

# Wandering from the shopping street into the department store

Research on the former department stores of the V&D



## Research Plan

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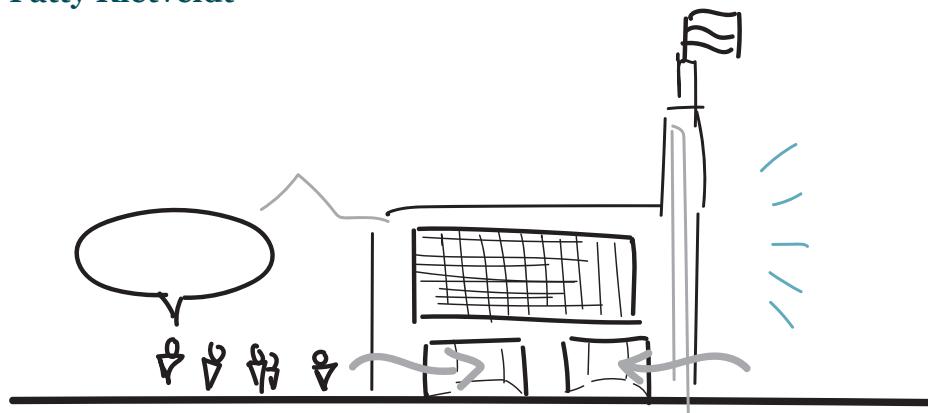
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Walking into city centres of the Netherlands is the department store always a remarkable building of retail. Since the experience of shopping and other cultural activities have changed over time, I am still wondering what a heritage V&D building could serve for the city. It makes me curious what citizens would like to see happening and what their needs are during a visiting day.

The former V&D buildings are unique and central oriented within city centres. Thereby is the old department store essential in its architectural composition of the public plinth. With a progressive attitude, is the question if the department store typology can be maintained in this composition? Accordingly, these vacant department stores are waiting for us to be carefully researched concerning their heritage values as a base for future design.

Because citizens' lives have a strong relation with cultural functions as retail, the research intends to gain knowledge about citizens' spatial desires. Especially the desires in the shopping street, because this routing users walk and retrieve experience from into the department store.

**Sincerely,**  
**Patty Rietveldt**



**Figure 1** - Sketch of the department store as reacting on the inner city centre. (Own image, 01/11/20.)

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## **Heritage value**

The in-studio discussion suggested that the department store's essence is a vital building in the inner city centre. The historical city development shaped the retail district, mostly around the flagship of retail: the department store. The key location of the department store is furthermore a valuable asset of heritage. Unless the former V&D location is not in the historic inner city centre, the question is, would the V&D building have a more significant value asset if situated somewhere else? Nevertheless, it is a questioning mindset that should be taken into account by researching the target area.

Citizens walking and strolling in the shopping street are not aware of the heritage value just mentioned. However, most people are aware of the unique architecture and type of building they are perceiving. The first interaction of the citizens moving in the shopping street is the shopping window. This architectural component is a valuable asset for retail buildings. How bigger and more detailed, how more luxurious the shop feels. Public attraction is a fact where visitors are influenced by it. Even more essential for the department store is the shopping window's design formed with detail and strategy. The sequence of shopping windows determines the cityscape in the shopping street. This character makes the retail cityscape very recognizable. The department store is the leading value component in the sequence of shopping windows. Without the grandeur façade of the department store, is the cityscape quality downsized.

This research will explore the department store's heritage value by researching the shopping street users' perception of space and architectural components. This outcome will suggest heritage values the designer can take into account to maintain the cityscape quality.

**Figure 2** - Archive photography of the shopping windows in the *Bijenkorf* Rotterdam. (Cas Oorthuys, n.d.)



## Research relevance

If we visit city centres nowadays, it is all about cultural functions that reflect city life. Living and working environments are also present in the inner city. Nevertheless, restaurants, theatres, supermarkets, and shops are building types that shape today's city centre. On the other hand, we are often used to retrieve these cultural facilities online. We can order our groceries, watch a movie at home and order the clothing we need with one-day delivery. The physical buildings of shops are no longer needed for consumption but are still part of the city. The department store is assumed to be a vital building in the city centre. Its function changes by online consumers. There is no need for a collective retail building if people have the overview online. Years after the bankruptcy of the V&D, more stores become empty, and still the former department store of Vroom & Dreesman itself.<sup>[1]</sup>

The vacant department store influences the experience of the shopping street. The shopping street will retain its function, but the research would address the change from shopping street perception. Citizens have different goals and desires during their visit to the inner city, then they used to have. Therefore, this research will explore the perception of today's shopping street and argue the desires of tomorrow.

The movement of citizens, wandering from the shopping street into the department store, will cross multiple perception levels. Different components of architecture and sequences of spaces shape the experience of the shopping street. Previous research is mostly done on the perception of architecture by approach or by the interior. The following research will contribute to gaining knowledge about the perceived link between the architecture and the street. Most research focuses on the perception from a single perception perspective is without ordering. Therefore, the following research will contribute to further knowledge about perception in sequence. Besides, many numbers and observations are researched on the development of today's shopping street, with future prediction. They were considering such statistical research as a significant insight into the future development of the shopping street. Thereby, the following research will take the observations into a new architectural perspective. The perception of architecture relates to essential scientific research that extracts the experience of people. The following perception on the movement from the shopping street into the department store is new insight that helps authorities understand the impact of vacancy.

<sup>[1]</sup> – Information retrieved from publication of *Sprekende cijfers: Winkelmarkten* (Dynamis, 2018)

## **Problem statement**

### **The vacant department store reduces the quality of the shopping street. It does not fit society's needs.**

The way visitors perceive the department store has changed. We used to benefit from the fact that many brands, products, and services are displayed in the department store. However, since we can retrieve information, inspiration, and sales online, the citizens won't need to visit the actual store. The facilities, therefore, have changed, and the function of the department store is different. Shop owners no longer need the actual retail building and have more competition in the retail sector. The shift of consumer's desires is also one reason why V&D went bankrupt. <sup>[2]</sup>

Like earlier mentioned, can the department store been seen as a vital building in the public plinth. If these stores become vacant, will it be experienced as a void of the shopping street. Thereby is the identity of the V&D affected and the connected vacant building. The void in the shopping street is noticeable by the vacant department store and the lack of remaining identity of V&D.

The quality of the shopping street experience is adapted because one vacant but magnificent retail building influences the existence of other shops or cultural functions. Lastly, are the needs of the customer changed. Citizens have other desires during the day when they visit the shopping street, compared to the past where the typology was newly designed. We should be aware, as designers, of the changed quality and citizens' behavior in the shopping street.

<sup>[2]</sup> - Information retrieved from news article named: *Waarom winkelstraten nooit meer winkels (moeten) worden* (Financieel Dagblad, 2020)



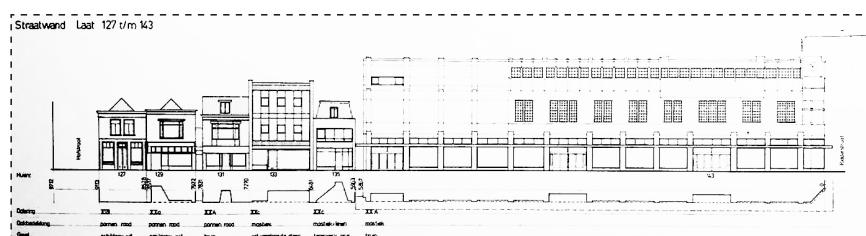
**Figure 3** - Montage of the cityscape expression of the Laat in Alkmaar, including the Vroom & Dreesman. (Own image, 26/11/2020)

## Research themes

Firstly, the most fundamental research terms will be addressed to introduce their definition. There will be illustrative examples given in these descriptions to understand this research in its language.

the **cityscape** How citizens perceive the architectural character influences the buildings and public places. For instance, this experience can be a dense urban district with high-rise buildings or a historical old village as a character. The way people perceive the street is also labeled with a type of character. We are then talking about the cityscape of the street. Accordingly, the building's character, together with the public domain, defines this cityscape. If we are talking about a historical cityscape, in most occasions it will be protected by the municipality. The factors that characterize the cityscape can differ in scale, just as building heights or window frame coloring. The proportion of shops in the street shape the cityscape experience. The research will look into the sizes and relations of the V&D within the cityscape of Alkmaar.

**Figure 4** - Archival drawing of the shopping street the *Laat* and the former Vroom & Dreesman (Gemeente Alkmaar, 1980)

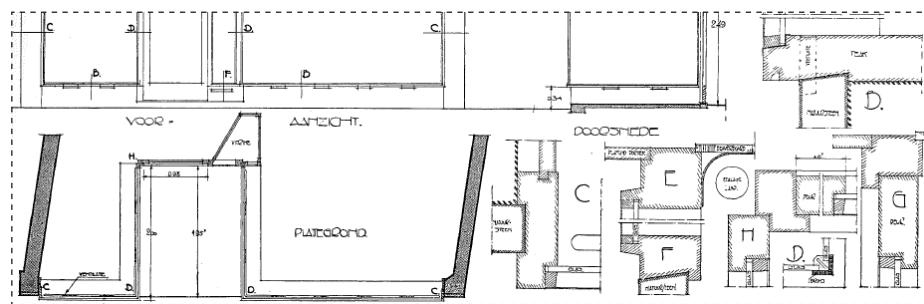


**slow desires** City life is constantly on the move however, there is a difference between fast city flows. For instance fast movements like traffic, and slowed down activities like pedestrian friendly routings. If citizens move slowly through the streets, they will observe more detail of their environment. We live in a modern society where we are always in a rush. The mental pressure is high, for instance at work to make more office hours than we should. There is less time left to enjoy public life, like standing still by river to enjoy the lovely weather. Also in retail, the customer has different desires such as quickly basic needs or slowly choosing which color and material suits best. The research will define the difference between slow and fast perceptions while citizens move through the shopping street. This research is searching for the second type of desire, activities that need time and joy. The search towards slow desires specify shopping street users' needs that cannot be done online. The research builds upon the assumption that the architectural perception of space influences the citizen to use or enter the department store or other shops.

## shopping window

The architectural component that is the first interaction with the public is the particularly designed glass window frame that displays the goods and products. Window shopping is therefore in contrast with the online rush of shopping. Furthermore is the building typology of a store is recognizable by the shopping window. It is not a particular window detailed in a regular dimension, but it always contains bigger glazing and depth dimension. The shopping window is, to a degree, the showroom effect what shops can extend in their façade. These architectural components shaped the cityscape experience of visitors and will be further research in its perception.

**Figure 5** - Technical drawing of the shopping window (Wattjes, 1924)



## approach street

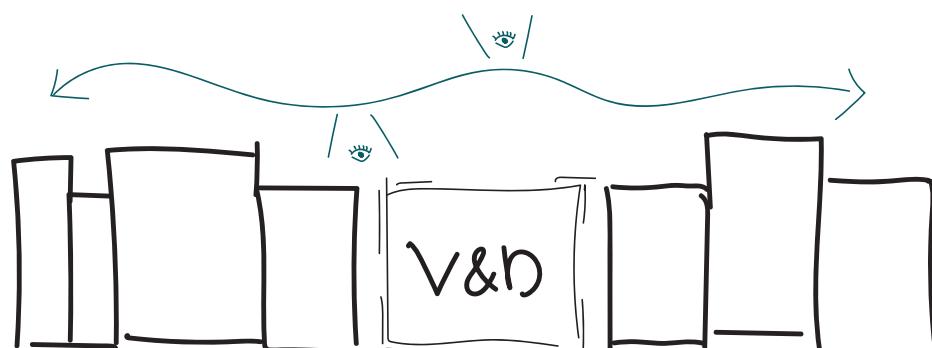
Citizens move through the city center in a particular direction. Regarding the shopping street, they will first enter a different street that brings them into the direction of their destination. This street is the approach to walk to the department store. Often are these approach streets are visually focused on the department store by guidelines. However, the approach street can also guide the user beyond the department store. The orientation in the shopping street is a character of space that guides the citizens towards their destination. Besides, the human scale of the street is an essential aspect that the research will analyze. The approach of the department store is critical to research through the eyes of the user.

## **Research goal**

Since the department store assumes to be a key element in retail's inner city center, it obtains a strong relationship to the shopping street. To propose a future proof re-design for the V&D department store, is it crucial to understand what the shopping street provides in the daily life of citizens.

This research will present the study on the typology of the shopping street related to the department store's perception arranged into the cityscape experience. The research intends to assess the hypothesis that the shopping street's perception is influenced by architectural components that shape the space and interaction with the department store. The outcome of this research will classify an explanation of the experience of the shopping street, including the department store. The research conducts spatial characters that define the sequence of space citizens are retrieving during their movement. Besides, a suggestion will be given for future retail desires. The citizen's slow desires and future retail developments will be included as design propositions for the re-design of the V&D department store.

**Figure 6** - Scheming the perception of the shoppingstreet in movement and objects. (Own image, 02/10/20)



## **Research question**

### **What defines the cityscape experience from users moving through the shopping street?**

To find an elaborated answer to the main question, will multiple sub-questions need to be answered first. These answers will formulate a base to understand the typology of the shopping street over time. The reasoning why these sub-questions will be used, is elaborated per question:

**sub question one** What are the spatial characters that define the space of the shopping street?

The shopping street where visitors move through is in each inner-city centre distinctive. Each city is developed differently and also the city's networks. Main roads and dense streets can shift over time. Likewise, could the retail function or other cultural functions shift therefore. By spatial changes in the city, experiences change. To explore the research location, spatial analysis research will extract the urban configuration of the Laat. With a morphological understanding of the context around the department store, this sub-question can be answered. The approach street and the outlet street of the shopping district, or even more relevant towards the department store, are critical components that make it accessible. For this reason, gaining knowledge about the urban configuration around the shopping street is essential in this research.

**sub question two** What are the architectural components that influence the perception of the shopping street?

Walking, wandering, and strolling through the shopping streets, people will perceive an experience. Looking at architecture or feeling the atmosphere are research aspects that will be taken into account. Architectural components will be observed by framing the visual perspective while the citizen is approaching the department store. To prevent biased research, literature study will explain the perception of architecture and space. By framing the perspective and confirming the observations, the influence of architectural can design be extracted with this research question.

sub question three

### How is the cityscape of the shopping street developing today?

Like the problem stated, due to online shopping is the cityscape changing. The shopping windows of today are different than originally designed. The shift in marketing and attraction is already noticeable in several cities. By researching future proposals of inner-city development and observing the Netherlands' modern shopping street, as example the *Lijnbaan* in Rotterdam, this sub-question will be answered. Gaining knowledge from case studies can be more expanded if the research requests a further explanation.

To sum up, these sets of sub-questions are different in their result and relevance concerning the shopping street. With this broad spectrum of research topics, will this research be able to get to know the typology of the shopping street and research how it is used and will be used. The figure beneath will supply an overview of the set of questions.

**Figure 7** - Overview of sub research questions extracted on research framework and potential approaches. (Own illustration, 01/12/2020)

<i>type of question</i>	<i>research aspects</i>	<i>theoretical frame</i>	<i>tools or methods</i>
WHAT is the shopping street	<b>Spatial characteristics</b>	Spatial analysis	Mapping, street profiles, 3D massing, building essence drawings
WHAT is the experience	<b>Exploring perception</b>	Theory of Zumthor, Holl and Rasmussen	Perspective sketches, research paper fieldtrips, architectural reflection
HOW is it developing	<b>Future predictive</b>	Literature & scenario studies	Case studies, describing scenarios, future thinking mindset by literature

## **Research disciplines**

The department store is a large building which has a specific designed typology. Throughout multiple scale levels will the SBT research explore spatial aspects which define this typology. On the hand of eight inner city center V&D buildings is the typology analyzed. The different scale disciplines all research throughout the same aspects applied to different locations.

### **Understanding the four SBT research dimensions in personal research perspective**

#### **scale 1: City centre**

This research reflects the urban fabric where the city center is defined—looking into the buildings itself and the structure of the inner city. The accessibility of the city will not only be researched by mobility in transport and taking into account the value of network priority (Jallon, 2017). The composition of building blocks and infrastructures defines the city's multiple zones, including the retail area as a target. Throughout the years, the V&D is in placed and removed out of the cityscape. This became stronger with further development of facilities but also vacancy in other buildings as a reaction.

#### **scale 2: Urban block**

The aligned buildings and public space determine how its visitors have perceived the V&D. The accessibility, on a small scale, shapes this domain's use from multiple sides. Because the V&D is located in a logically valuable way as a unique building block, the building's configuration concerning the other buildings is relevant to research.

#### **scale 3: Building object**

The typology of a department store is so specific, that the design needs explanation. Understanding the main aim of the design is key to understanding how the visitors experience the building. The ground floor is the key building interaction by people walking in and out of the department store.

#### **scale 4: Facade & roof**

The composition of the facades tells a story about the program within the building. The shopping window or *etalage* of the department store is included in this facade. This is the first interaction to the public reflecting the retail function. This together makes the research on the boundary between in- and outside interesting. The monumental value of the facade is also a factor that makes the research critical.

## **Methodology**

The SBT study is, as earlier mentioned, based on analysis throughout multiple scale levels. The collaborative research will achieve a comprehensive overview of the department store's spatial analysis applied in eight locations. The chosen locations are prepared with archival research for drawings and photography. This information is organized and shared in teamwork. The mindset behind the typology research used methods, in teamwork, will be elaborated.

### **Literature study**

On the hand of a literature study on Hausmann Paris (Jallon & Napolitano, 2017), the team gained knowledge on how to study spatial typologies. The guidelines and formats are only based on this Hausmann method to achieve a comparable overview from the different analyses and locations. Looking into the analysis examples makes us wonder what information is valuable to learn from the department store. The Hausmann book was used as a reference and reflected the analysis we were working on in the end.

### **Spatial analysis**

To compare all cities with credible research and formulate the precise analysis was the first method to create mock-up research. The first research trial led us towards a defined overview of all spatial studies which needed to be done. The different research dimensions are also divided into smaller groups. One scale set defined the visual requirements and content for that particular spatial analysis. The updates on the multiple locations research are shared with the research team and reflected with each other. Finally, crucial topics are compared and exhibited to discuss the broader scope of the analysis. The conclusions were translated into a relevant comparison to summarize the spatial building typology of the department store.

### **Model making**

Overall will the spatial building typology research teach us what the spatial characters of the department store are. Nevertheless, the reflected essence of the department store is different in each location. These models help us think about a particular store location's critical factor, reflected in the model. The next step is to find patterns and differences that help us understand department store typology's key aspect.

## Research output

The SBT research output is spatial comparison and explanations of the department store's spatial aspects. To gain knowledge from the V&D cases, the research plan will argue which conclusions are relevant. The conclusion of the SBT research will be parallel drawn next to the following analysis values.

analysis one **Understanding of the city networks**

To produce further research upon city networks in the selected case studies. In this matter will the SBT research serve as a base for the yet to analyze more detailed city networks (elaboration on Haussmann).

analysis two **Configuration of the building within the cityscape**

The former V&D buildings are in each city placed differently in their context. This makes the urban typology of this building relevant to understand, in relation to other retail and cultural buildings in the streets or squares.

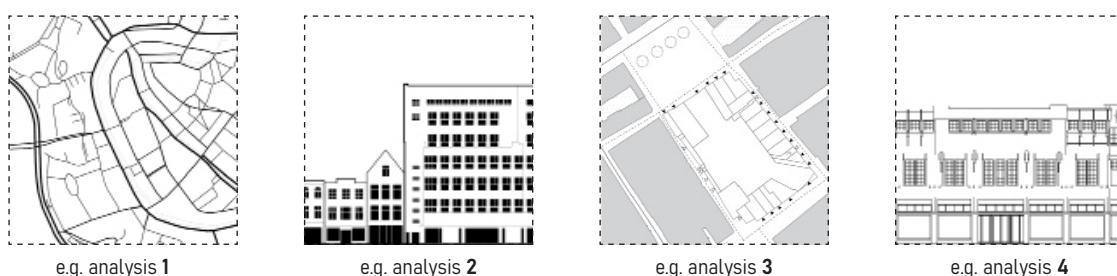
analysis three **Accessibility of the target area**

To understand the city flow around these V&D is the accessibility key to explore. In this research plan will accessibility be enlarged by the themes of eye-level experience.

analysis four **Openness and composition of the facade (transparency)**

The way how the plinth opens up towards the public is the first place where the building interacts with their users. Which reflects the first impression, transparency and entry of the façade. The SBT research will be a base for explaining the first impressions of the façade. This personal research will look further into the first interaction with the façade.

**Figure 8** - Analysis examples from the Spatial Typology Research booklet.  
(Studio Teamwork, 03/11/2020)



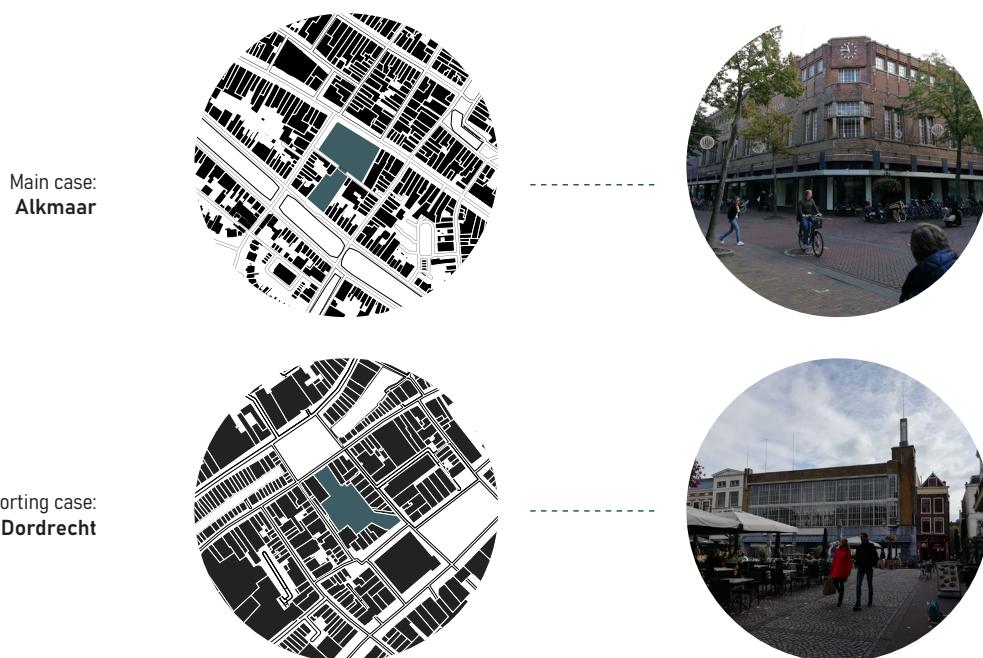
## Research location

During the SBT research, a set of V&D locations is chosen for analysis. The set of locations supplies a spatial explanation of the department stores. However, the research into the shopping street will base the choice of research location on urban configuration and the degree of problem. The earlier mentioned problem statement includes the declining quality of the shopping street. By this claim is the choice made for the former V&D situated at the Laat in Alkmaar.

The choice is made on preliminary research into the shopping street of Alkmaar. Firstly, it is on city level scale research done by the SBT teamwork. Aside the analysis, the first understanding of the inner city centre is made. By online moving through the Laat, the street's problem was observed by visual data of Google street view. By looking back into the street image of 2016 and sometimes even to 2009 (Google Maps, 2020), quality definitely reduced. Besides looking into the cityscape, a personal relation did confirm the observation. Alkmaar's long-time inhabitant expressed the impoverishment of the shopping street, emphasizing the change after the V&D disappeared. These observations together confirm the reasoning to research in the shopping street of Alkmaar.

The shopping street of Alkmaar is not the single one that will be chosen for research. Besides, another street will be researched as a comparison. One of them will be the shopping street of the V&D of Dordrecht. The urban configuration is totally different because the V&D is situated at a square. On the analysis level, the shopping street of Dordrecht will be a supporting location.

**Figure 9** - Case studies urban situation and image from the Spatial Typology Research booklet (Studio Teamwork, 03/11/2020)



## **The shopping street**

The research methodology of SBT is extracting the typology of the department store. To understand the use of the department store will the run-up towards this particular building research. The citizens first move through the shopping street to get into the department store. This movement is for all people different but is shaped by the same encounters of space. Throughout multiple architectural research methods on the experience in front of the department store, the space of shopping street should be defined, and its influence on visitors.

### **To retrieve credible research results, different research methods will be used to obtain correct assessment of research**

set of methods: **one**

Since the use of the shopping street is assumed to be influenced by experience, phenomenology research is one way to gain results. Walking through a street is giving the pedestrian sequences of perspectives. With phenomenology, research methods make the user perspective able to translate into the perceived image. Framing the image of the shopping street is necessary to analyze the perception of the particular space. The visualization of perception will be argued on the hand of literature studies that describe architecture's perception. The combination of phenomenology studies with supporting scientific research can draw a conclusion of the shopping street experience.

set of methods: **two**

Looking into the spatial aspects of the shopping street will create typology research. By analysis of multiple dimensions, the typology will be translated into morphology. In the order of sequences of space, the morphology will be explained. The start of routing along the retail districts starts in the approach street towards the department store. Besides, the outlet street defines the last experience of the shopping street and, therefore, will be taken into account in the morphology. These different streets relating to the research location will be labeled with spatial characters that define the buildings' outdoor space. Supporting literature will provide the argumentation of why space is used in a particular way.

set of methods: **three**

When morphology and space perception is retrieved from the research location, the outcomes will be measured and compared on other shopping streets in the Netherlands. To learn from the shopping street of today is crucial to suggest a future proof design. Besides, the study on shopping street case scenarios will be researched by combining progressive scientific knowledge. At this moment, citizens' future desires are discussed and compared with reference cases as scenario studies. More relevant examples could be included that are not bombed city centre, for a more coherent comparison.

## Content and structure

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The shopping street research will be structured per research component. Different research methods will be used throughout the several topics, which are built upon each other. Overall, literature studies will be the guidance in stating arguments, which is based on analysis outputs. However, especially the perception theme also needs a theoretical framework based on literature study in advance. The research paper will frame the research aspects of the perception of experience. The structure will now be discussed step by step.

### Imaging the user

Citizens who move through the shopping street all have different goals. One person will be in a rush to buy something particular, while the other person could be strolling around and is there for a social occasion. To enclose the type of users, can the following research assume more specific behavior. The user will be elaborate on the studies of Jan Gehl, *Life between buildings: using public space* (2011).

### Extracting the space

By the spatial analysis will the typology of the shopping street be determined. To translate the spatial analysis into a morphological understanding, Kim Dovey, *Mapping urbanities: Morphologies, flows, possibilities* (2017) will be a supporting theoretical example. Besides, visually analysis will be done on the hand of the theory of Kevin Lynch: *The image of the city* (1960). Making a two-dimensional analysis into a three-dimensional understanding of space will mostly be sketched and reduced to its essence.

### Exploring the perception

To further research on the experience of space, this research will define the one experience linked to another. Firstly the experience in the shopping street, based on different speeds of citizens. What do people perceive and what is recognizable? The second experience is moving from the exterior into the interior. The facade's boundary is where the department store's architectural aspects define the sequence of space—the different perceptions within the movement of space encountered by the street and its plinth. The perception will be argued on the hand of multiple literature perspectives, from Zumthor (2006), Holl (2006), Rasmussen (1964), and supporting scientific papers.

### Comparing

The city center of Alkmaar is not the only contemporary case that will be studied. The supporting case of Dordrecht will add examples of perception in a different context. Two main shopping streets and two approaches or outlet streets will be researched to make a coherent comparison. To understand the design possibilities of retail districts and architecture, knowledge will be retrieved from the earlier study on the Binnenweg by Gerard Peet (2013) and the Lijnbaan as a modern typology of retail Astrid Aarsen (2013). These will be placed within a framework of scenario studies, including Alkmaar, Dordrecht, and perhaps another enriching shopping street.

## Frame of reference



**Figure 10** - Cover of research publication: Street level desires (Hoeven, 2008)

### Street-level desires: Discovering the city on foot - TU Delft

The Department of Urbanism published a pedestrian focused research: Street-level desires: Pedestrian mobility and the regeneration of the European city centre (Hoeven, Smit & Spek, 2008). This research provides examples how design intentions have influenced the life of citizens, to learn from the existing. To be more specific, it states how western cities have improved the main shopping streets for the pedestrian desires (Hoeven et al, 2008). The project suggests the reversed design relation towards my type of research. The urbanist approach is a good way to reflect the design relation on the typology studies of this research. To test if the research result of desires are created by architecture of urban design. Further conservation strategies have responded to building heritage of the retail (Hoeven et al, 2008). This statement is significant towards the research proposal about the shopping street and the department store. And thereby a reason to use the theoretical reference to the research and design relation.

### The city at eye level: Lessons for street plinths

The book and extension of The city at the eye level are open source projects where information keeps developing. The extension publication of this project relates to the experience of streets in various aspects. There are many theoretical relations describe that are overlaying with the research of the shopping street of Alkmaar. General studies are also implied to implement statistics and behaviour of people perceiving architecture while moving through the streets. The collection of information is very relevant to this research; the project will be used for inspiration and reflection.



**Figure 11** - Chapter of street perception: *The city at eye level* (Glaser, 2012)



**Figure 11** - Perspective of the outlet street of the Rotterdam retail district  
(Own photograph, 27/11/20)

### Case study: retail district of Rotterdam

The city centre of Rotterdam is often researched due to city reconstruction. Also, many studies are done on the retail perspective of Rotterdam. Nowadays, Rotterdam is one of the most progressive cities if we are talking about shopping street evolution. To start with is the Lijnbaan, a modern typology of the shopping street (Aarsen, 2013). The design intentions and identity proposals are architectural aspects to learn from. Together with the new upcoming project Forum of Wessel de Jonghe architects is the retail district in evolution. Learning from Rotterdam's existing and future designs will support the scenario study related to the Laat in Alkmaar. Furthermore, the approach and outlet street of Rotterdam's retail district is the Binnenweg (image above). Elaborate research into the evolution of this street, done by Gerard Peet (2013), is relatable to the urban configuration of the V&D in Alkmaar. All the above is a collection of Rotterdam's shopping street's relevant architectural research, which is a critical reference for this research.

## **Design relations**

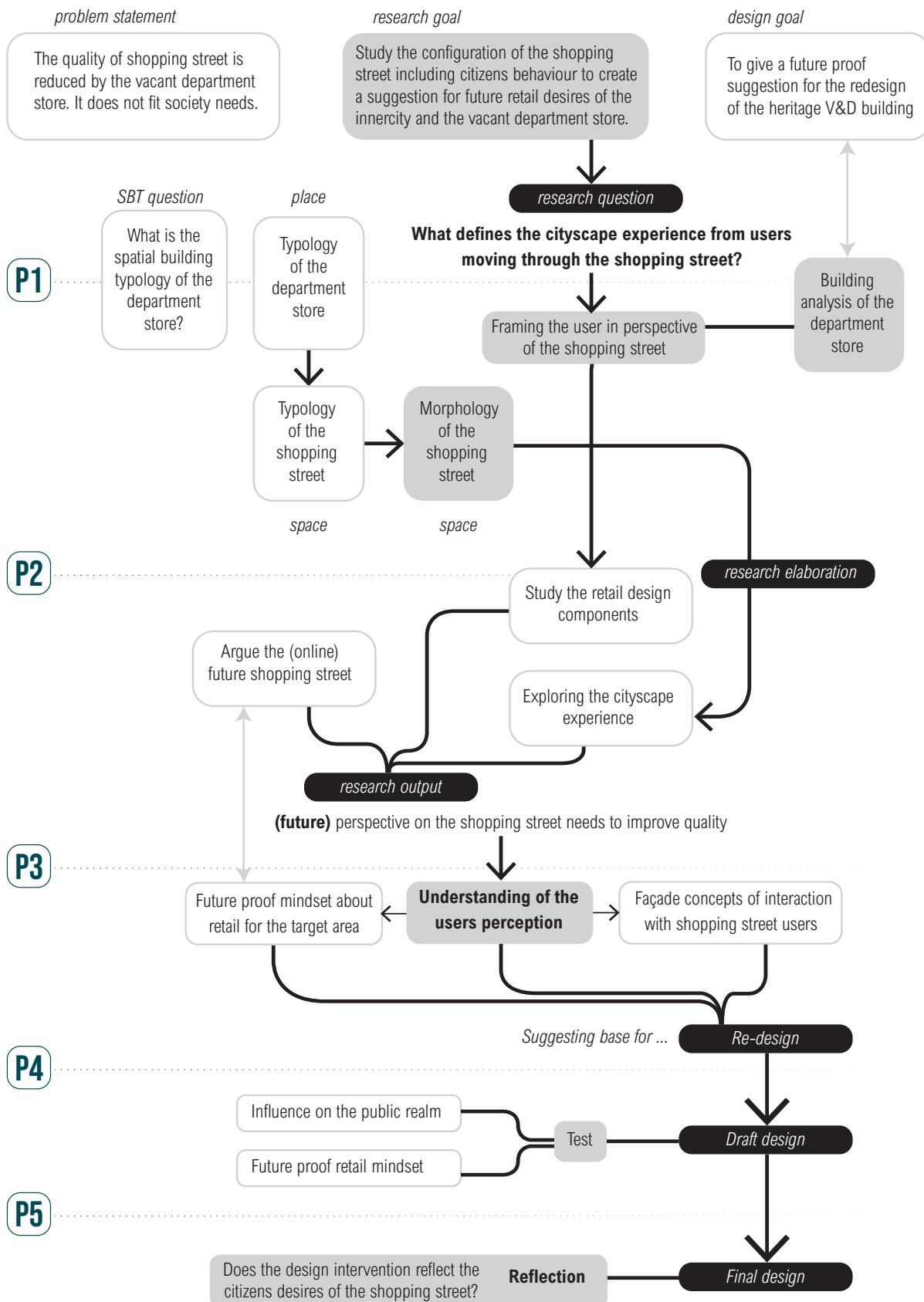
The design goal is to give a future proof suggestion for the redesign of the heritage V&D building in order to improve the public realm of the shopping street. To research the users' perception of the shopping street, the designer will understand their desires. The value of perception is translated into architectural components that influence the users. To take these slow desires as design propositions, multiple programming concepts can be created. The re-programming of the former department store is the design base for the future proof design.

Since the balance between shopping in cities and ordering online is shifting, the department store's function is also different. We need to question ourselves if the development of the shopping street influences the department store's typology. This research will supply a point of view for the retail market, where the redesign of the V&D's will respond.

The relation between the shopping street and the department store is linked through sequences of perception. This research includes the approach perspective as well as interaction with the shopping windows. Through the sequence of space, the design will be reflected on the perception. The proposed research method to explore the experience is the designer able to improve the experience.

The following diagram will be demonstrated to retrieve an overview of the relationship between research and design (next page). Based on the studio process and personal research mindset.

## Research diagram



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# Research Plan

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