

# Reflection P4 Report

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The revitalization of the city centre of Hengelo

## Introduction

This reflection is for my graduation project about the revitalization of the city centre of Hengelo, located in the east of the Netherlands. Because the specific location is a small urban place, the studio where this project fits in is the studio of “The urban fabric”, with a strong relation to urban regeneration.

## Relation project and social context

The social context is the reason why the topic of innercity revitalization is chosen, and also the location of the project. The inhabitants of the city of Hengelo are complaining about the high amount of retail store emptiness. This emptiness is a problem which occurs in many different cities caused by several urban and/or economic trends (economic crisis, demographical changes). So the aim for this thesis is to investigate what the options are to handle this urban phenomenon and what the possible answers are for this. Also it is an opportunity to investigate what kind of place city centres do have in the current urban structure and function of the city as a whole, or, even on a bigger scale, in the region.



Figure 1: Article Twentse Courant Tubantia 17/6/14

## Relation studio and subject

As mentioned in the introduction, the location is part of a dense urban context situated in the middle of the city. The perfect theme for this graduation project is so Urban Fabrics, the design of the urban fabric within a city. The aim of this research theme is to do research so we can understand how we can contribute to a more sustainable, attractive and vital urban design. The specific contribution of the theme of urban fabric is strengthen the discipline of urban design as a technical discipline in terms of awareness of rising complexities of urban patterns and the development of tools for practical implication (Nadin et al, 2013).

The aim of this thesis is find solutions for a city centre which does have problems with its attractiveness, vitality and a great amount of empty retail space. This fits perfectly in the description of the theme of urban fabric, because the city centre needs improvement in the topics mentioned before.

## Relation research and design

Research is an important part of an urban design. Many components of an urban design are based on information which cannot be found by just drawing maps or pictures. Also books, municipality papers or existing research papers are being used to formulate design principals. As can be seen in the scheme on the right, this design scheme contains three elements which are based on different kinds of research methods. An theoretic part which contains an overview of relevant for this subject written papers and books and/or government documents, a spatial part which contains drawings, maps and computer models and a requirements and preconditions part which contains information based on field work (questionnaires).

All these components together provides information of how the urban fabric of a specific place can be changed in to a well functional city centre. By formulation the sub research questions, each question was formulated in a way that they address each a different perspective in research and research tool. The result was a broad range of information which covers different aspect of a city centre. This helped a lot to understand the complexity of a city centre and it provided information of many different point of views. So the end result of all the different research was a large framework of information where the strategic design could be based on.

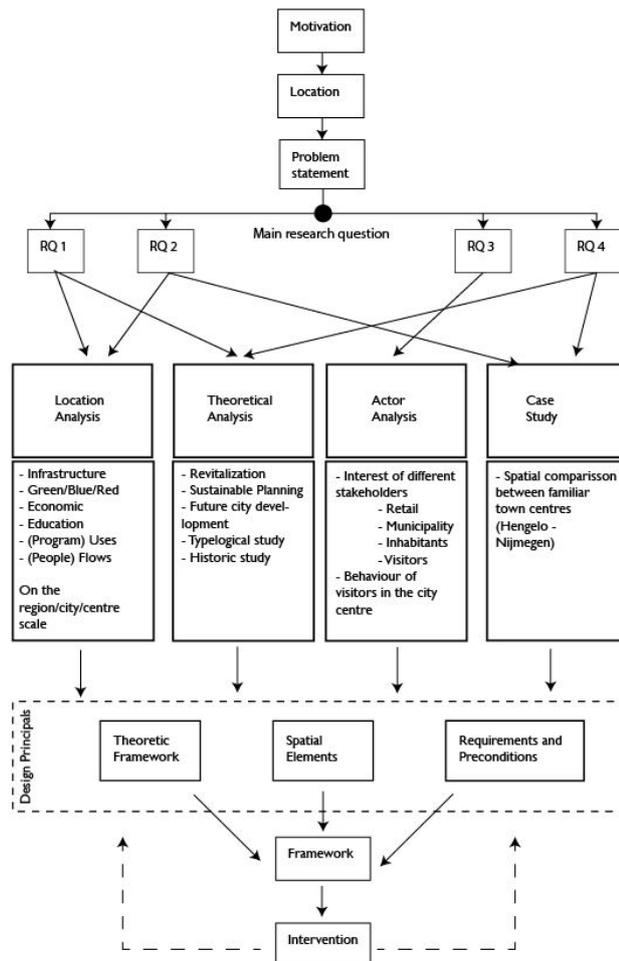


Figure 2: Project scheme (by author)

## Relation methodology of studio and individual

As explained, in this thesis there are several different kinds of methodology tools used to provide the research framework for the strategic design. It shows the complexity in where urban design have to be made. In this complexity, the research group of Urban Fabric has two different kinds of approaches: quantitative and qualitative. The quantitative approach contains the informative side of the research, the non-physical information. By mapping and literature reviews and comparison information can be gained about the city centre. Besides this, this contains also the questionnaires from citizens and government documents belong to this approach.

The qualitative approach address the visual and spatial aspects of a location. In this thesis, this is examined within a comparison case study between the city centres of Hengelo and Nijmegen. In this two spatial aspects are investigated: the relation of emptiness with the streetscape and the relation of emptiness with the accessibility. Also the an overview is made of the building typology which is characteristic for the city centre of Hengelo.

In this thesis, a mix is made between the two approaches. This because each approach is related to the other and both are necessary to have a clear set of information (and conclusions) in the end. This mix provides the opportunity to come with design solutions which can be reflected on both elements so in the end it has approval in perspective of "dry" information as well in perspective of the 'third dimension'.

## **Process of the graduation**

My personal graduation track of this thesis was one which of many bumps and setbacks. The problem was not the location or choosing of topic, it was my personal interest. Someone told me that the graduation period is the last time to learn something before entering the real world. During the bachelor I was not good in the creative spatial aspect of design, so I wanted a first and second mentor who could teach me that. After two failed P2 presentations the conclusion was that I had difficulty with the spatial aspect of analysing and designing, something I already encountered in the bachelor. After this, I chose a new mentor couple which I do still have. This because in my opinion they focus more on the theoretical part of design, something which suits me better.

This long track of graduation made clear for me that I do not want to be a designer after this graduation. Personally I find it very interesting, but somewhere I lack the capability to do it. In the end it was a long, hard and difficult graduation track, but I think I know now precisely what I want to do in the future, and maybe more important, what I do not want to do.