

Rethinking of a Topology

To what extent do the different stakeholders of vacant retail spaces in inner cities influence the selection of intervention strategies and how can new ideal-typical use concepts for these vacant spaces be concluded from it?

RESEARCH PLAN for the Graduation Studio
"The Modern Mall" 2022/2023

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Submission | 04. November 2022

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1

RESEARCH INTRODUCTION

The fateful evolution of shopping

Due to the lack of inner-city space and the increasing demands for sustainability in architecture, the construction industry is increasingly concerned with the revitalization and reuse of existing buildings. The goal is to use existing structures to reduce the proportion of new construction projects and thus protect the environment. (Schrami, 2021) This topic is particularly relevant regarding the increasingly vacant shopping malls in city centres.

In the early 20th century, shopping malls were originally envisioned as community centres where people could shop, engage in cultural activities, and interact socially (Gruen & Smith, 1960). Urban planner Victor Gruen described malls at the time as a gathering of consumption with civil commercial facilities such as clubrooms, zoos and kindergartens. The shopping mall was a place of freedom and ease. Over the years, however, the image of shopping malls changed from multicultural centres to temples of pure consumption. (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 2020)

Retail has always been one of the fastest-changing industries (Stumpf et al., 2016), which has suffered severely in recent years. The main reason for shrinking sales in stores is the change in people's shopping behaviour (Möhlenbruch, 2012). Constantly changing opportunities of the digital age (Bauer & Rock, 2019) make it possible to shop from home (Figure 1). This was also partly caused by the Covid pandemic. Retail sales declined in all countries of the European Union, while the proportion of consumers shopping online increased (Appendix 9.1.) (Statista, 2020, 2021). As a result, we see vacant storefronts in city centres. This development is clearly visible in the example of former department stores of the *Karstadt* and *Kaufhof* chains in Germany. Low-cost and online retailers forced the two companies to merge into *Galeria Karstadt Kaufhof* due to the lack of sales (Internet World, 2019). As a result, nearly one in three stores had to be closed (Nitzel, 2018). The vacancy of these former department stores not only entails the problem of vacancy in times of inner-city space shortage but also promotes social and urban problems (Brinker & Sinning, 2011; Hertwig, 2014; Kube, 2003). These problems will be explained in more depth following this introduction. However, it can already be said that it is of great social urgency to combat this inner-city vacancy. To do so this thesis aims to develop new use concepts for these former retail spaces.

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RESEARCH AIMS

Identity loss and rising crime. What now? **Problem Statement + Research Question**

Following the approach of urban planners Peter Zlonicky and Othmar Ebert, the city center is not only the geographic center but also the identity carrier of a city (Vollmer, 2015, p.43). "Verliert eine Innenstadt [durch Leerstand] an Multifunktionalität, Vitalität und Vielfalt, wird dies nicht selten mit der Bedrohung der urbanen Lebenskultur und der gesellschaftlichen Identität gleichgesetzt." (Brinker & Sinning, 2011, p.9)¹ This means that the city finds itself in a loss of identity due to vacancies in the city centre (Figure 2 & 3). Furthermore, dead spaces in inner cities lead to an increase in crime (Kube, 2003).

To combat these problems, there have been studies and projects for the revitalization of vacant retail spaces for several years. All these projects have one thing in common: the execution of transformation processes. In the book '*Rewriting Architecture, 10+1 actions, Tabula Scripta*' methods are discussed which can be used to realize these transformation processes (Alkemade et al., 2020). These methods are called *intervention strategies* and are defined as "the action of becoming intentionally involved in a difficult situation, in order to improve it [...]" (Cambridge Dictionary, 2022). Like many other books in the field of architecture, '*Rewriting Architecture*' focuses exclusively on structural interventions (Alkemade et al., 2020).

The book '*Heritage - Management, Interpretation, Identity*' by P. Howard sets itself apart from this kind of architectural literature. It attempts to explain the holistic nature of the term *cultural heritage* and highlights the different ways in which different groups (stakeholders) deal with heritage from an economic, socio-political, cultural and financial perspective. (Howard, 2003)

Reading P. Howard is playing a key role in formulating this research. Architects often forget about the involvement of different stakeholders, because their engagement in the construction industry takes place in the background. Yet it is precisely these stakeholders who commission the intervention strategies. Be it the renovation of a façade to increase the *footfall* of a shopping centre or the transformation of dull plazas into high-quality common areas to make visitors stay longer in the mall. The initiator of such changes and applications of intervention strategies is in very few cases the architects themselves, but an interaction of the different stakeholders.

This paper combines an architectural-constructive investigation of intervention strategies with an economic analysis of the interests of the various stakeholders. The aim is to develop innovative new concepts of use in order to avoid inner city vacancy.

¹ Translation by the author of this paper:

[If a city centre loses multifunctionality, vitality and diversity (due to vacancy), this is not infrequently equated with a threat to urban living culture and social identity.] (Brinker & Sinning, 2011, p.9)

The demands of the different stakeholders on vacant spaces in inner cities and the intervention strategies used to meet these demands will be investigated. Stakeholders with many commonalities in these two areas will eventually be brought together in groups to create new use structures. By pursuing similar interests and applying the same intervention strategies to achieve those interests, these use structures are ideal for effectively reducing vacancy and its consequences in downtown areas in the long term.

This combined approach of intervention strategies and the influence of stakeholders on them has not yet been found in a satisfactory, comprehensive form and therefore contributes to the gapless investigation in the academic context.

Accordingly, the developed Research Question of this thesis will be as follows:

To what extent do the different stakeholders of vacant retail spaces in inner cities influence the selection of intervention strategies and how can new ideal-typical use concepts for these vacant spaces be concluded from it?

To obtain the information necessary to answer this question, the following subquestions will be addressed:

- *Which Stakeholders are involved in the revitalization of vacant former retail space in inner cities?*
- *What do these stakeholders expect from buildings to fulfil their ambitions?*
- *What intervention strategies are performed for the fulfilment of these ambitions?*
- *Which stakeholders have a lot of alignment in their interests and their choice of intervention strategies to meet them?*
- *What user structures can be developed through these similarities for effective and long-term use of the vacant inner city retail space?*

Based on the overall literature and case research, the following hypotheses can be formed, which will be tested during the research:

H1: Malls of the post-war era up to the present day have shown an increase in vacancy as a result of the decline in revenues and on-site shopping, and are therefore good case studies for the stated problem of this thesis. (Möhlenbruch, 2012; Statista, 2021; Kolf, 2021)

H2: Stakeholders have a huge influence on decisions in the architectural context. (Appendix 9.2.)

H3: Intervention strategies are pivotal to achieving stakeholder goals in a vacant building. (Appendix 9.2.)

H4: By sharing the same ambitions and executing the same intervention strategies, different stakeholder groups consequently fit together very well and guarantee the long-term functioning of buildings. (Schultz & Schilter, 2003)

Note:

In this work, a new typology is created. According to architect K. Voigt, detailed building typologies are formed by structural, use, constructional, material, compositional and contextual characteristics (Voigt, 2020, p.20). The term typology, as used in this thesis, refers to the notion of typology, which is shaped by use-related characteristics. An accumulation of retail spaces falls into the typology of shopping malls. However, since the aim of this thesis is to develop alternative user structures for former retail spaces, a new use-based typology defines itself.



Figure 1: Photograph of an empty store in Remscheid that says Amazon is not a city (StadtBauKulturNRW, 2017)



Figure 2: Photograph of the Althoff department store in Herne
([Photograph of the Althoff department store in Herne], ca. 1960)



Figure 3: Photograph of the vacant Hertie department store in the city centre of Herne
(Cristóbal Márquez, 2017)

Research Structure Overview - Rethinking of a Typology

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH -social-

Urban, social and economic problems

urban spaces without purpose = "dead spaces" (Example Lijnbaan, Rotterdam)

loss of identity for the city and its inhabitants

Fewer semi-public spaces under surveillance, thus potential for increasing levels of crime

Location becomes less appealing for investors

RELEVANCE OF RESEARCH -academical-

Academical context/debate

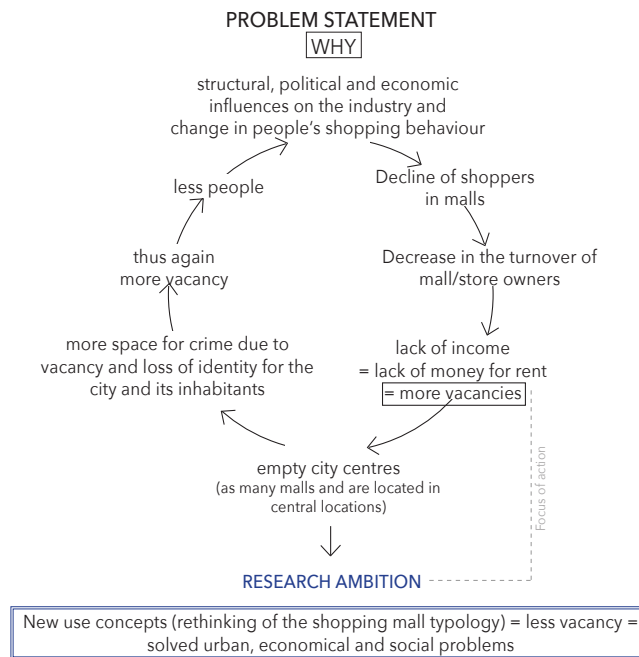
1. lack of space, expensive building materials and sustainability and circularity ambitions lead to greater importance of revitalization - for that intervention strategies are needed
2. vacant city centres and the connected problems

Validity and transferability

Aim of this work: creation of ideal-typical use concepts to reduce vacancy rate in centres
Applied to: vacant inner-city malls

Contribution to existing knowledge

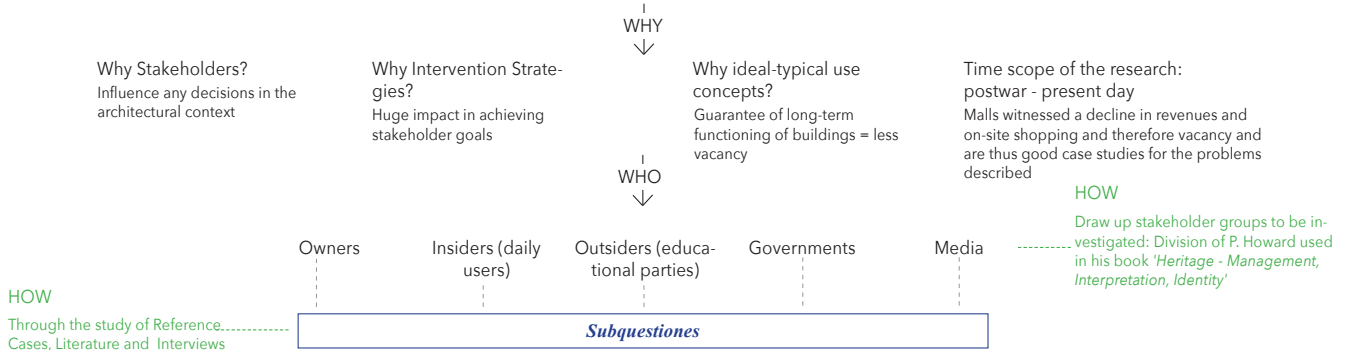
This paper combines an architectural constructional investigation of intervention strategies with an economic analysis of the interests of different stakeholders. It moves away from the exclusive focus on the consumer.



To reach that:

RESEARCH QUESTION

To what extent do the different stakeholders of vacant retail spaces in inner cities influence the selection of intervention strategies and how can new ideal-typical use concepts for these vacant spaces be concluded from it?

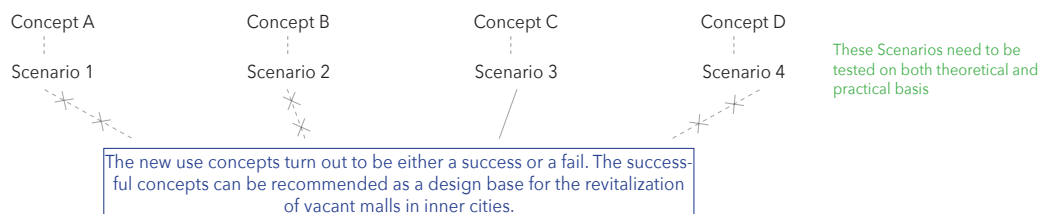


RESEARCH P1

TESTING P2

WHAT

Comparative analysis: Stakeholders with overlaps in their goals and the intervention strategies used to achieve those goals are put together into new use concepts. Whether these concepts work in reality must be tested in design scenarios.



DESIGN P3 | P4 | P5

Figure 4: Overview of Research (own illustration, 2022)

3

ACADEMIC CONTEXT

Reflection on wider Relevance

The population is growing steadily and space in city centres is becoming limited (Hertwig, 2014). The vacant spaces of former shopping malls in prime downtown locations represent a great opportunity to densify inner city areas and to counteract the lack of space, vacancy and the social problems associated.

Secondly, the revitalization of vacant spaces contributes to Europe's environmental goals. Germany, for example, wants to significantly reduce CO₂ emissions from buildings by 2030. To achieve this, there must be increased sensible preservation and reuse of existing buildings. (Schrami, 2021)

Contribution to existing Knowledge

The debate about revitalizations of malls has been going on in response to the ever-changing demands of consumers (Norddeutscher Rundfunk, 2020; Schmidtke, 2011).

This work, however, broadens the focus to all stakeholders involved in vacant former retail spaces. The new use concepts developed at the end of this research might no longer have anything to do with shopping.

With that approach, this thesis contributes significantly to science and applied practice. In addition to architecture, there are also different possibilities for using this approach in further research in real estate economics. The new use concepts developed in this thesis form recommendations for action that can be of great value to all parties interested in the preservation of inner cities.

4

DEFINITION OF THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK AND LIMITATION OF RESEARCH

The new approach to the development of new use concepts presented in this thesis is based on the argument that buildings are particularly successful when there is a mix of sectors. This mix increases the overall level of attraction in all age groups (Schultz & Schilter, 2003) and thus also the *footfall* in the vicinity of such buildings, which would have the effect of limiting the described problems.

To reduce the scope of this work, a limitation of the stakeholders to be investigated must take place. This limitation is based on the theory of P. Howard, who classifies the different stakeholders: Owners (people who own a piece of heritage), Insiders (people who judge the heritage to be theirs, like daily users), Outsiders (educational parties, like schools, tourists, pilgrims), Government (operate within the market or they impose their wishes) and Media (reporters or tv shows). (Howard, 2003) Furthermore, this study refers to stakeholders in the European context and therefore cannot be generalized to other parts of the world.

To elaborate, which stakeholders are involved in the revitalization of vacant former retail spaces and what intervention strategies are performed to meet their ambitions, case studies were chosen that fit into the time frame of the work (post-war era), already show structural changes (interventions), and are influenced by different stakeholders. This categorization includes the *Winkelcentrum Leyweg*, the *Westfield Mall of the Netherlands* in The Hague as well as department stores of the former chain *Karstadt* and *Kaufhof* in Lübeck, Berlin and Bremen.

In order to categorize and define intervention strategies with consistent terms, this thesis uses the theory of F. Alkemade. (Alkemade et al., 2020).

Furthermore, it is using the definition of the Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary of a *mall*: "a very large building or buildings containing a lot of stores [...]" (Cambridge Academic Content Dictionary, 2022).

Interaction of References

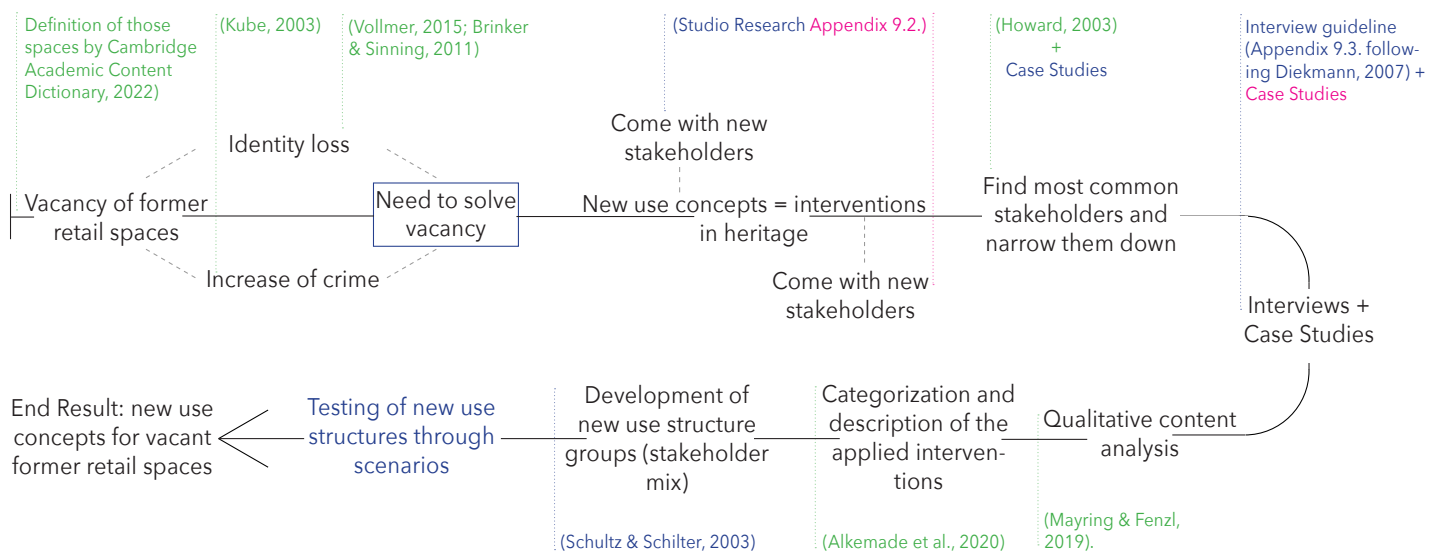


Figure 5: Interaction of references: *Theory, History, Practise* (own illustration, 2022)

5

METHODOLOGICAL POSITIONING AND DESCRIPTION OF RESEARCH METHODS

Research Design

The preceding literature review made it possible to point out that only a little literature exists on the influence of different stakeholders on intervention strategies in former retail areas.

The limited existing theoretical research will therefore mainly be supplemented by qualitatively exploratively obtained guidelines in terms of use concepts for vacant former retail spaces in city centres (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019).

At the beginning of the research, theory-based deductive research is applied. This means that on the foundation of the literature research as well as the developed research question, theory-based hypotheses are first established, which will then be investigated with the help of semi-structural expert interviews. To differentiate and find specific interviewees, it is necessary to first study cases related to the research question. Part of this case studies are images of the respective city archives showing interventions, as well as the study of scientific literature, professional journals and government publications. The case studies are used to answer the following subquestion: Which stakeholders are involved in the revitalization of vacant former retail space in inner cities? In connection with the groups formed by P. Howard, the interviewees will be selected.

Subsequently, the interview guidelines with the previously selected experts are developed based on the theory-based hypotheses (Appendix 9.3.). They serve to answer the subquestions: What do these stakeholders expect from buildings to fulfil their ambitions? And: What intervention strategies are performed for the fulfilment of these ambitions?

Since questions can often be answered more clearly in a personal conversation, the semi-structured interview was chosen. This procedure enables a narrative conversation and thus provides a certain level of necessary structure. (Bortz & Döring, 2006; Helfferich, 2019; Küsters, 2019)

After the consent of the interviewees, the interviews will be recorded. If an participant does not wish to be recorded, notes will be taken.

In addition to the interviews, the investigation of case studies takes place to examine the requirements of various stakeholders for vacant downtown space and to filter the intervention strategies used to meet these requirements.

The analysis of the data is based on qualitative content analysis, a method that allows the analysis of social science data (Mayring & Fenzl, 2019).

Flow and bar charts and tables can be used to visualize the data (Appendix 9.4.).

The new knowledge gained from the interviews and the case studies will be used to specify the existing hypotheses and will lead to new use structures for vacant retail spaces through a comparative analysis. This analysis includes the comparison of the stakeholder groups, their ambitions and the intervention strategies used for this purpose and is therefore answering the following subquestions: Which stakeholders have a lot of alignment in their interests and their choice of intervention strategies to meet them? And: What user structures can be developed through these similarities for effective and long-term use of the vacant inner city retail space? Stakeholders with a high degree of correspondence are brought together into user structures. This inductive process allows the development of a clear approach (Strübing, 2019).

Structure of the Research Process

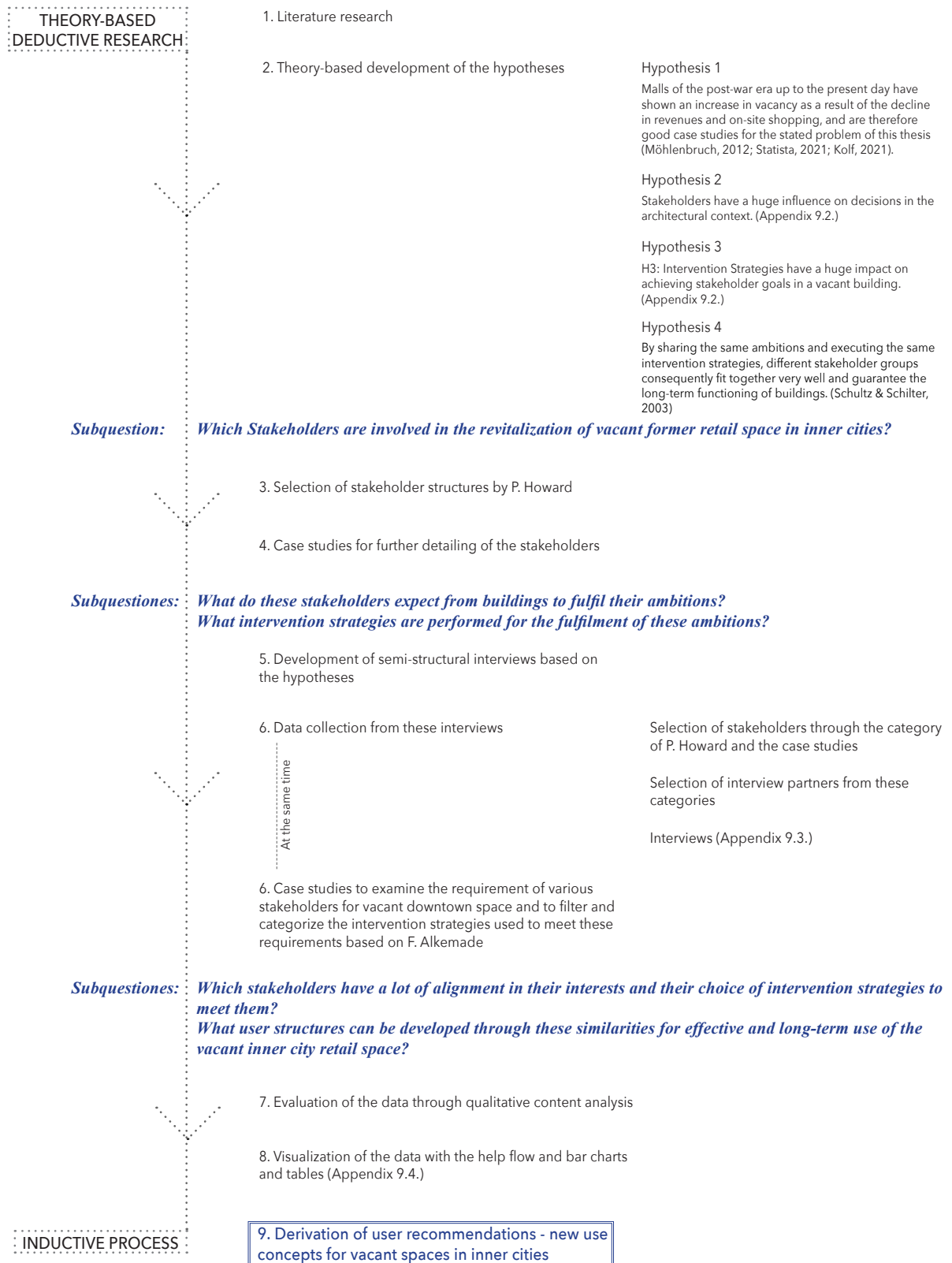


Figure 6: Structure of the Research Process
(own illustration, 2022)

How the Research leads to Design

The new use structures developed during the research can be tested afterwards in different scenarios for their ability to adapt to different conditions and situations (P2). The use structures that proved to be successful in scenario testing form the foundation for the design in the context of the master thesis (content of P3-P5).

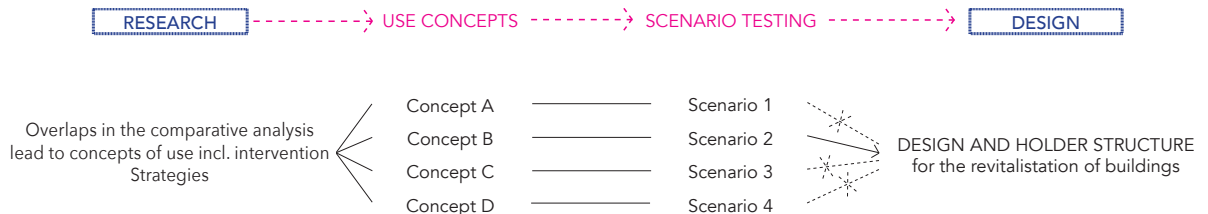


Figure 7: Research leads to Design
(own illustration, 2022)

Ethical Issues

Especially in the area of interviews, it is of great importance to address the ethical considerations, since interviews always represent a form of human interaction. Due to this human interaction, this thesis requires permission from the Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) of TU Delft.

Following the HREC guidelines makes it possible to assess and minimize the risks for all parties involved. For this research it is especially important to consider the following points:

1. Participation in the interview is voluntary.
 2. Participants are above the legal age for giving consent.
 3. Participants can leave and enter the interaction at any time and point.
 4. Personal information of the participants is only provided if they feel comfortable sharing it.
 5. Anonymity is possible.
 6. Participants are informed about their options, the background, the aim and the methods of processing the data and the possibility of hiding confidential information in this paper.
 7. No PIRD (Personally Identifiable Research Data) will be stored after the evaluation of the data.
- (following Diekmann, 2007; Delft University of Technology, 2022)

The potential confidentiality or anonymity of some participants could lead to more complicated treatments of the collected data and the following publication of this thesis. However, the participants' well-being is the main priority and will be respected. A possibility could be a locking note of this thesis.



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8

TO BE CONSULTED

This list acts as a supplement to the theoretical and historical bibliographical references already studied in chapter 6. The references listed here will be examined and incorporated into the context of this thesis in the coming weeks. The list is a current state and will change as well as expand during the course of the next few weeks.

Primary Sources - Archives

(Since I have not used any information with the collection, file number and page number at that stage, I provide the works as a web page for now):

Gemeentearchief, H. (2022). *Haags Gemeentearchief - archief Leidschendam-Voorburg*. <https://haagsgemeentearchief.nl/>

Case Study through history: Winkelcentrum Leyweg and Leidschendam

Topics: Study of Interventions over time through pictures and plans, study of history of stakeholders and what they wanted to achieve.

Primary Sources - Books

Seifi, S., & Crowther, D. (2018). *Stakeholders, governance and responsibility* (S. Seifi & D. Crowther (eds.); 1st ed.). Emerald Publishing Limited.

Theory research

Topics: relationships between stakeholders, governance and corporate social responsibility.

Marit Berger, H., & Ziemer, G. (2017). *New Stakeholders of urban change : a question of culture and attitude?* Jovis Verlag GmbH.

Theory and history research

Topics: the shift of stakeholders in recent times due to a shift of focus in architecture, How can they work together to build a functioning urban surrounding?

Secondary Sources - Books

Crimson. (1995). *Re-Arch: Nieuwe ontwerpen voor oude gebouwen*. 010 Publishers.

Theory research

Topics: Explanation and study of different Intervention Strategies and its effect, Intervention terms.

Krieger, D. (2011). *Die Revitalisierung von Shopping-Centern; Inhalt, Verfahren und Potential*. Universität Zürich.

Theory research

Topics: role of stakeholders in the revitalization of shopping malls.

9 APPENDIX

9.1. Influence of Covid on retail sales and online shopping

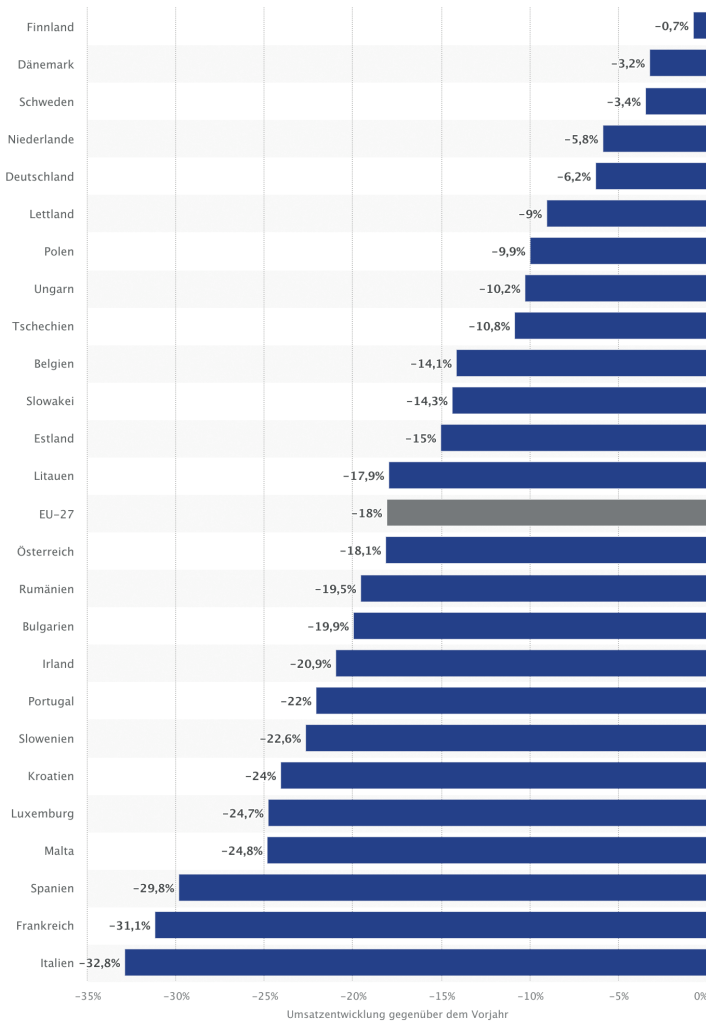


Figure 8: Covid pandemic - Development of retail sales in the European Union in April 2020 compared with April 2019 (Statista, 2020)

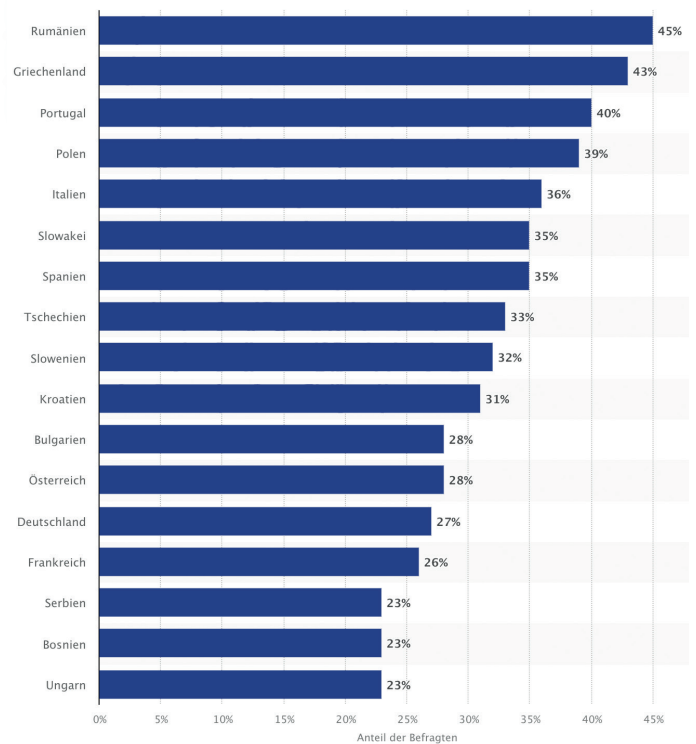
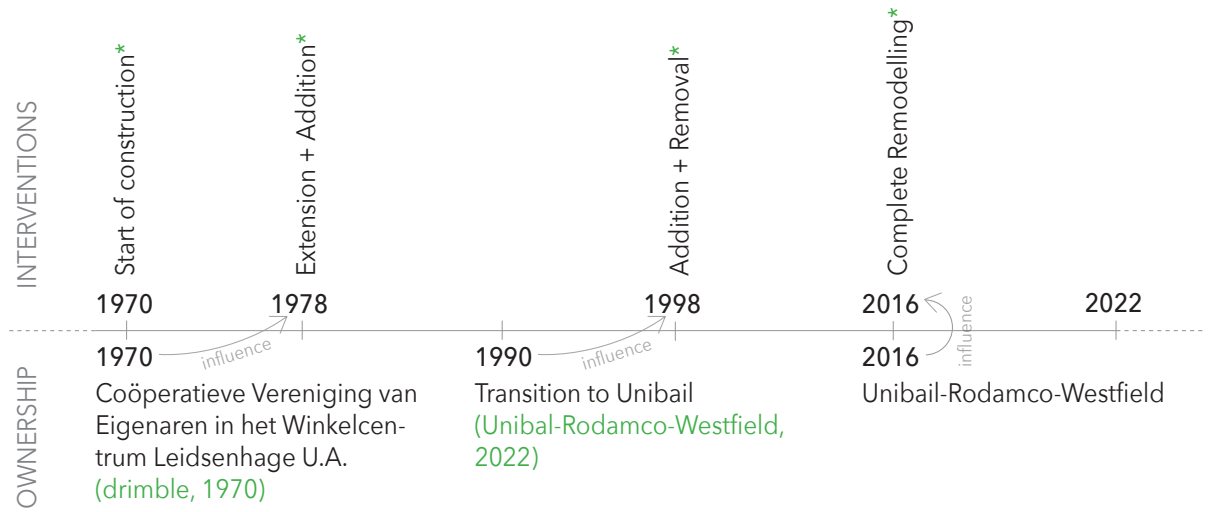


Figure 9: Proportion of consumers who purchase more online as a result of the Covid pandemic in European countries in 2021 (Statista, 2021)

9.2. Studio Research - Influence of changing stakeholders on interventions

-Case: The Westfield Mall of the Netherlands-



* (Haags Gemeentearchief - archief Leidschendam-Voorburg, 2022)

Figure 10: Influence of changing stakeholders on interventions
(own illustration)

9.3. Interview guidelines

The characteristic of a semi-structural interview is that the open structure and questions create a conversation rather than a questioning, which is guided by the answers of the interviewee. The questions listed below do not provide a strict structure but focus on topics that prevent the interview from deviating into other subject areas. The openness of the interview allows the interviewed expert to explain his answers comprehensively and to help shape the interview. At the same time, the interviewer can add further questions to deepen topics. (Bortz & Döring, 2006; Flick, 2009; Helfferich, 2019).

This guide will be adapted to the particular stakeholders to be interviewed, which may result in the exclusion of some questions in some cases.

Research Question

To what extent do the different stakeholders of vacant retail spaces in inner cities influence the selection of intervention strategies and how can new ideal-typical use concepts for these vacant spaces be concluded from it?

Introduction

- Welcoming the experts as well as thanking them for their time
- Introduction of myself
- Brief explanation about the reason for the interview as well as the topic of the studio
- short description of the interview procedure
- Explanation of the time frame of the interview
- Clarifying conversation about the interviewee's desired privacy protections
- Starting the interview which is recorded for documentation and data processing purposes:
Use of video-based technology so that no visual impressions are getting lost

Introductory question

You have been involved in several building revitalizations in recent years.

- What building category/use did these buildings to be revitalized fall into?
- In recent years, have you noticed a shift toward certain types of buildings that should be revitalized more frequently?
- What have those been?

Main questions

While preparing for this interview, I was able to find out that, among other things, you were also involved in the revitalization of former previously vacant retail spaces.

- What was the main goal of the whole project? (e.g., getting more people interested, new stores, new uses... - social, urban, economic goals).
- What was your area of responsibility in the revitalization of the building?
- With which internal parties did you collaborate more on this project?
- What was the collaboration like between the different parties involved in the process?
- With whom did the collaboration go best?
- What was your ambition for the building?
- With which parties involved in the revitalization did your ambitions align the most? Who shared the same goals and objectives?

- Could these ambitions be realized?
- If so, how? What interventions were needed to achieve your ambitions with this building?
- If not, what couldn't be realized and who or what do you think was to blame?

Concluding questions

I asked you at the beginning of the interview what the main goal of the whole project was.

- Were you able to achieve this goal to your satisfaction?
- Where would there still be room for improvement?
- Do you think the concept you followed with your revitalization could be a successful concept for future vacant former retail spaces?
- What stakeholder interests do you think best fit together in the context of such vacant space?
- And do you think these stakeholder groups are suitable to be considered as new use concepts for vacant spaces?
- Could these new use concepts be a solution for vacant former retail spaces in city centres through their common interests and consequently through their same interventions in the building?

Conclusion of the Conversation

- Summary of the most important comments from the interview
- Short explanation of how I will process the data
- Thanking for the time again and goodbye

Source: (following Diekmann, 2007)

9.4. How to visualize the data?

Flow Charts

What Ambitions do stakeholders have and what Intervention Strategies are they using to fulfil these ambitions?

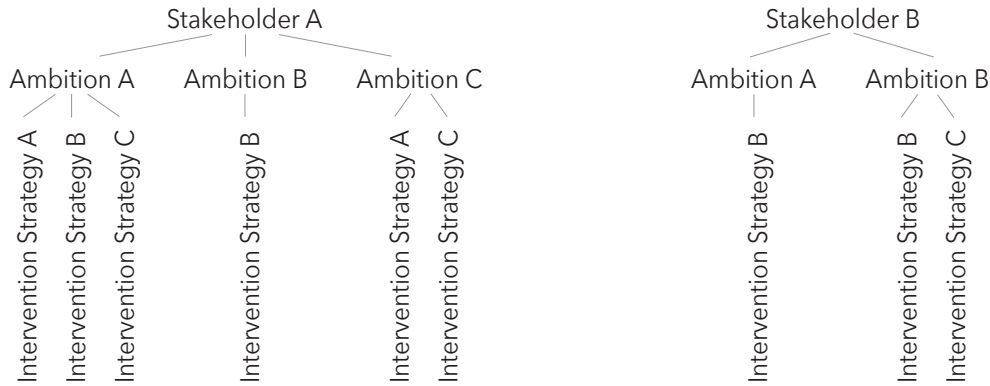


Figure 11: Stakeholder ambitions and resulting intervention Strategies (own illustration, 2022)

Bar Charts

What ambitions do the stakeholders have? Which stakeholders use which intervention strategies?

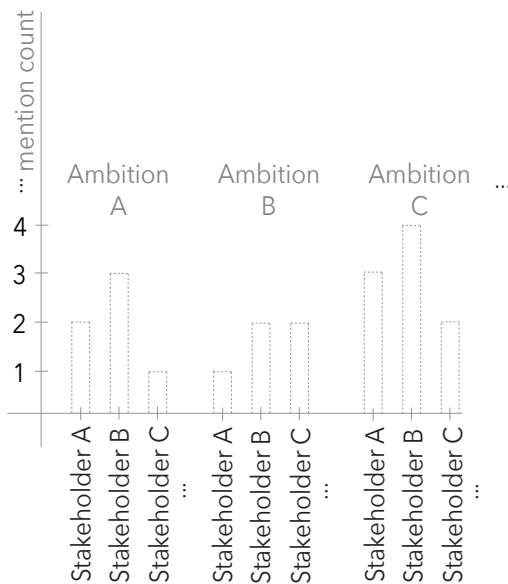


Figure 12: Stakeholder ambition (own illustration, 2022)

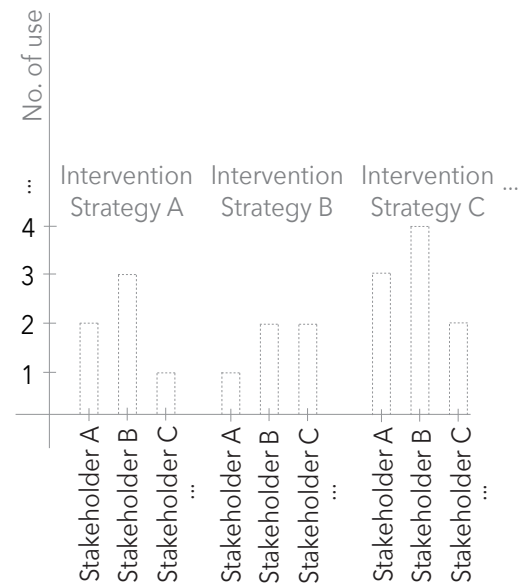


Figure 13: Intervention strategies used by stakeholders (own illustration, 2022)

Tables

How often are the interventions performed for a given ambition?

	Intervention Strategy A	Intervention Strategy B	Intervention Strategy C
Ambition A	Number	...	
Ambition B	...		
Ambition C			
...			

Figure 14: Influence of ambition on intervention strategy (own illustration, 2022)