

THE QUALITY OF MODEST VALUED TWENTIETH CENTURY BUILDINGS

The past year I have delved into field of built heritage in the context of my graduation project at the Vacant Heritage studio. The studio focusses on the role of vacant heritage for a more sustainable future. Within this studio, the Touch & Feel research line studies the materiality of buildings and the essential values these material attributes represent, in regard to the possibilities for adaptive reuse (Dos Santos Gonçalves, J., Meijers, L., Quist, W., Zijlstra, H., 2021). This year's subject was a selection of police stations which are to become vacant soon. To enable a new future, they are in need of a redesign.

The graduation assignment, consisting of a redesign and a related research, meant a first opportunity for me to study heritage values and redesign strategies. It also meant I had to position myself within in the large field of heritage. Taking position in a complex field like heritage or architecture in general is one of the things I found most difficult during my studies. The time given by a yearlong graduation project allowed me to at least give it a thorough try. Therefore I've written this paper not only as conclusion of my research but also as substantiation of my view on heritage assignments.

ABSTRACT

In the near future, many buildings, built in the second half of the twentieth century, reach the end of their functional lifespan. As most of them are not protected by a heritage listing, they are at risk of being replaced by new buildings, while sustainable ambitions require a sparing use of new building materials. By studying the possible heritage values of these buildings, a greater appreciation for them can emerge. This increased appreciation should lead to more redesigns in which heritage value preservation, contemporary demands and sustainable considerations are equally important.

Inventorying existing redesign strategies and analysing how these are applied on projects with ascending weights of heritage listing, led to insights in how these strategies can be applied on modest valued buildings. The unlisted status of modest valued buildings allows for larger interventions with more contrast to the original building, increasing their adaptability to new demands. Furthermore, by applying various redesign strategies for different attributes, architects can emphasize the attributes which convey most of the buildings value leading to more adaptability elsewhere. Last, the modest heritage value combined with the necessity for adaptability mean that the importance of recognizable contemporality and reversibility of interventions in modest valued buildings is low.

The research findings are applied in the redesign of the police station in Middelburg, which served as design experiment. Tracing in which specific attributes the heritage value of the building lies, enabled a redesign strategy which conserved these attributes while allowing large changes elsewhere. It resulted in a design which preserves the most essential heritage values, guaranteed a new future for the building, and prevented unnecessary new construction.

INTRODUCTION

In the upcoming years, most of the buildings built in the second half of the twentieth century reach the end of their functional lifespan. As more than three quarters of our building stock is younger than 75 years, this architectural legacy is extensive and present throughout the country (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2021). This reality leads to questions on the value and possible future of these twentieth century buildings.

Despite the approximately 62.000 national and 55.000 municipal monument listings in the Netherlands (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 2022), most of these twentieth century buildings are not listed as heritage. Even though they are not listed it is not said these buildings do not carry any cultural significance. They have all been built for a specific purpose or designed with a vision in mind which reflects the developments or architectural movements of the twentieth century, meaning they must convey a certain heritage value.

To distinguish this type of 'modest valued' buildings, three criteria are formulated. Their cultural significance must not be officially recognized, meaning that they are not listed. Second, they convey at least one of the primary heritage values as described by Silva & Roders (2012, p.6) or 'deelwaarden' as defined in 'Richtlijnen bouwhistorisch onderzoek' (Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, 2009). Lastly their cultural significance is not irreplaceable or indispensable, which would make a listing desirable (art. 3.7 lid 1 Erfgoedwet 2021).

As more and more of these modest valued buildings lose their function, demolition threatens their future. While demolition allows the construction of a new building - which can meet contemporary demands - the current challenges in mitigating climate change require sparing use of building materials.

The conflicting interests of heritage value preservation, sparing use of building materials and meeting contemporary demands result in the question 'What to do with the stock of modest valued twentieth century buildings?' These three interests are not only relevant for modest valued buildings. They are also present in debates on the future of listed heritage. Therefore, an overview of the history and current challenges of listed heritage management are used to answer this question.

The overview shows that the future of heritage management is strongly linked with the challenge of climate change mitigation. But the real sustainable potential lies with repurposing unlisted, modest valued buildings which are demolished if we can't find appreciation for them. Their modest value allows for adaptation to current demands, while preserving cultural significance.

Consequently, the second part of this paper deals with the matter of how to create an architectural design while balancing between preservation and renewal. An inventory of existing redesign strategies and an analysis of four transformation projects aims to provide insight in the question: How to redesign the vast late-twentieth century building stock in a way that does justice to its modest cultural value while still enabling practical and sustainable future use? The found strategies are tested on the redesign of an example of a modest valued twentieth century building - the police station at Achter de Houttuinen 10 in Middelburg.

2. HERITAGE AS DRIVER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT

2.1 *Changing views on heritage management*

During the nineteen fifties and sixties, heritage management was centered around the idea of conservation and protection. Spatial developments like land consolidation and urban expansion were forces against which heritage had to be protected. The legal listing which protected the heritage, simultaneously isolated them from their ever-changing surroundings (Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, 2013).

From the seventies onwards, the rise of the service economy entailed the transformation of industrial cities to office districts. It resulted in an increased interest in build heritage, also to accommodate tourism and recreation. In the decade before the turn of the century, the idea that the defensive notion of heritage management was no longer sustainable gained ground. An early governmental publication - *Nota Belvedere* - originated from the idea that heritage preservation should be more than conservation. Instead, cultural heritage should foster place identity and add meaning to spatial development (Rijksoverheid, 1999). This new vision on heritage as driver of development is also internationally advocated, among others by ICOMOS and UNESCO (2011, 2013).

Alongside this change in heritage management, the notion of what cultural heritage is, has vastly widened in scope. Not just the exceptional but more and more the remnants of everyday life have gained interest. Besides, younger buildings and traditions are increasingly considered heritage. Furthermore, the scale of heritage items enlarged as not only buildings, but also industrial complexes and entire urban planning structures were considered heritage (Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, 2013). The growing extent meant increasing costs for heritage management which enhanced the need of new functions for built heritage. At the same time the rise of the leisure culture meant that the experience of heritage could translate to economic value (Kuipers & De Jonge, 2017).

According to Janssen, Luiten, Renes and Rouwendal (Rijksdienst voor Cultureel Erfgoed, 2013)' heritage management has improved its social engagement through the approach of preservation through development. In their reflection on a decade of 'Belvedere' it is stressed that this social engagement is the future for heritage. Heritage must find affiliation with new issues and continue to take part in spatial development.

2.2 *The future of heritage*

Perhaps the most comprehensive societal issue of the current decade is mitigation of climate change. In the building industry, a large polluter, there is a lot of interest in the transition to a more sustainable way of working. The urge for sustainability also leaves its mark on heritage management.

The current policy centres around improving the energetic performance of listed heritage buildings. To improve energy efficiency, the National government

invests in study groups and education to find new energy solutions without disregarding the cultural significance of the buildings (Ministerie van Onderwijs, Cultuur en Wetenschap, 2018).

Nevertheless, the largest sustainable potential lies not in the field of listed buildings which were to be preserved anyway. It lies with the modest valued buildings which are at risk of being demolished. By repurposing these buildings, the inherent sustainability of reusing buildings and their embodied energy and materials is utilized. For these modest valued buildings, we need a shift from a defensive approach where sustainable measures are considered – in written and unwritten rules - something which should be implemented with prudence, to a way of thinking which treats heritage, sustainability and contemporary interests as equally important.

2.3 *Opportunities for modest valued heritage*

As stated, a sustainable potential lies with the buildings which do not seem culturally significant at first sight. In these cases, the choice for demolition is too often made. While many buildings, with a closer look, turn out to convey heritage values worth preserving. After all, the notion of heritage is widening, possibly resulting in an increased future appreciation of currently modest valued buildings.

To achieve less demolition and more redesigns, it is necessary to study our building stock closer. Because by studying, a greater appreciation of the existing can emerge, as unknown makes unloved. This does not just apply to experts in the building industry, but to the larger public as well. By increasing knowledge and awareness for the modest valued built heritage which surrounds us, the bond with these buildings can be strengthened and less demolition will take place. Hence, "the ultimate form of sustainability first and foremost lies in better observation and reflection" (Alkemade, F., 2000 p.23).

However, studying our built environment to enhance appreciation of the existing should not prohibit change. Meeting new demands also represents a value which should be balanced with the value of the existing. Especially the modest valued buildings allow for this synergy between existing and new. As their cultural significance is modest, a progressive approach can be undertaken without the loss of a lot of cultural value. Thus, they can combine heritage preservation with meeting new demands.

3. DETERMINING VALUE, FINDING APPRECIATION

The previous chapter stressed the benefits of reusing modest valued twentieth century buildings, provided that we find appreciation for them. In the next chapter, the redesign of the police station at Achter de Houttuinen 10 (Figure 1) is used as design experiment to test redesign strategies for modest valued buildings. Yet the first step in this process is to study the cultural significance of this building, determine its valuable attributes and thereby enhance appreciation for it.

3.1 Value assessment

The police station in Middelburg is part of a protected cityscape, but only valued for maintaining the original boundaries of the historic street pattern (Rijksdienst voor de monumentenzorg, 1984). Its actual cultural significance lies in its designer. The building was designed by Johannes Fake Berghoef, an influential twentieth century architect and professor at the Technische Hogeschool in Delft. Mainly due to his large oeuvre, his position as professor and his prominent role within the traditionalist's architecture movement. His clear ideas on the use of materials were often criticized during Berghoef's live (Mertens, 1982), but with the unravelling of the construct of 'Delftse school' architecture his ideas are revalued, leading Bernhard Colenbrander to call him: "The most interesting and undervalued architect of the twentieth century" (1993, p.71).

To classify Berghoef's work as straightforward traditional architecture proves too short-sighted after a closer look at his motive (Bosch-Meyer, 2016). His way of building from tradition is derived from a drive to represent society in architecture, as traditions hold the essence of (local) society. Thereby his approach differs from many of his contemporaries, for example Granpré Molière. Whereas Granpré Molière searched for a timeless appearance, Berghoef worked in dialogue with the Zeitgeist by using simplified, more contemporary, variants of traditional references (Ibelings, 1994). Later in his career, even industrialized or prefabricated building methods entered Berghoef's work (Spoomans, Zijlstra & Quist, 2018). Resulting



FIGURE 1. Berghoef, Police station, Middelburg, the Netherlands, 1967

in architecture which balances between continuity and innovation. Besides society, buildings should represent their function. Berghoef achieved this by using building shapes like halls and towers historically associated with the function of the building (Berghoef, 1947). Second, his work aims to express the identity of the community by including local customs or techniques and art displaying important local historic events. In the third place, Berghoef's oeuvre is characterized by straightforwardness and simplicity, both in composition and the use of unfinished materials. This uncomplicated approach aims to create beauty, without frills (Berghoef, 1934). It is most clearly visible in simple repetitive façade partitioning present in all his public buildings (Gentenaar, 2022). The fourth character is the application of craftsmanship in the building process. This is derived from an appreciation for the local traits which are often conveyed through craftsmanship (Berghoef, 1947). It is not only present in masonry patterns, but even in custom designed railings and furniture for most of Berghoef's public buildings. Last, especially Berghoef's later works, often combine a more traditional appearance with innovative building systems or load bearing structures. It results in buildings with a masonry façade in brown and orange shades with precast concrete floors or roofs (Gentenaar, 2022).



FIGURE 2. The ANWB Office in The Hague by Berghoef combining a traditional appearance with a concrete shell structure

3.2 Locating the valuable attributes

As visualized in figure 3, several attributes of the police station in Middelburg, embody Berghoefs view on architecture. Separate, the masonry façade, with monumental traits, represents Berghoefs tradition-based design and therefore has a historic-conceptual value as defined by Silva & Roders (2012, p.6). The, at the time, innovative DATO floor system, represents a scientific value. However, the combination between a traditional façade and innovative floor is what characterizes Berghoef most. Meaning that this combination represents most historic-conceptual value. At the same time, many more buildings of Berghoef – like the office for the ANWB in The Hague – which have the same characteristic combination are present throughout the country. It means the cultural significance of the police station in Middelburg is not irreplaceable or indispensable.

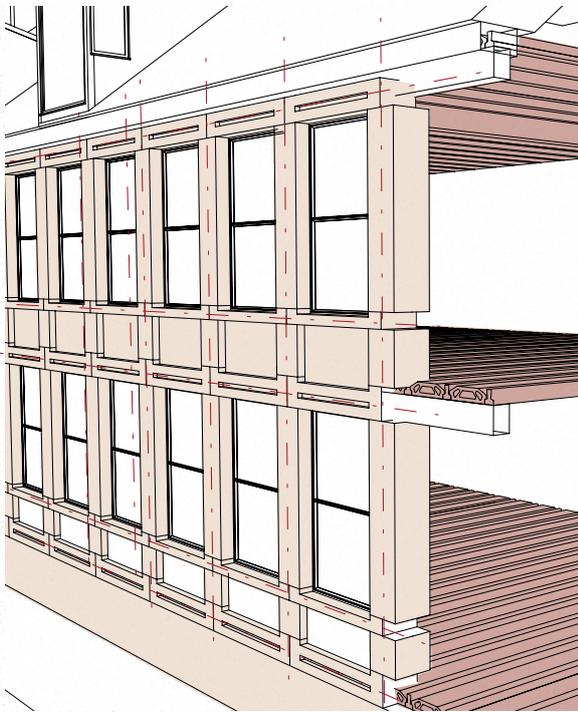


FIGURE 3. Locating the valuable attributes of the police station in Middelburg – A traditional façade composition in combination with an innovative DATO floor system

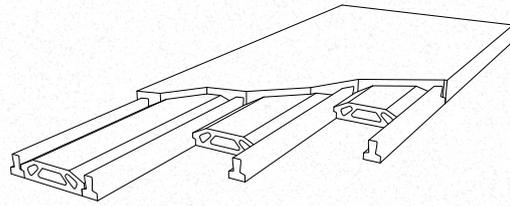


FIGURE 4. Locating the valuable attributes of the police station in Middelburg – The DATO floor system

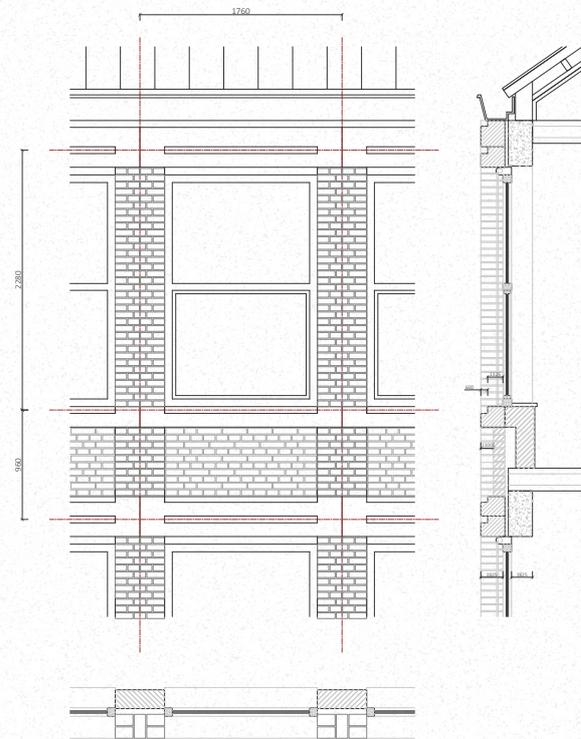


FIGURE 5. Locating the valuable attributes of the police station in Middelburg – A traditional façade composition

4. HOW TO REDESIGN MODEST VALUED BUILDINGS

Even though the police station is not listed as heritage, the value assessment shows it conveys several primary heritage values. These values are a reason to not demolish the building but to repurpose it. To allow for a new future, changes to the building are inevitable. To understand how changes can be made, without compromising the heritage value, an inventory of existing redesign strategies is made. These strategies are graft on listed heritage buildings. An analysis of four case study buildings with different weights of assigned listings (National monument, Municipal monument and unlisted) aims to provide insight in how these strategies can be applied on modest valued buildings.

4.1 Existing redesign strategies

Vandenbroucke & Janssen (2020) state that there are four ways an intervention can relate to the existing building. By creating contrast, competition with the original is avoided and thereby the original building is respected. When seeking for more rapprochement, new and old can make contact by creating similarity in a limited number of aspects. The third option, a connection, implies a relation between new and old like brother and sister. The two look alike, but clearly have an own identity. The connection can be enhanced by resembling material choices, or façade rhythm and detailing. Lastly a new addition can be a copy of the existing building.

Plevoets and Van Cleempoel made a similar classification of redesign strategies. The first strategy, *translatio*, comes down to restoration of the original in tangible or intangible aspects. The second step, *imitatio*, is a more selective restoration of historic aspects to enable a new function of the building. The third step, *aemulatio*, attempts to exceed the original quality. Interventions aim to strengthen existing qualities or spatial experiences.

Lastly, De Jonge (Lecture, 14 September 2021) distinguishes four categories of adapting heritage, based on how severe the alterations of the heritage object are. Ordered from conservative to progressive these are: conservation, adaptation, intervention and transformation. In this spectrum conservation means the preservation of the existing building and perhaps restoring important aspects. Adaptation and intervention are comparable but differ in the limits of acceptable change to the original building fabric and

original design intentions. In case of transformation, the interventions focus on facilitating new use while preserving enough of the original to convey the buildings most essential values.

Plevoets & Van Cleempoel (2019) and Vandenbroucke & Janssen (2020) rate their strategies on a scale of resemblance to the original building. When this factor is graphed against the extent of the redesign, as mostly discussed by De Jonge (2021) a coordinate system of possible redesign options is constructed (figure 6). As both the extent and resemblance of a redesign can be positioned in this coordinate system, it provides a simplified classification.

The redesigns of the four selected Berghoef buildings are analysed and positioned within the coordinate system. As they have varying listings, comparing their positions can provide insight in the difference between redesign strategies for listed and unlisted buildings.

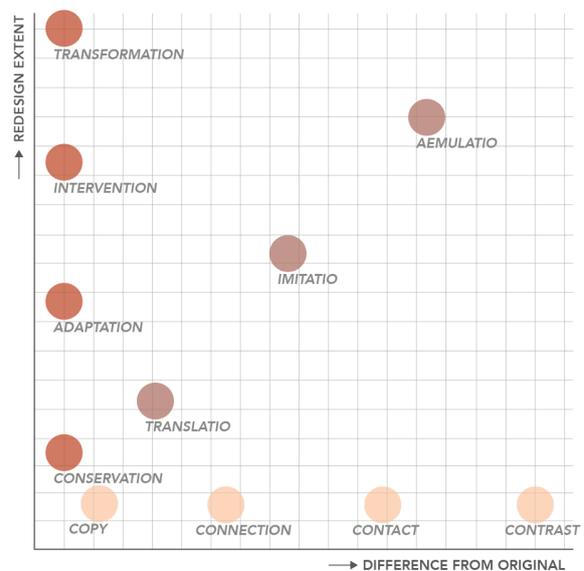


FIGURE 6. The various redesign strategies organized on a grid

4.2 Increased adaptability

From the strategy grid comes forward that a heritage listing of the buildings influences the extend of the redesign (figure 7). Both of the national monuments (The Haque and Hengelo) have endured little changes in their redesigns. New program is housed in new buildings which are positioned separate from the monument thereby allowing some contrast with the original building. The transformation of the City Hall in Aalsmeer, a municipal monument, had a slightly larger extent. Aside from repairs it also entailed a new entrance and new climate installations. The unlisted office building in Alkmaar underwent a more invasive transformation. A new storey was built on top and balconies were added to accommodate a new housing function.

It seems the greater design freedom which exists when working with unlisted buildings allows for larger interventions with more contrast to the original building. This enables function changes which are more difficult in listed heritage. It confirms the potential of modest valued buildings to meet contemporary demands.

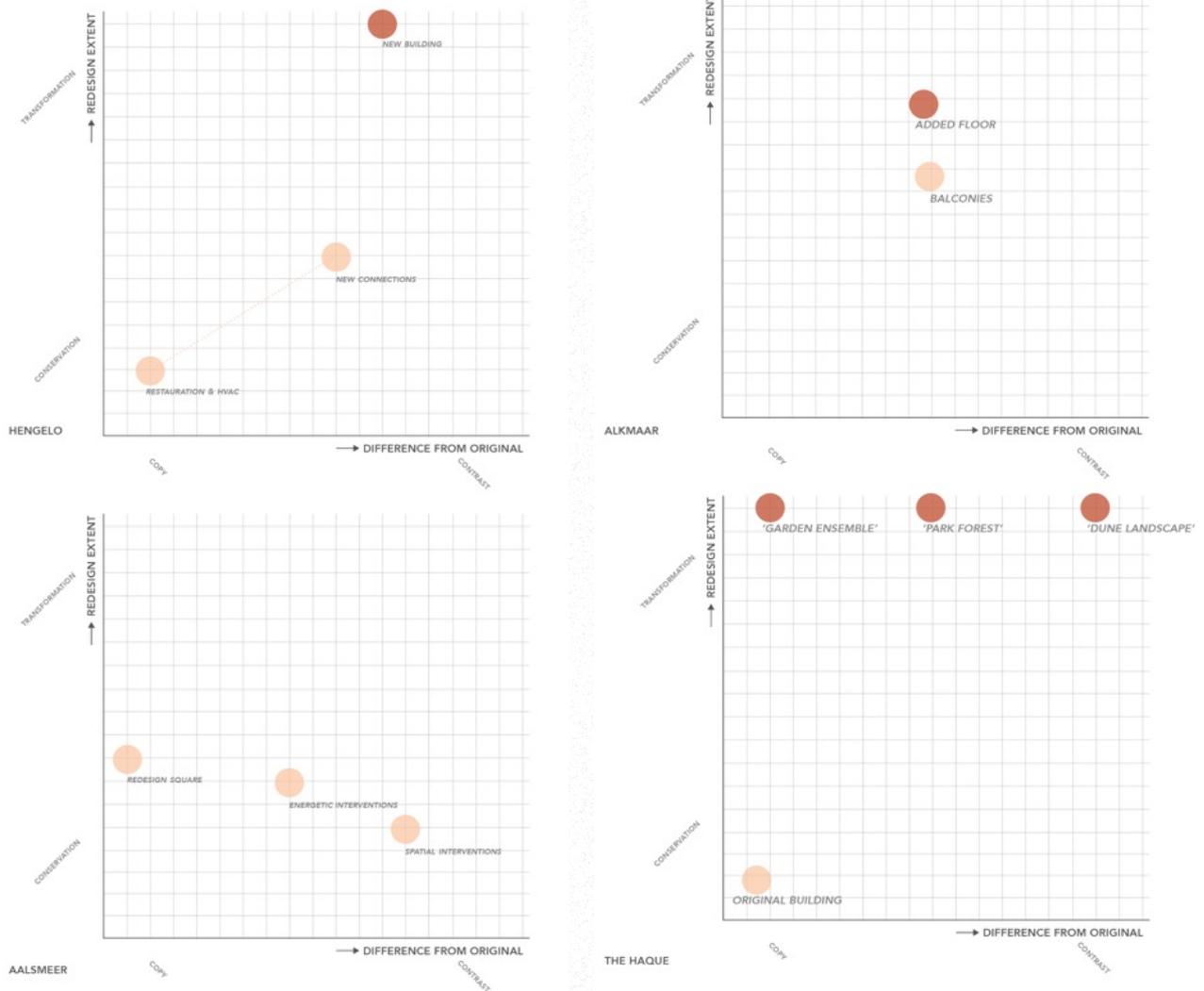


FIGURE 7. All case study transformations positioned on the strategy grid – The national monuments Hengelo (top left) and The Haque (bottom right) show little changes to the existing building.

4.3 A closer look – varying tactics

The great advantage of the strategy grid is the simplified overview it provides, simultaneously this simplification means that complexity and nuances in different strategies were unexposed. A closer look at the case studies revealed that the choice for resemblance or contrast is not just made for the new design as a whole, but also on different aspects of one design. It is most clearly visible in the additions which were made in two of the studied transformation projects.

In Alkmaar an extra storey and in Hengelo a new building next to the monuments is added. For these large additions three different strategies have been deployed. The new parts seek connection with the existing monument by resembling its material, resembling its composition or by reinterpreting its design intentions.

In case of the office in Alkmaar, the curtain wall of the added storey complies to the existing partitioning of the brick façade. The balconies on the other hand are also added later but designed in the same material as the original building. As they do not comply with the existing façade partitioning they draw focus, but the proof of their later addition is lost. The overall position on the strategy grid can therefore be specified in four positions for the material and composition for both interventions (figure 8).

The new building next to the city hall of Hengelo reinterprets the references to local characteristics of the original building by having an image of a local salt tower perforated in the façade cladding. By doing so, the redesign resembles the original design intentions while taking a more contrasting approach in the composition and material choice.

The closer look at the case studies proves that redesign strategies can differ per intervention and use multiple tactics to relate the new parts to the existing buildings. By applying various tactics for different attributes, architects can emphasize the attributes which convey most of the buildings value.

4.4 Recognizable contemporality and reversibility

A reoccurring strategy found in the case studies is the aim for recognizable contemporality of the spatial interventions. New entrances, hallways and other elements which influence the spatial experience of the monument are often designed in different materials than the original building. The materials contrast with the original because they are clearly newer. Extreme contrasts were not the aim. The interventions usually distance themselves from the original building by creating actual physical distance between new and old and connecting only at a limited number of points. This also ensures that later additions can be easily undone (figure 9).

In case of smaller interventions, usually with a more technical nature, the aim for recognizable contemporality seems to drop. It resulted in a separation between the spatial and technical interventions on the strategy grid.

In the studied examples, technical installations - like ventilation ducts – are often fit in the existing or partially hidden. The proof of their later addition is hereby often lost. The concept of reversibility is often compromised in these situations.



FIGURE 9. Recognizable contemporality in the redesign of the city hall of Aalsmeer – The new entrance distances itself from the original building.

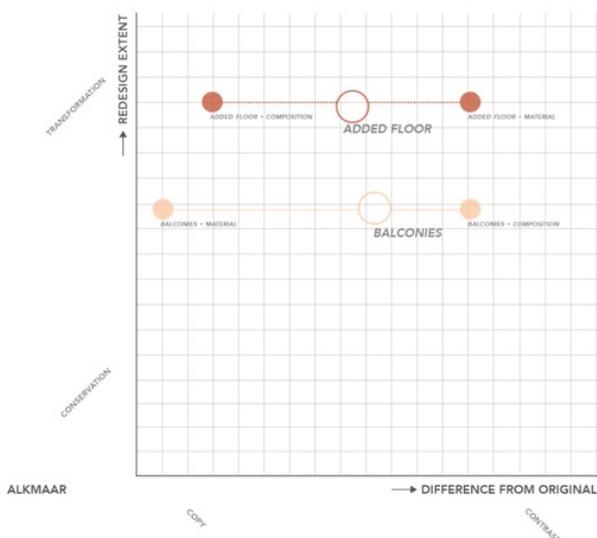


FIGURE 8. The overall redesign strategy of the office in Alkmaar, specified in separate tactics for each intervention.

4.5 How to apply on modest valued buildings

The inventory of redesign strategies and case studies regard buildings with an ascending heritage listing. Different approaches for different weights of heritage listing led to the following recommendations for redesigning modest valued buildings.

The fact that modest valued buildings are unlisted, and their cultural significance is not irreplaceable or indispensable allows for larger interventions. This increases the adaptability to contemporary demands.

The overall redesign strategy should allow for varying relations between old and new per intervention. This enables a strategy which is conservative for the attributes which convey most of the buildings value while allowing more contrast or change for less valued parts. The case studies showed three tactics to achieve this. Out of these three, the reinterpretation of the original design intentions can enrich the transformation but requires a lot of knowledge of the building and the redesign. As modest valued buildings are usually lesser known, a relation solely based on the reinterpretation of design intentions is difficult to grasp for most viewers.

Recognizable contemporality or reversibility are appreciated concepts when dealing with listed heritage. Even so, consistently implementing these concepts is rarely done, especially regarding technical interventions. In modest valued buildings, the necessity of these concepts is questionable. Current interests might outweigh the heritage value. Besides, an effective intervention can enrich the history of the building by leaving some indelible traces. It is a dilemma strongly linked with the question what we see as the history of a building.

4.6 Application in design

From the value assessment came forward that façade and floor system are the attributes which convey the historic-conceptual value of the police station the most. The study into redesign strategies showed how various relations between old and new can be present in one redesign strategy. Consequently, the redesign of the police station in Middelburg takes as starting point the conservation of the façade and floor system while in other aspects, like the plan layout (figure 10), more contrast with the original design allows new use.

Resembling the façade composition of the police station in new additions (figure 11) creates a strong visual connection which ensures everyone can understand the relation between old and new. Due to this relation, the new additions can derive some of their identity from the police station which integrates them in their surroundings.

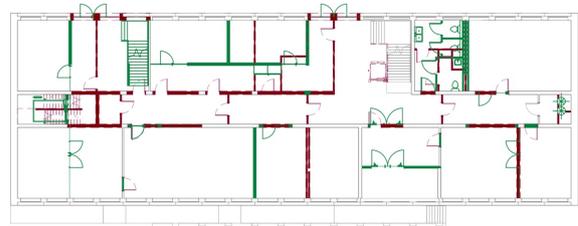


FIGURE 10. Changes to the ground floor of the police station in Middelburg



FIGURE 11. Resembling the façade composition of the police station in new additions

5. CONCLUSION

In the near future, most of the buildings built in the second half of the twentieth century reach the end of their lifespan. It leads to questions on their value and possible conservation.

Current and past heritage management shows that the notion of heritage is widening. Not just the exceptional but more and more the remnants of everyday life have gained interest. Furthermore, the sector is increasingly socially engaged and by preserving and improving heritage buildings it can contribute to the mitigation of climate change. However, the largest sustainable potential lies not with listed and therefore protected heritage. It lies with unlisted buildings, at the end of their functional lifespan, which could be appreciated for their cultural significance. By studying these modest valued buildings, an enhanced appreciation can emerge. This improved appreciation of our current building stock can lead to less demolition and more adaptive reuse.

Reusing more buildings should not lead to lesser fulfilment of contemporary requirements. Therefore, this paper aims to learn from existing redesign strategies and reason how they can be applied on modest valued buildings in a way that does justice to their modest cultural value while still enabling practical and sustainable future use. By combining a literature study, case studies and the redesign of the police station in Middelburg as design experiment, the following insights for redesigning modest valued buildings are acquired.

To start, the great quality of modest valued buildings is that they are unlisted, which allows for more severe interventions to meet new demands. Besides, principles like reversibility and the recognizable contemporality of interventions - which are generally valued in listed heritage transformations - are of lesser importance. Indelible traces of later interventions might even enrich the history of these buildings.

Second, variable relations between old and new allow for conservation of the most valuable attributes while enabling contrast/change elsewhere. As becomes clear from the redesign of the police station in Middelburg, this approach allows the preservation of heritage values while drastic interventions and additions still enable a new use of the building. The possibility of new use ensures a future for the police station, prevents demolition, and thereby contributes to mitigating climate change.

By studying the link between façade attributes and related heritage values, attempts to define a new type of modest valued heritage buildings and studying how their heritage value can remain perceivable despite necessary interventions, this research contributes to the Touch & Feel research line of the Vacant Heritage studio.

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FIGURES

1. Zeeuws Archief, Gemeente Middelburg, Afdeling Communicatie, nr. 50
2. Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, 20357856
3. Image by author
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