

Reflection P4

Heritage & Architecture: The Modern Mall

Eva Maarleveld 4584686

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Mentors: Lidy Meijers, Frank Koopman, Marie-Therese van Thoor, Tong Wang

Introduction

This research investigates how to adapt and redesign the postwar shopping mall and its typology to the contemporary needs of the users. If so, a value-based redesign proposal can be created, which can be helpful for multiple cases in the future for them to implement the contemporary needs of their users in their existing typology. From a broader perspective, the aim is to learn and gain knowledge and tools for the broader issues: vacancy and obsolescence of shopping malls and revitalising historical architectural typologies.

The design assignment is to create an attractable, highly livable area in an existing postwar shopping mall typology for the users of the Amsterdamse Poort. Since its existence, the area around the Amsterdamse Poort has been known to be unsafe and scores low on the Dutch national average quality of the living environment. Based on existing historical and socio-economic qualities together with the contemporary needs of the users, multiple scenarios will be tested to examine which interventions contribute best to maintaining historical values and improving socio-economic values.

Relations between graduation project, master track & master programme

















The topic of the graduation project, enhancing the socio-economic values of a postwar shopping mall and meeting contemporary needs, is related to the studio topic by creating a design for the mall's future by this type of environment in an existing shopping mall typology. As the Syllabus states: 'How could the shopping mall of the mid-20th century meet contemporary demands? While dealing with the changing retail landscape nowadays.' By using and strengthening current qualities of the complex and area, but also upgrading weaknesses, and keeping socio-economic values and qualities of livability as a basis for the design, a plan will emerge to answer the studio's design question. Secondly, from the design studio and the master program, there is a sustainability question that will look beyond just the building itself. Sustainability will be an integral part of the entire design process and, in addition to the values already mentioned, form the basis for the new design.


















Influence of the research on the design and vice versa

The research is structured into three subdomains: the historical and socio-economic values will express why it is crucial to preserve the mall. Users' needs can be translated into attributes and express what it is about the shopping mall that makes it valuable. Last are the redesign strategies that help create possible manners on how to tackle the interventions in the shopping mall. In conclusion, a matrix has been established from the research in which the values (why's) of the Amsterdamse Poort are set against the attributes (what's). The attributes can be divided into tangible, often linked to historical values, and intangible, often the more socio-economic values. This matrix (figure 1) formed the base for the design/recommendations and was used as a guideline throughout the design process.

However, conversely, the design process has also influenced the research. Based on the results from the literature, the third sub-question, the redesign strategies that help create possible manners on how to tackle the interventions, seemed more complex to apply in the design. The literature review regarding the redesign strategies pointed out many different approaches. However, which is suited for this project is hard to determine based on the literature. This will have to be apparent from the design for research. In addition to the research alone, several other factors, such as the collected values, will also play a role here.

	ASSET				AREA			LANDSCAPE	
	BUILT ELEMENT	BUILDING	URBAN ELEMENT	NATURAL ELEMENT	ENSEMBLE	CONTEXT	AREA	LANDSCAPE	LAYERING
ECOLOGICAL									
SOCIAL									
ECONOMIC									
AESTHETICAL									
HISTORICAL									
POLITICAL									

	RELATION			SOCIETAL				PROCESS	
	CHARACTER	RELATION	CONCEPT	USE	KNOWLEDGE	ASSOCIATION	COMMUNITY	PLANNED	UNPLANNED
ECOLOGICAL									
SOCIAL									
ECONOMIC									
AESTHETICAL									
HISTORICAL									
POLITICAL									

 LOW VALUE
 AVERAGE VALUE
 HIGH VALUE

Figure 1: Values & attributes matrix (Pereira Roders, 2007, Veldpaus, 2015)

Approach, used methods & used methodology

Various sources and methods were used for the research, resulting in both quantitative and qualitative data. Literature review, combined with visual material, such as pictures, from the archive, will reveal historical values. For socio-economic values, data is reviewed based on digitised news articles. The contemporary needs of the users will be explored by fieldwork, such as observing, photographing, and interviewing users on-site and through social media research.

This study paid much attention to the users' notions, needs and wishes. This valuable method provides a strong starting point for the design. After all, they are the users and will benefit from the new complex, so their opinion counts the most. However, the architect (me) looked at it with a realistic and sharp look. The historical values, such as the history of the area where the complex is located (the Bijlmer), should be included, and a balance was sought between the two during the design. As mentioned earlier, these values in combination with environmental values, formed the common thread throughout the entire process. From urban scale to the 1:5 scale details, the design choices are based on these values and although it was sometimes difficult to find a balance between the different values, we tried to do this as well as possible.

Using this values-based methodology for designing encourages a deeper exploration of the purpose and significance of the complex. By incorporating values into the design process, architects can address broader social, environmental, or cultural concerns and contribute to positive change. This approach promotes design outcomes that resonate with the users and contribute to a sense of place and identity.

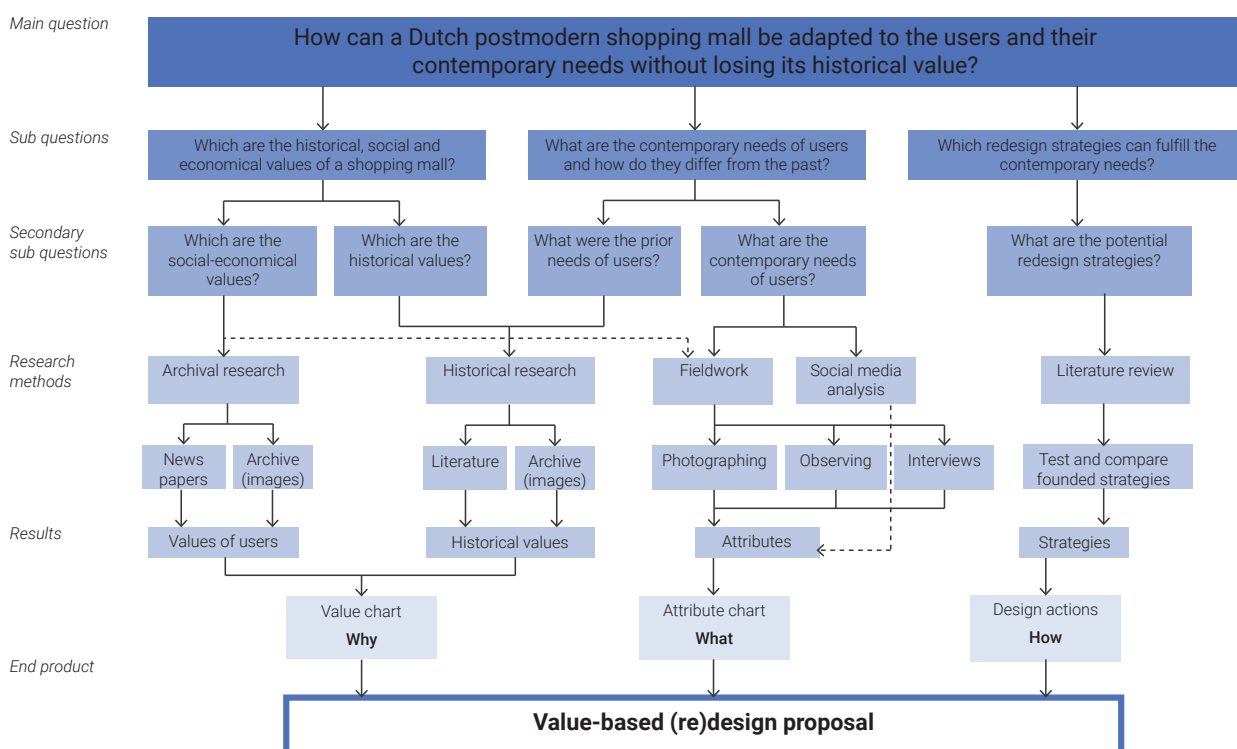
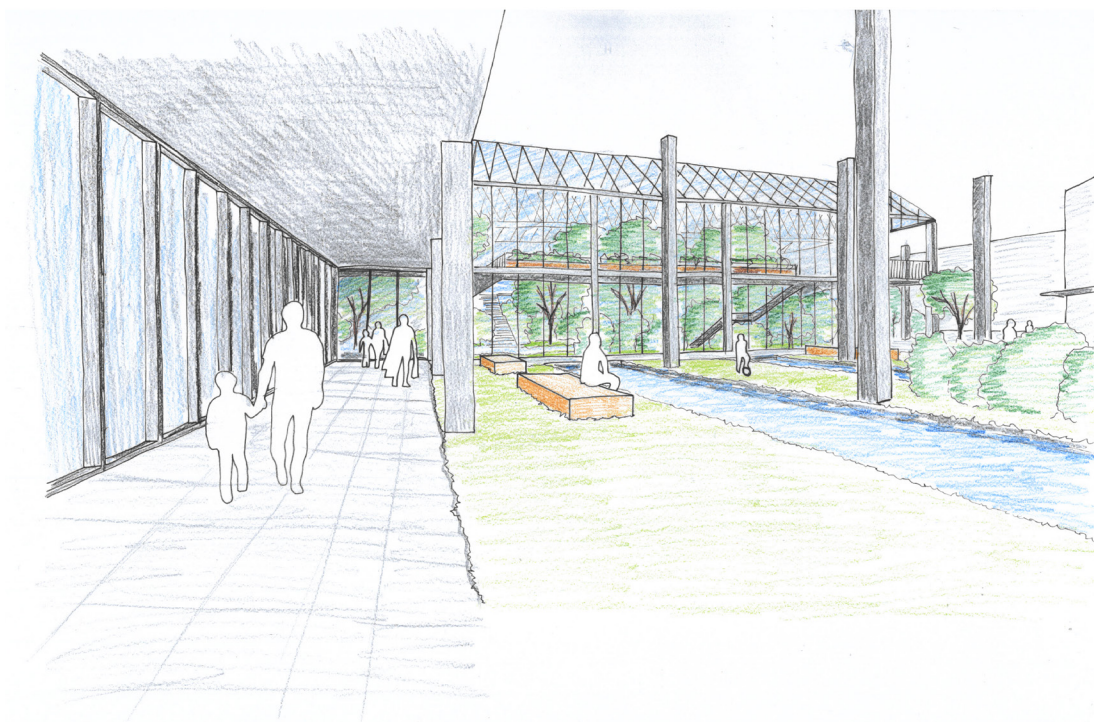


Figure 2: Flowchart of research methodology (E. Maarleveld, 2022)

Relevance of the graduation project

Today there is much discussion concerning the vacancy of buildings, and transforming and making them more sustainable is an important topic. Much research has already been done on the importance of heritage and the corresponding cultural values. Although this individual research is relevant to include in a redesign for the shopping mall, a link needs to be included. New needs must be matched to restore the cultural and social significance of the Amsterdamse Poort, and the mall will have to adapt and be redesigned to increase its socio-economic values again and make it futureproof.

For the social relevance of this research, valuable conclusions about the current state of affairs will be drawn, it will be tested whether a particular method works, and this will lead to recommendations for solving the problem. Additionally, this research will contribute to raising awareness within our society and bringing back the cultural significance of the Dutch postwar shopping mall. Creating a circular community pavilion in the heart of the Amsterdamse Poort will raise awareness among the residents to solve social and economic issues in the neighbourhood. Residents from diverse backgrounds can come together, interact, and build social connections. By facilitating dialogue and collaboration, the community pavilion can contribute to a stronger sense of community and belonging among the residents of the Bijlmer. This also has a significant positive impact on young people in the Bijlmer. It can provide a safe and supportive environment for youth to engage in communal activities, develop skills, and explore their talents and interests that contribute to their personal development, resilience, and social integration.



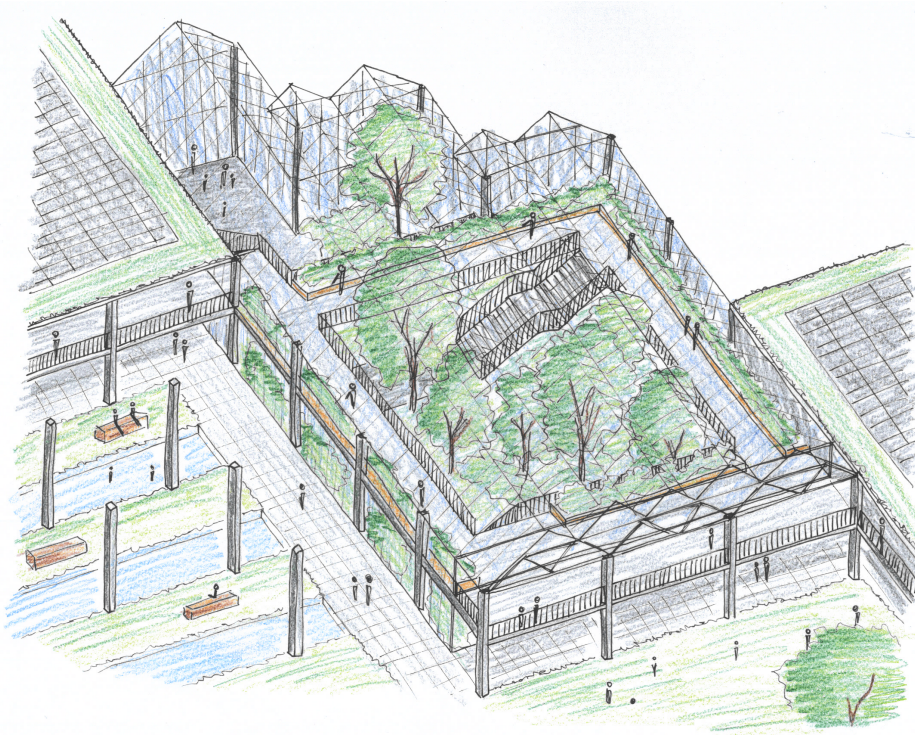
Drawing 1: Impression of pavilion and greenhouse in public space (E. Maarleveld, 2023)

In addition, the sustainability concept of the design, executed in a community greenhouse, can contribute to the residents' knowledge of ecology and sustainability and raise awareness of the current state of affairs.

Creating a social community pavilion can contribute to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) outlined by the United Nations. The pavilion can offer several programs concerning physical and mental well-being, educational, skill development and social inclusion. By creating a safe and inclusive space that promotes equal opportunities it will support the residents to develop themselves which enhance employability, job creation, and sustainable livelihoods.

Next to the social sustainability goals, attention is paid to ecological sustainability goals. By reducing the paved part of the area and replacing it with greening, the Urban Heat Island effect will decrease. In addition, it offers residents a greener, more livable environment. As much material as possible will be reused and climate-technical research will be carried out whether it is possible to make the pavilion as self-sufficient as possible, independent of external sources.

The main goal of the design is to make it adaptable, both in structure and functions. It is precisely this that makes the design specific and future-proof. The design will easily adapt to the constantly changing needs of users. However, historical values will never be omitted.



Drawing 2: Impression of pavilion and greenhouse in public space (E. Maarleveld, 2023)

The transferability of the project results

The Amsterdamse Poort shopping centre consists of multiple clusters, typified by retail on the ground floor and residential floors above. However, there is a cluster that deviates from this, cluster 8, located in the centre of the complex. It also differs from the other clusters in architectural style and is characterised as an autonomous object in space. It is precisely for this reason that it was decided to zoom in on this cluster and to be able to transform it into a circular community pavilion. In the original design of the Bijlmer, according to the CIAM principle, each residential building flat had several pavilions, the so-called collective spaces, intended for the residents to converge. The pavilions presented light, air and space and were accessible to everyone (image 1).

This design project gives a possible approach to adding new programs to the existing shopping mall, making it the “community pavilion” for the neighbourhood. It can be an inspiration and example for other postwar shopping malls, which are also under the pressure of shop vacancy issues today. Additionally, this proposal brings the biodiversity concept into the transformation process.

The generic structure of the existing building offered great potential for later interventions. After the intervention, the building preserves the original feature of the concrete frame structure, built in the 1980s, while adding a new facade. The new structure follows the original grid and rhythm of the existing structural framework, which provides flexibility for future change. Since cluster 8 is located in the centre of the complex, the transformation focused on the building and the connecting public space played a significant role in the design process. There is an interplay between inside, outside and transition spaces.

These interventions contribute to the larger goal of transforming the Amsterdamse Poort: create an attractable, highly livable area in an existing postwar shopping mall typology. Although initially, the concept was to create space by completely removing cluster 8, it was subsequently looked at again with a sharp eye to see the potential of reusing the current structure. During the design process, a balance was sought between ‘light, air and space’ according to the ideology of the CIAM on the one hand and reusing the current cluster 8 as much as possible on the other.

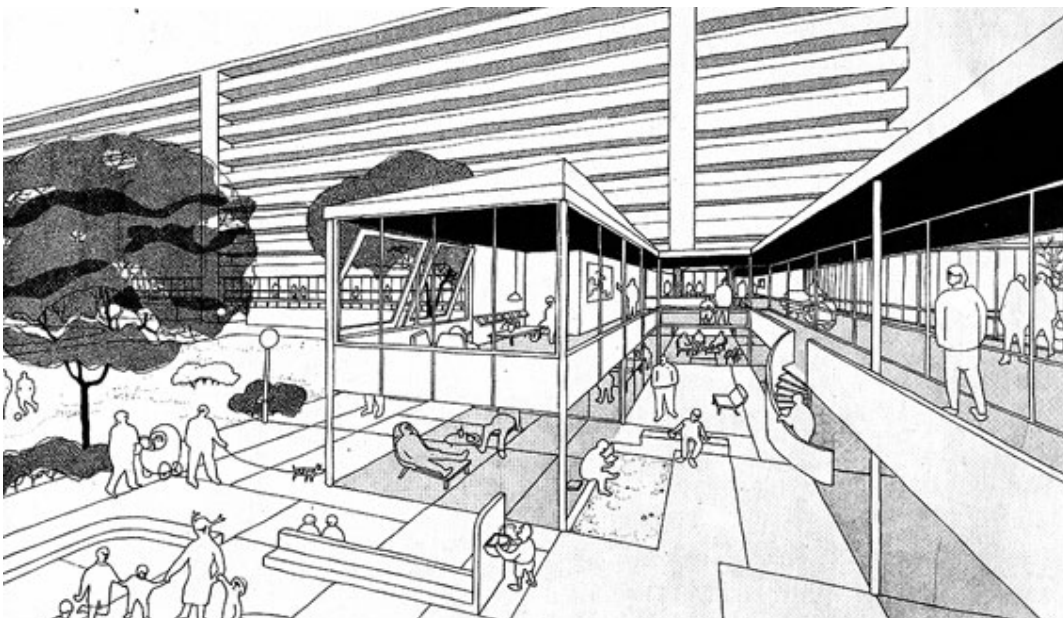


Image 1: Dreust city development Amsterdam (Archive of Amsterdam, 1968)

Ethical issues

When creating a social community pavilion in the centre of the Bijlmer, several ethical issues may arise. The Bijlmer has a diverse population with various socio-economic backgrounds. Ensuring equitable access to the community centre's resources and services is crucial. Ethical concerns may arise if certain groups or individuals are excluded or face barriers to participation due to factors such as income, race or social status. Efforts should be made to promote inclusivity and provide equal opportunities for all residents.

Secondly, the Bijlmer has experienced urban regeneration efforts in recent years. While a community centre can bring positive changes, there is a risk of gentrification and displacement of existing residents. Dilemmas may emerge if the centre's establishment contributes to rising property prices, pushing out low-income residents or altering the area's social fabric. Mitigation measures, such as affordable housing provisions and community-based development strategies, can help address these concerns.

Thirdly, creating the pavilion may involve construction and operational activities that impact the local environment. Considerations may arise regarding the ecological footprint of the pavilion and its potential effects on the surrounding natural habitat. Minimising environmental harm and implementing sustainable practices, such as energy-efficient infrastructure and waste management, can help mitigate these concerns.

These ethical issues highlight the importance of considering the social, cultural, economic, and environmental implications of creating a community pavilion in the Bijlmer area. Engaging in open dialogue with the local community and stakeholders, promoting inclusivity, and striving for fairness and sustainability can help navigate these challenges responsibly.