

Retail-reuse of historic buildings: developing guidelines for designer and conservators.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Retail-reuse as a contemporary phenomenon

In different historic cities in Europe, not a few historic buildings are left unoccupied because they lost their initial function. To avoid a degradation of the building itself and the cityscape it belongs to, a new use for the building is desirable in order to supply finances for its maintenance and restoration. From the retail sector, there exists a strong demand for available buildings on A-locations¹ in the city which cover a large area. The commercial centre of the city is in many cases the historic city centre, so the eligible buildings are often monuments such as post offices, religious buildings or industrial buildings. Commercial reuse of those buildings seems to be a beneficial solution for both parties. For instance, it is easier to find investors for retail projects than for social or cultural projects. Moreover, the building will have a public function, allowing it to become part of contemporary urban life.

However tempting this immediate solution may seem, it is not always evident to introduce a retail interior in a monumental building. Many stakeholders are involved with different interests. Investors are mainly interested in the revenues of the project and not in the conservation of the historic building. Conservators fear an over-use of the monument without any respect for its value. But even if the owner chooses a qualitative conservation and restoration, the quality of the project is not automatically guaranteed. In many cases, the building will be rented out to a user who does not always takes the specific characteristics of the monument into account. In the case of a tenant, monument boards almost have no control over the use of the building after its restoration. After all, to the

¹ The ABC-policy is based on the Dutch planning system which defines a connection between the type of the economic activity, the associated zone and the accessibility of that zone.

A-location: Main retail area in the city center with a high number of passengers. Excellent accessibility by public transport, such as in the direct surrounding of large railway stations and at the junction of public transport routes.

B-location: Area directly connected to the A-locations. Accessible by car and public transport

C-location: Area with less retail activities and low number of passengers. Accessible by roads and high way /definition based on 1/.

public at large the evaluation of the building does not depend on the architectural style of the monument but on the way the building is used today. Therefore reuse of buildings is not only an architectural, but also an urban and social challenge /2, p.115/.

1.2 Goal and method of this research

The goal of this research is to make a first move into the theoretical analyses of retail-reuse as a contemporary phenomenon in historic city centres in Europe. The research question is twofold: Which type of buildings can be suitable for retail-reuse? And how can retail design respect the historic value of the monument? Based on literature review, a classification scheme indicating the different building types suitable for retail-reuse, is developed. In a next step, three case studies are analyzed to test and extend the insights obtained through literature review. To conclude, guidelines for retail-reuse projects are formulated. On the one hand, these guidelines can help retail designers in dealing with the complexity of designing a store within a monumental building, whereas on the other hand these guidelines could be applied by monument boards to evaluate retail-reuse projects. Currently, conservators act rather restrained towards retail activities in monumental buildings. But by providing a framework for evaluation, a more open attitude towards retail as a new use for historic buildings could be possible.

This research was restricted to buildings that are legally protected as a monument. Because the system of protection differs among countries, the level of protection is not taken into account. A second delineation to the research was made according to the type of retail considered. Although in literature retail is often defined as including selling of goods as well as provision of services /overview of definitions: 3, p.10/, here only retail activities where the selling of goods is the main activity, are taken into account.

2. Review of literature

Specific about retail-reuse, the available literature is limited. About retail in historic city centres, an important contribution comes from English Heritage. English Heritage together with the English Historic Town Forum researched the impact of retail development in historic towns /4; 5/. Their research focuses mainly on the urban dimension and does not go into detail about the architectural dimension. Contrary to these existing researches, this contribution does not start from the largest scale (the urban scale) but from the smallest scale (the interior).

Therefore literature about reuse of monuments on a more architectural level is studied. Extensive research in this field has been done especially since the 1970's /6, p.354/, mostly dealing with one category of heritage such as religious or industrial buildings

/among others: 7, 8/. Two important general studies about reuse of monuments are 'Herbestemmen van grote monumenten: een uitdaging!' /9/, a Dutch study and 'Creative Reuse of Buildings' /10/, an English study. Both apply a broader approach starting from the classification of heritage, based on their initial function, and formulate separate conclusions for each category. Retail as new use is only mentioned in the sidelines, the focus of these studies is on a functional approach and does not discuss architectural issues.

3. Classification of buildings suitable for retail-reuse

To apply literature dealing with reuse of monuments in general on the specific phenomenon of retail-reuse, a classification scheme is developed, indicating the different building categories that are re-used for retail functions, based on literature and practical examples. Based on Nelissen et al. /9/ a classification is made into industrial heritage, religious heritage and other (public) buildings. The last group was divided further based on Latham /10/. Finally six different categories were defined: industrial heritage, religious heritage, (semi-)public buildings, residential buildings, military buildings and buildings with initial retail function. Each category is subdivided in different typologies as illustrated by table 1.

The classification afterwards was tested against practical application by a student project. Two groups of six students each of the second year interior architecture, were asked to set up an inventory of all shops located in a historic building within a given zone of a city centre. The inventory included the name of the shop, its address and indicated if the building was protected as a monument or not. Once the inventory was set up, the students classified all shops included according to the given scheme. When certain cases could not be classified, missing typologies were detected. The first group surveyed six streets in Antwerp (BE), the second group surveyed seven streets in Hasselt (BE). Although the research was rather limited – the students had only 60 hours available for the work – the scheme could be extended with three typologies being bank, office and hostel, all within the category of (semi-)public buildings.

For each category included in the scheme, the opportunities and threats according to retail-reuse were indicated. The opportunities and threats were related to social issues, the urban location and the architectural form of the building type and were based on the review of literature, a selection of which is described above. Table 1 finally gives an indication of the different categories that are suitable for retail re-use; industrial heritage, (semi-) public buildings and buildings with initial retail function seem to be suitable to bring in a retail function while religious heritage and military buildings are not. Residential

buildings are in general not suitable to bring in a retail function with the typology town house as an exception. Nevertheless, also for categories that seemed in general not suitable for retail-reuse, positive examples exist in practise. The case study Selexyz Dominicanen is an example of a bookstore located in a church. Here, the threats of the building could be overcome because of the specific history of the building and inventive design solutions.

CATEGORY	TYOLOGY	OPPORTUNITIES (+) and THREATS (-)
Industrial heritage	Factory Warehouse Large Industrial site	+ large area + open structure → easy to adept + people feel related to 'their' heritage - high cost for redevelopment and maintenance
Religious heritage	Church and chapel Convent Beguinage Presbytery	+ location - closed architectural typology - churches: small floor area compared to volume - social resistance due to sacral atmosphere
(Semi-)public buildings	City Hall Post Office Railway station Hotel	+ location + large area
Residential buildings	Castle Country house Farm	- location + large area
	Town house	+ location ! Often combined with residential function on the upper floors
Military buildings	Fortresses Barracks	- location - closed architectural typology + large area
Buildings with initial retail functions	Ground floor shopping - upper floors dwelling Passage Department store	+ location + architectural form designed for retail


 Buildings that seem more suitable for retail-reuse

Table 1 Classification of buildings suitable for retail-reuse

4. Case study analyses

After defining the general characteristics of the different building types suitable for retail-reuse, three case studies were selected based on six criteria (supra p. 5): Selexyz

Dominicanen in Maastricht (NL), Selexyz Verwijs in The Hague (NL) and the Hema in Tongeren (BE).

4.1 The cases

Selexyz Dominicanen and Selexyz Verwijs are both bookshops of retail groups Boekhandelgroep Nederland (BGN). As a store chain, BGN wants to distinguish themselves through unique locations for their stores /11/. Selexyz Dominicanen is located in the 13th century church of the former Dominican order. The church has been used for secular uses for over more than a century already but despite its historic and architectural significance, most of the functions did not respect the monumental value of the building /12/. The rehabilitation of the church was part of the new master plan of Shopping Entre-Deux, located on the site of the Dominican convent after its demolition in the 1960's. In 2006, BGN opened a bookshop in the church.

Selexyz Verwijs is located in the former Hotel du Passage, in the center of the Passage in The Hague. The Passage is the only remaining 19th century passage in The Netherlands. After the hotel was closed, the building has been empty for more than thirty years /13/. In 2003, a large restoration and rehabilitation project for the whole Passage was started. Today, Selexyz Verwijs functions as a successful pilot store within the historic retail environment.

The Hollandsche Eenheidsprijzen Maatschappij Amsterdam (H.E.M.A.) opened their first shop in Amsterdam in 1926. It was a store for the general public where products were sold for small prices. Soon, Hema opened several stores in the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxemburg, France and Germany /14/. Although their supply can be compared with these of a department store, the shops are generally smaller and do only sell generic brand products. The Hema in Tongeren is located in a 16th century late-gothic deep house, called Dommershausen, and the adjacent premise. The buildings were constructed at the same time and the façade of the Dommerhausen and the partitioning wall between the two premises exists of a timber frame structure /15/.

4.2 Selection criteria

The cases are selected based on six criteria. (1) The selected cases represent different categories included in the classification scheme. Selexyz Dominicanen is located in a church and can be classified as religious heritage. Selexyz Verwijs is situated in a 19th century shopping arcade so it was initially a retail building. But the bookshop itself is located in the former hotel of the Passage. This case can be classified in two different ways: as initial retail function or as a (semi-)public building. The Hema in Tongeren can be classified as residential building within the typology of a town house.

(2) The concept of restoration was different in the three cases. The restoration of the Dominican church aimed to conserve the current state of the building. Contrary for the Hotel du Passage the restorers reconstructed the original historic appearance of the building although many transformations have occurred since its construction. The interventions reached much further than strictly conserving the existing state of the building. The concept of restoration of the Dommershausen and adjacent building aimed to restore and to visualize the most significant value of the building being the timber frame structure of the partitioning wall between the two premises and the façades.

(3) All three cases are located in Belgium and The Netherlands to ease the collection of data about the projects. As such I was able to visit the sites several times and observe changes made to the retail design and the interior during the period of research. (4) The selected cases were single shops. Projects where several shops are located within one building or site are not considered in this research as the focus is on the scale of the interior and not on the urban scale or the scale of the master plan. (5) Moreover all stores were medium-branched stores. The approach of these retailers towards retail design in historic buildings contrasts strongly with the approach of exclusive stores. To enlarge the social bases of the research, the focus is on medium-branched retailers. For the same reason, the selected cases are chain stores and not independent stores.

(6) The type of goods sold by Selexyz is very different from those sold by Hema. The American Marketing Association makes a classification of goods into 'convenience goods' and 'comparison goods' /15, pp.206,215/. *"Convenience goods are consumers' goods which the customer usually purchases frequently, immediately, and with the minimum of effort. Examples of merchandise customarily bought as convenience goods are: tobacco products, soap, drug store products, newspapers, magazines, chewing gum, small packaged confections, and many grocery products. [...] Comparison goods are those consumers' goods which the customer in the process of selection and purchase characteristically compares on such bases as suitably, quality, price, and style. Examples of goods that most consumers probably buy as shopping goods are: millinery, furniture, dress goods, men's and women's ready-to-wear, shoes, jewellery, and residential real estate."* Based on this definition, the goods sold by Hema can generally be considered as convenience goods whereas the supply of Selexyz are comparison goods.² By selecting cases with a different type of supply, we have the possibility to compare the approach to retail-reuse between convenience-stores and comparison-stores.

² However it should be emphasized that a given article may be bought by one customer as a comparison good and by another as a convenience good. The general classification depends upon the way in which the average or typical buyer purchases /16, p.215/.

4.3 Methodology

The case study analysis follows a systematic protocol for data collection, reporting of the cases and the evaluation of the project /17/. For each case, data were collected through review of publications about the history of the building, its restoration and the contemporary project, through archival research, interviews with different stakeholders involved in the project and visits to the site. After making a full description of the case, each case was evaluated on three different levels. First it was evaluated to what extent the project respected the general typological characteristics of the building. Secondly, an assessment of the specific values of the monument was made to check if the project respected those values. As a tool for value assessment, the Nara-grit is applied.³ The Nara-grit (table 2) is a methodology developed at the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation and is based on the Nara Document of Authenticity /19, article 13/. Previous applications illustrated that the method is successful for the evaluation of complex problems /17/, because, contrary to other evaluation systems /20/, tangible as well as intangible aspects can be assessed.

ASPECTS of the sources:	DIMENSIONS OF THE HERITAGE			
	ARTISTIC	HISTORIC	SOCIAL	SCIENTIFIC
FORM AND DESIGN				
MATERIALS AND SUBSTANCE				
USE AND FUNCTIONS				
TRADITION AND TECHNIQUES (intangibles)				
LOCATION AND SETTINGS				
SPIRIT AND FEELING				

Table 2 Nara-grit as developed at the Raymond Lemaire International Centre for Conservation /18/.

³ The grit was initially developed in relation to 'materials' and 'craftsmanship' in restoration of masonry. Later the method is applied in other conservation fields such as three-dimensional documentation, evaluation of eclectic architecture and in the design of a master plan for conservation /18/.

Thirdly, the after-life of the monument in terms of contemporary application of the retail design and the use of the shop, is analyzed by using a SWOT-analysis.⁴ Afterwards, a cross-case comparison is made between the three case studies.

4.4 Selexyz Dominicanen, Maastricht

Because the church is an impressive monument in its own right, it needed to be kept as an open space as much as possible but the available floor area was only half of the required commercial area. Therefore a volume of two floors high was introduced asymmetrically in the church. By doing so the typology of the church was not only respected but even emphasized: seen from the ground floor the volume stresses the monumental dimensions of the church, while from upstairs the visitor can see all architectural details from close by. An other intervention that accentuates the quality of the building was a well-considered lighting plan that not only highlighted the books on sale but equally the architectural beauty of the church. In order not to 'pollute' the church with fixtures, most of the lighting was integrated in the furniture or the volume.

The Dominican church was restored by SATIJNplus Architecten, but the retail design was done by Merckx+Girod Architecten because BGN has had a successful collaboration with this office before. Nevertheless there was a close collaboration between both offices from a very early state of the project. They even exchanged design tasks to simplify the process /22/. The project was very well received in the national and international press /among others: 23, 24, 25/.

The Nara-grit showed that the extrinsic historic and social values are most significant. The historic interest is in the painting of Thomas Aquinas and the Roman remains which were found under the church. From a social point of view, the people from Maastricht feel very much related to the church, mainly because the building had served as a community place in the past.

The SWOT-analyses showed that the attention by the press and the fact that the project is considered as an exemplary case of a rehabilitated church are opportunities to the site. Contrary the extensive decoration of the building and the many changes that are made to the interior of the bookshop, which are considered as threats.

⁴'SWOT' stands for Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. It is an analysis of the strong and weak points (the intern analysis) and the opportunities and treats that occur in the acquaintances /21, pp.500-502/.

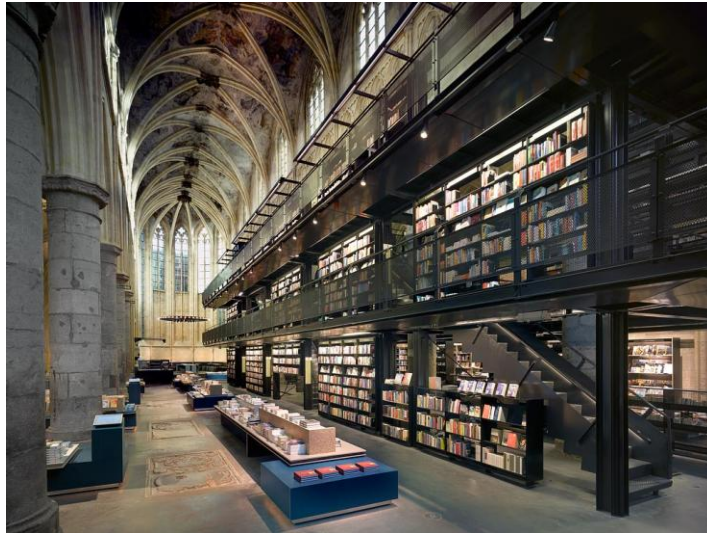


Figure 1 Selexyz Dominicanen, ©Roos Aldershoff

4.5 Selexyz Verwijs, The Hague

The Passage as well as the Hotel du Passage were restored by Kentie & Partners but the scientific approach of the restoration could well be subject of debate. To convert the former hotel into a bookshop, major interventions to the building had to be made. An inner garden was located in the centre of the hotel. To increase the commercial area, this garden was covered with a glass roof. Initially the level of the floors was different at both sides of this inner garden. To ease the circulation in the store, the floors were brought in the same level. This intervention however caused new problems such as the windows that now were divided between two floors and the historic staircases that did not fit anymore.

Also for this Selexyz store, the retail design was made by Merckx+Girod Architecten but in this case there was hardly any collaboration at all between the restoration architect and the interior architect responsible for the retail design. As a result the contemporary interventions made by Kentie & Partners (staircases, balustrades, lighting and floor in the inner court, etc.) contrasted aesthetically with the interventions made by Merckx+Girod Architecten (furniture, lighting and floors in other parts of the shop, etc.).

In the Nara-grit, the historic dimension was most significant. Intrinsically, the Passage had been a creative mix of uses (shops, bars, theatre, apartments and hotel) which had been the key to its success. Extrinsically the former hotel was at the moment of

restoration the most authentic part of the Passage: parts of the original decoration and interior were preserved. Unfortunately, nor the mix of uses, nor the interior of the hotel had been preserved by the rehabilitation project.

The after-life of the project can be compared as this of Selexyz Dominicanen as the most important threat is in the extensive decoration of the space and the changes made to the contemporary interior.



*Figure 2 Selexyz Verwijs
©Roos Aldershoff*

4.6 Hema, Tongeren

In this case study, the buildings were completely restored before a tenant for the building was known. The restoration was done by Jamaer Architecten and focused on the restoration of the façades and the timber frame structure of the partitioning wall between

both premises since these elements were considered to be the significant value of the building (reflected by the aspect 'Material and Substance' in the Nara-grit). Also here the commercial area was extended; the first floor was added to the commercial area and an extension to the building was made. To show the original typology of the buildings, the addition was attached to the historic buildings through a glass strip. Because an extensive use of the historic staircase would damage the material, a new staircase was introduced, next to the historic staircase, connecting the ground floor with the first floor.

After the building was restored, Hema rented the space. They introduced the same standardized retail design they use in all their stores and, as shown by the SWOT-analyses, they did not show any respect for the monumental value of the building: shelves were even placed in front of historic interior elements.



Figure 3 Hema Tongeren

4.7 Cross-case comparison

After comparing the case studies some conclusion can be formulated.

Firstly we can see that when the monumental setting is a surplus value for the retailer, it will be more likely that the retail design will respect the significance of the building. Where Selexyz bookshops particularly selects unique locations for their stores, Hema selected the building because of its A-location inside the city and because the available floor area

fitted their required area. The historic value of the building was not considered to be a surplus value.

Secondly, the cases illustrate the stress field between retail as a short term activity and conservation as a long term activity. To deal with this tension the interventions made to the building could be reversible, not only as to the retail design but equally the interventions foreseen in the master plan for conservation and rehabilitation. The restoration of the Dominican church in Maastricht was independent of its current commercial use and can be called heritage-led. In Selexyz Verwijs, the retail design in itself is reversible but the master plan included many irreversible interventions that were induced by its future function as a shop and as such the restoration was retail-led. Where the retail use of the Dominican church can be seen as a transitional stage within the history of the monument, the Hotel du Passage cannot be transformed into other functions without intervening in the monument again.

Thirdly, analysis of the cases show the importance of an interdisciplinary collaboration. For Selexyz Dominicanen the different parties worked very close together within a non-hierarchical network /26, p.81/. Contrary, for Selexyz Verwijs different parties were involved in the project but design decisions were not discuss with each other and as such a close collaboration between the stakeholders was lacking. As a result the project of Selexyz Verwijs is no harmonious entity which harmed the overall quality of the project. In the case of Hema, the restoration architect did not even know who would be the tenant of the buildings and as a result, no collaboration between the different parties was possible.

Fourthly, the after-life of the project is problematic in all three case studies. In Hema, the timber frame structure is used as a clothes hanger and goods are exposed outside the shelves which hinder the circulation in the shop. Both Selexyz shops are 'polluted' with extensive decoration and additional displays. Moreover in Selexyz Verwijs, new furniture is introduced without advise of the designers. Several functions such as the children's corner and the information point have changed place. Although this contemporary interventions in theory do not harm the monumental value of the building, these could influence strongly the way the monument is presented to the public.

5. Guidelines

The synthesis of the literature study about reuse of monuments in general and the case study research were compared with existing guidelines set up by English Heritage for retail development in historic areas /5, pp.20-25/. Although the English Heritage guidelines focused on urban development they were used as a framework to set up the

guidelines for retail design in historic buildings. In what follows, nine such guidelines are presented:

1. RESTORATION CONCEPT

As illustrated by the case studies, the concept for restoration should be based on scientific research and should not be retail-led. Nevertheless it is essential that the concept for restoration anticipates to the retail design. For example by taking into account future circulation in the building, integration of services, etc.

2. USE AND FUNCTION

Deciding up on the new function of a monumental building is not an easy task. Several questions arise: Is a retail function the best new use for this building? Can the building match for the proposed function? Which type of retail is suitable? Can the new function provide enough resources for the maintenance of the building?

After analyzing if retail is a proper new use for the building, an organization chart for the space should be set up. On the one hand, when the amount of activities or the number of visitors increases strongly comparing to the historic use of the building, measures should be taken to avoid an over-use of the building. For example, in the case study of Hema, the number of daily visitors increased strongly after the two houses were transformed into a store. To not get a wearing off of the staircase due to extensive use, a contemporary staircase was added. From the other hand, a too limited occupation of the building will not provide enough resources for restoration nor for maintenance of the building. The intensity of the use of the building should be well balanced.

English Heritage states *"If at all possible choose tenants or occupiers who appreciate the consequences and responsibilities of occupying a listed building"* /27, p.19/. To create a retail design that shows respect for the historic qualities of the building is more evident to achieve when the monumental character of the building contributes to the retail concept. Therefore, comparison-stores are in general more likely for retail-reuse than convenience-stores. When a designer succeeded in his task, the historic qualities of the building can only be perceived as an excess value for the retailer.

3. QUALITY OF DESIGN

The importance of high quality contemporary interventions is stressed in many documents dealing with guidance in rehabilitation projects /5, p.26; 26, p.90/. To ensure high quality of design, English Heritage proposes to organize a design competition. Although this can be interesting for large-scale urban projects, for retail design a competition is not always the best solution. The case studies learn us that the best result

is obtained by a far-reaching collaboration between the different stakeholders involved in the project – owner, restorer, municipality, monument board, tenant, retail designer, etc. In the context of a competition, collaboration in an early stage of the project is not evident. In many cases retailers prefer to work with the same designers that they worked with before. As such, a design competition is not the best solution to obtain a high quality retail design that meets the wishes of the retailer and at the same time respects the historic building. The quality of the retail design can be obtained through constant discussion with the different stakeholders who assess the project from their point of interest – conservation, retail, urban planning, etc. The type of collaboration that is most appropriate for retail-reuse is a non-hierarchical, closed network /26, p.81/.

4. RESPECT THE CONTEXT

Respect for the historic and architectural quality of the surrounding is stressed in almost all literature dealing with reuse of buildings and urban regeneration. But practice shows that many sad examples are at hand where the retail design does not show any respect for the historic building in which it is located. Yet, the case study of Selexyz Dominicanen shows that it is possible to design a successful retail project and at the same time a qualitative conservation project for the building.

The respect for the context should be twofold: (1) the original typology of the building should be respected and specific characteristics of the typology should be taken into account in the conservation project as well as in the retail design. (2) The specific values of the monument should be assessed and should be the basis for the conservation project. Moreover the values of the monument should be respected by the retail design and should be understandable for the public.

5. MATERIALS AND TECHNIQUES

Materials and techniques used for the restoration should be as high in quality as the historic materials /28, p.113/. But it is not necessary that these materials are the same. Contrasting materials, application of new techniques and contemporary design avoids the public to falsely understand the new interventions as being historic as is the case for certain interventions in Selexyz Verwijs.

6. FLEXIBILITY AND REVERSIBILITY

The problem of tension between conservation as long-term activity and retail design as short-term is already discussed in the conclusions from the case studies. An option to deal with this tension is by making the interventions that are solely retail-led reversible. This includes interventions for the retail design, made by the tenant, as well as

interventions set up in the master plan. As such, future changes to the design and the function of the building stay possible.

7. ECONOMIC VIABILITY

The project should be economically viable. For restoration and maintenance often public funding is available for some part of the costs. Nevertheless it is important that enough percentage of the available floor area can be used as commercial area. If necessary, additional commercial floor area can be created by the construction of new floors or through constructing a contemporary annex to the historic building. However, this kind of interventions only are acceptable when they respect the intrinsic values of the monument. The case studies of Selexyz Dominicanen where a volume is introduced and Hema where an annex to the building is made can be considered as good examples how to enlarge the commercial area.

8. INTERDISCIPLINARITY

Both the literature study /5, p.21/ and the case studies illustrate clearly the importance of an interdisciplinary approach. Depending on the specific case, different stakeholders should be approached to collaborate in the project. But instead of different stakeholders only taking responsibility for 'their own part of the project', all parties should collaborate and reflect about all aspects of the project from their own point of interest. As such, a successful retail activity that is at the same time a qualitative conservation project can be created.

9. AFTER-LIFE

As discussed earlier in the comparison of the case studies, the after-life of a monument is often problematic. To avoid problems regarding this issue, retailers need to be informed about the reason why interventions are made in a particular way and how the contemporary design interacts with the monument. Guidelines should be set up to help users in taking decisions; the designer involved in the retail design can play an important role. After all, he could be the contact person to consult if the user has a question or wants to change something corresponding to his current needs /29, pp.139-140/.

6. Implementation

The guidelines as formulated above are primarily meant to help designers when dealing with retail design in historic buildings. By following the nine steps described above, the complexity of a retail-reuse project is divided in different sub-problems which are less complicate to deal with. Next to potentially help designers in dealing with retail-reuse

projects, the developed guidelines could be applied by monument boards and conservators. Currently these parties often act rather restrained against retail in a monumental building because once the monument is restored, they cannot control much of the interventions made by the retailer. Different sad examples are at hand where interesting interiors are completely covered to create a faceless space without any visual reference to its historic character that can be furnished like any other building. The guidelines here developed could be used as a checklist for helping to obtain a retail design that respects the historic value of the monument and that comes towards the wishes of the retailer.

A question rising is how to communicate these guidelines towards the different parties involved in retail-reuse projects. A first possibility is through courses for student retail designers and eventually for all (interior) architecture students. A second option is to organise lectures for architects, conservators, retailers, etc. Channels to reach this large group of possibly interested people are professional associations, heritage organisations or the national and regional monument boards. A third way to communicate the guidelines is by distributing a brochure among the different parties involved in retail-reuse projects. Although the information given in the brochure should be very summarized and to the point, the brochure should include examples of retail-reuse projects containing a critical evaluation of the projects. Because the brochure should address people with different professional backgrounds (architects, conservators, urban planners, retailers, etc.) the language used should be uncomplicated and photographs and plans should illustrate the content.

Although this research was restricted to buildings that were legally protected as a monument, the guidelines could also be applied for not-protected historic buildings. Even though less parties will be involved in the project when the building is not a monument, many aspects of the process will be comparable or the same as in projects dealing with monumental buildings.

7. Discussion

Considering the limited research that has been done about retail in historic buildings, this contribution can be seen as a starting point for further research within the field. The classification system could be developed further as it was only tested against practical implementation on a small scale. The appearance of different typologies depends on the location inside the urban fabric as well as on the history and geographic location of the city itself. By making inventories of carefully selected cities that represent different urban histories, a more complete overview of existing typologies could be set up.

Furthermore the selection criteria of the case studies caused some delineations to the research. All case studies were located in Belgium and The Netherlands and were examples of single shops in a historic building. Moreover, both BGN and Hema are medium branched retailers. As a result, the conclusions, in the form of nine guidelines for retail-reuse projects, have a large intern validity but they do not pretend to be externally valid for all types of retail-reuse all over Europe. To broaden the viability of the results, the classification scheme should be tested among other European cities and case studies should be extended to shopping centres and exclusive stores all over Europe.

Future research may evaluate and further elaborate – more cases in an international scene - the nine guidelines formulated in this paper. The guidelines do not pretend to be the final solution but they should be seen as a first step into the development of concrete policy guidelines. They could serve as a framework for evaluation of projects and as such, could stimulate qualitative retail-reuse projects, both from the perspective of the retail sector as from the perspective of conservation.

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