

FWO research project (2014-2017)

Preserving historical urban warehouses by understanding their architecture and technology

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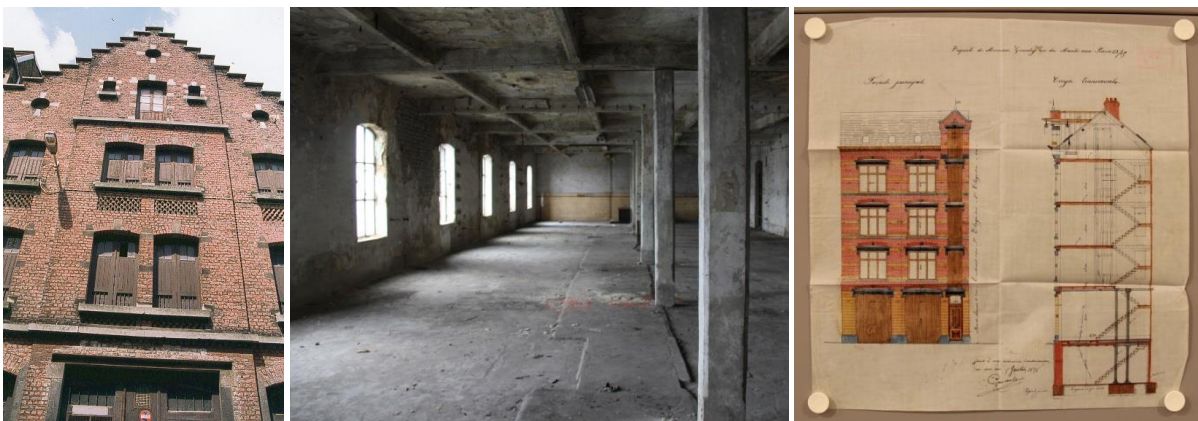
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Project summary

Historical urban warehouses are remarkable structures. As essential facilities in national and international trade and industry, they were ‘cathedrals of modernity’: their presence signifying that a city was integrated into a commercial network made possible by evolving transportation technology.

Today, these wonderful buildings are obsolete for their original purposes. As they occupy valuable plots beloved by speculating building promoters they are endangered by redevelopment pressure. Preserving them has an important social value, in that it would maintain the distinctive look and ambience of former trading and manufacturing areas, and create a sense of continuity between the past and present.

The objective of the proposed research project is to develop a base of knowledge about the history, structure, operation and architecture of historic urban warehouses in the main cities Brussels, Ghent and Antwerp in order to enhance their preservation and adaptive reuse. To date, there has been no comprehensive study of warehouses as a building type. This research project, and the typology we develop, will be models for the investigation and understanding of this building type.



Façade beer warehouse Brussels (left)

Brussels warehouse 1903 with early reinforced concrete structure (middle)

Archive drawing warehouse (right)