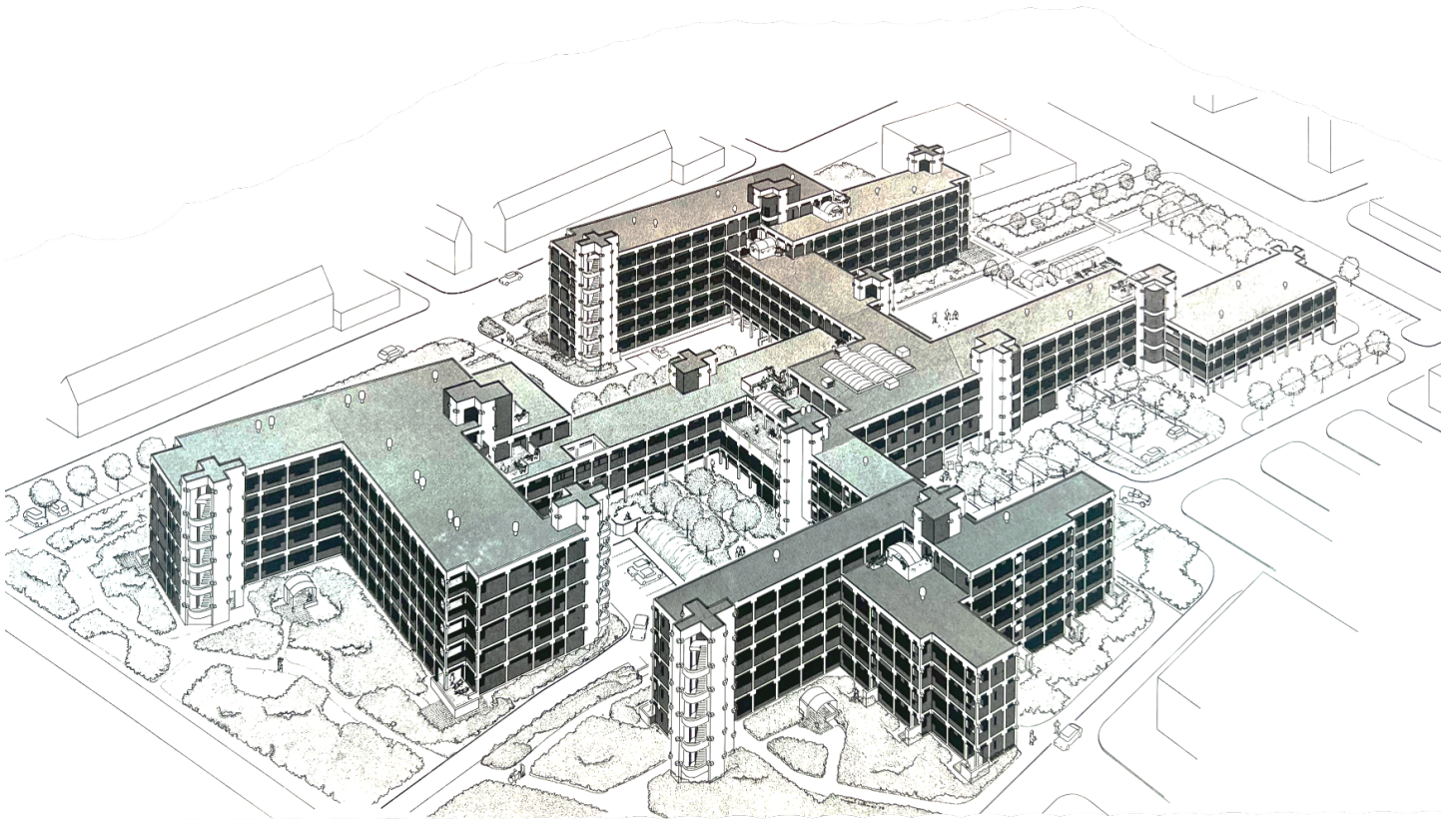


**Constructing a link between Hertzberger's theory and lived experiences on
meeting spaces within elderly living complex *De Drie Hoven***



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Abstract

This research investigates the link between Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces in *De Drie Hoven* with lived experiences. As *De Drie Hoven* exemplifies a shift in elderly architecture of the 1970s and because of the integration of meeting spaces, it has relevance in adding depth to the contemporary discourse about elderly architecture.

While existing literature emphasizes the importance of social space in elderly architecture, limited research has been done into small scale meeting spaces. This research used existing literature as a starting point and archival documentation and secondary sources to add depth to existing research. Constructing a link between the architect's theory and lived experiences has led to highlighting a gap between Hertzberger's intent and the reality of using these social spaces.

The first part of this research focuses on Hertzberger's theory within the meeting spaces of *De Drie Hoven*. Hertzberger's principles are; softening the boundaries between public and private spaces, creating territorial responsibility, visual connection and providing reason for use. These principles are clearly reflected in *De Drie Hoven* where seating in corridors, at entrances of housing units, in circulation zones create a variety of meeting spaces. The second part constructs a link as it adds perspectives from actual residents, architectural critiques and other stories about the meeting spaces. It highlights the complexity of applying Hertzberger's theory in practice. While many meeting spaces are socially effective, there are challenges that effect the use of some spaces.

This research concludes that Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces offers valuable insights for socially engaging architecture, but designing effective elderly architecture is a complex task. The effectiveness depends on specific need of the users and a careful balance between openness, visibility, privacy and functionality. The findings of this study contribute to the architectural discourse on elderly care by demonstrating the importance of designing not only central, but also smaller-scale meeting spaces to enhance social interaction.

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1. Introduction

In the 70s a change occurred in the Dutch architecture for elderly living, developments changed from isolated housing complexes to combined, well integrated projects that connected to it's urban surroundings. One of the main goals of these new developments was to enhance social interaction and move away from the idealistic approach of post-war architecture which lacked identity and social qualities mainly because of the heavenly differentiation in structuring functions and categorizing housing typologies. This led to monotony and lack of spontaneity in the architecture.

A leading architect of the time, Herman Hertzberger, emphasized human scale as a fundamental principle in his designs. Hertzberger's design for *De Drie Hoven* exemplifies this shift in the architecture of elderly housing complexes in the 1970s. The design provoked social interaction among residents while also strengthening social connections with the surrounding neighborhood.

However, the legacy of projects, like *De Drie Hoven*, have been increasingly challenged by shifting policies in elderly care. Many of the projects from the 70s have been lost or partly demolished because of this change in Dutch policies between 2000-2010. Self-reliance became the norm and financial support for the elderly housing complexes became uncertain, consequently a lot of the complexes were demolished or re-interpreted. But although a lot of built projects are now gone, there are still lessons to be learned about the social qualities of these projects. In this research an in-depth analysis of the various meeting spaces inside *De Drie Hoven* will be linked to actual residents experiences. The main question is: how does Herman Hertzberger's theory align with the perspectives of actual users regarding meeting spaces within the elderly living complex *De Drie Hoven*? Intertwining the analysis of Hertzberger's theory within *De Drie Hoven* with lived experiences of user will hopefully result in new insights.

Existing literature

First of all, the social qualities which have relationship with the meeting spaces should be understood. Becker (2009) describes a model in which a well-being-enhancing care concept, specifically focused on elderly people, is explained. It goes into autonomy of the clients, followed by the need for activities and lastly the importance of social interaction. A more historical perspective can be seen in *The aging person in our society*, where similarities and differences with contemporary theory on social interaction among elderly people is noticeable (Rubbens-Franken, 1953). Other research further analyses the types of social interactions between residents and other groups (Royers & Stephan, 2001). Following this understanding, research into, built, elderly living complexes and the way social interaction is provoked in these complexes has been quite limited. In 2009 the book *The Architecture of Elderly Housing* was published, in this book the changing perspective on elderly living in the 70s is described (Mens & Wagenaar, 2009). Elderly housing complexes are analyzed in a broader scale, as for example the position in the city is analyzed. Five years later, the book *The Desirable Scale* was published (Spiering, 2014). This book describes the constantly changing architecture of elderly housing, and addresses the lack of research which has been done into the impact of the scale of these complexes on social quality for residents. It thereby specifically mentions the time period in which *De Drie Hoven* was built, and clearly describes the new shift in architecture which *De Drie Hoven* exemplifies. In a broader perspective, the book *Threshold spaces* offers a more theoretical perspective on the meeting spaces (Boettger, 2014). Looking at the research specifically into *De Drie Hoven*, in 1991 researchers reflected on the first 15 years of the buildings use and looked ahead to the future (Breuer et al., 1991). The nursing home and care home were extensively analyzed and several improvements were pointed out. This also included some of the meeting spaces, but as this wasn't the main theme, research about this topic is not complete. A further analysis of the relevant literature will be done in the first chapter of this thesis.

Methodology

As in current research, buildings are often analyzed in a broader context, relating it to the city and, on a smaller scale, mostly looking at the global organization of elderly housing complexes. This research will use these existing studies as a starting point to analyze a specific case study into more detail and thereby adding more depth to the discourse about social interaction in elderly housing complexes.

Structure

The research will start by studying the theoretical framework Hertzberger used to design the different meeting spaces inside *De Drie Hoven*. By analyzing archival documentation and written work of Hertzberger himself a clear overview will be made. Following Hertzberger's theory a wider perspective on Hertzberger's meeting spaces will be formulated by analyzing primary literature of residents from *De Drie Hoven* and the work of architectural critiques from the time. The thesis will be structured in two main parts. First, there will be an in-depth analysis of Hertzberger's theory on fostering social interaction through the creation of meeting spaces. The meeting spaces of De Drie Hoven will be highlighted to illustrate Hertzberger's theory in a, built, case study. Second, a broader perspective on meeting spaces will be linked to Hertzberger's theory. Constructing this link between theory and real-world experiences will, hopefully, lead to new in-depth analyses that will contribute to the contemporary discourse on social interaction in elderly housing.

2. Theoretical framework

What is social interaction for the elderly?

First of all, it is important to understand where the quality of life for residents in elderly housing complexes comes from and to position the meeting space in relation to this notion "quality of life." There are many different perspectives on this. The following research defines the well-being-enhancing care concept, which is specifically focused on elderly people (Becker, 2014, p.16). First, Becker (2014) describes the autonomy of elderly clients, which refers to a person's ability to make their own choices and to escape from situations where they do not feel comfortable. Secondly, Becker highlights the need for activities, emphasizing the importance of maintaining certain activities on a regular basis. Lastly, the significance of regular social interaction is discussed, ranging from short encounters to intimate contacts (Becker, 2014).

When comparing the research from Becker (2014) to a more historical perspective differences and similarities are noticeable. The need for activities has always been seen as a need to prevent a feeling of dullness, as the book *The aging person in our society* states the following; "For every aging person, a daily task or a program that is not too demanding is the best remedy against boredom and also against fatigue" (Rubbens-Franken, 1953, p.110). A difference in perspective on social interaction is also clearly visible, as in the book *The aging person in our society* the writer states that social contact should mainly be planned activities in community centers or other clubs. In contrast to the contemporary perspective it focusses less on the importance of accidental, not planned social encounters.

As can be seen in the research from Becker (2014), one of the main well-being aspects of the elderly is to have regular social interactions. Other research further detailed these encounters (Royers & Stephan, 2001), Royers further describes the amount and types of social interactions residents encounter during a normal day. This "contact" can occur over a wide spectrum, from quick encounters to planned visits (Royers & Stephan, 2001). Royers (2001) also describes the difference in social involvement between residents themselves, the encounters that can occur between residents and care people or outside visitors.

In the book *The desirable scale* research is conducted to the scale of elderly housing complexes, and what the influence of the physical scale of the complex is on social quality experienced by the residents (Spiering, 2014). Four themes play a central role in this research, which are combined in the final conclusions. First of all the physical scale is explored, secondly the influence of the population composition of residents on social interaction is researched. Afterwards the level of facilities and the influence on residents experiences is looked at, followed by the last theme which goes into decision-making processes. The most relevant part of this book for this research is the topic of communal spaces. The book states, similarly as other research, that communal spaces play a crucial role in stimulating social interaction (Spiering, 2014, p. 385), but the book primarily focuses on central meeting spaces, and thereby emphasizing the importance of a central meeting space for social interaction of residents. While the importance of meeting spaces is heavily emphasized, it does not go into the different types of meeting spaces, and does not touch on possible qualities of smaller, more spread out, meeting spaces. It states that meeting spaces that are "less accessible" and have "less facilities" are not as effective as meeting spaces that do have these properties.

The meeting space

The book "Threshold spaces" by (Boettger, 2014) researches the threshold spaces, which are transitional spaces in architecture. In essence, this threshold space can be seen as an meeting space. The social aspect is very important in these threshold spaces, where different design concepts provoke different types of interactions as can be seen in the book (Boettger, 2014, p. 48). This book can be linked to the meeting spaces of Herman Hertzberger, he designs these meeting spaces often at the so called thresholds. For example, the entrances of housing units in the service flat of *De Drie Hoven* have a nook to create a distinct threshold. The boundaries between public and private spaces are shaped in such a way that Herman likely intended these transitions to serve as areas for social encounters. The book "Threshold spaces" can provide a contemporary perspective on the design choices made by Herman Hertzberger in the 70s.

The Theory of the architect Herman Hertzberger

In the book "Space and the architect" architect Herman Hertzberger reflects on the modernistic architecture and emphasizes the responsibility of future architects to create meaningful spaces that enrich the users experience (Hertzberger, 1999). By analyzing different case studies based on different themes Hertzberger describes what his perspective is on these particular themes. In the book we can see Hertzberger's distinctive opinion about space efficiency, and critique he has on the pragmatic approach of the post-modernism era. He advises architects to focus on the in-between, as in his perspective these are the spaces that add most meaning to architecture. He writes; "We have to become less object-happy and shift our view from things, objects and buildings to what lies in-between." (Hertzberger, 1999, p. 215). Connecting this to Hertzberger perspective from 1982, he wrote about creating a nook at the entrances of the service flats in *De Drie Hoven*; "In administrative terms, it is considered an unacceptable reduction of the housing unit or an unnecessary widening of the corridor" (Hertzberger, 1982, p. 15). In a more recent interview Hertzberger formulates it differently but expresses the same way of thinking, he mentions; "it is all about creating 'unofficial' space." (Hudson & White, 2019, p.7) This shows that Hertzberger's perspective on creating space and focusing on the in-between has been a strong thought of him over the years.

Reflecting on *De Drie Hoven*

In the book *The architecture of elderly housing* Mens & Wagenaar (2009) describe the changes in elderly living in the 70s, the focus shifted from isolated housing complexes to integrated housing in the existing urban fabric. The new developments focused on social integration and interaction. (Mens & Wagenaar, 2009, p.101) describe *De Drie Hoven* as the leading example in this new perspective. *The desirable scale* names this architectural shift more specifically as the construction of multifunctional complexes capable of housing a variety of elderly groupings, but in contrast to Mens & Wagenaar (2009) doesn't state that these complexes are well integrated into the urban fabric, it states the opposing (Spiering, 2014).

According to (Mens & Wagenaar, 2009, p. 101) *De Drie Hoven* is organized similarly to a city, consisting of streets, squares and centers, the main goal of the building is to create an inclusive environment where social interaction is fostered. A critical evaluation of *De Drie Hoven* is also included, here they describe a lack of daylight, privacy and functionality for disabled as the main points of critique on the design.

Research was done approximately 15 years after completion of *De Drie Hoven* (Breuer et al., 1991). As this was a fitting moment to reflect on the success of the building. The research was primarily focused on the functioning of the nursing home and care home, while the service flats received less attention, the other residential spaces such as the collective corridors, were not taken into account in this research. Reflecting on the subjects that were researched, it was concluded that several elements of the nursing and care home were not functioning well. This was due to a lack of daylight, the harsh use of materials, and insufficient points of orientation for the residents. However, since the research was not complete, stating that the building was a failure would be too harsh.

3. Hertzberger's meeting spaces

Wherever people happen to meet – by chance or as passers-by – or converge in the act of meeting – whether accidentally or deliberately for gatherings or appointments – we can use the term social space (Hertzberger, 1999, p. 150)

This chapter links Hertzberger's theory on social spaces to *De Drie Hoven*'s meeting spaces, concluding with a summary connecting theory with the case study. Research on the case study is based on archival documentation and the author's visual analysis.

Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces

Hertzberger theory on meeting spaces starts with the principle for public and private space. As the boundaries of these zones are the most active spaces in social interaction, and therefore the place where encounters occur. Hertzberger make an example of the threshold of a house. here the threshold defines the public street and private house (Hertzberger, 1982, p. 27).

Further, Hertzberger goes into nuances of public and private boundaries, creating conditions for territorial responsibilities, some public spaces can be seen as more or less private because of accessibility and who is the care taker and user. These different "Care and responsibility areas", are characterized by the person who takes responsibility, these users create a certain appearance for a space.

The notion "threshold" therefore becomes a transition rather than hard boundary, it forms the connection between spaces with different territorial responsibilities, they form the spatial conditions for meeting and dialogue between different spaces. Hertzberger writes the following; "Furthermore, as a built condition for social interactions, the threshold is just as important as thick walls are for privacy." (Hertzberger, 1982, p. 31).

Softening boundaries between public and private at the threshold. This concept of the threshold is key to prevent divisions between areas with different territorial claims by creating intermediate spaces that, while administratively belonging to one side, remain accessible and mutually recognized by both sides (Hertzberger, 1982). Later, Hertzberger writes space should be formed to offer opportunities and cause for social contact, catalyzing the effect on seeing and being seen within these intermediate spaces (Hertzberger, 1999, p. 135).

Designing spaces for formal or informal seating isn't enough, it is crucial that the building itself is organized in such a way that people's routes do encounter one another (Hertzberger, 1999, p. 156). This comes down to giving reason for people to use the spaces.

To finalize, Hertzberger writes that visual relationships can create opportunities for encountering or avoiding others. Light, short-stay spaces, transparency and views out are design means an architect can use according to Hertzberger.

Overview of meeting spaces

Archival research has led to an overview of all meeting spaces within *De Drie Hoven* that are relevant to the subject of this research. Meeting spaces can be identified at different scales within the building. They are structured according to the organization of streets, squares, and centers, which served as the fundamental design principle of Herman Hertzberger.

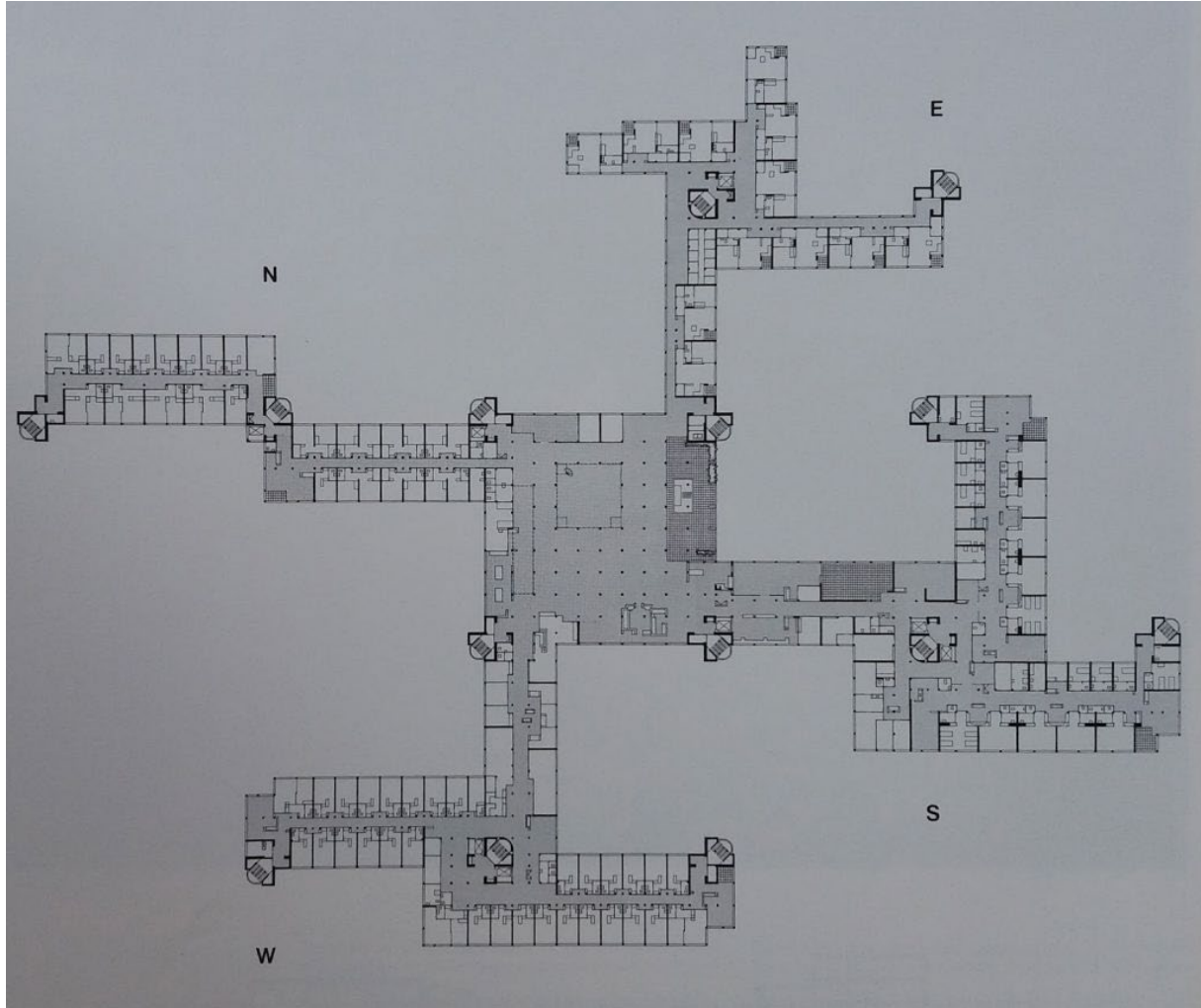


Figure 3-2 Floorplan ground floor *De Drie Hoven*, (*Hidden Architecture*, n.d.)

Central square and streets

The central building serves as the connecting element between the different 'houses', it can be seen as the center of the city. It is the largest communal space where various events can take place, as mentioned in "De Drie Hoven"². Near this central square, there are different shops, hobby spaces, and other organized activities.



Figure 3-3 Photos of central square in De Drie Hoven (Hidden Architecture, n.d.)

A design sketch (figure 3-4) from Hertzberger shows the principle for this center. The individual 'neighborhoods' all lead to the city center. In this sketch the principle for streets can also be identified, as these are the connector between the houses and the center of *De Drie Hoven*.

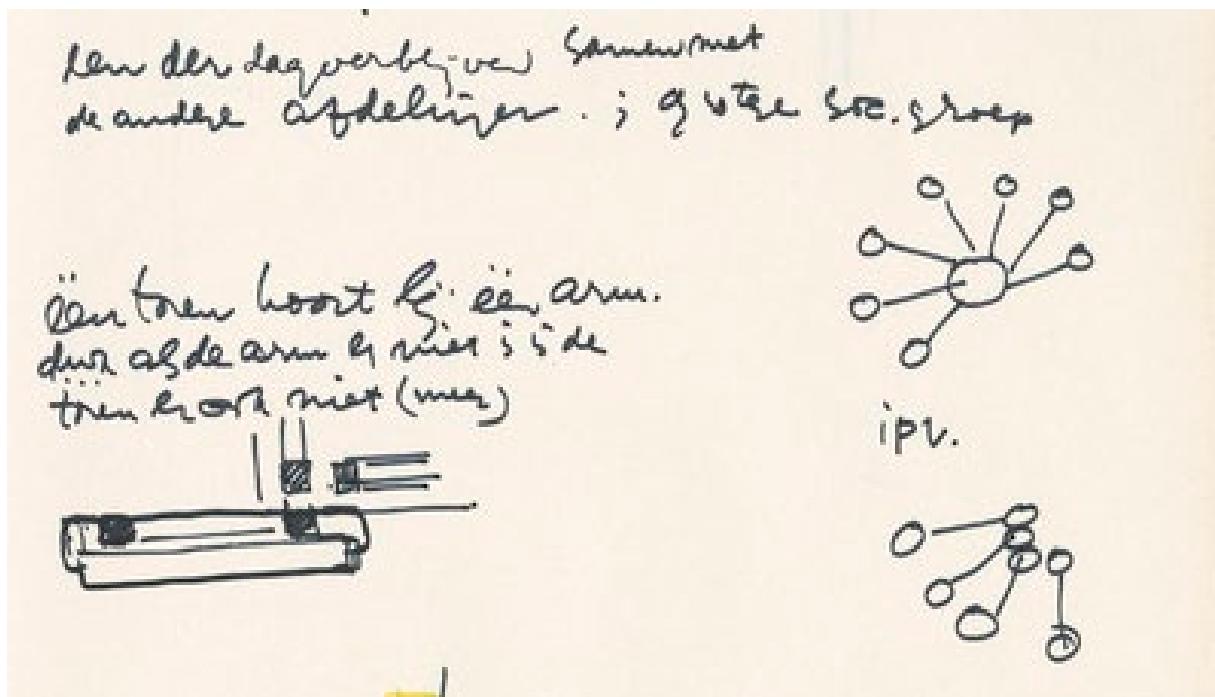


Figure 3-4 Sketch of Herman Hertzberger which shows relation of central square to the other "houses", Nieuw instituut, HERT_5.11-1, drawn between November 1967 and September 1968

² "de drie hoven" book consisting of different articles about *De Drie Hoven*. Published by mr I. Vorrink on 29 may 1975. Citation from first article "Ten Geleide" written by F.J. Willems. archival documentation, Nieuw instituut, HERTd1889 HERT 0763

Entrances service flats

The entrances of the service flats are widened, remaining part of the corridor, yet the residents of the housing unit behind take ownership of the space. They personalize it by placing chairs, decorating the walls with plants or art, they use it as if it is their own.

Figure 3-5 shows the visual link at these entrances. It visualizes the connection between the private housing unit and the public corridor.



Figure 3-5 Photos entrance service flat (Hertzberger, 1982)(Hidden Architecture, n.d.)

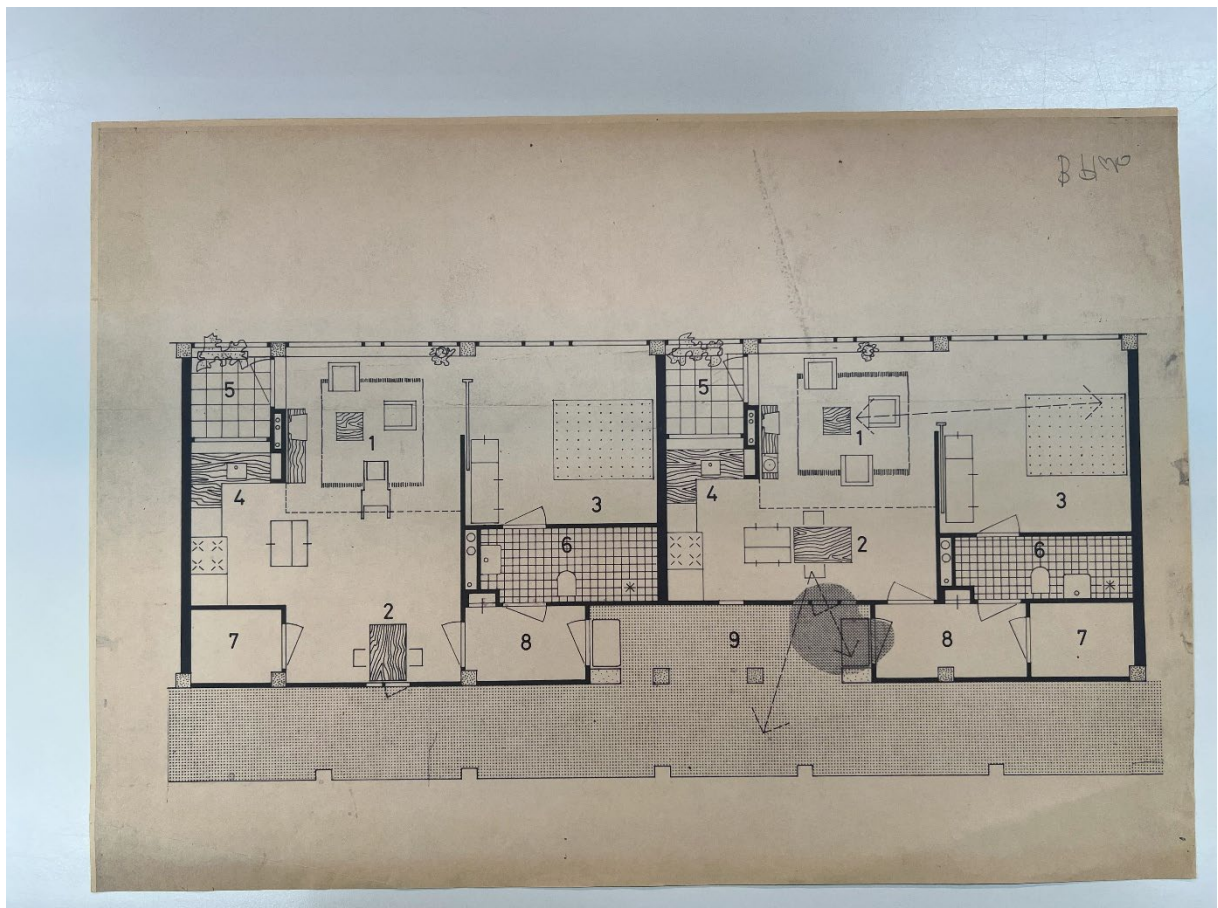


Figure 3-6 Floorplan of housing unit service flat, with overlay of visual connections, n.d., Nieuw instituut, HERT0234

Gathering space at end of corridor

The end of the corridors shows two key principles of Hertzberger. First, the communal gathering place give reason for residents to use the corridor and therefor walk past other meeting spaces.

Secondly, the principle of territorial responsibility is visible. The sense of ownership changes due to spatial conditions. As can be seen on the picture, the narrowing of the corridor which leads into the entrances is taken care of by the residents, the doormat exemplifies this "invisible" boundary. It shows, that when spatial conditions are correct the principle still functions (Hertzberger, 1982).

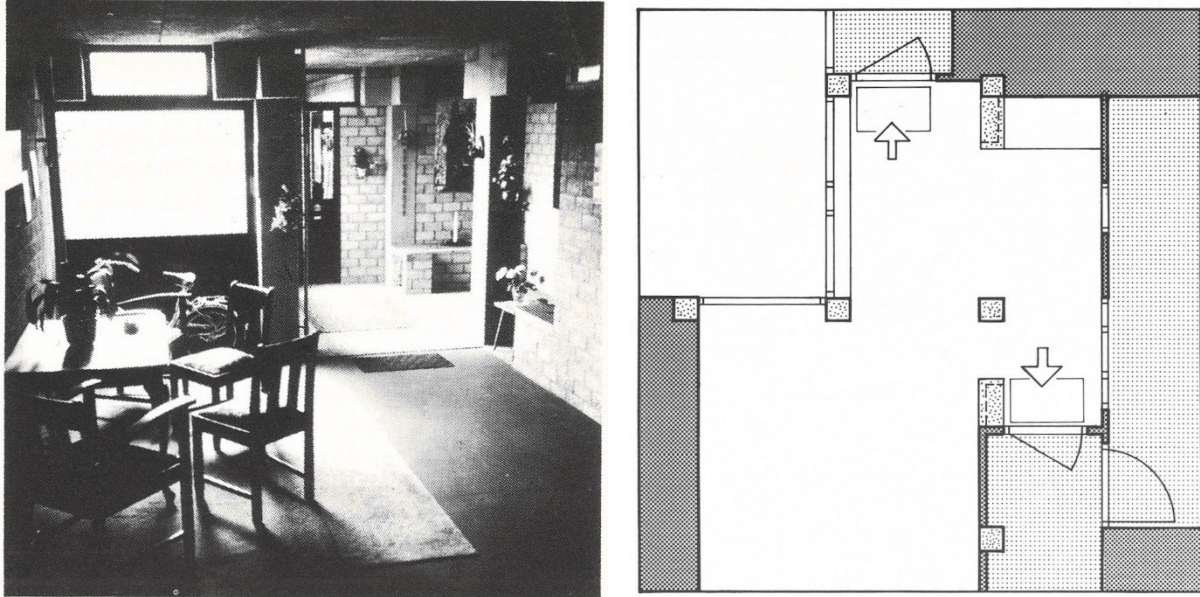


Figure 3-5 Floorplan of room and meeting space nursing home, Nieuw instituut, n.d. HERT0160

Entrances care home

Because of limited mobility, elderly people inside *De Drie Hoven* could easily experience loneliness. Thereby doors of the care home rooms are split into two parts, where the top part could be opened independently from the bottom part. Half open creates an inviting gesture where a dialogue between residents and a passing person can occur (Hertzberger, 1982, p. 15).

Hertzberger designs meeting spaces to foster social interaction, one method to enhance contact is by having a visual connection, as previously explained in Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces. When researching the archives drawings can be found that show how this principle is implemented in some of the meeting spaces from *De Drie Hoven*.



Figure 3-6 Photo of entrance housing unit care home (Hertzberger, 1982)

Figure 3-9 show the different sightlines from specific corridors and housing units. The hatched area shows where these sightlines all cross; this is the place where Hertzberger consequently designed his meeting spaces.

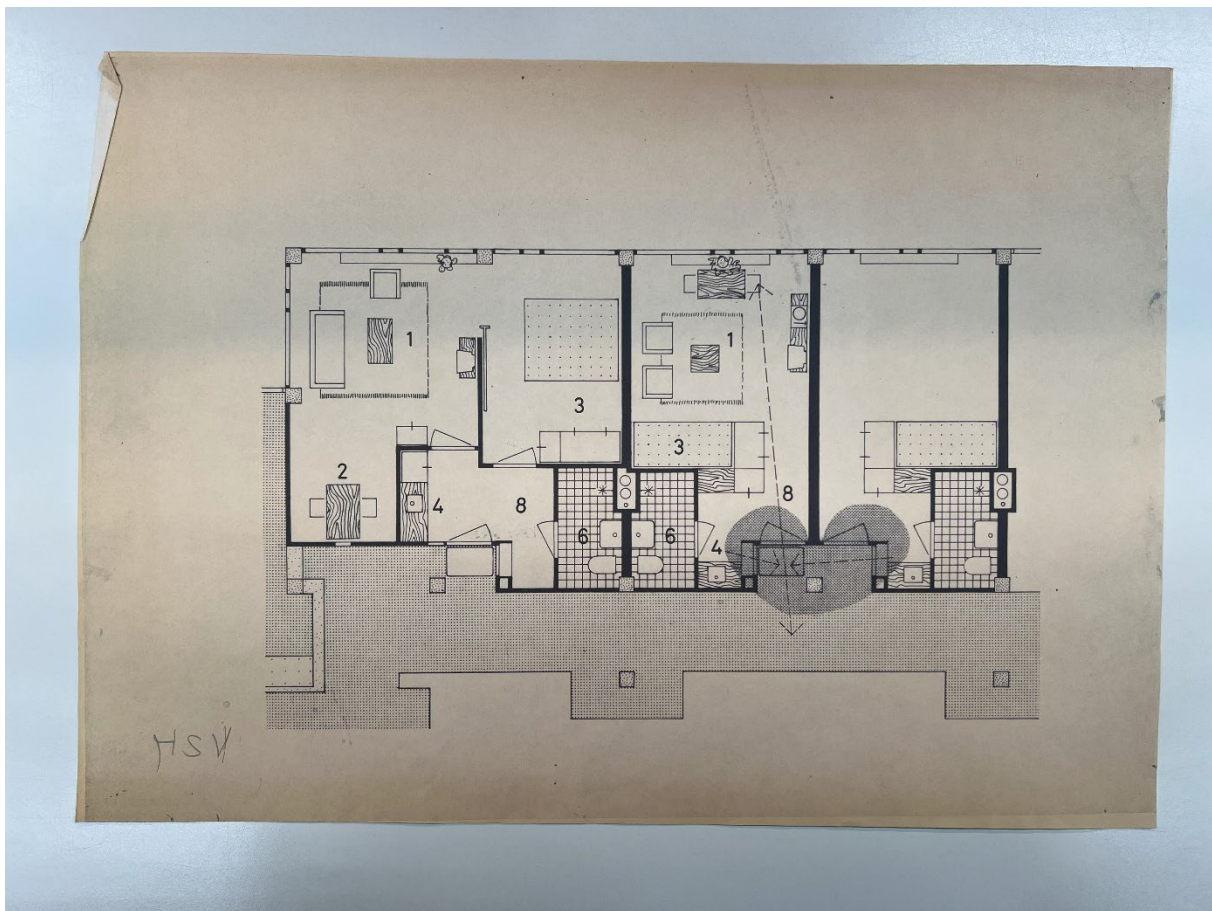


Figure 3-7 Floorplan as housing unit care home, overlay shows visual link, n.d., Nieuw instituut HERT0234

Communal space nursing home

In the rooms of the nursing home, a nearby space has been created where patients can gather and sit together. This exemplifies Hertzberger's philosophy that a building should provide opportunities for its users to remain engaged in activities they are able to do.

The residents of the nursing home have the lowest mobility of all patient groups. Considering this limitation, it seems that Hertzberger's idea was to create a meeting space as closeby as possible. The short distance of only a few meters remains manageable for the residents.

And again, Figure 3-11 shows how the visual link is constructed in this particular space.



Figure 3-8 Photo of meeting space nursing home (Hidden Architecture, n.d.)

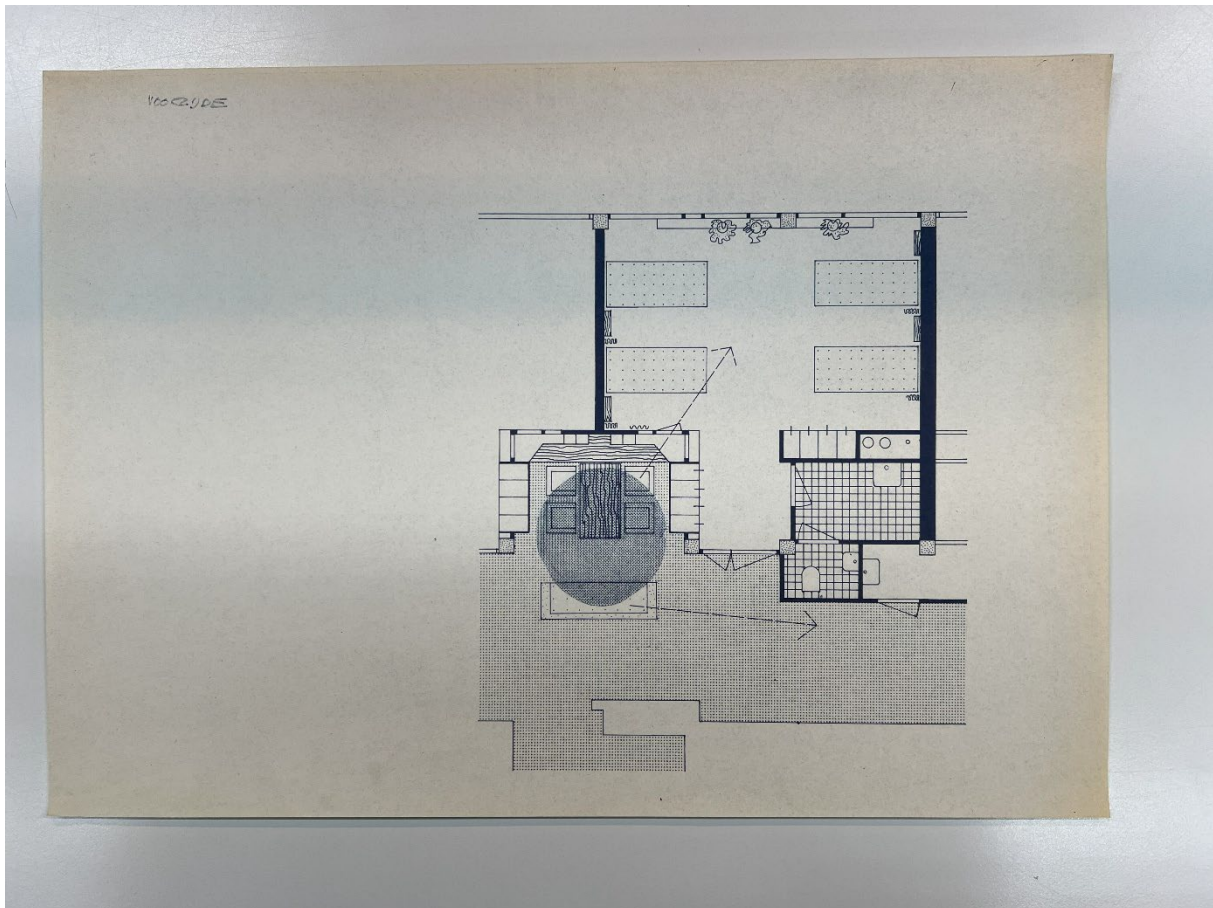


Figure 3-9 Floorplan of nursing home, overlay of visual connection, Nieuw instituut, n.d., HERT0234

Meeting space inside circulation

The theme of "leaving space" is clearly visible in the circulation of *De Drie Hoven*. Hertzberger changes orientation of staircases and elevator shaft to create corners that can be used as seating, telephone cells and other functions.

The goal of these spaces is "short-stay" and therefore increase the chance of a possible social encounter. Figure 3-12 shows design sketches of Hertzberger about the principle "leaving space".

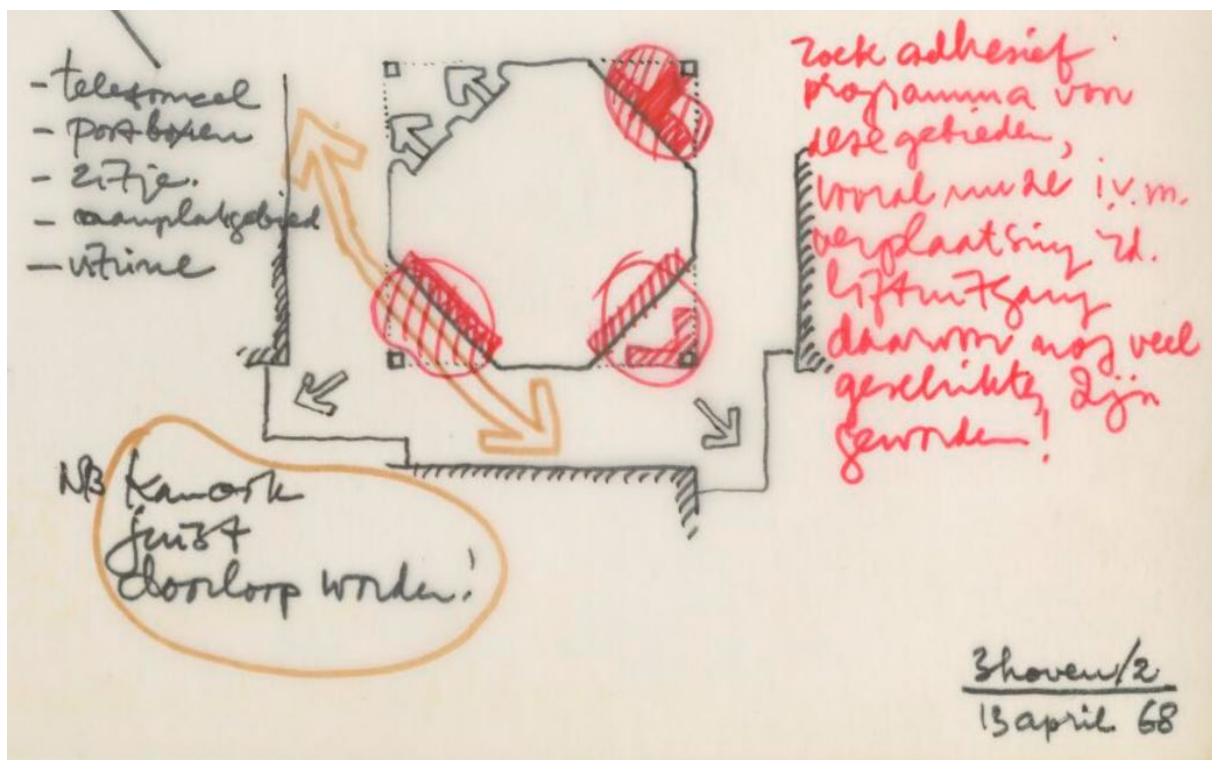
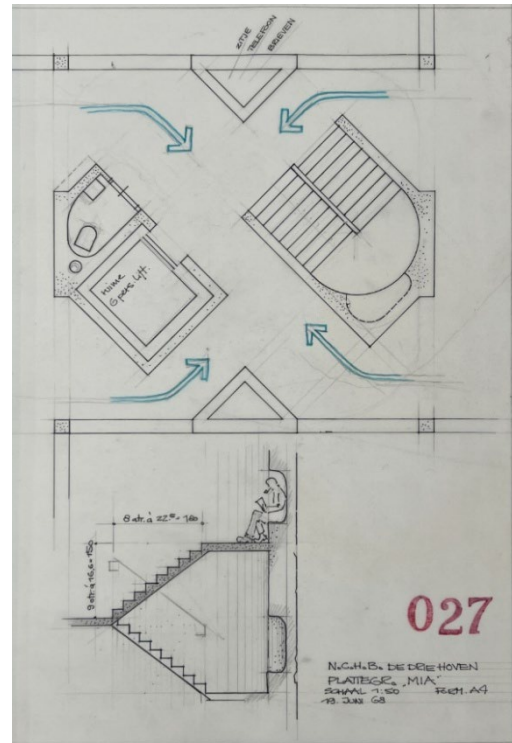


Figure 3-10 Sketch about circulation spaces by Herman Hertzberger; Nieuw instituut, HERT_5.12-10, from time period between November 1967 and September 1968

Another interesting thought can be seen in the sketch below, where Hertzberger emphasizes the importance of the appearance of circulation spaces. He describes that these spaces should evoke the feeling of a living room rather than that of a train station hall, as can be seen in the yellow text bubble.

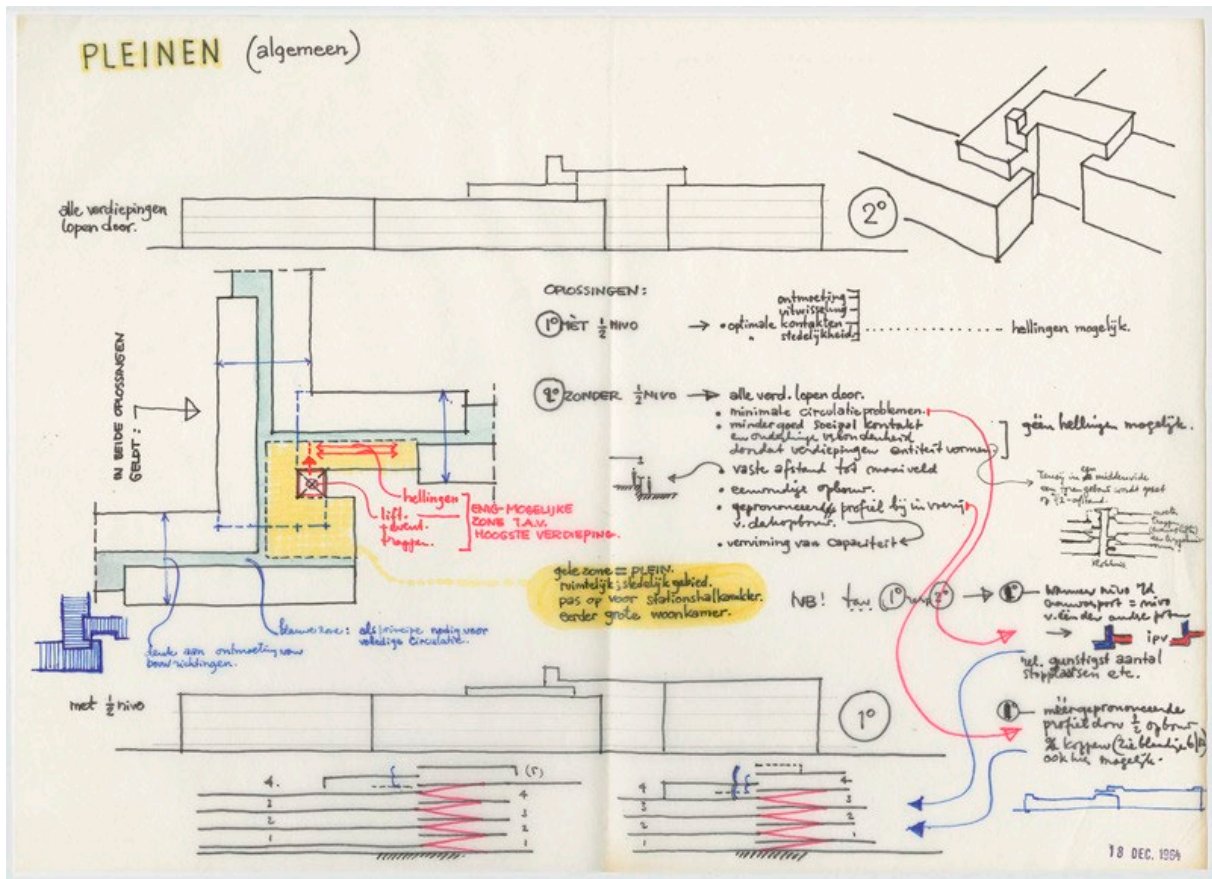


Figure 3-11 Sketch of circulation spaces by Herman Hertzberger; Nieuw instituut, HERT_5.3-19, drawn on 18 December 1964

In this sketch, Hertzberger mentions; "Yellow zone = square, spatial = urban area. Be careful not to create a station hall character. Preferably more like a large living room."

Unrealized design concepts in meeting spaces

One important theme in archival documents is the design approach Hertzberger initially took on daylight within the corridors. On the sketch (figure 3-14), in the bottom right corner, Hertzberger showed the idea of atrium in the corridors to let in natural daylight. The built design shows that this concept was lost during the process of realizing the building.

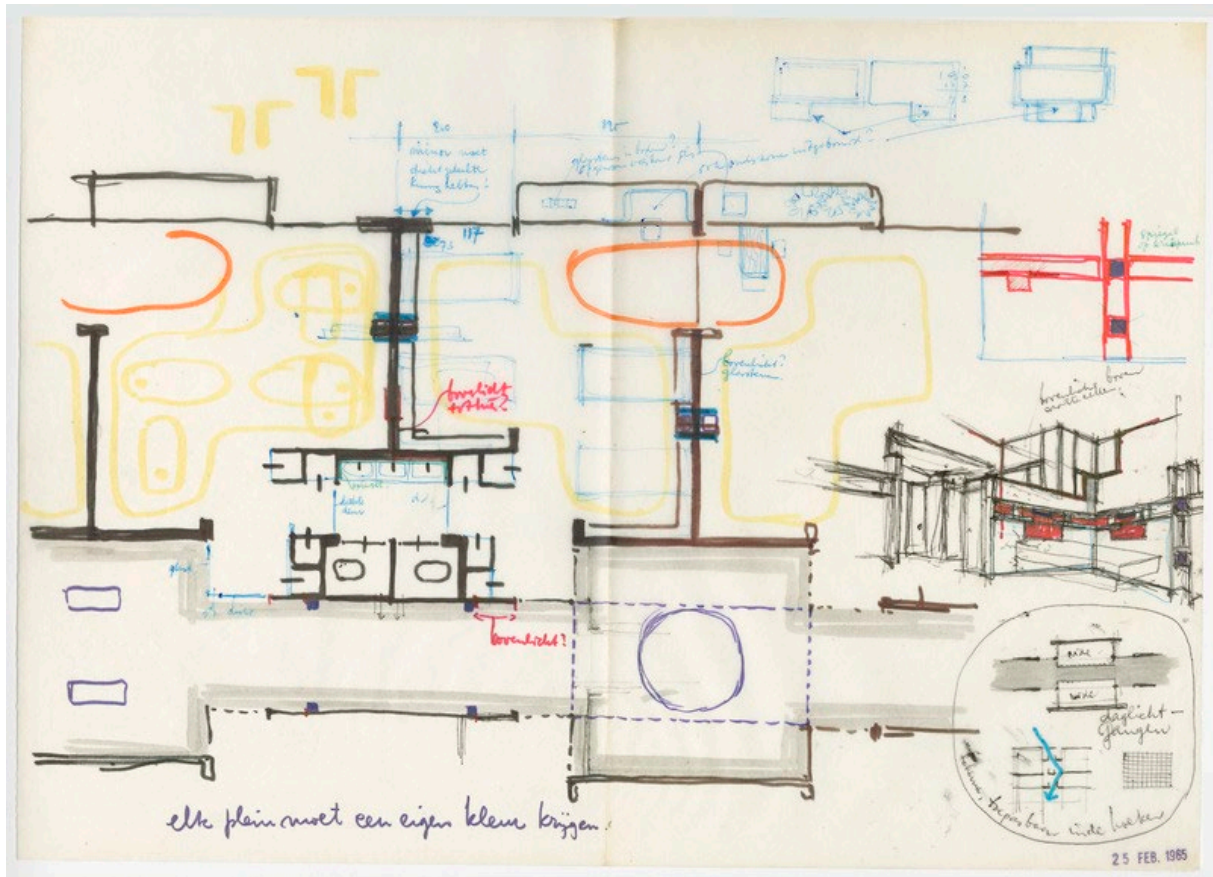


Figure 3-12 Sketch of daylight in corridors, Nieuw instituut, HERT_5.4-16, drawn on 25 February 1965

In early presentation floorplans these mezzanine spaces are also visible in the communal spaces of the building. After the archival studies it remains uncertain why these mezzanine spaces were not constructed in the final design.

Key findings on meeting spaces

From the previous analysis of archival documents and literature, a couple of leading themes used by Herman Hertzberger within *De Drie Hoven* can be identified. These are the following themes:

Visual link

Although it isn't sure that the sketches that represent the visual link on the entrances of the different housing units are made by Herman Hertzberger. It is most likely that they are sketched by Herman Hertzberger as he describes this exact principle in other literature. When linking Hertzberger's theory to the case study visual link can be identified as a guiding principle used by Herman Hertzberger.

At a lot of the meeting spaces there is a variety of visual connections from corridor to room, and meeting space to corridor or room.

Softening of private and public boundaries and creating territorial responsibilities

Hertzberger carefully designed transitions from public to private inside *De Drie Hoven*, residents often take care for the public space in front of their housing unit. This can be traced back to Hertzberger's principle of territorial responsibility. This idea is visible at entrances of housing units where residents place chairs and other furniture.

Creating spaces and leaving room for interaction

Hertzberger says, to create the opportunity for interaction, space is needed. We can refer to this principle as 'leaving space'. This is noticeable in different meeting spaces, for example the entrances of housing units are setback and the staircases are turned 45 degrees to leave room for seating.

Short stay

In many of the meeting spaces inside *De Drie Hoven*, the focus is on creating an environment that encourages a 'short stay.' A careful analysis of photos, archival documents, and written works reveals that Hertzberger considers these short moments crucial for enhancing social interaction. When people occupy the same space, even momentarily, the chance of encountering someone passing by increases.

Reason for use

According to Hertzberger, it is important to provide a reason for using corridors; otherwise, the meeting spaces within these corridors will not be used.

4. Wider perspective on meeting spaces within *De Drie Hoven*

In the following chapter, experiences and stories from actual residents or users of *De Drie Hoven* are described. Also, architectural reflections and later research is analyzed. All these stories will later be linked to the first part of this research to create a deeper understanding of the social functioning of these spaces.

User experiences in *De Drie Hoven*

De Drie Hoven allows residents to personalize communal spaces. Mrs. V.W.M. Schmidt, resident of a service flat, describes how residents are encouraged to decorate the corridors and seating areas with plants, pictures, and furniture, creating a warm atmosphere. Even pets are allowed to stay, an unusual but important gesture towards making the building feel like home³.

Another perspective is from the butcher across the street. Mr. Slijkerman has a lot of clients who regularly give their opinion about *De Drie Hoven*. In general, he concludes the following. This has been written in ‘Cursief’ which was the newspaper of *De Drie Hoven*³. His *Drie Hoven* customers generally find the house dark and the stone walls so-so! But the messages did improve over time.

Positive experiences are also shared in informal stories, a visitor quoted in the residents' newspaper ‘Cursief’, who praises the spacious design, half-doors for social interaction, and the colorful, homely interior³. Concluding enthusiastically that "you really have to see it for yourself."

Reflections of architectural critiques

Critics were largely positive about the social intentions behind *De Drie Hoven*. As Salomons (1975) writes in *Het Parool*, the way seating areas in the corridors create a living room atmosphere. Which is a rare achievement in a nursing home. Yet he also noted that the building's socially vibrant interior was not reflected to its exterior.

Van Zuylen (1975) similarly highlights the building's opportunities for personalization. While this often has negative influence on the architectural value, he argued that Hertzberger designed *De Drie Hoven* to ‘embrace’ its inhabitants without losing its architectural quality.

More critical reflections come from Huisman (1987), who questioned Hertzberger's assumption that people would naturally take ownership of communal spaces. He mentioned the failure of the collective gardens, which eventually had to be maintained by a local school. This evidence shows that this assumption does not always function.

In de ‘woningraad’ the openness of *De Drie Hoven* is seen as a risk, since the concept of the building was far away from a traditional elderly housing complex it required adaptability from its initial residents (Denijs & Pouw, 1975, p. 349).

Reflections of later research on *De Drie Hoven*

In the research (Hertzberger et al., 1990) there is a reflection on *De Drie Hoven* 15 years after completion. In the book different articles are presented. Houben writes that combining different functions under one roof was an innovative solution for the time. However, the demarcation between the different houses was greater than expected. When residents' conditions worsened, they still had to move within the building, which was ultimately experienced negatively (Hertzberger et al., 1990, p. 29).

Van Hoogdalem writes about the future of *De Drie Hoven*, and mentions shortcomings of the design. One is about the lack of daylight in spaces which are intensively used during the day (Hertzberger et al., 1990, p. 35). Residents use the seatings for the majority of the day, but these spaces are inside the corridor and have no direct daylight.

³ ‘Cursief speciaal no. 33’ newspaper of *De Drie Hoven*, special edition for official opening of *De Drie Hoven*. Made by residents and caretakers of *De Drie Hoven*, 29 May 1975, Nieuw instituut, HERTd1855 HERT0762

Another critique from Van Hoogdalem is the lack of privacy in the nursing home. The shared four-person rooms are visually connected to the common seating area in front of them, meaning that patients are always in sight of a nurse or other residents.

In the article from (Sutherland, 1976) which was published just after completion, an interesting shift is noticeable. Where Sutherland describes certain points as qualities, 15 years later these exact point are seen as a disadvantage. About the moving of patients he writes the following;

“The advantage of *De Drie Hoven* is that when occupants become unable to manage under “half care” as most of the semi- and mobile disabled occupants are, they can be shifted down the “street” into a physically familiar setting.

5. Conclusion

This research on meeting spaces within *De Drie Hoven*, first analyzed through the lens of architect Herman Hertzberger and later linked to lived experiences, underscores the importance of social interaction in elderly housing. The shift in the 1970s from isolated complexes to integrated, socially engaging environments marked a transformation in elderly housing architecture. *De Drie Hoven* exemplified this change by prioritizing the well-being of its residents through a human-centered approach where it provided meeting spaces. This research shows that Hertzberger's theory generally aligns with lived experiences; however, due to the complexity of *De Drie Hoven*, it is sometimes not as effective as it could be.

To start, Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces is primarily based on the transition between public and private spaces, constructing a sense of ownership, visual connections, and creating reasons for use. These principles are clearly reflected in the meeting spaces of *De Drie Hoven*, which are used to provoke social encounters. The meeting spaces that incorporate the theory are entrances of housing units, communal seating areas throughout the corridors but also spaces inside the circulation areas. In these spaces it's visible how Hertzberger designed them according to the principles as visual link, leaving space and creating spatial conditions to construct a sense of ownership in communal areas.

However, when linking Hertzberger's meeting spaces to lived experiences and other literature, a gap is highlighted between the architects intent and the lived experience. There are two important notes at the meeting spaces within *De Drie Hoven*. First, while Hertzberger's theory is effective in many cases, *De Drie Hoven* exemplifies the thin line that needs to be balanced when specifically focusing on an elderly audience. For instance, while a visual link enhances connection for residents of the service flats, in the nursing home, it was perceived as a breach of privacy. Similarly, the concept of territorial responsibility functions well indoors, where residents take care of the space in front of their homes, but fails in the communal gardens, where no one felt responsible for their maintenance. Secondly, practical challenges—such as limited daylight and orientation—impacted the effectiveness in some of the meeting spaces within *De Drie Hoven*. However, several design compromises are not a consequence of Hertzberger's intentions. For example, archival research reveals that Hertzberger had originally proposed skylights in the communal corridors, which would have solved the lack of natural light.

Hertzberger's emphasis on the importance of meeting spaces in shaping social interactions remains a well-founded concept. However, these findings highlight the complexity of designing for elderly users rather than undermining the strength of the architects concepts.

This research contributes to the ongoing discussion on loneliness in elderly architecture by linking Hertzberger's intentions to real-world experiences, offering lessons on the social qualities necessary in elderly housing. While this study focuses on *De Drie Hoven*, further research should examine a case study free of the practical shortcomings found here. Such an analysis could provide a clearer evaluation of Hertzberger's theory on meeting spaces.

Despite the complexity of *De Drie Hoven*, it shows that Hertzberger's vision continues to be a meaningful foundation for designing socially effective elderly architecture.

6. Discussion

In the end, this research highlights the complexity of designing a well-functioning and socially engaging building. It shows how difficult it is for an architect to anticipate and meet the diverse needs of users during the design process. A strong design intention alone is not a guarantee for a successful outcome. Various factors, often beyond the architect's control, can prevent these intentions from being fully realized, as can be seen in Hertzberger's unimplemented plans for natural light in the communal corridor of *De Drie Hoven*.

Additionally, one observation from contemporary literature is the tendency to overlook smaller meeting spaces in research for elderly housing. Current research often focuses on larger communal areas that serve the entire community. However, this thesis shows that smaller social spaces also play a crucial role in fostering socially strong architecture.

A limitation of this research is its focus on a single case study. Analyzing a wider range of projects would provide a more complete perspective.

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