

The Effect of Multifunctional Centers on Intergenerational Target Groups

Architectural History Thesis



Central hall of the Meerpaal (NI Archive, 1967)

Abstract

The concept of multifunctional centers emerged strongly in the post-World War II period in the Netherlands. This concept was brought as a solution to strengthen social cohesion and fight segregation in diverse neighborhoods. Combining different functions in these centers is a widely researched topic in the field of architectural history. This thesis will focus more specifically on the intergenerational aspect of the combination of different target groups within a multifunctional center. The main question is: ***What is the goal of Frank van Klingereren with a multifunctional center on intergenerational target groups?***

In order to find an answer to this research question, the following method is used. Using a literature review, first, the political and societal background is researched, and secondly, governmental and architectural ideologies regarding multifunctional centers are analyzed. After that, three case studies, about de Meerpaal in Dronten, the Agora in Lelystad, and 't Karregat in Eindhoven, were conducted. Based on this, the following answer is formulated. The goal of Frank van Klingereren was to stimulate interaction between different groups in society to strengthen community life, which would stimulate communal activities, participation, and openness. With this, he tried to decrease the gap between private and public.

With this thesis, the knowledge gap about intergenerational contact in multifunctional centers is decreased. This contributes to the knowledge about the functioning of these centers. A notable implication is that it was hard to find sources that were specifically relevant for the intergenerational aspect, rather than different target groups in general. To substantiate the answer more strongly, further research is needed.

Keywords: *multifunctional center, Frank van Klingereren, age groups, target groups, social interaction, intergenerational*

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Introduction

In the discourse on community building, the concept of multifunctional centers has emerged as a solution to foster social cohesion and counteract segregation in diverse neighborhoods.

Frank van Klingereren, an architect and urban planner, had the idea of creating spaces where individuals from different age groups and social backgrounds could come together, interact, and build trust. His work has been widely researched, but the intergenerational aspect is still little written about. Therefore, the research question is: ***What is the goal of Frank van Klingereren with a multifunctional center on intergenerational target groups?***

Mixing different generational groups was already relevant in the 1970s. The Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Work (CRM) played a central role in promoting multifunctional centers. Their publication *Werken met sociaal-culturele accommodaties. Een gebouw is meer dan een ding* (Van Haalen et al., 1978) supported this idea with practical guidelines. The book echoes the broader ideas of the 1970s in the Netherlands, in which government and local communities sought inclusiveness, efficiency, and participation. Also in the *Experientia docet* published in 1976 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, this zeitgeist of 1968-1969, where community building with new forms of living and housing in which people could live together, is mentioned.

But also, current research highlights the effect of multifunctional centers on contact between generational groups. Nelischer and Loukaitou-Sideris (2022) state that there are multiple benefits to intergenerational public spaces, such as individual health and well-being. Secondly, they describe the enhancement of social cohesion and solidarity. Also, Svendsen (2010) confirms that multifunctional centers bridge social capital and they foster “widespread cooperation between various professional, associational, social, and age groups, leading to high inter-group trust.” Next to this, existing research of the Sociaal en Cultureel Planbureau (Gijsberts et al., 2024) writes about these positive outcomes, such as reducing prejudice and enhancing social cohesion – a principle supported by the contact hypothesis (SER Diversiteit in Bedrijf, 2021). According to this hypothesis, interpersonal contact between groups can diminish stereotypes and stimulate mutual understanding. Besides, all three sources establish that intergenerational spaces contribute to community development, which leads to participation and energy to contribute.

Unless these benefits, research about intergenerational tensions, coming from differing frames of reference, is lacking. So, the goal and impact of age diversity on social cohesion remains a question within the existing literature (Gijsberts et al., 2024).

Topic of thesis

This thesis aims to research this knowledge gap by exploring van Klingereren’s vision for multifunctional centers and their role in stimulating intergenerational cohesion. By reviewing literature and conducting a comparative case study of three multifunctional centers in the Netherlands designed by van Klingereren, this architectural history research will investigate what the goal of the intergenerational contact was. The findings aim to contribute to the broader discourse on the functioning of multifunctional centers.

Research question

What is the goal of Frank van Klingerén with a multifunctional center on intergenerational target groups?

Sub questions

The following sub-questions are covered in the chapters.

1 Background

- *What occurred in the 60s that led to multifunctional centers?*
- *What was the goal of the government in mixing different age groups?*
- *Who was Frank van Klingerén?*

2 Ideologies about multifunctional centers

- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of the government?*
- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of (architectural) movements?*
- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of Frank van Klingerén?*
- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of other relatable architects in that time period?*

3 Case studies

- *What are the (ages of the) target groups of the building?*
- *What was the goal of Frank van Klingerén in bringing different age groups together?*
- *What was the outcome of bringing together different age groups?*

Research method

Multiple sources and research methods are used for this architectural history research. To find an answer to the research question, at first, the time period and societal and political context will be researched. In this part, information about the background of Frank van Klingerén will be gathered as well. In the second chapter, ideologies about multifunctional centers will be researched. Both the ideas of the government and the ideologies of Frank van Klingerén and the relatable architects of that time period. In the third chapter, three case studies will be conducted. These cases are all postwar multifunctional centers designed by the architect Frank van Klingerén, which are the following:

- De Meerpaal in Dronten (1967)
- 't Karregat in Eindhoven (1973)
- Multifunctioneel Centrum Agora in Lelystad (1977)

For all the chapters, archival research will be conducted in order to provide primary historical information. Next to this, primary and secondary literature research will place the research within its historical, cultural, and social framework. Other secondary sources such as newspapers, interviews, and videos will be used.

1 Background

1.1 Time period and societal and political context

To find an answer to the research question, the time period and societal and political context are researched. The following sub-questions will be answered:

- *What occurred in the 60s that led to multifunctional centers?*
- *What was the goal of the government in mixing different age groups?*
- *Who was Frank van Klingereren?*

In the post-war period, during the '60s, societal change was the central theme in the Dutch media, politics, and culture as well as in the world of urban planning. An example of this emerges in the government led by politician Joop den Uyl. One of his main beliefs was that the differences between the powerful and the weak, between the rich and the poor, should be decreased. Besides, the distribution of knowledge, power, and income was one of his main points (Provoost, 2022).

In an article by Van Ussel (1973) in the *Bouw* journal, this search for minimizing differences and sharing between different groups is also mentioned. He states that society is getting colder and that the contact from human to human is decreasing. The need for social contact, openness, and participation comes up in the built environment. This is confirmed in an informational booklet of AMRO about 't Karregat (1973); "the general desire-from the late sixties - to break down existing frameworks, promote social contacts, by bringing people out of isolation with their activities and thus encouraging real community life". Lastly, in the *Experientia docet* published in 1976 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, they write about the zeitgeist of 1968-1969, where community building with new forms of living and housing in which people could live together is the new standard. Communal gardens and squares, meeting and communes gain importance.

In conclusion, the change in societal beliefs explained in the previous part led to the need for communal meeting places, such as multifunctional centers. The goal of the government in mixing different age groups was mainly to minimize differences and stimulate sharing between them. This also encouraged community life and participation.

1.2 Frank van Klingereren

Frank van Klingereren (1919–1999) was a self-taught Dutch architect renowned for his innovative, multifunctional community buildings that promoted social interaction and flexibility. Born in Rotterdam, van Klingereren was initially trained as a construction engineer but ventured into architecture independently, distinguishing himself from contemporaries by avoiding traditional architectural standards (Bugaric, 2018). He studied civil engineering at the MTS, and then in 1940, he continued with education in concrete and steel. After this, he started working as a structural engineer at the Nederlandse Dok Maatschappij (NDM), after which he established his own office in 1948. In the 1950s, the combination of technical, constructive, and architectural aspects became characteristic of his company. In 1957, he renamed the company to "Architecten en ingenieursbureau van Klingereren," reflecting the shift to the architectural side of his work (Van den Bergen & Vollaard, 2003).

He found greater affinity with avant-garde groups of the time than with established architects, although he shared similar ideas with figures like Herman Hertzberger. His main interests were multifunctionality and adaptability in architecture. Beyond his architectural achievements, van Klingereren was a prominent media personality and societal critic, often appearing on television to discuss his progressive ideas (Bugaric, 2018).

2 Ideologies about multifunctional centers

Now that the political and societal context is established, the thesis will zoom in on the ideologies about multifunctional centers. Ideas of the government, different architectural movements, and architects, including Frank van Klinger, will be analyzed.

2.1 Government and movements

The following sub-questions will be answered:

- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of the government?*
- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of (architectural) movements?*

Government

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the ideology of politician Joop den Uyl was focused on contact between different societal groups. Looking at his ideas regarding urban development, he stands for participation, egalitarianism, and non-commercial or economic growth driven. Knowledge, power, and income should be spread equally in the built environment (Provoost 2022).

Next to this, Doeve and Stolzenburg wrote in 1988 about the 'neighborhood idea' which came up in the reconstruction period after the Second World War. They describe this as "efforts to achieve conscious community building in the city". They also mention Rotterdam public works official W.F. Geyl, who was the advocate of this concept. His interpretation of the neighborhood idea in 1946 and 1947 pleads for a community building in every neighborhood where different services and activities can take place.

Architectural movements

These ideologies started right after the war, when the main architectural movement in the Netherlands was the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne) led by Le Corbusier. They felt that social, both planned and chance, encounters should take place in designated centers (Barbieri & Rodrigo, 1983). Although this may seem in line with the neighborhood idea, there were multiple critiques on the CIAM ideologies. For instance, M. Hajer argues in 1989 in his book *De stad als publiek domein*, that CIAM misunderstood the power of urban life emerging from the "chaos" of the big city. According to him, pulling apart functions according to CIAM principles creates enlarged individuality and isolation.

In 2004, M. de Vletter published the book *De kritiese jaren zeventig*, in which he reflects on the critiques and changes after the CIAM movement. According to him, the basis of the change in architecture and urban planning in the 1970s was because of the growing dissatisfaction with the quality of architecture and urban planning, and the increase in scale. The attention to the 'humane and small-scale' aspect of the built environment was growing. An example of this is the small-scale and humane building put forward by the Forum architects led by architect Aldo van Eyck. This was a reaction to monotonous building and the individualization of society (Vletter, 2004).

2.2 Frank van Klinger and other architects

The following sub-questions will be answered:

- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of Frank van Klingereren?*
- *What were the ideologies about multifunctional centers of other relatable architects in that time period?*

Frank van Klingereren

When having a closer look at the field of architecture and the ideologies of the '60s, architects develop ideas to encourage this societal contact between different groups. Starting with Frank van Klingereren, who is the architect of the three case studies conducted in the following chapter. According to Van Haalen (1978), the concept of 'multifunctionality' began to live on among several pioneers, such as engineer and architect Frank van Klingereren.

Van den Bergen & Vollaard (2003) argue that van Klingereren's work was strongly influenced by social issues. One of these social issues was, according to van Klingereren, that society in the 1970s was too compartmentalized, so he wanted to allow people to meet each other (Laarakker, 2020). His ideology was an attempt at 'decluttering', what the division of society into segments means. This is not only about the spatial division, but also about the division of activities. Examples of this are the loss of the connection between education and societal activities, or the separation of elderly people in elderly homes. Van Klingereren states that "Human beings, however, are one coherent being, and from there the dissatisfaction with the division of society can be explained spatially and functionally." Based on this, he thinks that humans should be able to perform multiple functions mutually as much as possible (Van Haalen, 1978). Provoost (2020) adds to this that van Klingereren advocated 'conflict' precisely by facilitating interaction. This conflict would lead to the earlier mentioned 'decluttering' of society in which people would no longer be active only in their own social environment ('clut', or present-day 'bubble'), but would actively interact with others through conflict.

Next to this, Bontekoe (1973) explains van Klingereren's plea for reorientation of the relationship between public and private life. This is related to his credo "the whole city will be an agora," in which he explained the agora as a medieval city where the street serves for encounters. Provoost (2020) adds to this that the diverse activities would have nuisance to each other, which was the prerequisite for communication and community building according to van Klingereren. The integration of functions should lead to interaction between people of different societal groups.

Van Klingereren's ideologies, analyzed by van Haalen, Provoost, and Bontekoe, are confirmed by the interview with van Klingereren published in *Het Rotterdamsch Parool* in 1967. Here van Klingereren explains his ideologies about the new and open society where the societal aspect is placed centrally. Besides, he talks about disturbance and 'decluttering'. Where social contact is encouraged by disturbance and the existing system of 'cluts', such as elderly homes, must be broken to connect people with each other.

Van Haalen (1978) zooms in on van Klingereren's idea of socio-cultural accommodation; "Socio-cultural accommodations serve as meeting places for diverse populations, such as young and old, different social classes and cultural backgrounds. The building acts as a space where ideas are exchanged, and cooperation takes place."

More specifically, Bontekoe (1973) describes van Klingereren's vision on human, education, and society as that society should change education. The main thought was "integration or collaboration of commerce, culture, recreation, health care and education; the integration of preschool and primary education; the bridging of the gap between school and family; a living

heart to pump new blood into more normalized relationships between people; education as an everyday, natural activity in social life.”

Van den Bergen and Vollaard (2003) sum up van Klingereren’s ideology as “The recurring themes in van Klingereren’s work are publicness and meeting, integration of functions and an architecture that leaves room for unexpected change.”

Other architects

Provoost (2020) also describes the ideologies of other architects in the same time period, such as Aldo van Eyck. Already in 1959, his designed building for the civic orphanage in Amsterdam opened. In here, interventions such as small seats, thresholds, benches, and other furniture were part of small-scale and societal meetings, which were an important part of the design. Later in 1972, Herman Hertzberger also stated that the community center should be designed by the users according to their wishes. This openness of activities should lead to interaction. Van Klingereren shared these ideas with his colleagues, but was one of the most progressive in terms of multifunctionality and community building. Therefore specifically his projects are case studied in this thesis.

2.3 Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the previous analysis, van Klingereren’s ideology was to stimulate interaction between different groups in society and counter ‘decluttering’. He goes even further by saying that disturbance is the means that leads to this interaction. Different activities should be mixed in order to encourage interaction even when they are a nuisance to each other. With this, he aimed to decrease the gap between private and public. Related to this is van Klingereren’s idea that society should be more intertwined with education.

Also, other architects from the same time period, such as Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, share these ideas about stimulating interaction between different target groups in one building.

3 Case studies

In order to find an answer to the research question, three completed multifunctional centers designed by Frank van Klingereren will be case studied. The projects will be analyzed on the aimed target groups, the goal of bringing together these target groups, and the outcome of it. In the following three case studies, the following sub-questions are covered.

- *What are the (ages of the) target groups of the building?*
- *What was the goal of Frank van Klingereren in bringing different age groups together?*
- *What was the outcome of bringing together different age groups?*

The following projects will be case studied:

- De Meerpaal in Dronten (1967)
- 't Karregat in Eindhoven (1973)
- Multifunctioneel Centrum Agora in Lelystad (1977)

3.1 Meerpaal, Dronten

The Meerpaal in Dronten is designed by Frank van Klingereren and was opened in 1967. This so-called 'trade fair complex' was an urban building which is described as a covered plaza partially surrounded by "buildings" by which diverse functions are meant (Van den Bergen & Vollaard, 2001). To determine the target groups, explanations and plans will be analyzed. Next to that, literature research will be conducted in order to gain knowledge about the usage of the buildings by different target groups of different ages.

Target groups

In order to analyze the original design of the community center, the Flevolands Archief has been consulted. In an explanation of the preliminary design, written by architect van Klingereren in 1965, the program is described. The program for the trade fair on the ground floor consists of the large hall, balcony, stage, foyer, and the central hall. These spaces are used by target groups of all ages. For the hotel-restaurant part, an entrée with offices and toilets, café-restaurant, meeting room, and kitchen is included. This part was more focused on (young-)adults and the elderly instead of children. Next to these two main functions, the design includes a cinema, exhibition space, bowling alley, and a sports hall for basketball, volleyball, and tennis, which are more focused on younger target groups.

In the floor plan below, the positioning of different functions in relation to each other is visible. All the functions, such as the café restaurant, the cinema, and the bowling alley, are placed around the central hall. Based on this, it can be assumed that different functions were aimed to be mixed.

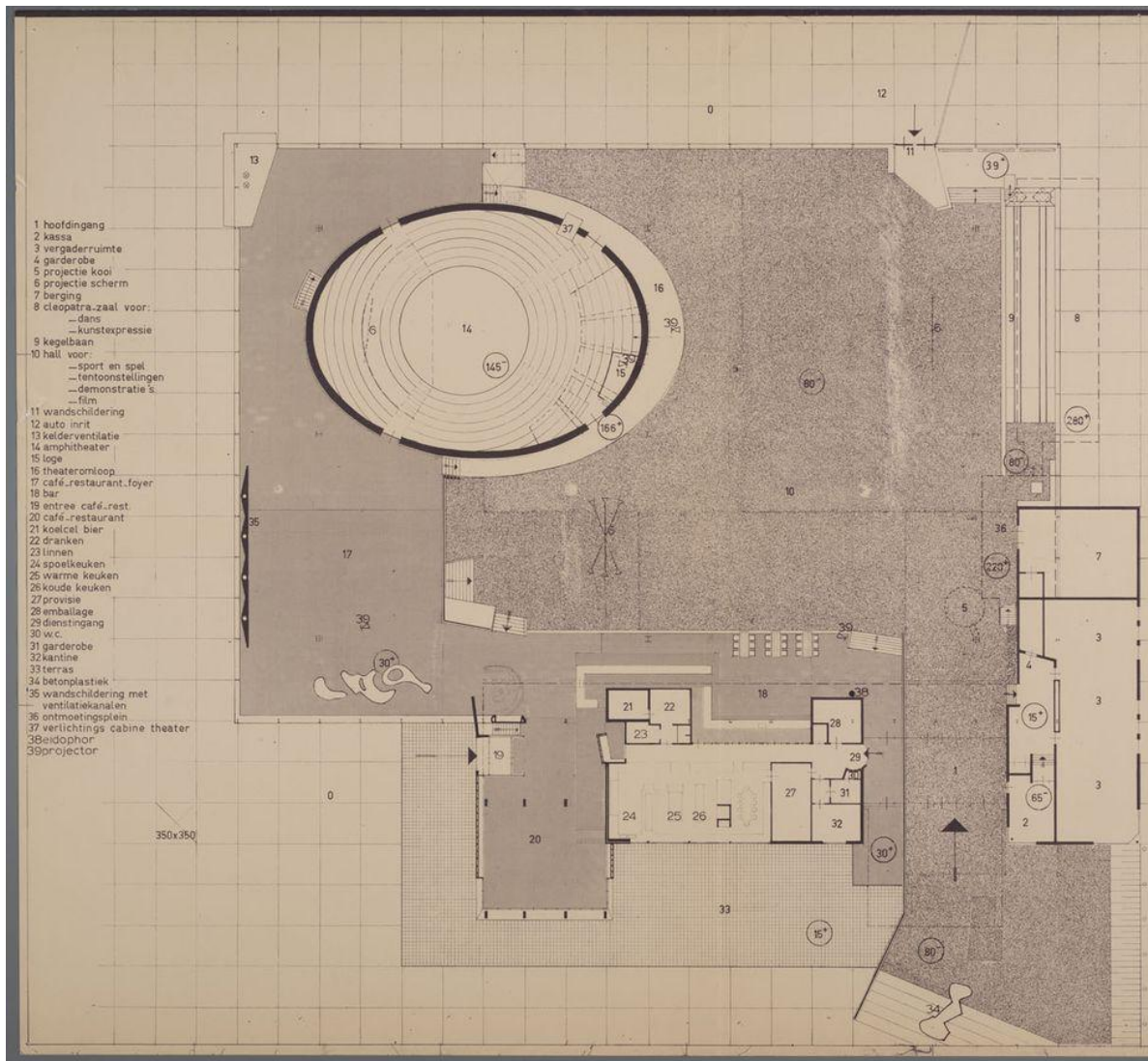


Figure 1, Ground floor plan of the Meerpaal in Dronten (NI archive, 1967)

Besides this overview, short explanations of the use of the spaces are included in the explanation of the preliminary design (1965). For example, the architect writes that the large hall “can accommodate all sports and game demonstrations, competitions, exhibitions, mass political and economic demonstrations, and Christmas singing. All around, there is plenty of spectator space available from the square-level foyer, the meeting rooms, the intermediate plaza, the bar and café-restaurant complex, and the perimeter walk around the theater.” Based on this, it is assumed that the interaction between functions and, therefore, target groups was strong.



Figure 2, shot from video after opening (Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders, 1970)

In an interview with van Klingereren shown in a video dated from 1970 made by the Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders, the architect explains about the philosophy of the program. According to him, the building should function as an agora with open community life where people can see and meet each other. This openness leads automatically to social contact and to the possibility of undertaking any kind of activity you can think of. The central hall is part of the square and is a space to see each other and watch each other.

In the video made by the Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders (1970), several shots are shown of the use of the building. This shows the simultaneous use of the building by various target groups.

The Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders also mentioned these open activities in an inventory and analysis of the activities in the Meerpaal: “After all, the building also fulfills other - difficult to register - functions. Think of the functions as a “pied-à-terre” for many young and also elderly people, as a play and sports place for young people outside school and club contexts.”

In conclusion, based on the explained program, the floorplan, the shots from the video, and the other pictures, the Meerpaal was meant for and used by a variety of target groups with all different ages, which were equally represented.



Figure 3, shot from video after opening (Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders, 1970)



Figure 4, shot from video after opening (Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders, 1970)



Figure 5, Central hall of the Meerpaal (NI Archive, 1967)



Figure 6, Sport event in the central hall of the Meerpaal (NI Archive, 1967)

Goal of bringing different groups together

Now that it has been concluded that the Meerpaal housed a wide range of target groups of all different ages, the goal of bringing together these different groups will be analyzed.

In an interview with van Klingereren published in the *Rotterdamsch Parool* in 1967, he mentioned that the space was supposed to be open for diverse activities such as congresses, fairs, exhibitions, meetings, market day, concerts, theater, film, and indoor sports. This is also visible in figures 6 and 7 from Het Nieuwe Instituut Archive (1967). His philosophy of this openness is to “not build, because we do not know the requirements of the future in the field of recreation. So create a basic facility that future generations can build on.” Relating this to the role of the community center, he states regarding the location that the building should be in the middle of the village, which will lead to the continuation of existing space. Regarding the function, he says that the building should allow everyone to come in to connect with other people.

An article in the magazine *Bouw* published in 1966 describes the relation of the diverse functions and the contact between different groups. They say that the openness of the spaces leads to further stimulation of curiosity and social contact.

An example of this open use is bringing in the weekly market to “confront a larger public with culture through chance encounters while shopping in the hope that it would eventually come to contamination” (Van den Bergen & Vollaard, 2003). This ‘contamination’ between different people is similar to the intended disturbance van Klingereren talks about; “precisely by deliberately letting people disturb each other a little, you give them a sense of belonging” (Van den Ende, 1967).

In general, the previous analysis shows that the goal of bringing together different groups was to connect people and encourage curiosity and social contact.

Outcome and critiques

After analyzing the goal of bringing different target groups together, the question arises whether this goal is achieved at the Meerpaal in Dronten.

Based on Van Haalen et al. (1978), the multifunctional use in practice resulted in a lot of noise pollution between the main hall and the theatre. Besides, he stated that “there are no indications that there is a real mixing of the different user groups. For community centers, the characterization 'living room for the neighborhood' is sometimes used. This then does not apply to the central meeting area of the Meerpaal.” The acoustic and visual problems got the upper hand, according to him. Van den Bergen & Vollaard (2003) add to this that the Meerpaal was a 'victim of its own success' because the building was too fully programmed, making spontaneous use impossible.

On the other hand, when interpreting the pictures of the usage of the building and comparing this to the goal of van Klingereren of combining different target groups, another conclusion can be drawn. Both in the video made by the Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders in 1970 and on the pictures found in the archive, diverse target groups of different ages gather in the Meerpaal during different activities. Based on this, it can be concluded that the goal of the architect is achieved. That this led to acoustic and visual problems can coexist.

3.2 Agora, Lelystad

The second case study is about the Agora in Lelystad, opened in 1977. This community center was a follow-up to the function mix that was also discussed in the Meerpaal. The Meerpaal could be seen as urbanism, while Agora in Lelystad should be seen as a landscape growing over time (Architectuul, 2017).

Target groups

In the preliminary study for a community center in Lelystad, made by the architectural bureau of van Klingereren in 1970, the program of the Agora in Lelystad is explained. In the surrounding 'shell' around the market hall, the big hall for 500 people (used as a church, theater or conference space), reading room and library, instruction pool and café-restaurant are located. These functions are all accessible for all target groups of different ages. Next to this program, van Klingereren suggested adding functions in a later stage when more financial resources would be available. He suggested adding a sports hall, hotel, meeting rooms, a small hall (300 people), stores, and youth and hobby rooms. In general, all the functions are focused on different target groups of different ages. In the floor plan below, a similar setup as at the Meerpaal is visible, with a central meeting plaza and the other functions around it. In this way, all the functions are connected with each other by the central market hall.

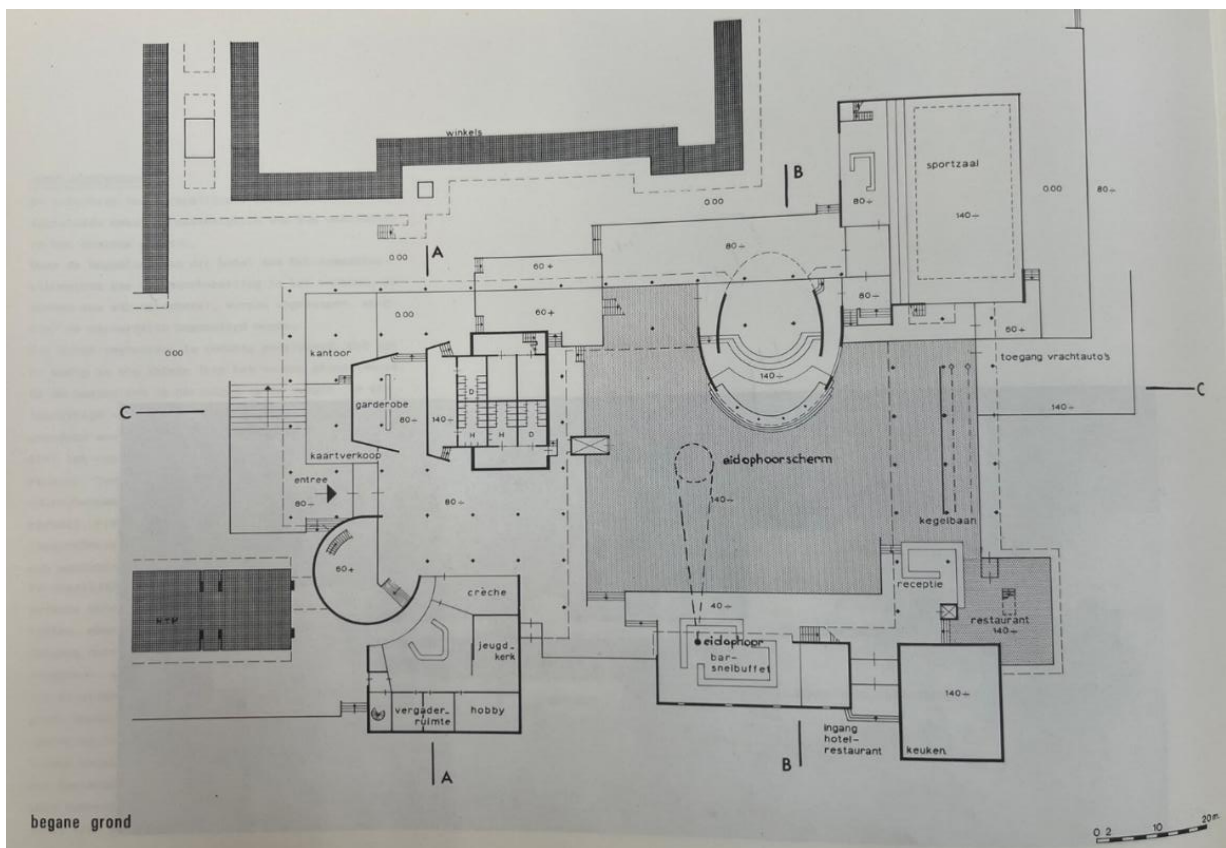


Figure 7, Ground floor plan of Agora in Lelystad (NI Archive, n.d.)

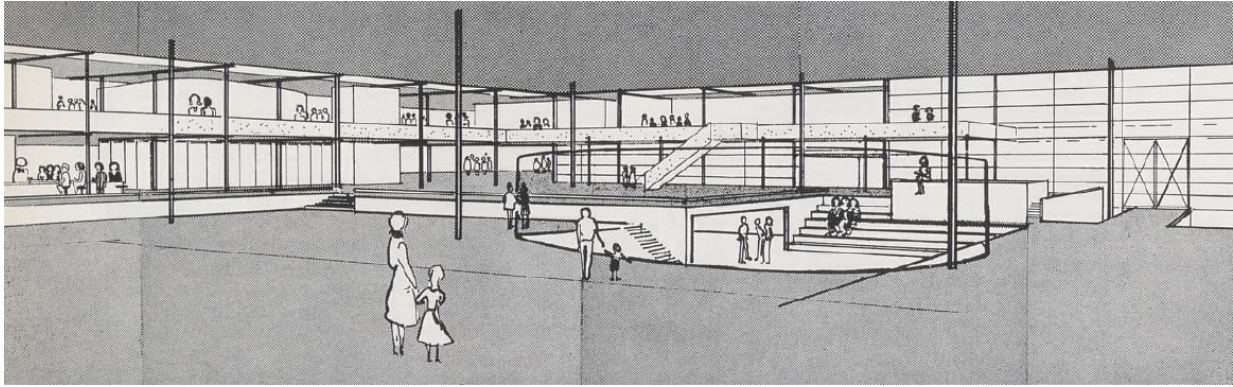


Figure 8, Impression of central hall of the Agora (NI Archive, n.d.)

The church was shared by three churches with different faiths and was used on non-Sundays as a theatre or meeting place (Architectuul, 2017).

Ger Koreman, who is an inhabitant of Lelystad, a former user of the Agora, was interviewed by radio station Omroep Flevoland in 2023. He mentioned population activities organized in the Agora, such as city festivities, programs from Lelystad associations, a children's fair, roller skating, fashion shows, miss and mister elections, talent shows, courtyard parties, cabaret, and informative presentations. It was of great value to have all the different associations in one central place.

In conclusion, the Agora in Lelystad was meant for and used by a wide range of target groups of all different ages, which were equally represented. The groups mixed during intergenerational events, which often took place in the Agora. This is visible in figures 9, 10, and 11 (Nieuw Land Erfgoedcentrum, 2016b).

Goal of bringing different groups together

The goal of the Agora in Lelystad was, according to van Klinger, to build a social and cultural center around a market (Krafft, 1971). Also, there is written about the goals of the building in a booklet of the design for the Agora found in the archive. Unless the fact that the writer and date of publication are unknown, it is strongly presumable that it was made by the architect just after the design was finished. In this booklet is stated that there was going to be "an Agora in Lelystad with spaces for cultural, social and enjoyable activities around and on a market square, creating the opportunity to meet each other in numerous casual ways". Besides, they explain that the reason for opening up the separate functions is



Figure 9, shot from video (Nieuw Land Erfgoedcentrum, 2016b)



Figure 10, shot from video (Nieuw Land Erfgoedcentrum, 2016b)



Figure 11, shot from video (Nieuw Land Erfgoedcentrum, 2016b)

to overcome the so-called ‘threshold fear’. With this, van Klingereren meant that he wanted to bring different groups closer to each other to learn and benefit from each other. Next to this, the booklet is describing the reason for the openness of the building as “Openness creates a nuisance. With the right dosage, this nuisance will not be disturbing and, on the contrary, will stimulate life in the community center” (Design booklet Agora Lelystad, n.d.).



Figure 12, shot from video (Nieuw Land Erfgoedcentrum, 2016b)

In the preliminary study voor een kommunikatiecentrum in Lelystad 1970 made by architecten en ingenieursbureau van Klingereren, is more explained about the reasoning of the program. They wanted to stimulate the coherence between outside societal activities, the activated park in front of the building, and shopping and office activities.

In conclusion, based on the analysis above, the goal of bringing different target groups together in one building is to decrease ‘threshold fear’, strengthen the community life with the right dosage of nuisance, and to continue and combine the outside societal activities.

Outcome and critiques

To determine if the goals of the architect are achieved, newspapers published just after the opening of the Agora are analyzed. In August 1977, van der Vet wrote in the *Algemeen Dagblad* that “The Meerpaal works a bit colossal, you feel a bit lost there as a loner. The Agora in Lelystad is more private, more intimate. A lot of people should be able to meet without bothering each other”.

Also, van den Bergen & Vollaard wrote in 2001 in the *OASE* magazine about the success of the Agora in comparison with the Meerpaal. They say that the Agora in Lelystad is more of a scenic landscape. “Facilities and ‘buildings’ are more or less randomly scattered over a covered ‘landscape’ and much more intermingled than at the Meerpaal.”

These statements are confirmed by a former user of the building who was interviewed by radio station Omroep Flevoland in 2023. He says about the Agora that it was the only place they had, so the place to meet each other. It was “the centerpiece of the society of Lelystad”. In the last part of the interview, he adds a critical note about the fact that the Agora had survived itself over time. The function was not relevant anymore, partly because of the fact that the diverse associations had split up and started their own clubhouses at other locations.

Based on the newspaper article of van der Vet (1977), the article of van den Bergen & Vollaard (2001), and the interview with the former user (2023), it can be concluded that the Agora in Lelystad was a well multifunctioning place where people were able to meet without bothering each other. Unless the success, the building survived itself overtime.

3.3 't Karregat, Eindhoven

As mentioned in the case study about the Agora in Lelystad, the Agora was supposed to be a landscape growing over time (Architectuur, 2017). Van Den Bergen & Vollaard (2001) mentioned that 't Karregat in Eindhoven was a further elaboration of this landscape concept. The building has a large overarching roof under which the space was to be filled in by the residents themselves. 't Karregat was built together with the development of the neighborhood Herzenbroeken. It was supposed to be the solution to the boring and monotonous large-scale reconstruction of residential neighborhoods. With the arrival of 't Karregat, the neighborhood spirit would be revived, and residents would have far-reaching control at 't Karregat (Van Den Bergen & Vollaard, 2001).

Target groups

As said before, 't Karregat was mainly focused on the residents of the new neighborhood Herzenbroeken (Van Den Bergen & Vollaard, 2001). Functionalities for residents of all ages in the neighborhood were therefore located in 't Karregat. Based on the design booklet published by Stichting Projectontwikkelings-bureau AMRO, the program is established. In the center of the building, the neighborhood center is placed, which includes a meeting and billiards room, hobby room, youth center, preschool, social work, and space for cultural activities. Next to this central space, the shopping area is located, which contains a supermarket, 5 shops, a café-restaurant, and the library. Next to this, there is a health center with the public health consultation bureau 'kruisverenigingen', a general practitioner, and family care. At last, there are two types of schools, the neutral school and the roman catholic school. They both contain elementary, preschool, and music classrooms, manual labor rooms, and a kindergarten playroom. In the design booklet by Stichting Projectontwikkelings-bureau AMRO, a gym with laundry and dressing room is also mentioned. However, these spaces cannot be found on the floor plan (figure 13).

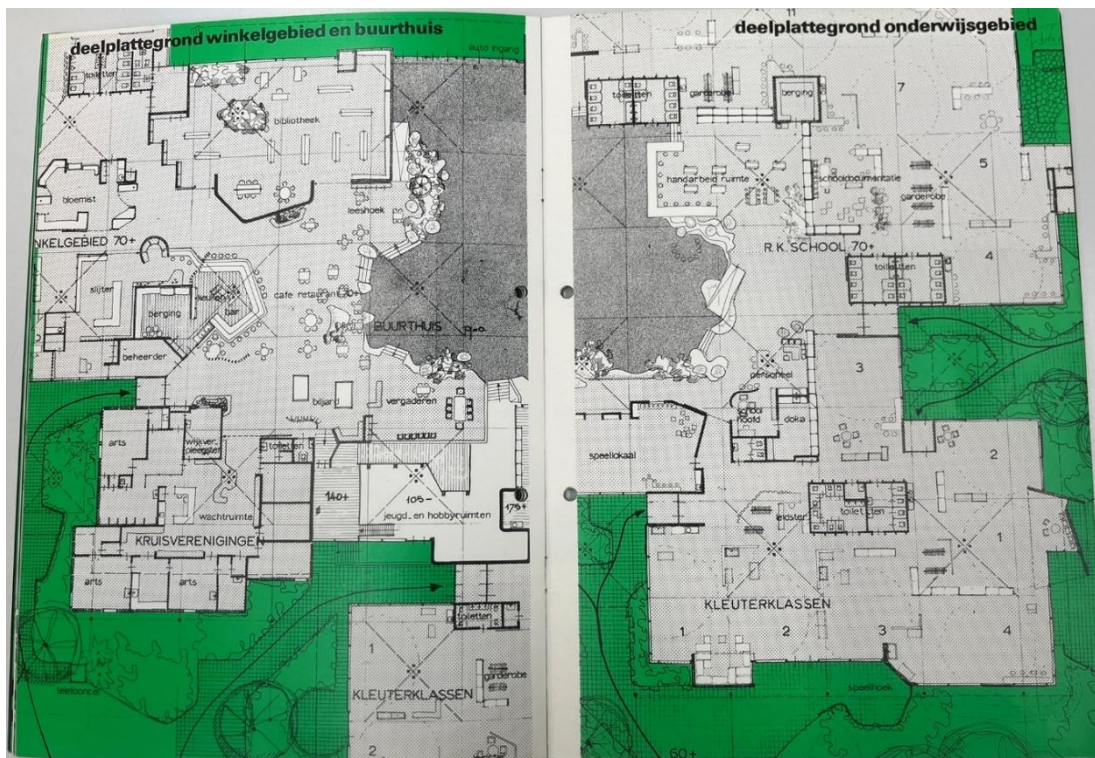


Figure 13, Ground floor plan of 't Karregat (Design booklet 't Karregat, n.d.)

According to another publication of Stichting Projectontwikkeling AMRO in 1976, published three years after the opening, 't Karregat consisted of three main principles: “dividing the city into independent neighborhoods, creating close social bonds within those neighborhoods, and using the design of the physical environment to promote the creation of those bonds.”

Van den Bergen & Vollaard (2001) added to his that Van Klingereren wanted to create a center that was a combination of “maximal openness and in addition maximal flexibility, of the whole in relation to the residential neighborhood; of the various institutions in relation to each other; of the distinct activities within each institution.” This openness is visible in figures 14 and 15 (NI Archive, 1973).

Van den Bergen & Vollaard (2001) mention examples of this relation between the various institutions, such as the fact that the nursery school was located next to the café and music school. But also that the shopping area was positioned on one side of the square, while on the other side, the school landscape was placed without the presence of walls between the functions. In more detail about the multifunctional usage, they describe that “Outside the library, there was a large reading table and magazine rack so that doctors and café visitors could read the newspaper outside library hours. The library was also a school library, and school math lessons were practiced in the supermarket.”

Based on the findings in the literature and on the figures, it can be concluded that the target group of 't Karregat was mainly focusing on the residents of the new neighborhood Herzenbroeken. Within this neighborhood, primarily families lived. So, 't Karregat is focused on preschool and elementary children of different ages and their parents. Education, health care, and leisure activities to strengthen the neighborhood bonds are the main functions related to the target groups.



Figure 14, Interior of 't Karregat (NI Archive, 1973)



Figure 15, Interior of 't Karregat (NI Archive, 1973)



Figure 16, shot from video (De Opening van Wijkcentrum 't Karregat in Eindhoven, 1973)



Figure 17, shot from video (De Opening van Wijkcentrum 't Karregat in Eindhoven, 1973)

Goal of bringing different groups together

To analyze what the goal of van Klingereren was in bringing different groups together in 't Karregat, his broader vision regarding education is relevant. The starting point for van Klingereren was society, which he thought should change education (Bontekoe, 1973). Van Klingereren pleaded for reorienting the relationship between public and private life. His credo was "the whole city will be an agora". In this agora, acoustic and visual separations are not present, which would lead to more social contact. The basis thought of van Klingereren on education and society is according to Bontekoe (1973) "Integration or collaboration of commerce, culture, recreation, health care and education; the integration of preschool and primary education; the bridging of the gap between school and family; a living heart to pump new blood into more normalized relationships between people; education as an everyday, natural activity in social life." In an article in the NRC newspaper written by M. Paumen in 1973 the philosophy of the of education is described as: "education has so far worked too isolated from society. Here, an attempt has been made to achieve real integration." It was about the ideal of doing and thinking together, according to that article. In another article published in the NRC newspaper, they mention that mixing functions requires familiarity with others' pursuits, personality, and circumstances (Wiekart, 1974).

Besides, in the design booklet of Stichting Projectontwikkelingsbureau AMRO dated from 1976, the goal of the integration of the different functions was to revive the neighborhood feeling. Also, Van den Bergen & Vollaard (2001) write about the idea of the neighborhood feeling: "By integrating neighborhood facilities and activities and bringing them out of their isolation, the goal was to facilitate contacts between residents so that communal activities could emerge, and real neighborhood life could develop." It was supposed to be a community center where people would automatically come to. This gathering of different target groups is visible in the figures 16 and 17, which are shots from a video made about the opening of the building (De Opening van Wijkcentrum 't Karregat in Eindhoven, 1973).

A more general reasoning for combining different functions and therefore target groups is given by Van Ussel in an article in the magazine Bouw published in 1973. He explains that society is becoming increasingly killer and that cities are lacking person-to-person contact. The distinction between publicity and privacy is getting bigger. Therefore, there is a need for sociability reflected in residential language in which openness and participation are important. The school must be seen as a building through which society runs, where youth make contact with people of all ages and social origins (Van Ussel, 1973). This aligns with the vision of van Klingereren on education and society as mentioned earlier.

In conclusion, the goal of van Klingereren was to let society influence education by integrating the two. The gap between school and family life was meant to be closed to get people started doing and thinking together. The goal was also to revive the neighborhood feeling where participation and openness lead to communal activities.

Outcome and critiques

Immediately after opening, there was plenty written about the experimental character of 't Karregat. In an article published in the newspaper NRC (Paumen, 1973), it is mentioned that the different school classes suffer from each other due to acoustics. Another newspaper article in the Volkskrant, published half a year after the building was opened, also described the so-called 'education dispute'. In the project description written by the architect, it was stated that it was meant to be a "Non-pre-conditioned situation grafted onto one particular educational system. Unforeseen developments must remain possible". But in reality, the different schools were

overwhelmed by chaos and experienced acoustic problems. Also, teachers were not prepared for the form of education that awaited them, because of the lack of educational conception for the special education form. They wanted “to go back to the safe security of the familiar, they want to go back to the old”. Lastly, Ruyter mentioned the problem of families interfering much more with each other, which led to strong social control; this does require guidance, which was not there (M. Ruyter, 1974).

Three years after the opening of the building, the developer AMRO reflects more nuance on the project. They acknowledge the problems with hygiene and noise, but state that, in general, people find it an attractive building where they meet many people (AMRO, 1976).

But again, M. Ruyter published in 1977 another critical article in *de Volkskrant* about the outcome of 't Karregat. He argues that van Klingereren's idea was a building as open as possible. But eventually, noise nuisance, distractions, and stimuli created an untenable educational situation. “Van Klingereren intended his building as a provocation. He raised questions with it, putting people's basic sense of safety on the anyway. ... He has dropped a building and said: You see what you do with it.” He is very critical about the multifunctionality of the building. “The biggest problem of all, in fact, is that in 't Karregat there is a jumble of stimuli coming at you and you do not know how to deal with it. The building itself invites unrest.” As an example, he mentioned that “You cannot hold a youth party there, where the amplifier is on full blast all night, and also organize a card night for the elderly, to name just two.”

Later AMRO reflects more elaborate on the project and acknowledge the lack of guidance needed for the experiment: “During the evaluation of 't Karregat, it turned out, that concepts such as integration and multifunctionality, which were the starting point for the plans, were actually not well defined and differed in meaning for too many people, partly due to lack of practical experience.” But they see, in contrast to M. Ruyter, 't Karregat as a successful experiment, because it was precisely the practical experience which was needed. They conclude with “The wide degree of contact enforced by the building between visitors and users was certainly perceived as positive, insofar as it stimulated mutual relationships. Residents were very appreciative of the way the center fostered close social contact in their neighborhood, but there was no getting away from the fact that people often unintentionally bothered each other in the building or even hindered each other outright.”

More recently, in 2001, Van den Bergen & Vollaard reflect on the outcome of 't Karregat. “The demise of the 't Karregat experiment coincided with, and was partly due to, the demise of the social ideal to which the project so explicitly gave shape. ... 't Karregat is in that respect the most concrete example of architecture”. According to them, society changed, but in a different way than van Klingereren hoped for. “The 'we' feeling of the seventies was not shared by the 'I' generation of the eighties. The building proved unable to absorb changing circumstances, perhaps especially unwilling to absorb them.” So, Van den Bergen & Vollaard do not fully blame the failure of 't Karregat on the building itself, but also on the changing society, which was not appropriate for the building anymore.

3.4 Conclusion from case studies

Below, the conclusion of the case studies on the Meerpaal in Dronten, the Agora in Lelystad, and 't Karregat in Eindhoven is described.

Target groups

Looking at the aimed target groups, it can be concluded that all the projects were meant for and used by a wide range of target groups of all different ages, which were equally represented. At 't Karregat it was slightly more specific, because of the simultaneously developed neighborhood Herzenbroeken, which mainly housed preschool and elementary children of different ages and their parents.

Goal of bringing different groups together

The goal of bringing together these different groups was to connect people by decreasing 'threshold fear' and encouraging social contact. The second important goal was to strengthen the community life with the right amount of nuisance. The neighborhood feeling had to be revived, and with that, the goal was to stimulate communal activities, participation, and openness. Finally, especially at 't Karregat, the goal of van Klingereren was to change education by society. The gap between school and family and between private and public was aimed to decrease.

Outcome and critiques

Although in some cases it was a bigger problem than with others, all three case studies received many critiques regarding acoustic and visual nuisance after opening. But on the other hand, the main goal of the architect, to stimulate social contact, is in all three cases achieved.

At 't Karregat, there was also the problem with the users not being ready to deal with the envisioned new educational system. There was not enough experience in using such a type of building. Therefore, it can be concluded that these projects are of great value, because they have provided this missing experience.

In the long term, because of the changing societal ideologies, all three projects were not able to keep functioning as they were originally supposed to. Thus, despite this dysfunction, all three projects can be viewed as successful experiments in which social contact was encouraged.

Conclusion

Based on the outcomes of the literature, archival and case study research, this thesis tried to find an answer to the following main question:

What is the goal of Frank van Klingereren with a multifunctional center on intergenerational target groups?

In three chapters, this question is divided into sub-questions. At first, the political and societal time period and the background of Frank van Klingereren are analyzed. That research concludes that the change in societal beliefs led to the need for communal meeting places, such as multifunctional centers. The goal of the government in mixing different age groups was to minimize differences and stimulate sharing between them, which encouraged community life and participation.

In the second chapter, the ideologies about multifunctional centers are researched. First, the ideologies of the government and architectural movements. From this, it can be concluded that politicians, such as Joop den Uyl, plead for participation, egalitarianism, and a non-commercial or economic growth-driven society. Regarding architectural movements, there was criticism on the CIAM principles, which would, namely, create enlarged individuality and isolation. A reaction to this monotonous building and the individualization of society was the Forum movement, which paid attention to the “humane and small-scale” aspect of the built environment.

Next to this, the ideologies of Frank van Klingereren and other relatable architects in that time period are analyzed. Based on this, it can be stated that van Klingereren’s ideology was to stimulate interaction between different groups in society and counter ‘decluttering’. Different activities should be mixed in order to encourage interaction even when they are a nuisance to each other. Also, other architects from the same time period, such as Aldo van Eyck and Herman Hertzberger, share these ideas about encouraging interaction.

Lastly, in the third chapter, three multifunctional centers designed by Frank van Klingereren are case studied on three topics: the target groups, the goal of bringing together different groups, and the outcome of that. In general, all the projects are meant for and used by a wide range of target groups with all different ages, which were equally represented. The goal of bringing together these different groups was to connect people, strengthen community life, and revive the neighborhood feeling, which would stimulate communal activities, participation, and openness. In the case of ‘t Karregat, the goal was also to change education by society and decrease the gap between public and private.

It is contradictory to conclude whether these goals are achieved, because on the one hand, all three case studies received many critiques regarding acoustic and visual nuisance after opening. But on the other hand, the main goal of the architect, to stimulate social contact, is in all three cases achieved. Unless the fact that the projects were not able to keep functioning in the long term, it can be concluded that these projects are of great value, because they have provided experience for the multifunctional building typology.

Based on the above answered sub-questions, the answer to the main question of this thesis can be formulated. The goal of Frank van Klingereren was to stimulate interaction between different groups in society to strengthen community life, which would stimulate communal activities, participation, and openness. With this, he tried to decrease the gap between private and public.

Reflection

Significance

The significance of this thesis is the reduction of the research gap on different age groups in multifunctional centers. This research focused on the reasoning of social interaction in these centers, instead of focusing on the outcomes and critiques, which are mainly written about. Besides, this thesis gained insights on why different age groups should be brought together and what both positive and negative consequences of that can be.

Implications

An implication of this thesis is that the sources may be too general, because they discuss different target groups in general, rather than different age groups specifically. Because of this, interpretations of the program of requirements of the case studies and pictures of the use of the buildings were needed to make the research specific about the intergenerational aspect. That can be seen as a tenuous argumentation.

Further research

A suggestion would be to dive deeper into the intergenerational aspect to make the argumentation of this thesis stronger. Therefore, sources more specifically about the aspect of bringing together different age groups must be found. A suggestion would be to search for literature not specifically related to the work of Frank van Klinger, but to intergenerational contact in general.

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