

# Reflection

The new art and dance academy for Apeldoorn, re-interpretation of Centraal Beheer office to a creative city for students and the inhabitants of Apeldoorn.



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## Project description

This graduation project falls under the studio the future of structuralism where different buildings within this movement (Dutch structuralism) are tested by students with different approaches to see what is possible with these buildings. My project was to re-interpret the Centraal Beheer office in Apeldoorn by Herman Hertzberger into a creative city for students and the inhabitants of Apeldoorn by placing an art and dance academy in the building. In 1972 the building was an entirely new interpretation of an office where the building was not finished by the architect but by the users. The building only provides the base which is based on the individual workspaces (see figure 1).

## Process

During the graduation studio finding the balance between research and design is one of the important parts. But the relationship between these two is constantly changing during the process. I feel this was because of the methodical line and the connected evaluation moment of the graduation which made a clear shift. While during the P1 and P2 the focus was more on doing research, in P3 the focus was more on design.

In P1 the foundation of the project was created. The first few weeks we analyzed and visited iconic structuralist buildings in order to get an idea of what this movement contains and what the idea and history behind it is. Thereafter we analyzed the building of Centraal Beheer as a group where we decided to look at the exception instead of the rule. Taking a newer view on the building then analyses made before. This gave an interesting point of view towards the building and had as a conclusion that the building is more complicated than we thought at first glance. During this period we had no program or design so that gave us the opportunity to look objectively and see what the building had to offer without limiting ourselves by already made requirements. Because of this, every individual member created his own cultural value framework of the building which eventually became the base for their design.

## Research question

My concept and research question is built on the first thing that disturbed me while walking through the building and analyzing it. It is the fact that the building has no identification marks on the outside or inside. Resulting in a disorienting building. This effect is caused when having no hierarchy in the building. The building is a repetition of raw small units based on a human scale that creates a concrete maze. If the building had these marks, it would work better in its environment. Thus making it a more successful transformation. From this perspective the next research question was formed:

“How to create hierarchy in a structuralist building without affecting the value and the structural appearance of the building?”

To answer this question I had to create a framework with the elements which are critical to preserve the cultural value of the building and where I have the freedom and space to add hierarchy to create a better orientation.

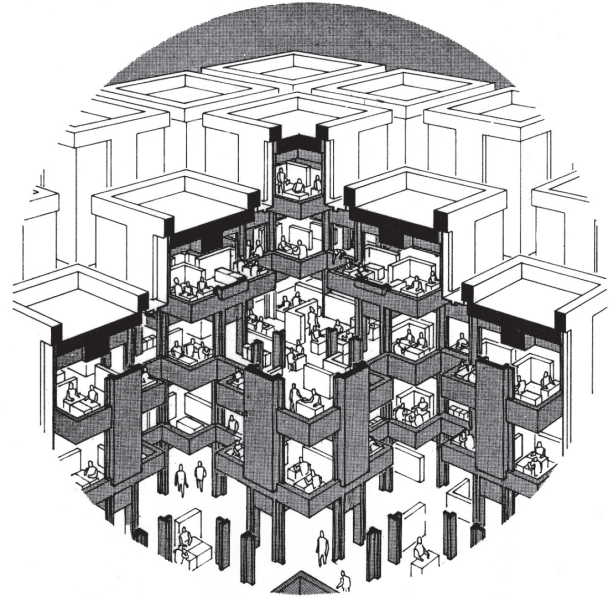


Figure 1: Axo showing the spatiality of Centraal Beheer.



Figure 2: What happens with the space in the quadrants when you placing walls.

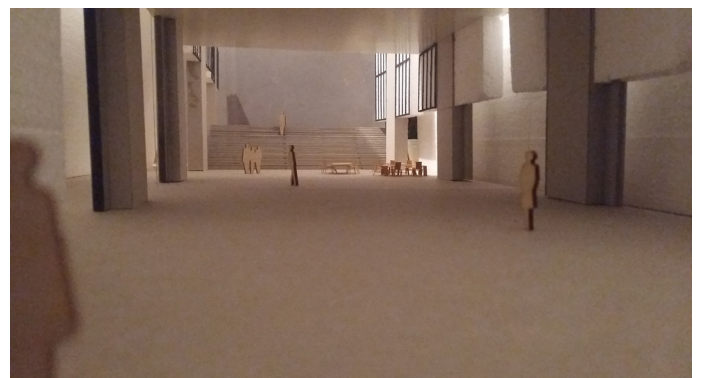


Figure 3: Interior model to test the spatiality in the new street.



Figure 4: Model to test the composition of the building.

## Heritage position

For me, the purpose of a transformation generally is that the building retains its history and contains all the elements needed to tell the story but also stays functional for the user. It's fine that interventions necessary for the building to be made usable are visible because they become a part of the building's story but only as long as it does not destroy the original vision behind the design of the building. I believe that the users should not have to be impeded in their use because of the history of the building. They just have to love the building because of its unique qualities and respect it not only for its past but also because it is their building.

Within the movement of structuralism, it means that you are more flexible than usual because you have the unique advantage that the building consists of repetition. However, the building of Centraal Beheer is the opposite of flexible, the structure of the building, which is the base for the space, limits the possibilities for the future. While in that time it was designed as a flexible building easy to adapt to a new function.

## Cultural value Centraal Beheer

The elements I valued most in the building of Centraal Beheer and which, in my opinion are essential to tell the story are these. On the outside the composition of the building and the facade where the building is a rock existing out of smaller units divided in three parts accentuate the verticality separation by the gutters (see figure 5). But the purpose behind the building comes forward in the space plan of the building. There is a clear division between the public street where you enter the building and the more private spaces placed on the edge of the building. Other elements that characterize the building are the vertical interaction and sightlines within the building and the conflict spaces which encourages people to interact.

The concept together with my position towards the cultural value of the building and the new program comes together in the design proposal which is developed in P2. This was all about doing research to form the program and investigate the possibilities of creating more hierarchy without disrupting the qualities of the building that tell the story. During the P2 I did my research by making models to test the spatial design and the composition see figure 2,3 and 4. This worked very well to get a quick view and see what kind of impact my additions had.

I observed that after P2 instead of finding the balance between design and research to develop my design more deeper, I lost myself in the building. The building is too big and complicated to solve entirely but this is exactly the danger of this project. During the design phase, I did not really give myself the time to dig deeper in researching. Making the integration of everything later on, being more work.

## Answer of the research question

I found my solution in opening up the street to strengthen the division between public and private and let the light into the center of the building. By doing this, I created a more flexible space in the center of the building that interacts with the entire building. So I placed the bigger functions I needed for the program in the street on its own construction detached of the existing structure so the quadrants would not have to be demolished. By giving these functions a clear but subtle expression, it also created hierarchy on building level. This also follows the idea of the creating large inner areas to be a solution for the later movement of structuralism giving structuralist buildings a hierarchy without disrupting the structure. The quadrants in the design have mostly been left as is. Adding certain improvements that enhance the quality of space to use and preserve different voids in the different quadrants to give every quadrant its own identity so you always know where you are.

I advise future students to test the ideas in a model especially the interior model helped me to picture the spatial experience of the space in an early stage of the design. What I noticed during the design process was that it is very important to constantly link back to your concept and research question and with every decision you make, to look back at the points you value.



Figure 5: Composition of units going up gradually.

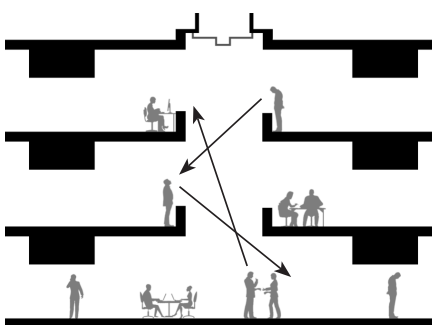


Figure 6: Vertical interaction and sightlines

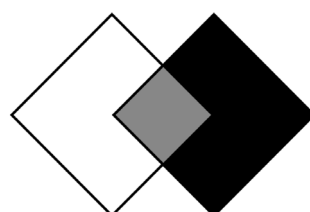


Figure 7: Conflict spaces

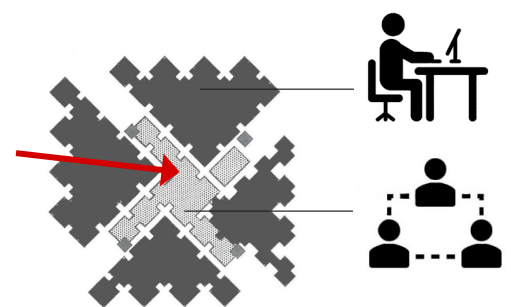


Figure 8: Enter in a active centre