Graduation Plan

Master of Science Architecture, Urbanism & Building Sciences

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1. Introduction | Lelycentre, Lelystad
Lelycentre, an area that was initially planned as a living, working and shopping district, was meant for the first inhabitants of Lelystad. However, this composition of the different functions has radically changed and this changing is still ongoing. With this changing of composition, also the state of the area and also the inhabitants are changing. This brings in a lot of real estate as well as social problems, which the municipality of Lelystad is trying to deal with and which for me also are exciting to deal with during my graduation project.
2. Problem Statement

Flevoland | Lelystad

To understand why Lelycentre is in a state such as it is now, we need to go back to the initial planning of the province of Flevoland and the capital Lelystad. In the initial planning of the polders there were five polders drawn by Cornelis Lely; the Noordoostpolder, Oostelijk Flevoland, Zuidelijk Flevoland, Wieringermeer and the Markerwaard. From these five drawn polders, only four are executed. Markerwaard, the one that would make a connection between Amsterdam and Lelystad, never got constructed and with that, the connection between Amsterdam and Lelystad was removed. As a result of that, the layout of the Lelystad completely changed, with Gordiaan as the new city center, leaving Lelycentre behind as not more than just a neighborhood. As for the city of Lelystad, the expected numbers of inhabitants never came, leaving Lelystad with just 72,000 inhabitants where there were 125,000 expected.

We can say that the problems in Lelystad started with the planning of a city for 120,000 people were in the end at its peak, only 77,000 people came. For Lelycentre specific, the problem started with the change of the city layout. Lelycentre was initially planned as the main center for Lelystad. However, the city plan changed drastically with making a new city center, and therefore Lelycentre became – second to the main city center – a neighborhood shopping center. From this moment on, the focus was laid to the main city center leaving Lelycentre neglected and with no one willing to invest in it. Adjoining to that, another critical change is the vanishing of the office functions in the area, leaving all the office buildings vacant or transformed into housing. Unfortunately, the transformations that are being done, or are planned to be done, are being done without any concern for the heritage of the site and/or building. Besides that, the spaces that aren’t vacant are often misused. All these problems leave Lelycentre neglected behind, with a highly amount of vacancy, and if not vacancy, spaces that are totally not used to the potential they have. The ones that are responsible, are coming up with solutions that do not concern the cultural heritage, nor fit in a proper (future proof) solution. For example, the many former office buildings which are currently occupied by homeless people and immigrants with a short-stay in Lelystad.

Adjoining to the real estate problems, there are also problems within the social context of the plot. Lelystad was made as an overspill area for the big cities as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, the Hague etc. in order to attract the people over to Lelystad, the municipality at that time made the city of Lelystad the opposite of what the big cities in that time were. Whereas the houses in the big cities were too expensive, too small (for big families), only consisting of high-rise apartments and were there was a lack of green and nature, the municipality of the new man-made land of Lelystad offered the inhabitants, cheap, big, and between abundance of green ground-based houses. On the surface, this “ideal” solution to attract residents to the new man-made land worked perfectly with all the benefits offered by the municipality. However, with time it has become apparent, that it
wasn’t the best solution in the long-term. Fifty years later, the big families which were invited to Lelystad are currently aging, the children are grown and in a phase to be starting own families. However, due to the situation of Lelystad and in Lelycentre the youngster aren’t willing to stay in Lelystad. They rather move to the bigger cities, like Amsterdam, Rotterdam, The Hague etc. The situation right now, is that the youngster are fleeing Lelystad, leaving behind the elderly people, which causes the – what seems to be – the never ending aging of Lelystad. This problem is so clear, that the nursing homes are getting multiplied by the municipality, hoping to deal with the elderly people which are growing and growing, with the risk that, in a couple of years, Lelystad will be a city with only elderly people. The focus on helping the elderly people is great, which is not strange, due to the fact that the elderly people form one of the largest group in the area. However, there are two other groups that are at least as important as the elderly people. These two groups are the migrant workers and the youngster. As for the youngsters – youngsters who wants to enter the labor market – there is not much reason (such as work opportunities and activities) let alone housing options for them to stay in Lelystad. And seeing the developments and future plans for the housing in Lelycentre, it can be concluded that giving the youngster a reason to stay in Lelystad will take a while. The same sort of problem is with the immigrant workers in the area. Immigrants with the purpose to have a short stay – max. a year – to work in the area and afterwards to go back to the country of origin. The immigrant workers are currently spread over the area with no such thing as a permanent stay for the time being in Lelystad. This causes problems such as nuisance, as a result of ill housing and lack of activities to do during free time. Unlike the younger, the immigrant workers don’t have the choice to leave Lelystad, which makes them at least as – and if not, more – important as the starters as well as the elderly people.

From the planning of Lelystad, to the current situation where we see that the plans didn’t go as planned, the question to answer is;

How can we react to the changes in plans of Lelycentre in order to revive Lelycentre and clear the vacancy, without neglecting the future generation and the immigrant workers?

To answer the main question, I have divided it into three sub questions.

1. What is the value of Lelycentre in terms of history, social and culture?
2. What are the future plans for Lelycentre (from the stakeholders, owners and municipality)?
3. How can Smedinghuis be transformed in order to help provide housing to the departing youngsters and the temporary immigrant workers?
2.1 Goal | Method
As a group of three students we set the goal to revive Lelycentre – which is now neglected, vacant, misused and not used to its potential – to the state it once had (lively and used to its potential). Considering the fact that we are not dealing with just a single building, but with a large part of a neighborhood that forms a local shopping center, the methods are divided in methods for the group and methods for the individual part. As a group we have made a masterplan for Lelycentre. Within this masterplan all three of us have chosen a site/building to work out further in details. The methods for the individual part arises from the masterplan. As for the individual part of the project, the aim is to deal with the changings that’s been going on in Lelycentre. For this, I have chosen to deal with Smedinghuis (Rijkswaterstaat building in Lelystad), which is currently partly empty and partly still used by Rijkswaterstaat and forms the center of the plot. To save this building from a transformation that doesn’t concern any historical nor cultural value and social value (or even worse, demolition) and a transformation which will not have any positive effects to the problems, I want to give it a function which makes the building useful again in Lelycentre. A transformation, that provides a solution to the above mentioned problems. However the individual project must fit in the masterplan made for Lelycentre. To do this correctly, the masterplan must be in the back of the head during the whole design process. Firstly, it is for me important to know everything that is planned for Lelystad as for Lelycentre, in order know the developments in the area and come up with a fitting solution. Secondly, the values of the area are important. For this a value assessment will be made. The goal is, as last, to analyze how to use the Smedinghuis as an transformation element to help Lelycentre.

There are three important aspects in the graduation design project. Architecture, building technology and cultural/social values. For the design, I will mostly – for the architectural aspect – make use of reference projects, 3D (digital) modeling and (digital) drawings. For the building technology aspect I will use the Well-Building standard as an approach towards the design, make use of (structure) models, and use different references. Adjoining to that, I will make general calculations regarding the structure, façade and climate. For the cultural value, interviews are taken (with the locals and the architect) and a value assessment will be done for Lelycentre as well for Smedinghuis.
2.2 Literature and general practical preference

Information from:
- Het Flevolands Archief ([https://www.hetflevolandsarchief.nl/](https://www.hetflevolandsarchief.nl/))
- Municipality of Lelystad
- Rijkswaterstaat Lelystad

Interviews with:
- the architect
- the inhabitants, and visitors of Lelycentre.
- different stakeholders/owners

Readings:

Websites:
- [Het Flevolands archief]. (z.d.). Geraadpleegd van www.archieven.nl
- [Lelycentre]. (z.d.). Geraadpleegd van www.lelycentre.com

3. Reflection
As a part of the contemporary problems in the construction world, vacancy is frequent in the Netherlands. This project focuses on the reuse and redesign of a vacant young heritage building. However, it will not only focus on the architectural aspects, but also the technical, in terms of sustainability and above all the cultural values. With the redesign of this building, also a great part of the direct environment and therefore also the social life of the plot of the building will be touched up on.