

# A Multifunctional Experiment on Newly Built Land

Construction of a multifunctional centre within the  
historical context and developmental aspirations of  
Flevoland

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## Research question

What factors and decision-making processes led to the conception and construction of a multifunctional centre within the historical context and developmental aspirations of Flevoland?

## **Abstract**

This thesis aims to delve into the historical connections between the establishment of Flevoland, the unique imperative for a multifunctional centre, and the architectural marvel that is “De Meerpaal” in Dronten. The exploration seeks to understand the motivations behind Flevoland’s desire for such a centre, how it led to architect Frank van Klingeren’s involvement, and the rationale for siting this unique structure in Dronten. This investigation is not only a journey into regional development but also a probe into the broader realm of architectural history, architectural choices, and urban planning ideologies of Flevoland that converged to construct this iconic building.

## Introduction

Picture yourself as an urban planner, architect, or designer with the freedom to envision an area without the constraints of existing buildings, landscape features, entrenched customs, or age-old traditions. The prospective canvas for your creativity was the new landscape set to become the 12th province of the Netherlands in 1986, left pristine after the partial draining of the IJsselmeer. The newly reclaimed land offered the opportunity to build new towns, villages, and agriculture. One of the cities that emerged from this was Dronten, located in eastern Flevoland.

Against this backdrop of creative freedom and newfound opportunities, it is essential to delve into the broader context that shaped the transformation of this reclaimed land such as Dronten. Understanding the historical and theoretical perspectives surrounding the creation of the 12th province is crucial for appreciating the significance of the subsequent developments. With new land, many factors must be considered, from living and working to traffic and social functions. This thesis specifically delves into social functions with particularity the arise of a multifunctional centre in Dronten, De Meerpaal.

De Meerpaal is designed by Dutch architect Frank van Klingeren. Van Klingeren was an architect known for his way of "open architecture". His perspective on open architecture aligns with ideas of inclusivity, adaptability, and a continuous dialogue with diverse stakeholders throughout the architectural process. His approach extends beyond the physical structures, emphasizing the social and political dimensions of architecture (Sarçayır, 2022).

De Meerpaal is a prominent example of modernist architecture and played a very important role in the cultural development of the newly reclaimed region. The building housed a theatre, a library, and other communal spaces, making it a central hub for cultural activities in Dronten. The project became a landmark for local recreational

activities. From a construction standpoint, the experiment marked a breakthrough, paving the way for future developments. Additionally, the design of the structure prompts contemplation about leisure activities in other contexts (Dronten, 1972).

This research aims to bridge a gap in existing literature by providing a comprehensive narrative on the multifunctional centre's inception and its architectonic significance. The personal focus lies in unravelling the intricate threads of decision-making and urban planning in a newly designed province and city and architectural innovation that converged in the creation of De Meerpaal. This research contributes to a deeper understanding of the symbiotic relationship between regional development and architectural innovation, shedding light on the motivations and decision-making processes that shape our built environments. If more land is reclaimed in the future, the outcome of this research could help inform future decision-making.

The research question in this thesis is: What factors and decision-making processes led to the conception and construction of a multifunctional centre within the historical context and developmental aspirations of Flevoland? Three subquestions will help answer this research question: How did the chosen location of Dronten for a multifunctional centre factor into the overall urban planning strategies of Flevoland? How did architect Frank van Klingeren's design philosophy and architectural innovations align with the broader developmental goals? How was the need for a multifunctional centre translated into the realization of De Meerpaal in Dronten?

To address these questions, this thesis employs a mixed-method approach combining primary sources such as archival research and secondary sources as books, articles and architectural journals.

The thesis is structured comprehensively. It firstly delves into the Factors and Decision-Making processes, exploring its connection to the historical context of Flevoland and

the conception of the multifunctional centre. Subsequent sections address specific subquestions related to location selection, architectural influence by Frank van Klingeren, and the realization of De Meerpaal. In this way, the research question will be answered.

## Chapter 1: The origins of Flevoland and Multifunctional centres

Until the completion of the Afsluitdijk in 1932, the former Zuiderzee, now known as the IJsselmeer, posed a significant threat as a hazardous inland sea. Early efforts for (partial) reclamation began with Hendrick Stevin emerging as a pioneer in damming and reclamation in 1667. Despite subsequent plans, various factors prevented their implementation. In 1886, the Zuiderzeevereniging (Zuiderzee Association) was established, and hydraulic engineer Cornelis Lely crafted a plan for the closure of the Zuiderzee and the sequential reclamation of four specific polders in 1891. However, it wasn't until 1918 that the plan gained legal standing through the enactment of the Zuiderzeewet (Zuiderzee Law). Approval was driven by factors such as increased safety against flooding, the creation of a freshwater reservoir, and the expansion of agricultural land. During that time, considerations for current functions like housing and nature were minimal (Baas, 2009).

To oversee the reclamation of the Zuiderzee, the government established the Zuiderzeewerken Service. A specialized entity, the Service for the Cultivation of the Wieringermeer Reclaimed Lands (Directorate of the Wieringermeer), was created for the intricate layout of the polders. In 1963, it transformed into the Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders (RIJP), expanding its mandate beyond hydraulic engineering to include the organization and structuring of a new society. The RIJP relied on scientific research in fields such as land planning, demography, sociology, and the planning and construction of villages and cities (Baas, 2009).

Owing to economic hardships following World War I, the government initiated the execution of the Zuiderzeewet in 1924. The completion of the Amsteldiepdiijk, linking North Holland and Wieringen, marked the initial accomplishment. By 1932, the Afsluitdijk was finalized, and the Wieringermeer was successfully reclaimed in 1930. Subsequently, the Noordoostpolder (Northeast Polder) was

drained in 1942 (covering an area of 48,000 ha), followed by Oostelijk Flevoland (Eastern Flevoland) in 1957 (covering 54,000 ha), and Zuidelijk Flevoland (Southern Flevoland) in 1968 (encompassing an area of 43,000 ha). The envisioned Markerwaard, however, remains unrealized to this day, with the current dike between Lelystad and Enkhuizen serving as the only reminder of this planned development (Baas, 2009).

### 1.1 Eastern Flevoland

The planning of Eastern Flevoland was intricately connected to the broader question of optimizing the arrangement of the Southern IJsselmeer Polders. Initially, this inquiry found answers in the research conducted by Groenman and Takes, delving into the role of outlying municipalities as service hubs. This exploration established a categorization into locally servicing (A-cores), regionally servicing (B-cores), and regionally servicing centers (C-cores), each allocated its service area (Van Woensel, 1999).

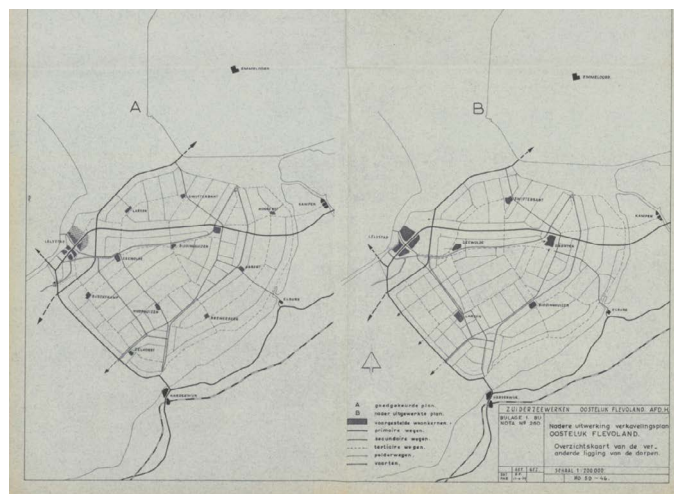


Figure 1: Further elaboration of the subdivision plan for Eastern Flevoland, (Flevolands Archief, 1959)

The initial method for determining the number of A-cores, guided by Hofstee's ideal parcelling scheme, underwent subsequent revisions. In 1951, the inaugural village pattern for Eastern Flevoland was crafted, incorporating a C-core (Lelystad), a B-core, and fourteen A-cores. Following adjustments based on resident experiences and preferences, the count was streamlined to ten A-cores in 1956. Lelystad would later be the capital of Flevoland (Van Woensel, 1999).

To determine the final number of villages to be built in Eastern Flevoland, Van der Bom, who was the head of the Noordoostpolder (Northeast polder) department at the time, conducted several calculations. Fig. 2 and fig. 3 show those calculations. It gives an indication of respectively different amounts of villages compared to the maximum distance, average village area, number of inhabitants per village and village centre (Flevolands Archief, 1951).

De Heer v.d.Bom heeft de theoretische maximum-afstanden tot het dorp berekend voor verschillende aantallen dorpen;			
bij 14 dorpen	max.afstand	4,5 km	
" 12 "	" "	" "	4,9 "
" 10 "	" "	" "	5,4 "
" 8 "	" "	" "	6,0 "
" 6 "	" "	" "	6,9 "

Figure 2: Documentation of the meeting Studiecommissie Inrichting IJsselmeerpolders (Flevolands Archief, 1951a)

De Heer v.d.Bom berekent op grond van deze verhoudingen de inwonertallen van de dorpsgebieden als volgt:			
bij 14 dorpen	2400 inw.	waarvan 1200 à 1700	in de kern
" 12 "	2700 "	" "	1350 " 1900 "
" 10 "	3100 "	" "	1600 " 2200 "
" 8 "	3800 "	" "	1900 " 2700 "
" 6 "	4700 "	" "	2400 " 3300 "

Figure 3: Documentation of the meeting Studiecommissie Inrichting IJsselmeerpolders (Flevolands Archief, 1951b)

As the 1960s unfolded, the narrative pivoted from the maximum distance between villages to the minimum required for sustaining the desired amenity levels. The size of villages was no longer confined by distance; rather, the focus shifted to prioritizing liveability. Considerations such as retaining rural character and accounting for the declining agricultural population now took precedence (Van Woensel, 1999).



Figure 4: Subdivision plan Eastern Flevoland, (Flevolands Archief, 1965f)

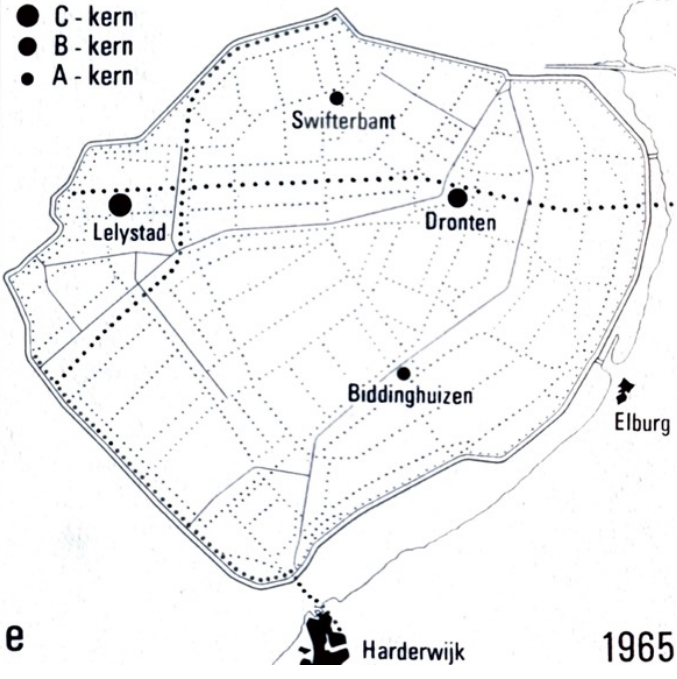


Figure 5: Residential areas Eastern Flevoland, (Dronten, 1972)

The designs for Dronten, Swifterbant, and Biddinghuizen evolved to become more adaptable, addressing diverse living spaces and amenities. Provisions were made for villages to expand in the future, introducing a newfound flexibility in village design. Further shifts in perspective occurred in the '60s, concentrating on the minimum size necessary for the desired amenity levels and promoting growth through industrial development or creating an appealing living environment for commuters. The resident count was recalibrated in alignment with these evolving insights. In the end, Dronten, Swifterbant, and Biddinghuizen materialized, embodying designs that seamlessly accommodated growth and change. Plans were deftly adjusted to account for the swiftly advancing era of motorization and the evolving needs of the residents, resulting in the emergence of vibrant and appealing villages (Van Woensel, 1999).

**1.2 A multifunctional centre**

Before we delve deeper into the understanding of the decision making of the location and the choice of the architect for a multifunctional centre, we must have the right conception of the definition of such a building during the '60s. To get an understanding of the arise of a multifunctional or community centre, the government subsidy scheme of the '60s can be cited: "a village or community centre is a building that meets the need for suitable space

for the association life of a local environment” (Verdoes, 1965).

Regarding the local community, the scheme only mentions a lack of sufficient, appropriate local space for various organizations and associations’ activities. If the community faced deeper social issues, merely establishing a shared clubhouse wouldn’t be enough. Other interventions like community work or specialized family and neighbourhood services might have been more effective (Verdoes, 1965).

This shortage of space for associative life could have had significant implications for the local community. Associative life plays a central role, as emphasized in the subsidy scheme, which states that subsidies may be granted if the unavailability of suitable local space impeded associative life to the extent that it negatively affects societal development. This suggests that associative life held a crucial position in the local community back in the days. A well-supported associative life, equipped with modern facilities, could greatly benefit the local community (Verdoes, 1965).

However, much of social interaction occurred beyond formal associations. Small, informal groups often engaged in activities vital for community cohesion. It was essential to provide suitable spaces for these groups’ activities as well. Moreover, in many cases it might have been desirable to create other facilities for the local environment, together with creating space for associations. Examples could be gymnastics accommodations, library, or a bathhouse. Combining such different facilities under one roof makes it possible to fulfil all desires from the local community at the same time excluding economic factors (Verdoes, 1965).



## Chapter 2: Location Selection

To analyse the structural plans for the new cities in eastern Flevoland, we need to examine the developments surrounding the Meerpaal finished construction in Dronten in 1967. This involves delving deeper into the cities slated for development in this part of Flevoland to compare their planning strategies. Therefore, we will further explore Biddinghuizen, Swifterband and Dronten.

### 2.1 Biddinghuizen

The original structural plan for Biddinghuizen dates to 1961, crafted by urban planner R. Hajema. Initially, it outlined around 340 residences, with the potential for an additional 140 houses as the town expanded. During the planning stages, the broader vision surrounded four residential centres across the entire polder, alongside Lelystad and Dronten, aiming to serve as service hubs for the surrounding agricultural community (RIJP, 1972).

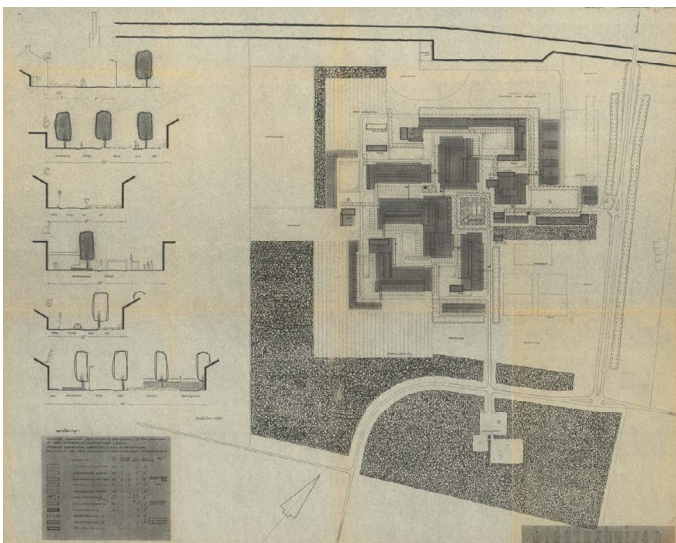


Figure 6: Structural plan Biddinghuizen 1961, (Flevolands Archief, 1961)

At the time when the requirements for the plan were being formulated, a broader plan existed for the entire polder. This plan included projections for four additional residential centres alongside Lelystad and Dronten. The primary purpose of these additional centres was to serve as service hubs for the surrounding agricultural population. A study conducted at the time indicated that approximately 290 farms were expected to be located within Biddinghuizen's service area. Consequently, it was estimated that around 200 residences for farmworkers would need

to be constructed in this area. Additionally, an approximate of 150 residences were deemed necessary for individuals employed in service industries, manufacturing, and other sectors (RIJP, 1972).

As shown in figure 6, amenities such as churches and schools were strategically dispersed throughout the planned community to maintain a lively atmosphere and prevent a loss of scale due to concentrated facilities. Commercial establishments were positioned on both sides of the main access road, converging into a square featuring a church, café, and several businesses. Another square was envisioned at the opposite end of the commercial street, linking to the road housing industrial facilities. Sports and recreational amenities were allocated south of the shopping centre (RIJP, 1972).

Construction began in the spring of 1962 following plan approval. However, by 1963, adjustments were necessary due to evolving circumstances (figure 7), including a shift from agriculture to fruit cultivation and fewer commuters than anticipated (Dronten, 1972). Those changes resulted in a higher housing demand for farm workers than originally anticipated (Van Woensel, 1999). Because of that, the revised 1963 plan increased the projected residences to 550 to accommodate these changes. Construction expansions were initiated based on this updated plan, maintaining the original design's integrity, incorporating minor alterations and additions (RIJP, 1972).

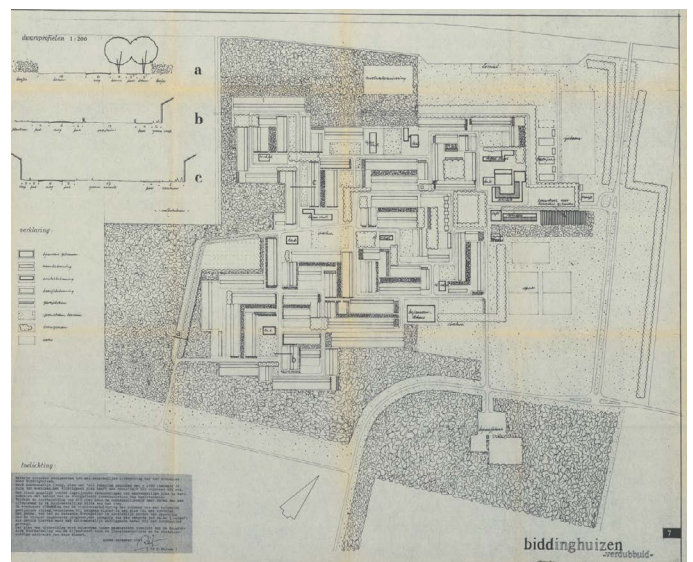


Figure 7: Structural plan Biddinghuizen 1963, (Flevolands Archief, 1963)

By 1967, it was clear that Biddinghuizen's envisioned population size needed to align with both agricultural and internal city requirements. Standards at the time suggested an ideal population of at least 5,000 to support essential services and cultural and recreational activities. Because of that, adjustments were made to the 1963 plan to accommodate this future population, including rerouting major roads to facilitate expansion and ensure accessibility to new residential areas (RIJP, 1972).

## 2.2 Swifterbant

Swifterbant, along with Dronten and Biddinghuizen, forms one of the three residential areas in the newly established Dronten municipality. Investigations into Swifterbant's purpose and size began around 1958/59, during a period when the broader plan for the entire region of eastern Flevoland was still significantly different from its eventual realization (RIJP, 1972). Historical records indicate that due to Swifterbant's distance from Dronten, Lelystad, and (the back then yet-to-be-developed) Zeewolde, it was primarily envisioned as an agricultural service centre, just as Biddinghuizen.

In the archival records of Flevolands Archief (1970a) an explanation is given about the function of Swifterbant: *"Swifterbant's function can be interpreted as a service centre for the daily required goods and services, with a modest commuter position. Higher order centres are Lelystad and Dronten. In retail, shops will mainly find a place at neighbourhood level. There will be limited opportunities for shops for non-daily needs, given the planned population and the catchment area outside the village. Agriculturally oriented industrial companies will find a favourable location in Swifterbant, in view of its favourable location in relation to the recently completed Ketelbrug."*

The initial plan for Swifterbant, approved in 1961, included 200 homes with most amenities situated around the outskirts of the city, following a concept of concentrated living with agricultural areas surrounding it (RIJP, 1972).

By 1963, because of growth expectations, plans were expanded to accommodate nearly 400 additional homes, adjusting amenities for a projected population of 1,850. This led to several changes, including the relocation of facilities such as sports areas and industrial zones. These expansions were Swifterbant's first steps beyond its original boundaries, anticipating a population of up to 6,000 residents in the future (Rijp, 1972).

Architect and urban planner ir. W.J.G. Van Mourik's designs for Swifterbant incorporated elements to attract attention to the city centre, including a central square with amenities, a lowered pasture, and a raised platform with a school, serving as a potential refuge in case of flooding. The layout also included supplying for access roads and areas chosen for agricultural and industrial activities (Van Woensel, 1999).

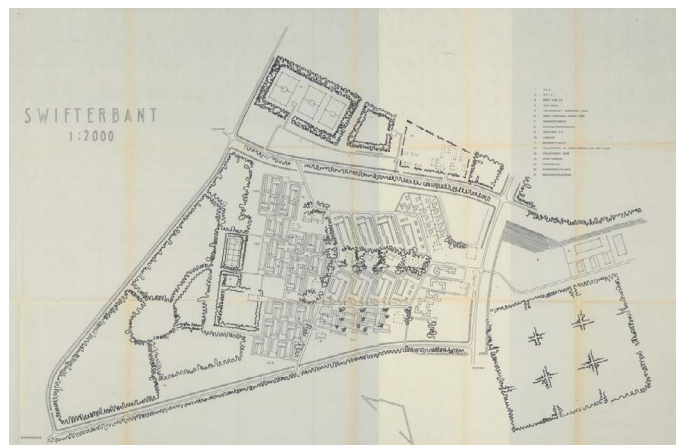


Figure 7: Structural plan Swifterbant 1963, (Flevolands Archief, 1963b)

## 2.2 Dronten

In March 1958, urban planner Mr. J. van Tol was commissioned to design a structural plan for the city of Dronten. It was noted that Dronten could potentially serve as a central hub for parts of the polder. Comparing Dronten to Emmeloord, the largest city in the northeast polder, indicated that Dronten, covering half the catchment area of Emmeloord, could expect a population of 4,000 to 5,000 inhabitants (RIJP, 1972).

In the archival records of Flevolands Archief (1958b) an explanation is given about the function of Dronten: *"Dronten will fulfil a certain central function in eastern Flevoland, at least for part of the polder"*. This further explains the central position between Biddinghuizen and Swifterbant.

By January 1959, when the first plan by Mr. Van Tol was presented, thoughts on the overall layout of the polder had significantly shifted. They led to considerations of higher population densities soon after the first plan emerged. Despite these changes, the initial plan formed the foundation upon which the current plan is based (RIJP, 1972).

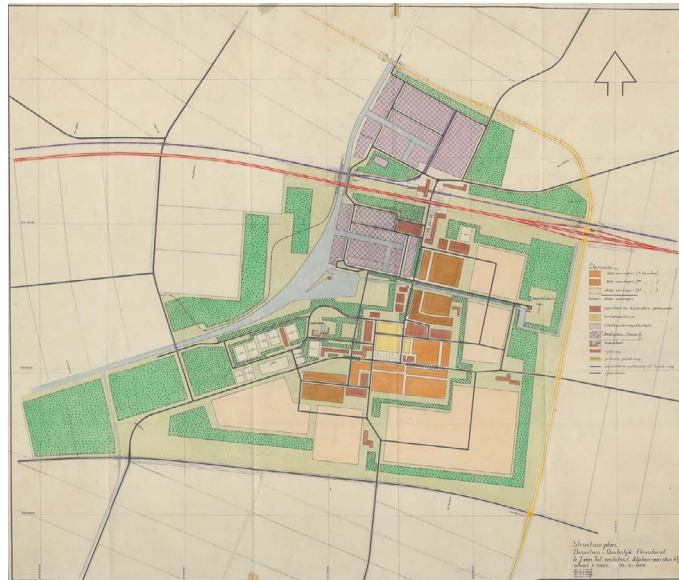


Figure 9: Structural plan Dronten 1958, (Flevolands Archief, 1958a)

In 1960, before the approval of the structural plan by the minister, construction began on the first residential areas and facilities in Dronten. However, in 1966, the RIJP requested Van Tol to create a new structural plan for Dronten. Despite the construction of multifunctional centre De Meerpaal in 1965 to Dronten's redevelopment, Van Tol made no mention of it in his considerations for the new structural plan in 1966. The concept of "livability" gained increasing attention from the early 1960s onwards. It can be described as the ability of a village and its surrounding area to maintain a level of amenities and social relationships that satisfy all material and spiritual needs, influenced by comparisons with urban lifestyles (Van Woensel, 1999).

In his explanation accompanying the 1966 structural plan, Van Tol revealed that he had to adjust his original plan due to evolving perspectives on Dronten's development. While his initial plan assumed a population of no more than 6,000 residents, he had outlined a responsible expansion up to 17,000 residents. However, he was now tasked with planning for 18,000 residents, emphasizing the need for Dronten to grow to ensure adequate services

and facilities, which would attract businesses beyond just its primary function as a service centre for a limited part of the polder (Van Woensel, 1999).

It's evident that, after Lelystad, Dronten had the most ambitious development plans in eastern Flevoland in terms of population, facilities, commerce, and size. Biddinghuizen and Swifterbant would serve more as service hubs for surrounding farmers. Dronten's strategic positioning at the centre of these three cities, coupled with its bigger area and better accessibility, makes it the best candidate for a multifunctional centre among them all. This conclusion is made with an objective standpoint, considering the yet-to-be-revealed design of De Meerpaal by Frank van Klingeren at that time.

### Chapter 3: Van Klingereren's Design Philosophy and alignment with Developmental Goals

The building central to this thesis is De Meerpaal in Dronten, designed by Frank van Klingereren. He recognized the growing trend of leisure activities. He believed that this would lead people to spend more time outside their homes. To accommodate this growing leisure time, he designed community centres, such as De Meerpaal, where people could meet and spend time together (Bacchini, 2006). Frank van Klingereren once said: *"The city has become a lump in which it is no longer possible to breathe. We will have to declump society, de-institutionalize it [...] The entire city must be one agora, one forum, one meeting place"* (Van den Bergen, et al., 2003). He made clear that he wanted more social life and interaction between people.

Van Klingereren's architectural ideas were influenced by the socio-political climate during the 1950s and 60s. He believed that interior walls hindered social interaction, which was problematic in a society transitioning away from the system of verzuiling (pillarization). Verzuiling was a socio-political system that segregated Dutch society into distinct pillars based on religion and ideology, such as Protestant, Catholic, Socialist, and Liberal. Each pillar had its own institutions and spaces, leading to limited interaction between different groups. As Dutch society moved towards depillarization in the 1950s and 60s, many people, especially those aligned with progressive movements, opposed this system of segregation, and were looking for greater social integration (Sarıçayır, 2022).

Before the RIJP asked Van Klingereren to make a design for De Meerpaal in 1965, he already once made a design for a multifunctional centre. His concept of decluttering societal structures began to manifest in his design of a youth centre in Amsterdam Noord (1958 - 1965). Within this structure, he integrated a versatile hall that could be utilized by different groups at the same time. As his career continued, he expanded upon this idea, crafting expansive multifunctional spaces where diverse activities could unfold

simultaneously. These covered communal areas, known as agora's, featured no walls between functions. Van Klingereren saw inconvenience as essential for communal spaces to work properly. He believed it was a good and unavoidable part of public places. He also thought that meeting and talking with others were crucial for creating a lively community life and could lead to different preferences (Bacchini, 2006).

As discussed in Chapter 2, Dronten was considered the most suitable location for the eventual construction of a multifunctional centre. Despite its relatively small size at the time, efforts have been made to ensure that essential services cater to the needs of a growing population. This includes providing adequate facilities for various functions such as education, healthcare, retail, and offices. The increasing demand for such amenities reflects the evolving needs of the community (Flevolands Archief, 1966). The archival records of Flevolands Archief (1966) mention the need to stimulate growth in Dronten: *"The idea is therefore that the growth of Dronten should be stimulated in the coming years, for example by attracting employment, which is not or not exclusively related to the primary service function of Dronten."*

Frank van Klingereren received the official commission from RIJP on March 9, 1965, to design what was then referred to as a "trade fair complex". Prior to the official commission, there was a meeting with ir. Bakker and ir. Tellegen where they discussed the assignment with Van Klingereren. This meeting convinced them to select Van him as the project's official architect. Initially, the "trade fair complex" was intended to include a cafe-restaurant, several meeting rooms, and a large community room that could serve various purposes, including hosting the weekly fair. Architects Van Tol and Verlaan, who were involved in the design for the market square, collaborated with Van Klingereren to bring the design to an eventual success (Flevolands Archief, 1965a). Van Klingereren acknowledged the positive reception by sending a letter back to RIJP (Fevolands Archief, 1965d): *"I hereby confirm the receipt of your aforementioned letter with the instruction contained therein to draw*

*up a sketch plan for a trade fair complex in Dronten”.*

Drastic changes to Dronten's structural plan were not expected, and in the following years, nothing changed until the plan for the “trade fair complex” was established. According to Van Klingeren, the building should be regarded as a covered square in a pedestrian area. He strongly advocated for a centre that would be free from through traffic. These ideas resonated with the evolving perspectives, including those of Van Tol and Verlaan, regarding the use and accessibility of city centres. RIJP asked Van Tol to consider the possibilities of a traffic-free centre for Dronten. This change from the original plan, which directed traffic toward the centre, represented a drastic intervention in the main lines of Dronten's structural plan (RIJP, 1972).

Van Klingeren's vision emphasized the importance of social interaction and the integration of diverse activities within public spaces, reflecting a shift away from societal segregation. His concept of decluttering societal structures and advocating for traffic-free communal areas resonated with efforts to promote community integration and urban development. Van Klingeren's design philosophy contributes to the broader goal of creating vibrant, inclusive communities not only in Dronten, but also in Flevoland.

## Chapter 4: Needs into Reality

Frank van Klingereren received the requirements plan from the head of the main architectural department of RIJP on March 25, 1965. It outlined a list of rooms and halls that Van Klingereren needed to incorporate into his design. Most of these spaces had specific measurements, and the main hall had a maximum capacity. A translation of the official archival document is provided in figure 10 (Flevolands Archief, 1965e). Later new activities were added, such as a cinema, sport shall for basketball, volleyball and tennis, reception for larger groups and conferences (Flevolands Archief, 1965b).

BEURSGEBOUW DRONTEN			
<b>a. BEURS</b>			
big hall	-	16,50 x 22,50	- 475 people
balcony	-	4,50 x 10,00	- 69 "
stage	-	16,50 x 12,--	- 544 "
side stage	-	4,00 x 10,--	
under stage	-	chair storage	
under side stage	-	2 dressing rooms + toilets and shower	
lobby	-	8,50 x 31,00	
telephone boots			
hall with wardrobe	-	13,50 x 17,50	
entrance and toilets			
<b>b. HOTEL-RESTAURANT</b>			
entrance with reception, office, toilets			
café	-	7,00 x 18,00	
dining room	-	7,00 x 9,00	
meeting room	-	7,00 x 13,50	
"	-	4,50 x 6,50	
"	-	4,50 x 6,50	
kitchen:			
		cold kitchen	
		hot kitchen	
		service space	
		stock room	
under the kitchen:			
		space staff	
		beer basement	
		packaging basement	
		boiler room central heating	
		pumps and control equipment	
		air heating room	
<b>1<sup>st</sup> floor:</b>			
		home guarantee	
<b>2<sup>nd</sup> floor:</b>			
		6 - 2 p, room with toilet space	)
		3 - 1 p, " " " "	)35
		8 - 2 p, " " " "	)bed
		4 - 1 p, " " " "	)
		linen room	

Figure 10: Requirements plan by the head of the main architectural department RIJP, 1965 (authors translation), (Flevolands Archief, 1965)

After the start of the project, Van Klingereren remarkably said: "In case the assignment given to us for the creation of a relatively small community centre in Dronten had a purpose other than serving a local purpose, if it were intended for a development centre in Greece or Italy for example, the assignment would have largely fallen away against the local usage, where most of the activities take place outdoors in the market square" (Flevolands Archief, 1965b). He implies that the design of

the community centre in Dronten was specific to its local environment and intended usage, but he wanted to add the southern character.

He wanted to approach this character to get the most intense flexibility, which was shown in his design explanation (1965b). As a result, he attempted to minimize the specific requirements for the intended use within a large hall. This hall features a versatile round theatre for Shakespearean and normal plays, and variety shows. It includes an orchestra pit which is adaptable for music events, lectures, and conferences. Visitors can enjoy spacious intermission areas, adorned with murals and access small convenience stores underneath the theatre. The floor is designed to align with the surrounding ground conditions (Flevolands Archief, 1965c).

Additionally, various sports and game demonstrations, trade shows, and exhibitions on political and economic topics can take place. There is plenty of space for viewing around the area, which you can access from the ground-level foyer. The contrast between the open large hall and the darkly constructed café-restaurant complex is strong. A new approach to the cinema is introduced, with transparent screens allowing for dual-sided projection during various activities, including special screenings and informational films (Flevolands Archief, 1965c).

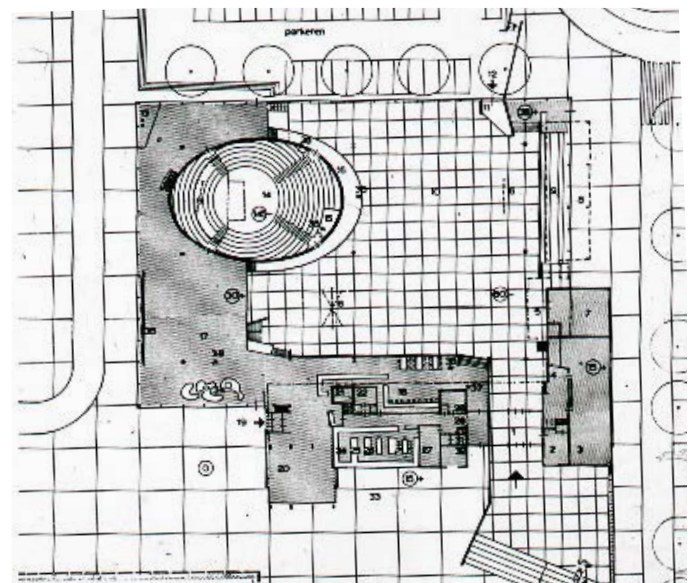


Figure 11: Floorplan de Meerpaal, (Flevolands Archief, 1970a)

It is reasonable to say that Van Klingereren was very focused on creating a meeting place for Eastern Flevoland, which he literally

mentioned in his explanation: *“all this drastically increases the appeal of this project as a meeting place for Eastern Flevoland in the centrally located Dronten”* (Flevolands Archief, 1965c). This shows the purpose of the project again.

In 1967, six years after the official establishment of Dronten, the multifunctional building known as De Meerpaal was completed. Queen Juliana inaugurated the building on November 8, 1967. The ‘Thing of Dronten’ was very successful. The media wrote favourable reviews. De Meerpaal also became one of the first buildings in the Netherlands to be the subject of a television documentary (Bacchini, 2006).



Figure 12: Visit by H.M. Queen Juliana, (Flevolands Archief, 1967)

After 1976, De Meerpaal experienced a decline in activities. The concrete floor was labelled unsuitable for certain sports, TV recordings ceased, and the theatre did not achieve the anticipated success. Several drastic changes followed: a shift in leadership to less liberal individuals, and the space previously occupied by the bowling alley and exhibition hall was repurposed for youth services. The original furniture designed by Swiss architect Zoelly was replaced with traditional chairs, the bar was removed, and a snack bar was added to the closed courtyard facade. Van Klingereren felt that these alterations led to a normal civilization, which he didn't think was positive in any sense (Bacchini, 2006). It is remarkable to see the shift in local needs in a relative short amount of time.

## Conclusion

To conclude this thesis, we must provide an answer to the research question: What factors and decision-making processes led to the conception and construction of a multifunctional centre within the historical context and developmental aspirations of Flevoland? The origins of Flevoland began with the efforts to reclaim the former Zuiderzee. This highlights the establishment of the Zuiderzeewerken Service and the subsequent transformations leading to the creation of the Rijksdienst voor de IJsselmeerpolders (RIJP) in 1963. The reclamation projects, including Eastern Flevoland, and the planning considerations for village layouts evolved from the maximum distance between villages to prioritizing livability and adaptability. This aligns with the concept of multifunctional centres, emphasizing the importance of suitable spaces for associative life and community cohesion, as well as the broader societal implications of such facilities.

The chosen location of Dronten for a multifunctional centre played a very important role in the overall urban planning strategies of Flevoland. Dronten's selection was influenced by its strategic positioning as a central hub between Biddinghuizen and Swifterbant, along with its larger area and better accessibility compared to the other cities. The urban planning strategies aimed to accommodate anticipated population growth and ensure adequate services and facilities for residents. Dronten's ambitious development plans reflected its role as a primary service centre for a large part of the polder. This decision aligned with the broader vision of establishing service hubs across the entire polder to support the surrounding agricultural community. Therefore, Dronten's designation as a multifunctional centre was a pivotal component of Flevoland's urban planning approach, aiming to create vibrant and sustainable communities in the region.

Architect Frank van Klingereren's design philosophy and architectural innovations aligned closely with the broader developmental goals of promoting community integration, urban development,

and the creation of inclusive public spaces in Flevoland. His vision emphasized the importance of social interaction and the integration of diverse activities within public spaces, reflecting a shift away from societal segregation. Van Klingereren believed in decluttering societal structures, advocating for open, multifunctional spaces where people from different backgrounds could come together. He recognized the need to break down barriers between different social groups and promote greater social integration. His designs for multifunctional centres contributed significantly to the realization of these goals, shaping the social and physical landscape of the region.

The need for a multifunctional centre in Dronten was translated into the realization of De Meerpaal through the careful planning and design efforts of the architect, receiving specific requirements from the head of the main architectural department of RIJP. As the project progressed, new activities were added. Van Klingereren emphasized the importance of De Meerpaal as a meeting place for Eastern Flevoland, highlighting its central location in Dronten and its role in fostering community interaction and engagement. This perfectly aligns with the vision Flevoland and Dronten specifically had in mind.





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