

H-schools as the centre of the neighbourhood in the post-war Netherlands

Longyi Zhou

4775333

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Tutor: Dolf Broekhuizen



1. Introduction

Through both the lens of sustainability and current events, particularly the pandemic, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of adaptability and intensive use of buildings. One form of adaptability and intensive use emerged in the second half of the 20th century, in the Netherlands, in school buildings.

The Netherlands in the 1950s was recovering from the aftermath of the Second World War. The industry came to a halt during the war, and buildings were destroyed. After the war, a large wave of new-borns added to the pressure on school buildings, particularly the elementary education. To cope with the shortage, standardisation in the design and construction of school buildings began in the 1950s. At the same time, the Netherlands was amid a rethinking of the education concept. Students' needs such as sunlight, fresh air and physical/outdoor activities are prioritized (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950). As a result of the change in education philosophy, the war, and industrialisation, the school architecture transformed from monumental brickworks to economical buildings with high transparency. Furthermore, besides the regular teaching activities, these school buildings are designed to have a social function in their own neighbourhoods, where they are used for gatherings and meetings (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950).

Standardisation in school buildings usually results in standardised floor plans, structures, and materials. The standard floor plans are categorised, with often times "hall-schools" and "corridor-schools" types in smaller cities. In bigger cities, like Amsterdam, unique types were developed. Amsterdam formed a committee of experts in education, architecture, town planning, and hygiene, which designed the H-type schools. These standard schools are spread across West-Amsterdam, within the numerous post-war neighbourhoods. These duplicated schools with the same floor plans and designs provide an opportunity to study the performance of the design in the historical context.

The post-war reconstruction period in the Netherlands has been extensively covered in many publications, both recent and in the 1950s. The post-war school architecture received more attention in the past few decades as studies are made to examine the value and future of these "young monuments". Bureau Mevrouw Meijer and the Rijksdienst voor het

culturele erfgoed (ministry of cultural heritage in the Netherlands), for example, argued that the old school buildings, while proving plenty of potential because of their standardised design and spaciousness, are in bad state and in need for a new future (2002). In the post-war period, many themes emerged in Europe and in the Netherlands. Many publications cover the phenomenon of standardisation of school buildings in the post-war Netherlands for its importance in the architectural discourse of the time. Provoost (2003) talks about Maaskant, famous architect that contributed to the reconstruction, who is also known for his role in the standardisation of design and construction. Broekhuizen (2000) focused in his book on the architect Oud and his opposing view on the standardisation. Van der Werf (2001) revisited the H-type schools in Amsterdam-West and the new ideals behind them, among which the ideal of creating schools as community centres. Verlinden and Zietsma (1956) position school building designs dated until 1956 with the education systems and requirements of the time. Another theme that emerged in the post-war reconstruction is the use of monumental artwork as a tool to strengthen social bonds, which is talked about in the book by Van Burkom & Spoelstra (2013).

Besides the theoretical perspective of these existing studies whereas the focus was on ideologies behind the schools, more evidence-based studies are required to test the effective capability of these schools. Therefore, this history thesis aims to answer this question: To what degree did the H-schools fulfil the vision of a centre for the neighbourhood? This is studied from different perspectives: the urban context and location of the schools, the users of the schools, the different functions/activities in the schools, and lastly, the artworks in the schools.



O.B.S. Multatuli. (2017). Gathering on the playground of Multatulischool, the former Prinses Beatrixschool. Google Image.

Foreword

It is with great pleasure that I present this history thesis, written under the curriculum of the Master Architecture programme of TU Delft. The history thesis would not be made possible without the support and guidance of Dr. Dolf Broekhuizen, and the inspiration and help of the fellow students within the tutor group. I hereby express my gratitude.

Keywords

Reconstruction, school building, standardisation, post-war, post-war neighbourhood, community centre, H-schools

Abstract

Through both the lens of sustainability and current events, particularly the pandemic, there is an increasing awareness of the importance of adaptability and intensive use of buildings. In the Netherlands, one form of adaptability and intensive use emerged in the second half of the 20th century in school buildings. One of the main ideas is that schools should have not only supported various educational functions, but also social functions within their neighbourhoods. These new ideas manifested themselves in the H-schools in Amsterdam-West. Existing literature provides theoretical contexts regarding the H-schools. Through further evidence-based study, this thesis examines in what ways the H-schools in Amsterdam achieve their role as community centres. The findings of this research can be valuable for current day designs and plannings.

The thesis begins with a literature review. Existing literature provides the historical basis on the topic of standardised school buildings in the 1950s and in particular the H-schools. The literature review also covers the ideologies behind education and school designs. Both primary and secondary sources provide the necessary evidence to answer the research question. The primary sources include photographs, and original floor plans of the school buildings from the Amsterdam City Archive (S.A.A.). This thesis also studies newspapers from the archives to provide the social context of

the time, which among other newspapers, are *De Waarheid* and *NRC Handelsblad* newspapers. With the combination of first-hand drawings, photos, and publications, this thesis studies the capability of the standardised H-schools as community centres in Amsterdam West.

The sources used in this research contain large amount of literature in the Dutch language, which is translated by the author (Zhou) self.

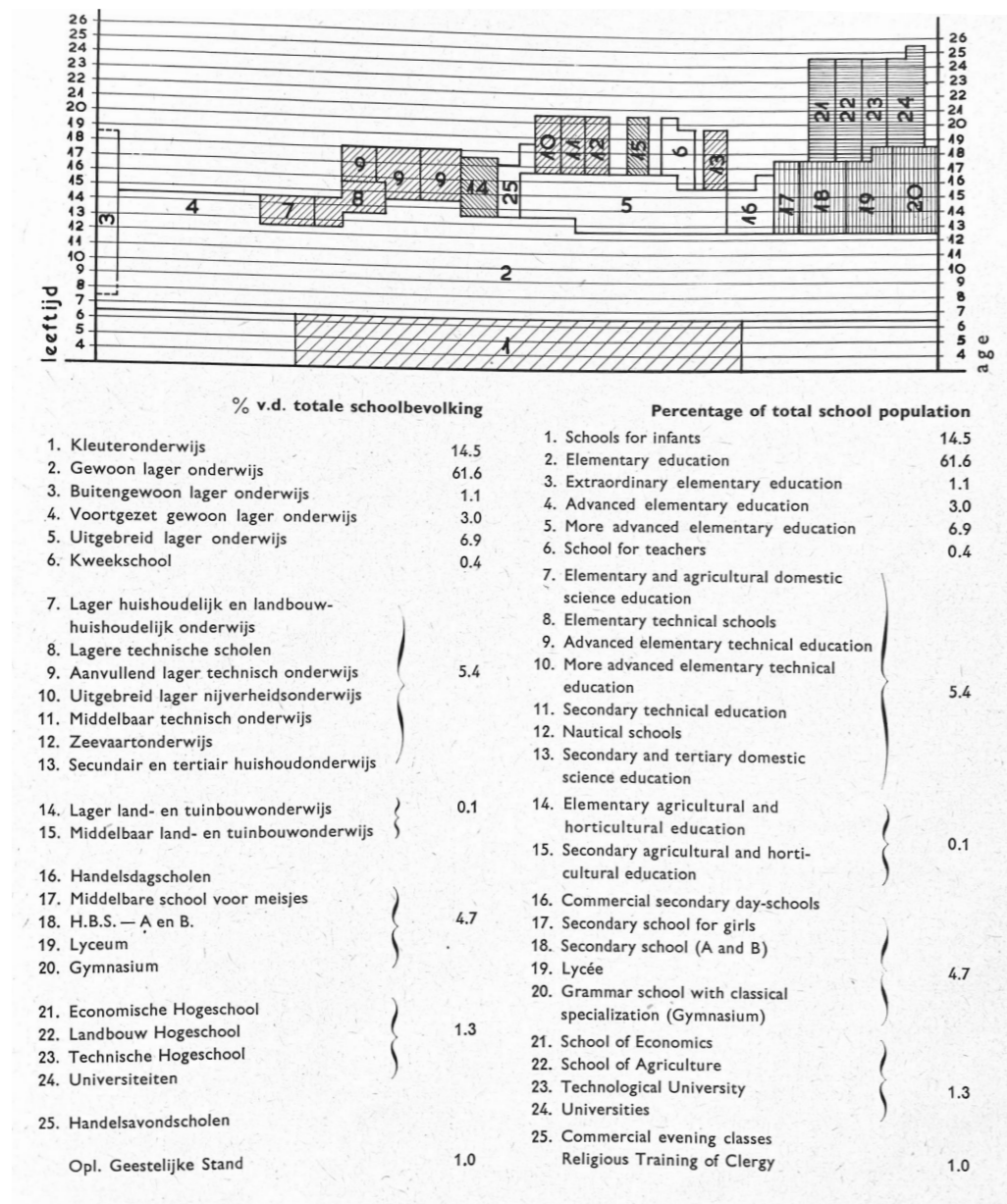


Figure 1: Bouwcentrum, 1953. Percentage of total school population in the Netherlands. In *Scholenbouw in Nederland 1950-1953*.

3. The new school-building for the child and the community

To understand the visions behind the H-schools, it is first important to look at their position in the whole education system at the time. The Netherlands in the 1950s had a unique education system. Bouwcentrum Rotterdam documented school buildings in the Netherlands from 1950-1953 in the report *Scholenbouw in Nederland 1950-1953* (1953) in assignment for the Minister of Reconstruction and Housing. This report also includes an overview of the education system and the types of schools that existed in that period (see fig. 1). The lower education, for example, consisted of schools for infants, elementary education, extraordinary elementary education, advanced elementary education, more advanced elementary education, elementary and agricultural domestic science education, elementary technical schools. Despite the complicated system, the (regular) elementary education, occupies the largest part, 61.6% of the school population, in which the H-schools in this thesis belong to.

School building in the Netherlands by Verlinden & Zietsma (1956) gives an overview of the school buildings in relation to the educational requirements in the post-war era. Zietsma was also part of the committee of the study of *Scholenbouw in Nederland* (1953). According to Zietsma, in both the report of Bouwcentrum, and *School building in the Netherlands* (1956), the school buildings were highly heterogeneous, partly due to the complicated education system in the Netherlands. Nonetheless, importance was given to three different typologies, the hall-schools, the corridor-schools, and the corridor-less type, which is the H-schools in question in this research. These schools in the post-war period are radically different from the school buildings before the war. The new schools focused on daylight, fresh air, sufficient exercise, collaboration, handwork, and active participation. Another important change in the education concept was the inclusion of parents in schools, while the schools opened their doors to the society and community (Verlinden & Zietsma, 1956). These similar values are adopted by the city of Amsterdam when designing for the H-schools, which is reviewed in the following paragraphs.

As mentioned, a key driver of the new school designs in the 1950s is the new pedagogical visions. The city of Amsterdam laid the basis for a new vision for the elementary schools after WW2 in the governmental report *Het nieuwe schoolgebouw*

voor kind en gemeenschap (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950), *the new school-building for the child and the community*. The report is the outcome of the research committee composed of experts in education, architecture, town planning, and hygiene. This report concludes with a set of guidelines for what quality and standards the new elementary school buildings should provide. In this chapter, these guidelines and visions are briefly reviewed.

Firstly, the existing urge towards educational reform around 1950 is reflected in this report. The pedagogical idea changed from a passive and receptive mode to an active participation of the children. Movements, freedom, and physical exercises are encouraged by providing larger spaces and dedicated rooms. Special rooms like play-work and handwork rooms are included in the new schools. School auditoriums are necessary for children of different age groups to meet and mix, hence strengthening the communal sense and children's command of language (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950). The committee paid further attention to the outdoor environment of the school as well. Playgrounds are directly accessible from the street and are to be used in and out of school time.

Secondly, new hygienic requirements aim to improve the mental and physical health of the children. Light, air, and ventilation are of the utmost importance in this report. Besides the building-physical aspects, more attention is also given to the natural impulse of children. That means nature, such as a school farm, is provided to children to gain knowledge of life, nature, and animals.

Thirdly, the new school is no longer an entity on its own, but a "centre of the community" (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950). This requires the auditorium, the gymnasium and handwork rooms to be used for different purposes, such as play-acting and music in the auditorium, and meetings for the neighbourhood clubs. A small kitchen was also mentioned in the report, so children could procure meals.

In the end, the report lays down guidelines for the building layout and construction. The guideline consists of a list of programmes required in the building, and their subsequent dimensions. Again, sanitary, light, active participation, and spaciousness are mentioned and integrated into the building programme requirements.

4. History and discussions around standardisation

Another important topic around school buildings in the 1950s is standardisation. In the chapter “Architectuur als consumptieartikel 1952-1967” of her book *Hugh Maaskant, Architect van de vooruitgang*, Provoost (2003) wrote about the standardised school building designs by Maaskant & van Tijen and the discussions around this approach to reconstruction. Standardisation was not a novelty in the construction, considering how building components are mass-produced. However, it was during the 1950s, in the Netherlands, that standardisation takes place in the design phase of school buildings. These buildings are no longer designed by an architect each time the client requests. It became a group effort of architects, contractors, the city, and different experts, and the outcome was a standardised school design. These school designs were then “placed” in different parts of the country, and every time a standard design was built, the architect received a percentage of income (Provoost, 2003). Provoost called this approach to design and construction, in plain language, “architecture as consumer goods” (2003).

The standardisation of buildings including schools became an intense discussion among architects through media such as the *BOUW* magazine (1953), and it has been written by both Provoost (2003) and Broekhuizen (2000) recently. On one side, the renowned Dutch architect J.J.P. Oud, who had never designed schools, held a stance against standardisation in the design of school buildings. He argued that the essence of architecture is specific to location, landscape, and context, and that standardisation eliminated this case-specific nature, and together with it, the freedom and possibility for the architects (“Genormaliseerde Scholenbouw En Industriële Productie,” 1953). Van Tijen & Maaskant argued for the social responsibility and economic motivations behind standardised schools, and that individuality in the post-war context should no longer be strived for (“Genormaliseerde Scholenbouw En Industriële Productie,” 1953). Provoost, in her book, argued that although van Tijen & Maaskant had a strong ideology for the standardisation of schools, this idea did not reach its fullest potential in terms of standardisation and economisation (2003). Most of those school buildings end up having small differences in plans, details, and constructions, adjusted to the unique situation of each location and project. This

drove up the costs of these school buildings, but they were still more affordable and efficient than the conventional design and construction of schools without standardisation (Provoost, 2003). Therefore, it is evident that architecture is different from “consumer goods”, and that there are exceptions to be found in each building, regardless of the standardised design.

5. The H-schools

The guidelines in the report *Het nieuwe schoolgebouw voor kind en gemeenschap* (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950) laid the foundation for the conception of the new H-school design (fig. 2) in Amsterdam. Van der Werf (2001) reviewed the H-school in his article in the journal *Jaarboek Cuypergenootschap*. The H-school plan refers specifically to the standardised plan developed by the Department of Public Works/Dienst der Publieke Werken (Dienst P.W.) and head architect J. Leupen, under the initiative of the municipality of Amsterdam. There was, however, one more example of an H-school variant that has a connection with the H-school in this thesis. The Dienst P.W. also designed a semi-permanent predecessor of the H-school in 1949 (see fig.3). This was a fast-built, single-storey design as an emergency solution for the high demand. This variant shares the same principles of sunlight, air, and outdoor activities, but has only four standard classrooms and playgrounds and no space for the specialised classrooms and communal functions (van der Werf, 2001).

Verlinden & Zietsma called these H-schools in their book the “corridorless schools” (1956). The motivation behind corridorless schools was the economisation of construction, whereas no floor area was wasted on spaces such as corridors. Rather, the classrooms themselves also bare the functions of a corridor, and the students must pass by inside the rooms. They pointed out that the corridorless schools gave inspiration to many other schools, owing to the large amount of sunlight and ventilation you can achieve with the lack of corridors (Verlinden et al., 1956).

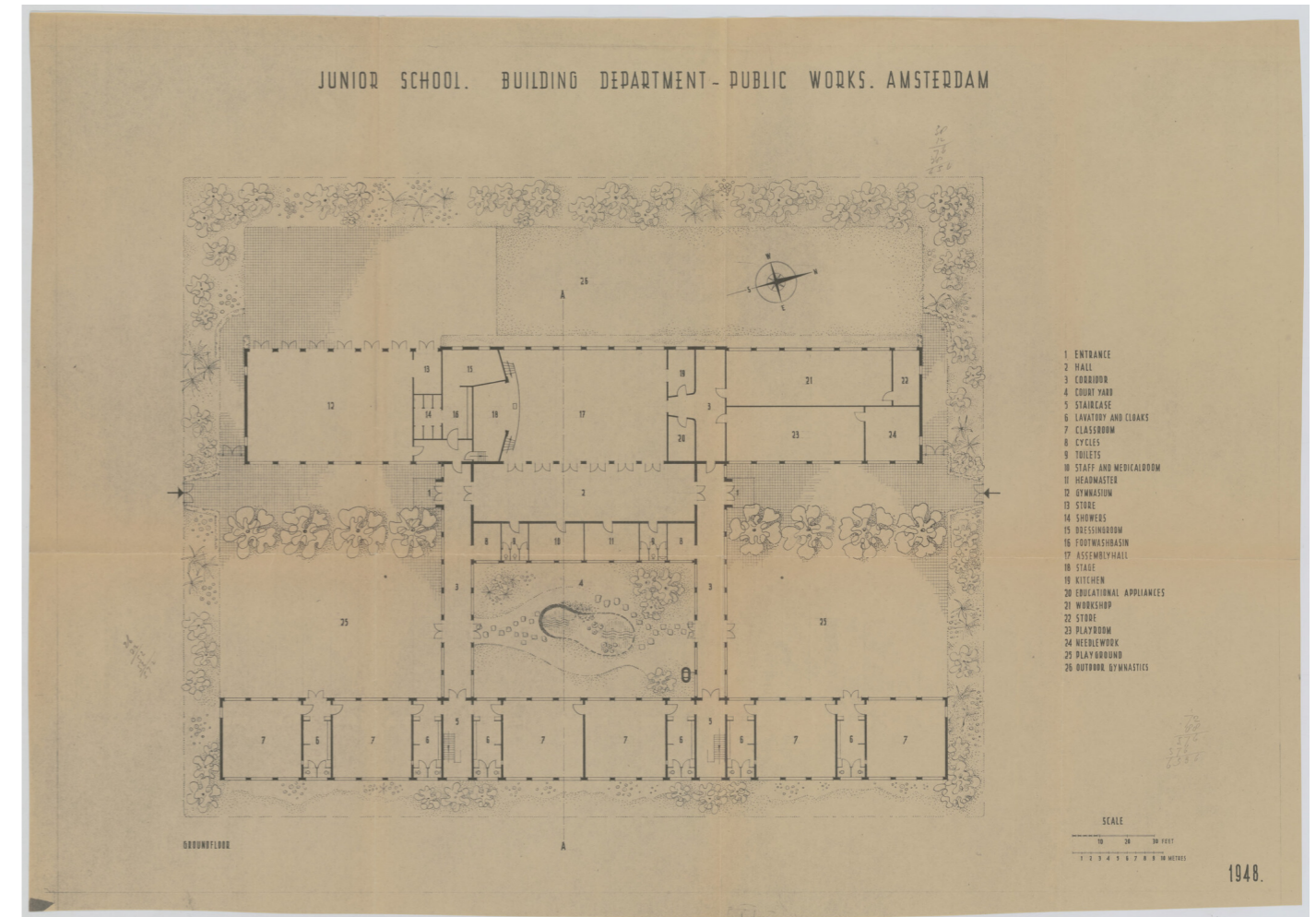


Figure 2: Dienst P.W., 1948. The floor plan of the new school building for elementary education, 1949. (S.A.A.).

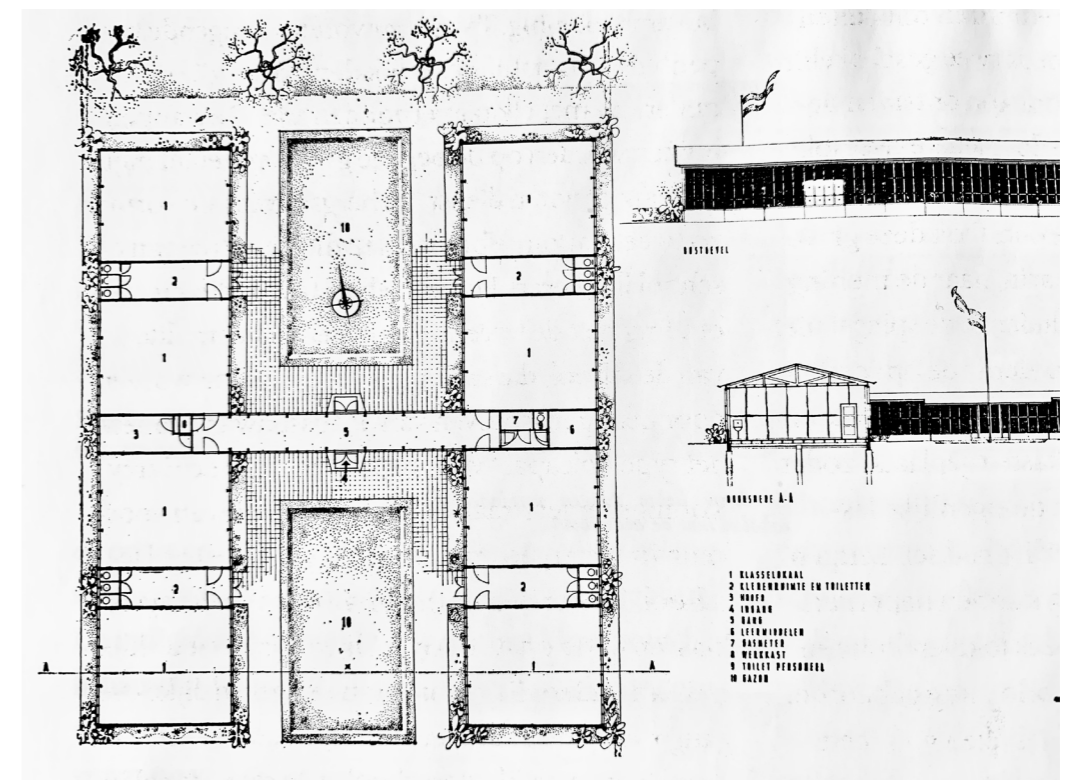


Figure 3: Dienst P.W., 1949. The semi-permanent variant for lower education, 1949. In *Jaarboek Cuypergenootschap*, 2001.

The design by Dienst P.W. for the Amsterdam H-schools consist of two wings, connected by two corridors, and forming a patio with the enclosure (see fig. 2). The southern wing consists of two storeys with a total of 12 classrooms, without any corridors and equipped with their own sanitary and changing rooms. The northern wing has one storey with a tall, pitched roof, whereunder the gymnasium, play-work rooms, school auditorium with stage, and various service spaces. In the centre of the floor plan, one finds administrative spaces and patio space. This plan (figure 2) is the first design of the H-school, before they were built between 1950-1960 (van der Werf, 2001). As seen in the construction floorplan for the Goeman Borgesiusschool (see fig. 4), the southern wing stays largely the same. However, there were several departures from the first design. Compared to the first design, the shower and changing rooms in the northern wing were designed with clearer gender separation. Observed in the section drawing (fig. 6), the Prinses Beatrixschool had an underground cellar for technical installations, whereas the chimney stands between two volumes of different heights, with the handwork/play-work rooms on the left and the auditorium on the right. In the sections of Goeman Borgesiusschool (see fig. 5), the same technical space became a half-sunken cellar. As a result, the handwork/play-work rooms are raised by half a floor, connected to the rest of the building through a short flight of stairs.

One of the representative elements of this floor plan is the standard classroom design, characterised by the near-square shape and the “en-suite” sanitary block shared by every two classes (van der Werf, 2001). This element was also found in the semi-permanent predecessor of the H-school (fig. 3). Bakkum explained that the lack of corridor meant the students using the classrooms at the wider ends would have to pass by the other classrooms to reach the end of the building, which was only a minor disturbance in reality (1953). The handwork classrooms and the play-work rooms were also completely new elements at that time for the elementary schools (Bakkum, 1953).

The auditorium, the gathering place of the students, was envisioned by many schools at the time to be a multi-functional space. By studying examples

in the 1950s, Verlinden & Zietsma found designs of school auditoriums as hybrid spaces, for example, the auditorium-gymnasium, hall-auditorium, and auditorium-canteen (1956). Compared to these other schools, the auditoriums of the H-schools lack hybridity. They were designed plainly as an auditorium or a theatre. It consisted of a stage with curtains, a piano, and chairs as seating for the audience. The focus, however, was on the flexibility and social functions of the auditorium, which will be studied based on historical evidence in the following chapters. The idea behind the auditorium was explained by Bakkum in the magazine *Forum* (1953). He stated, that the auditorium should house the opening- and closing ceremonies of a week, for special events, and for religious and national memorial days (Bakkum, 1953). By having such a central gathering space in the school, children of different age groups could interact and learn with each other, which also created a community within the school. Considering the auditorium, the flexible use of classrooms, the novel handwork and play-work rooms, education was no longer confined in one single classroom, but throughout the whole building. In the following chapters, this thesis will further argue that the upbringing of the students was even extended outside of the school through its inclusion in the neighbourhood.

The earlier mentioned emergency H-school will no longer be discussed, as it was semi-permanent, single-storey, and lacked communal spaces. This thesis will focus on the fully equipped H-schools (fig. 1). These H-schools that are built in Amsterdam West by the Dienst der Publieke Werken, following the same vision and floor plans, are listed below:

- Prinses Beatrixschool (1951), municipal monument, now the Multatulischool, Sara Burgerhartstraat 5, Bos en Lommer
- Burgemeester Fockschool (1953), municipal monument, now the Slotemeerschool, Burg. Fockstraat 85, Sloterveer
- Burgemeester de Vlugschool (1954), Jan de Louterstraat 21, Sloterveer; demolished in 2017 and replaced by a new school building;
- Burgemeester Röellschool (1954), municipal monument, now De Kans, Thomas van Aquinostraat 2, Sloterveer;
- Pieter Jelles Troelstraschool (1959), Dr. H.

Colijnstraat 2, Geuzenveld; demolished in 2016 and replaced by a new school building;

- Goeman Borgesiusschool (1954), Aalbersestraat 35, Geuzenveld; demolished in 2017 and replaced by a new school building.

- Louis Bouwmeesterschool (1959), Louis Bouwmeesterstraat 14, Sloterveer; partially demolished; renovated in 2018

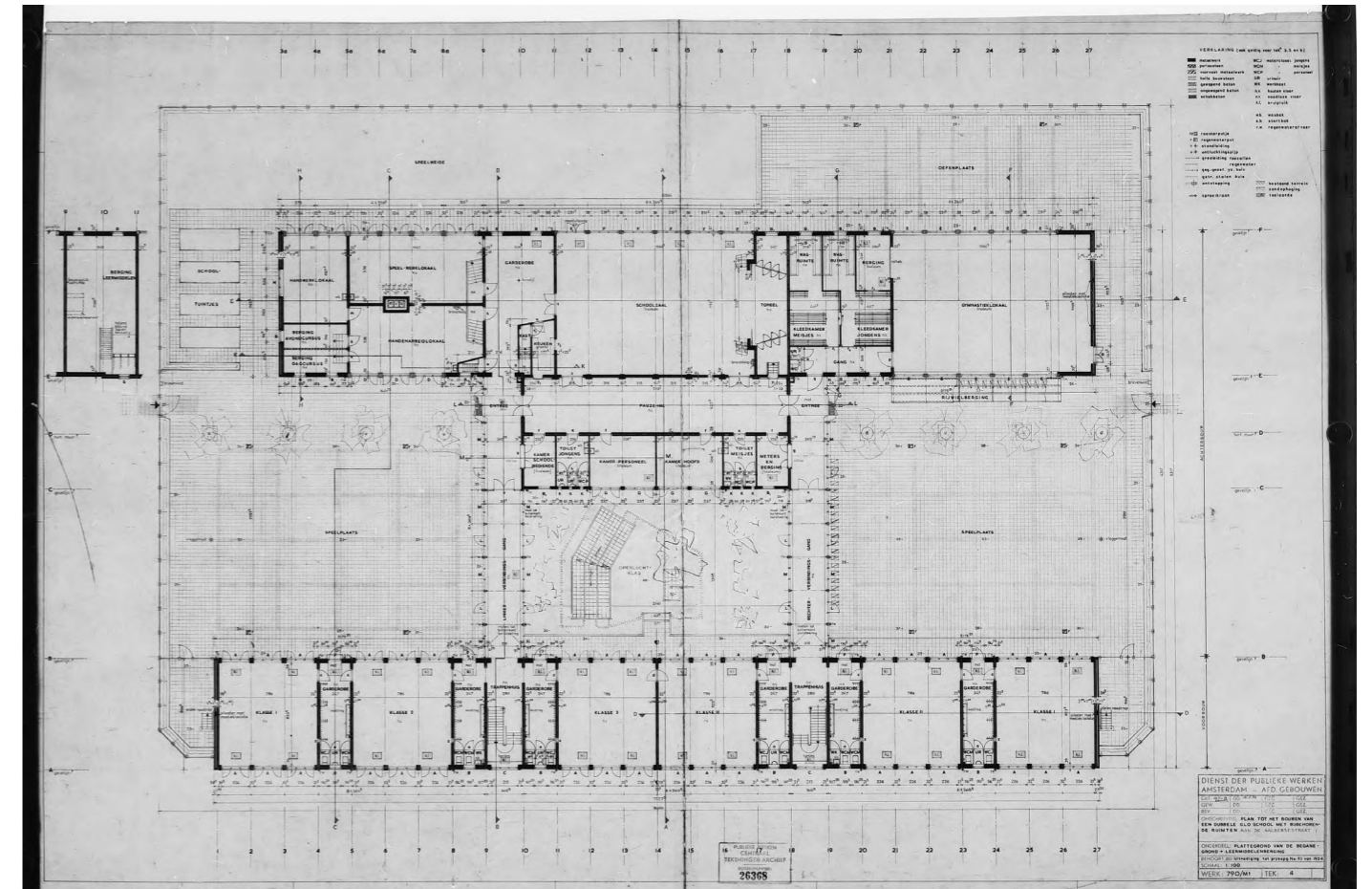


Figure 4: Dienst P.W., 1954. Floor plan of the Goeman Borgesiusschool. (S.A.A.).

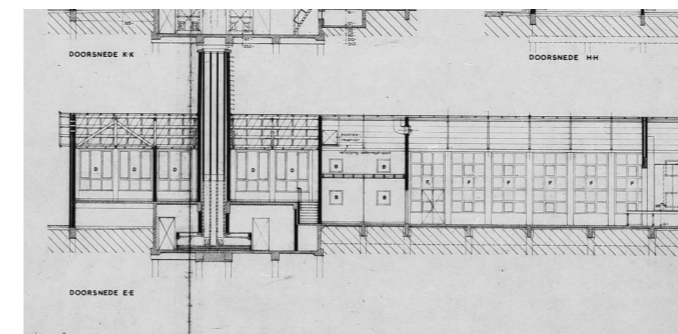


Figure 5: Dienst P.W., 1954. Section drawing of the Goeman Borgesiusschool. (S.A.A.).

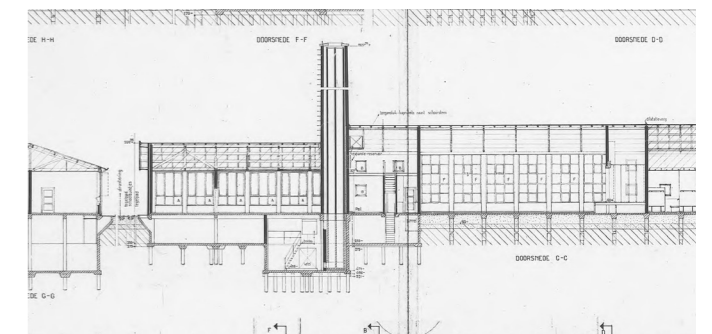


Figure 6: Dienst P.W., 1951. Section drawing of the Prinses Beatrixschool. (S.A.A.).

6.1 Urban context

The post-war neighborhoods in Amsterdam-West are all planned using the same set of logic. The mass-housing blocks are oriented for optimal sunlight, and they are surrounded by as much greenery as possible (Van der Werf, 2001). Just like the school buildings where outdoor activities are placed at the top of the priorities, the urban plan intergrated a large number of playgrounds, sports fields and spaces of similar nature (Van der Werf, 2001). These aspects created a healthy living environment. This section studies how the H-schools played a part in their urban context as the centre of the neighbourhood.

The standardised H-school also played a similar role in the creation of a healthy neighbourhood. The study committee argued that it is desirable for the school playgrounds to be used in and out of school hours (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950). The Goeman Borgesiuschool is one of the H-school examples, built in 1954 and demolished in 2017. Figure 7 shows the school building within its urban context at the time of construction. The open ground on the east side of the school, marked as “speelplaats” (playground), is open towards the main street going north-south. On the north side of the building, there are more open ground areas dedicated to outdoor activities, facing the Goeman Borgesiusstraat. Hence, the playgrounds are highly accessible from the streets and public spaces, and the rest of the neighbourhood.

The Burgemeester Rendorpschool, built in 1954, is nowadays the Kentalis Signis-school. Figure 8 shows the urban context of the school at the time it was built, whereas the west entrance of the school faces a square and the hexagonal church building “Olijftak” (nowadays a mosque). The H-school and the church square formed together an urban block double the size of the rest, while surrounded by residential blocks. Due to both of their social functions, the school functioned together with the church as the centre of the neighbourhood.

Another example of clustering of social functions can be found in Louis Bouwmeesterschool (fig. 9). The elementary school formed a cluster with the secondary school (V.O. school) on its west.

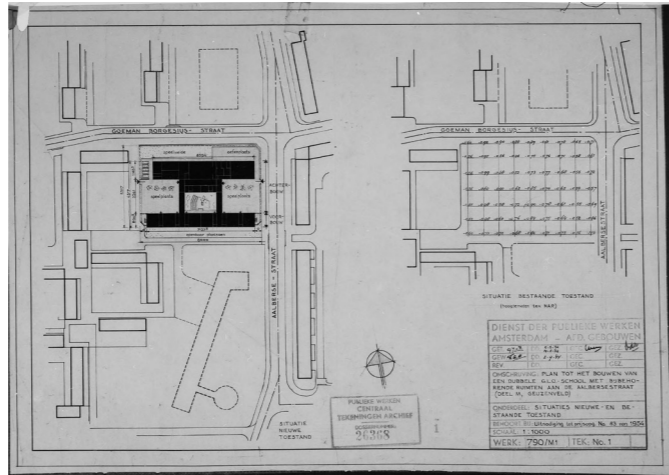


Figure 7: Dienst P.W., 1954. Urban context of the Goeman Borgesiuschool. (S.A.A.).

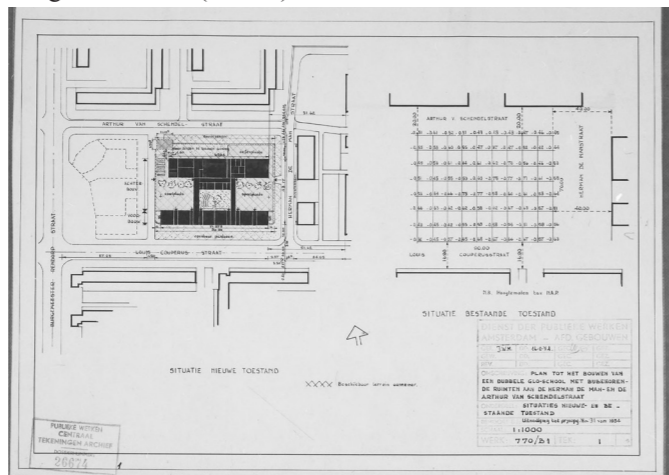


Figure 8: Dienst P.W., 1954. Urban context of the Burgemeester Rendorpschool. (S.A.A.).

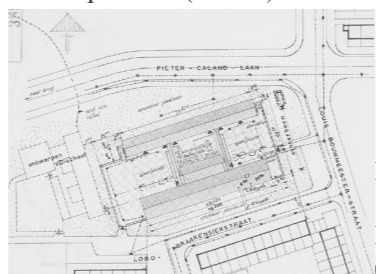


Figure 9: Dienst P.W. 1959. Urban context of the Louis Bouwmeesterschool. (S.A.A.).



Figure 10: Dienst P.W. 1953. Music lesson in the aula of Prinses Beatrixschool. (S.A.A.).

6.2 Use and users of the classrooms

In an article in the journal *Forum*, P. Bakkum, the government inspector of education, writes about the first completed school of the H-type family, the Prinses Beatrixschool in Bos en Lommer, Amsterdam. The article gives first-hand insight into the thoughts and idealisms behind this innovative school of the post-war period. In this account, Bakkum explained the multifunctionality of the school auditorium. The auditorium, equipped with a stage, can be used for week opening/-closing ceremonies, events for religious and national days, music and dance, theatre rehearsal, and displaying of movies (1953). The photos on the right (fig. 10 & 11) are taken from the Prinses Beatrixschool in 1953 and the Goeman Boegesiuschool respectively. They both show, besides for events, the use of the aula as a music lesson classroom, for both younger and older children.

Due to the upsurge in classroom demands, especially for the class 1952-'53, 1953-'54, and 1954-'55, even the classrooms carry a level of flexibility (Bakkum, 1953). The specialised classrooms (eg. the handwork room and the play-work room) formed one-third of the curriculum and school hours (Bakkum, 1953). This makes it possible for three classes to use only two of the standard classrooms, while the third class had their education inside one of the specialised classrooms. This form of rotation requires coordination between the teachers, but it was documented to be successful in the Prinses Beatrixschool (Bakkum, 1953). Another form of flexibility in the classrooms was achieved with the large dimensions and near-square plan of the classrooms. It allowed various layouts for desks and chairs, and hence various activities possible in the classrooms. This again emphasises the pedagogical vision of more active participation and increasing communication among children. Figures 12-15 are photographs demonstrating the variety of seating arrangements in different H-schools.



Figure 11: Dienst P.W. N.d. Aalbersstraat 35: De Goeman Borgesiuschool, de aula. (S.A.A.).



Figure 12: De Arbeiderspers. 1956, May 31. Klaslokaal in nieuwe Burgemeester Fockschool, Burgemeester Fockstraat 85. Stadsarchief Amsterdam (S.A.A.).



Figure 13: Dienst P.W. ca 1960. Classroom in Louis Bouwmeesterschool. (S.A.A.).

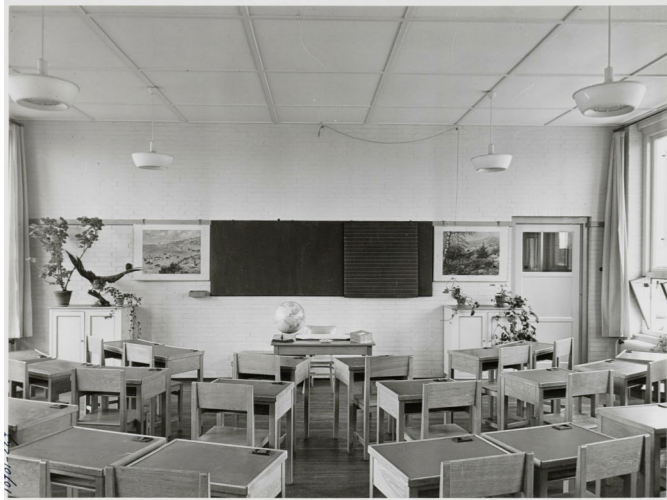


Figure 14 & 15: Dienst P.W. 1953. Classrooms in Prinses Beatrixschool. (S.A.A.).



Figure 16: Dienst P.W. April 1953. The Prinses Beatrixschool. Children having class in the patio. (S.A.A.).

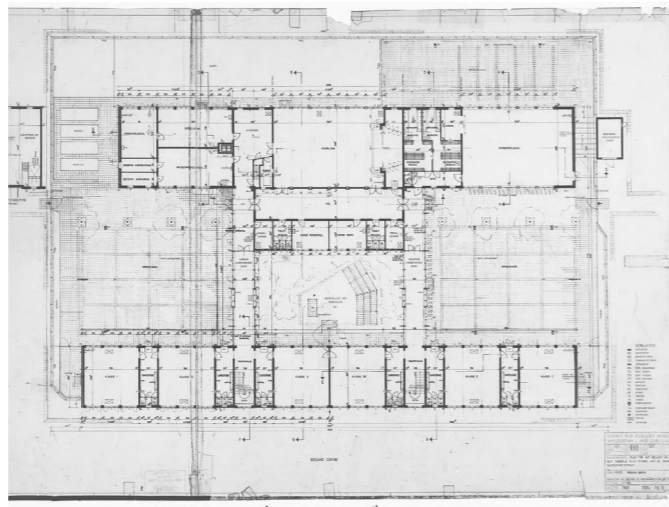


Figure 17: Dienst. P.W. 1951. Floor plan of the Prinses Beatrixschool. (S.A.A.).

The inner patio enclosed by the building structure becomes a private outdoor space, in contrast with the “extroverted” playgrounds accessible to the rest of the neighbourhood. In the construction floor plan (fig. 17) of the design by Dienst. P.W., the patio space is annotated as “buitenklas” (outdoor class). The tile steps and podium are designed as seatings for children and a place to stand for the teachers. Figure 16 shows such an arrangement of the outdoor classes. However, the photograph do not necessarily represent the true nature of the regular use of the space. This photo, among many of the documentation over the Prinses Beatrixschool, was taken in April, 1953, when it opened its door. Being the first permanent school building of its kind, Prinses Beatrixschool received a lot of attention. This is also evident from the visit of the Princess of the

time, which is reported in multiple newspapers over the whole country, such as *Eindhovens Dagblad* (1953, Sep. 11) in Eindhoven. Indeed, van der Werf reported in his journal article that most of these outdoor classrooms are later unused or replaced, because they were too close to the other classrooms (2001). Instead, they were adapted to a school farm or school garden, which van der Werf argues, also fits in the pedagogical vision of H-schools (2001).

6.3 Use and users of the communal spaces

The adaptability of the classrooms suggests that they can easily be used for other functions. Although the vision document of the city of Amsterdam suggests that the classrooms can be used by the neighbourhood outside of school hours for eg. meetings of community clubs (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1950), there is no evidence found in the limit of this history thesis. However, there were other moments that the community used the school as a centre. Firstly, the typical school auditoriums, like the one shown in fig. 11, were open to the public. In the newspaper at the time, *De Waarheid*, was an announcement inviting the reader to the Prinses Beatrixschool auditorium to watch the theatre show “Als de klok waarschuwt” (De Waarheid, 1956, Feb. 20). The announcement, among ones from other theatre clubs, was published under the section “Amaterus op de planken”, which was a place for hobbyists of theatres and amateur actors and actresses to communicate. *Het Parool* (1955, March 25) similarly had the section “Ons geheugensteuntje” (reminder section), reminding readers of a public class from the “speeltuon ver.” (playground association) at 19:45 at the auditorium of the Prinses Beatrixschool.

Secondly, the school playground functioned as an outdoor centre for the neighbourhood. Figure 18 is a photo taken in June 1980, on the school playground of the Burgemeester de Vlugschool. Around 1980, the government decided on a cut and downsizing of the workforce in education. Teachers of both lower and higher educations were forced to resign or retire early (Boissevain, 1982). The photo on the right shows parents gathering at the school, hanging up posters and banners, to show support for the teachers.

Besides acting as a place for gathering, solidarity, and political messages, the H-schools were used for other communal activities. In 1976, the Burgemeester Fockschool was part of a city initiative to clean up their neighbourhood. Fig. 19 shows a photo of the children of the schools receiving a prize from the city councillor at the time. The newspaper *NRC Handelsblad* (now NRC) have written about the prize of “the clean city” under the section “onder de keizerskroon” in April 1976 and



Figure 18: Verhoeff, B. 1980, June 17. Jan de Louterstraat 21. Parents at Burgemeester de Vlugschool after the resignation of teachers. (By *Dagblad Het Vrije Volk en Rechtsvoorganger*).



Figure 19: ANEFO. 1977 May 11. Councillor Goekoop giving out the “clean city” price at the Burgemeester Fockschool. (S.A.A.)

March 1978. It was a city-wide initiative to clean up the city of Amsterdam through labour (NRC Handelsblad, 1976). The broom in the picture, “de zilveren bezem” (the silver broom), is the symbol for whoever contributes greatest to cleaning up their own working and living environments (NRC Handelsblad, 1978). The city janitors received the prize in 1975, and the Burgemeester Fockschool (fig. 19) received it in 1976 (NRC Handelsblad, 1978).

Last but not least, although it is unclear which spaces in the school is in question, *De Waarheid* showed the schools were used as a place for temporary exhibitions (1956b, May 11). The exhibition of a series of reproduced Rembrandt paintings was exhibited in different buildings in Amsterdam, including the Burgemeester Fockschool and Goeman Borgesiusschool (1956b, May 11), with an entrance fee of 20 cents.

6.4 Artwork and community

Another noticeable element of the Amsterdam H-schools is the monumental artworks, usually positioned on the school playground next to a street. Burkorn et al. wrote in their book about the importance of these artworks as a tool to create a sense of identity and strengthen communities (2013). This thesis is able to include 5 artworks of the 7 H-schools (fig. 20-24). While the schools were standardised and duplicated, these artworks were creations of known artists, unique to every school. The artists Ek van Zanten, for example, gained fame and national pride as he won the Rome Prize in 1955 (1955, October 21). At that time, he was also in progress of the creation of “the ball players” in fig. 24. While artworks by reknown Amsterdam artists



Figure 20: Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1958. Statue “Jongetje met haan” (Little boy with hen) by Jan Wolkers on the school playground of Burgemeester Roëlschool. (S.A.A.)



Figure 21: Dienst P.W., 1956. Relief art by Frits Sieger ‘Boom der kennis’ on the façade of elementary school the Burgemeester Fockschool. (S.A.A.)



Figure 22: Dienst P.W., 1956 April. Playground with sculpture “Turner” by sculptor Herman Janzen for the Burgemeester de Vlugschool. (S.A.A.)



Figure 23: Dienst P.W., ca. 1956. The Goeman Borgesiuschool with sculpture, seen from the roadside of Goeman Borgesiusstraat. (S.A.A.)



Figure 24: Dienst P.W., 1956, May. Playground with sculpture, the ball players by Ek van Zanten at the elementary school Burgemeester Rendorpschool. (S.A.A.)

do suggest some degree of pride and ownership, there is no evidence found in the limit of this research that the artworks realised their ideology in the practice. However, the following literatures suggest the potential of these monumental art to achieve its “commoning” function.

The book *Kunst van de Wederopbouw in*

Nederland 1940-1965 sheds light on the role of monumental artworks in buildings in the post-war reconstruction period (2013). According to van Burkorn et al., the percentage-policy (percentage-regeling) initiated by the OKW (Ministry of Education, Art, and Science) in 1951 is one of the important drivers for the phenomenon of the growth of these artworks (2013). 1.5% of the budget for the construction of all state-owned buildings was dedicated to decoration and art. This is the reason why these arts are often also called “gebonden kunst” (bounded art), as they were always bounded to one building (van Burkorn et al., 2013). Many school buildings, including lower education schools, also included artwork as part of the package. However, it was only in 1955 that the OKW decided to expand the policy to the provincial scale, where they dedicated 1% of building costs to artworks that is applicable to the school buildings (van Burkorn et al., 2013). The goal of the stimulation of the monumental arts was to create a sense of identity and restore the feeling of collectivity after the adverse social impact of the war (van Burkorn et al., 2013). By building monumental arts also in school buildings, children would get more exposure to fine art (van Burkorn et al., 2013). This phenomenon of bounded artworks, however, last only about 15 years, due to factors such as the emergence of new contemporary artforms and the shift away from monumental arts (van Burkorn et al., 2013).

In recent years, there is a re-evaluation of the value of artworks in the public space. According to the municipality of Amsterdam, outdoor artworks like statues in public space has been a tradition of the city of Amsterdam since the beginning of the 20th century (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2018). Recent studies also highlight the importance of artworks in the public space, such as the report made by the Curatorium Amsterdam, for the municipality of Amsterdam (2021). According to the Curatorium, artworks in public space have the effect of creating “a sense of place”, by highlighting histories and stories, and “commoning”, bringing the neighbours together (2021). The users of the public space are therefore connected through their collective care for the outdoor artworks.

The H-school is a type of building that emerged in the context of new pedagogical visions, post-war shortage, industrialisation, and standardisation. One of the key developments from these new schools of the new age is the involvement of the community. This thesis started by reviewing the historical context and ideologies behind the schools. It is evident that the involvement of the community in the schools was crucial to not only education but also to a stronger social bond. Then, the thesis studies the H-schools in Amsterdam-West as evidence of how they answered to the idea of community.

The thesis answers to the research question from multiple angles: urban context, uses and users, and artworks. Firstly, when building the H-schools, attention was paid to urban planning, which allowed the school to be in the social centre of the neighbourhood, situating along important roads, squares, or sometimes other social buildings like another school or a church. Secondly, the flexible use of the classrooms and auditoriums created opportunities for children of different age groups to meet and learn from each other. This created a community within the school. The flexible use also functioned for the community outside of school hours. Communities outside of the schools such as theatre clubs, art exhibitions etc., used the school as their event space. Thirdly, the H-schools were used as a place for solidarity. The community in the neighbourhood gathered at the schools to protest certain policies, for example. Forth, the school contributed to the community through means of cleaning and service, while strengthening both the sense of collectivity among the students and the school's position within the neighbourhood. Lastly, the H-schools were equipped with monumental artworks, stimulated by national policies. The artworks were sometimes made by reknown artists of local or even national pride. These artworks had the goal of enhancing the sense of identity and collectivity, while exposing children to fine arts.

As a result of the H-schools in Amsterdam, education of children were no longer confined in a single classroom. Children used the whole school building, in- and outdoors, for different activities, interactions, and education. In a broader sense, education of the children also extended beyond the school buildings into the community, as seen in the use of solidarity and service for the neighbourhood.

From the perspective of the community, the schools were the playground for children from the whole neighbourhood regardless of age. The schools were a place for hobbyists of theatres and other artforms. The schools educate children and adults alike from the neighbourhood, through optional classes in the evenings and weekends. The intensive use of a building for different people at different times could offer valuable lessons to designs and plannings of nowadays.

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