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Regeneration by Excess

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Don't plan to much flexibility in a building at the start of the design process, let it be, let the building be. The most valuable buildings haven't been designed as flexible structures. Other factors were responsible for an energy saving reuse of them.

1. Introduction

Within the scope of my (PhD) research project I would like to talk about two aspects that are involved with Flexibility and Energy Saving: the regeneration of buildings instead of building new ones and flexibility created by the excess of available space.

I illustrate these statements with two examples: the Provincial Library of Friesland in Leeuwarden and the Distribution Post Office near the Central Station in Amsterdam.

During my research I am analyzing Postwar (1940-1970) Architecture in the Netherlands on educational, technical and adaptable aspects. My overall conclusion will be: continuity + changeability = sustainability.

Postwar buildings are large in number, are build with new techniques, seldom monuments, not loved by a big audience and not well known.[1]

All buildings change during there existence. Most of the time this happens unnoticed. To reuse a large number of postwar buildings we need to find and define their qualities before changing them.

A way of investigating buildings before we change them is necessary but differs from the original architect's point of view like Sigfried Giedion described in 1967: '*The attitude to the past of Utzon's generation differs from that of the historian, at least from that of those historians who lack an inner relation to the contemporary scene. The architect is little interested in when or by whom a certain building was erected. His questions are rather: What did the builder want to achieve and how did he solve his problems? In other words, the architect is concerned with searching through previous architectonic knowledge, so that he can immediately confront contemporary architectural aims with those of a former period. Travel gives the best possibility for such immediate questioning.*'[2]

We have to research the building, the space, the structure, the materials used and the services. And we have to reconsider the context of the building: the brief; the location; the architect; the typology and the designing process. We have to 'understand' the building.[3] After that we are capable to regenerate a building.

2. Regeneration

Norman Foster wrote: 'The regeneration process examines the possibility of extending the life of existing structures.'[4]

This is the most energy saving solution for a lot of existing buildings that surrounds us. It concerns sustainability from the essence of the concept of the word 'sustainability' itself. But it always deals with change and the changeability of a building. It isn't necessary to realize new ideas in completely new erected buildings. On the other hand regenerated buildings aren't 'second hand' buildings. They are completely redesigned and equipped for their new life.

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1 See also: Saint, A., 'Philosophical Principles of Modern Conservation', in: S. Macdonald, *Modern Matters. Principles and Practice in Conserving Recent Architecture*, Shaftsburry 1996, pp. 15-28.
2 Giedion, S., *Space , Time and Architecture. The growth of a tradition*, Cambridge 1967, (first edition in 1941) p. 670, 'Jørn Utzon and the third generation'.
3 See also: Latham, D., Creative Re-use of Buildings. Vol. 1. Principles and Practice, Shaftesbury, p. 77.
4 Foster, N., 'Appropriate technology', in: Henket, H.J. (red.), The Economy of Architecture, Technical university Eindhoven 1996, p. 24.

Postwar buildings in the Netherlands are seldom listed as monuments because the limit for listing as a state monument is 50 years. A lot of them have been demolished but a slight change in thinking, rethinking, has started.[5]

Regeneration doesn't mean that a complete new function has to be found for an existing building. Also the contemporary function can be regenerated in the existing building. The existing building needs to be changed respecting the original design and conceptual ideas of it.

An example of regeneration within the same skin and structure is the Provincial Library of Friesland in Leeuwarden.

3. The Provincial Library of Friesland in Leeuwarden[6]

In 1966 the Provincial Library of Friesland in Leeuwarden was finished. It took eight years from the design as a competition entry until it opened. Pieter Tauber (1927) from Alkmaar was the architect. It was his first serious project after his education in Delft. During the designing process the building developed to an internal atrium type. The architect arranged the different functions around an internal courtyard, a big hall.[7]

See illustrations 1,2 and 3.

Around the rectangular plan he pulled a more or less neutral façade of natural stone with a rhythm of vertical openings.[8] The building was located at the formal fortification area on the north west site of the site inside its surrounding canal. So the building was free standing surrounded by green close to the city centre.

See illustrations 4 and 5.

The archives were located in the basement and in a small book tower. The public spaces lay on the ground floor as on the first floor and the offices only on the ground floor.

Some elements changed during the years like they needed more quit study rooms and no big auditorium. In 1999 the library chose to regenerate the whole building. The director connected the primary architect. Tauber made a complete new design. Inside the original structure and façade. He took the opportunity to redesign his first project in a way that the concept of the atrium building became more clear.

See illustrations 6, 7 and 8.

The most imported changes in the plan are: an open hall at the ground level; a lecture room in the book tower; all offices at the first floor round the atrium; the enlargement of the basement for archives and a new entrance.

See illustrations 9 till 13.

Except the spatial and functional modifications complete new installations and services were needed. In the high of the building it was possible to integrate all the pipes and ducts. They only lifted the roof above the hall, the atrium, fifty centimetres.

See illustrations 14 and 15.

After this operation the Provinciale Library of Friesland started a new life as a regenerated building. It is able to function again for a long time.

But even now there are plans to change it again. The neighbour is the State Archive building, also form architect Tauber. Because digitalizing of files goes on and the number of visi-

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5 A book with Dutch examples of postwar architecture was published in 2002 by Prof. Marieke Kuipers. She works at the National Institute for Conserving Monuments and as a professor at the University of Maastricht. Kuipers, M., *Toonbeelden van de wederopbouw*, Zwolle 2002.

6 Zijlstra, H., 'De Provinciale Bibliotheek Fryslân kreeg een waardevolle herkansing', *Monumenten*, 24(2003)3, pp. 8-12.

7 See: Douma, S., 'Een nieuw gebouw voor de Provinciale Bibliotheek van Friesland en voor de Buma-Bibliotheek te Leeuwarden', Bibliotheekleven, (1959) vol.44, pp. 209-216 and Tauber, P.H., 'Provinciale en Buma Bibliotheek', Bouw, 23(1968)16, pp. 586-589.

8 Haskel, D., 'Jazz in Architecture', *Architectural Forum*, (1960) september, pp. 110-115.

tors of the library are decreasing and those of the archive are increasing both institutes want to combine more public services.

It also gives the opportunity to enlarge the basement between the two buildings for more storage and archives. And still Tauber is making plans for this.

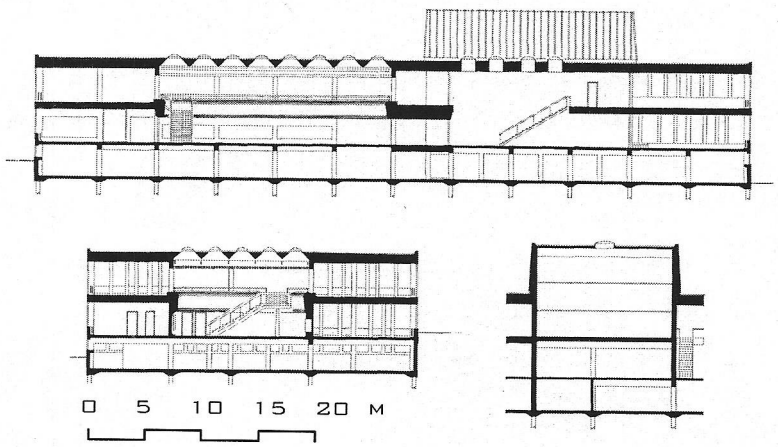


Fig. 1. Section of the Provincial Library of Friesland. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.

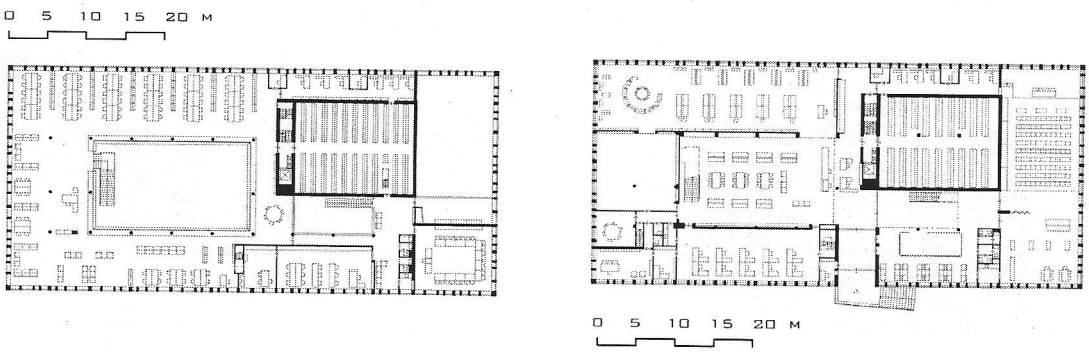


Fig. 2. Authentic ground floor plan of the Provincial Library of Friesland. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.

Fig. 3. Authentic first floor plan of the Provincial Library of Friesland. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.

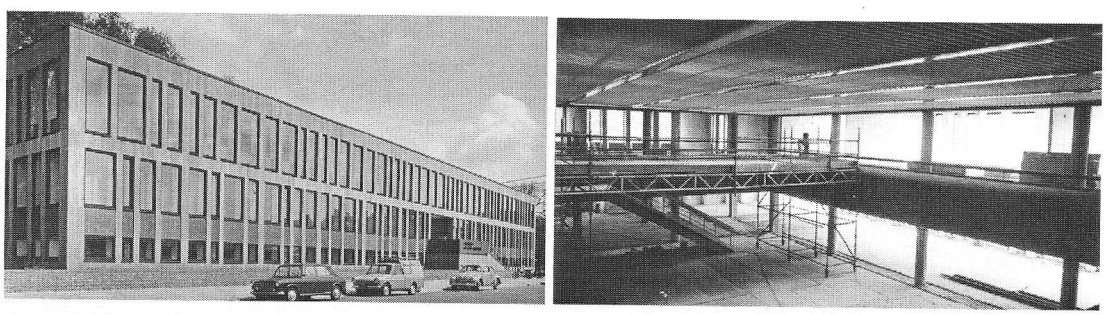


Fig. 4. Photograph taken in 1964 from the façade of the Library of Friesland. From: P.H. Tauber.

Fig. 5. Demolition of the central hall in 1998. From: P.H. Tauber.

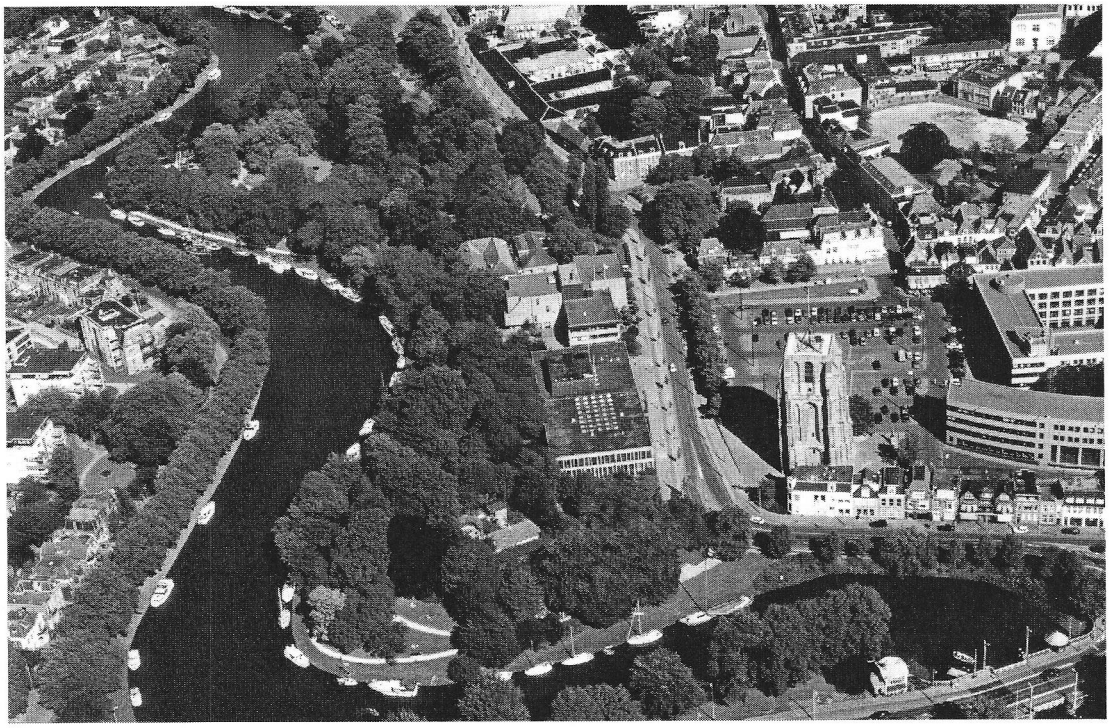
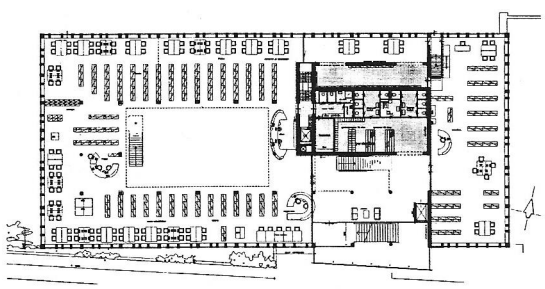


Fig. 6. Aerial photograph of the location of the Provincial Library of Friesland. The library is the rectangular building in the centre of the picture. Picture modified by the author originally from: Wetting, C., *Leeuwarden in perspectief*, Leeuwarden 2000.



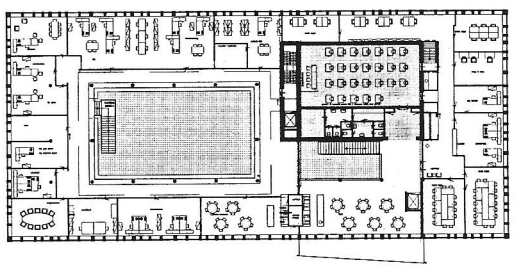
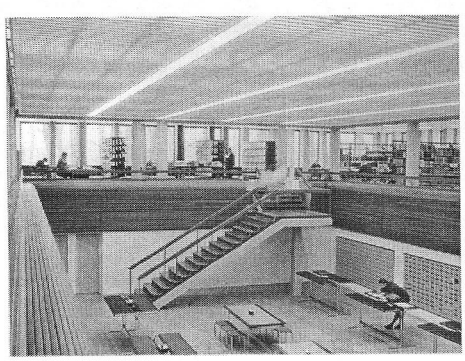


Fig. 7. Ground floor plan in 1999 after regeneration of the Provincial Library of Friesland. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.
Fig. 8. First floor plan in 1999 after regeneration of the Provincial Library of Friesland. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.



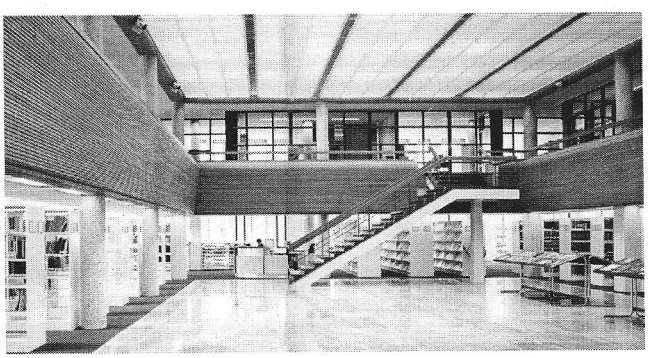


Fig. 9. Authentic interior of the atrium of the Library in 1964. From: P.H. Tauber.
Fig. 10. Interior after regeneration in 1999 of the library. From: Tauber, P.H.,F. en G.J. van den Broek, *De Provinciale Bibliotheek Friesland. 40 jaar ontwerp- en bouwgeschiedenis*, Leeuwarden 2000.

Fig. 11. The new entrance (exterior) of 1999. From: H. Zijlstra, 2002.
Fig. 12. The new entrance (interior) of 1999. From: H. Zijlstra, 2002.
Fig. 13. The extension of the basement of 1999. From: H. Zijlstra, 2002.

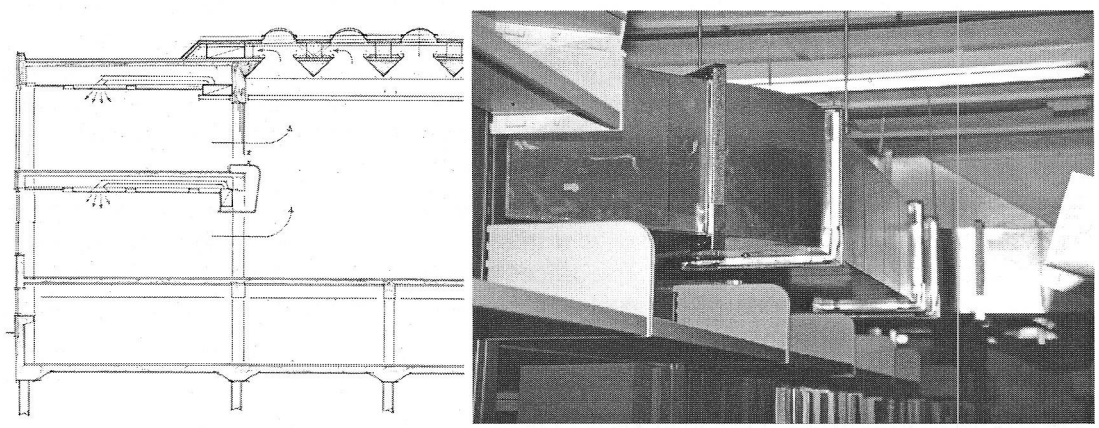


Fig. 14. A drawing from the new section. The roof has been lifted to create space for ventilation ducts. Drawing of P.H. Tauber 1998.
Fig. 15. The ventilation ducts in the archives. From H. Zijlstra, 2002.

Fig. 16. Pieter Tauber (1927) working at his drawing table in his private residence in 1981. From: Erkamp, N., B. Gmelig en F. van Hoeken, *Architectuur, vak van ontmoetingen*, Alkmaa 1981.

4. Excess

The second statement I would like to illustrate in this lecture concerns flexibility. I do not think it is necessary to design all new buildings as flexible as possible. Most of the times the results of these kinds of designs are neutral structures with an even more neutral skin and an interior ready to recycle. Buildings with less identity are the results. I know I am overstating but I want to make clear that flexibility isn't just a result of a designing process by only optimising the measures. I think, and old buildings proof this, that excess of space is the

most valuable factor in the flexible use of buildings. Like the Architectural Museum in London in 1852 was created in the Cannon Warf at Westminster inside a row of old warehouses.

Recent international examples show us a lot of possibilities in which railway stations in Paris and Berlin changed in museums, the Lingotto factory in Turin in an office building plus conference centre and a power station in the Tate Modern Museum in London.[9]

Great buildings with great authentic identity. Originally created for a very specific function, without being flexible in the recent way of speaking. Their quality is: space.

5. The Distribution Post Office near the Central Station in Amsterdam[10]

In Amsterdam the city planners have big ideas about the re-planning of the banks of the IJ. The central station once was build on one of three islands in the IJ on the north site of the city. In 1953 the city started to plan a new distribution and sorting station for mail: the distribution post office. The site was narrow and had a triangle shape. Professor Cornelis van Eesteren (1897 – 1988) chief of the planning institution of Amsterdam that it was not allowed to fill the complete location with a high building. 16 meters was the limit. Only on the far and of the island a tower shaped volume might be possible.

The original brief differentiated three parts: a post office for letters; a post office for parcels and offices. The first part was located as a triangle shaped 16 meter high volume close to the railroad with a railroad platform. The offices were located in a tower of eleven stories on top of a rectangular shaped parcel post office. A large basement connected all buildings. Cars could move in by ramps.

See illustration 17.

For the letter post building the brief wasn't complete at the start of the project in 1955. The architects Piet Elling (1897 – 1962) and Ben Merkelbach (1901 – 1961) planned a big hall with a span of 41 meters and a free height of 8,5 meters. The internal post distribution system had to be worked out later. This part of the post office was finished in 1961.[11]

See illustrations 18 and 19.

The second part, the parcel post office and the office tower opened in 1968. The first two floors got also a large freedom in height and structure spans. The roof was covered with concrete arches like parts of the roof of the parcel post office.

The architects placed the tower on a T-shaped structure to become a double column structure at the office floors.

See illustrations 20 and 21.

Like I mentioned before Amsterdam developed big plans for the river IJ banks. Together with the fact that the transport of mail in the Netherlands changed from trains to trucks the location became a hot-spot recently.

Erick van Egeraat (1956) and MAB development planned a new urban extension with offices, a music hall, a library, several shops, etc. Only the structure of the tower of the post office would be allowed to survive this operation. The building was planned to be stripped and covered with a new façade of glass.

See illustrations 22, 23 and 24.

In July 2003 the first part of the post office was demolished. By then the market of office buildings in the Netherlands collapsed. Amsterdam didn't allow new office buildings to be erected before the were hired. So some plans had to be stopped.

The location for the new city library of Jo Coenen (1949) was ready to build on in April 2004. The library is under construction now. In my opinion the demolished part of the post office was well shaped to locate a pluriform cultural function as a library.

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9 See also: Powell, K., *Architecture Reborn*, Londen 1999.
10 Zijlstra, H., 'Stationspostkantoor in Amsterdam. Een maatpak uitgekleed', *Monumenten*, 25(2004)3, pp. 18-22.
11 'Het Districtspostkantoor Amsterdam Oosterdokskade. I-VI, in: *De Ingenieur*, 78(1966)47+49, pp. B253-B277.

See illustrations 25, 26 and 27.

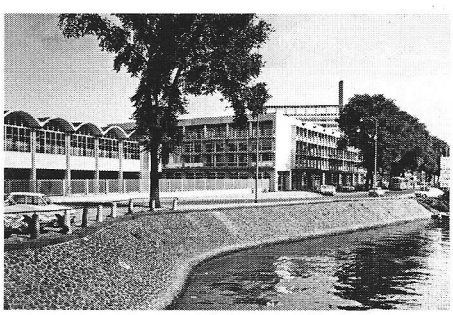
The tower and the parcel post office are still standing there waiting for the sledgehammer to get a new live. Because the plan of the redevelopment of the office building delayed people got interested in its opportunities. The Stedelijk Museum will be closed after summer for renovation and it looked for a temporary alternative. They found it in the formal post office. The SM CS opened the 28th of May. The parcel post office regenerated in a minimal designed museum by Zwarts & Jansma.

The authentic canteen on the 11th floor changed in a trendy 'place to be' restaurant. The farewell party of Rudy Fuchs, formal director of the Stedelijk Museum, was celebrated here and the Group of Amsterdam, cultural brainstormers, gather together here. In the meantime an the architects office of Zwarts & Jansma, the world wide video festival, some art related institutions and a design retail shop settled down on different floors in the CS post office.

See illustrations 28-32.

By occasion this mono functional building was able to regenerate as a pluriform culture accommodation because it was oversized and for a while left over.

Fig. 17. Aerial photograph of the location. In the front the parcel post office and the office tower on top of it and behind it the letter post office. In the background the central Station of Amsterdam. From: Siliakus, H., *Flying over Europe The Netherlands*, 1972.



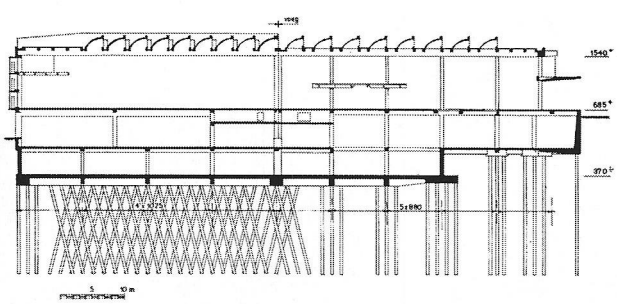


Fig. 18. The letter post office at the Oosterdokskade. From PTT The Hague.
Fig. 19. A section of the letter post office. From: *De Ingenieur,* (1966)47.

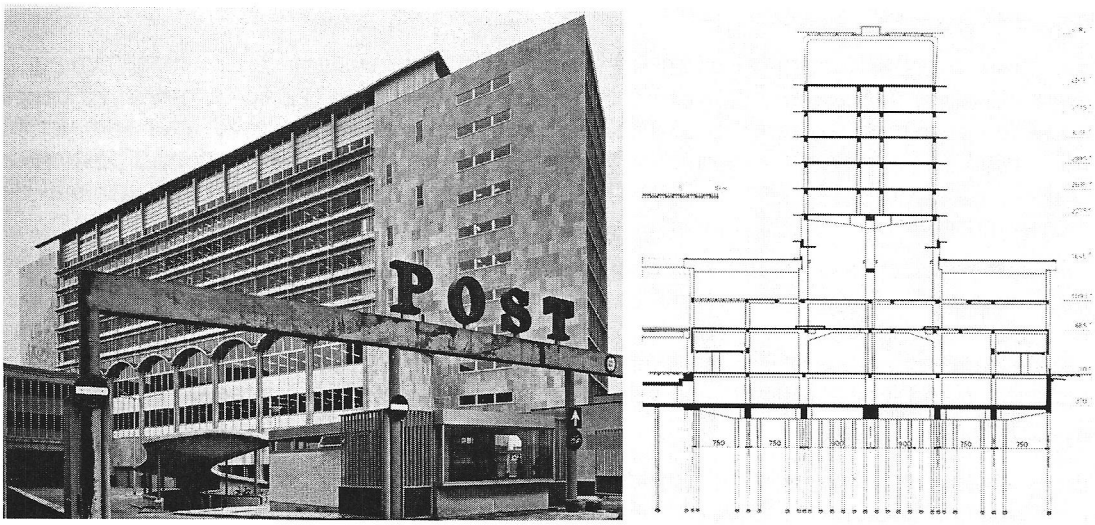


Fig. 20. The entrance of the parcel post building and the office tower of 1968. From: Wiekart, K., 'Elling postuum. Het postgebouwencomplex bij het centraal station in Amsterdam', in: *Museum Journaal*, serie 13 nr. 6 1968, pp. 316-319.

Fig. 21. A section of the parcel post office and the office tower. From: *De Ingenieur,* (1966)49.

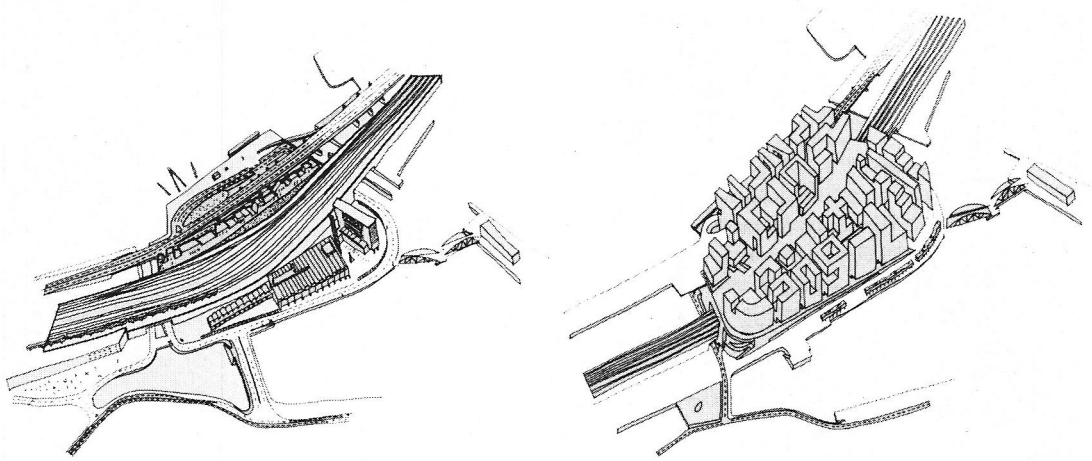


Fig. 22. The location of the post office in 1993. From: Rijs, J. van, *Ondernemersplan Ontwikkeling IJ-oevers Amsterdam*, Amsterdam waterfront, 1993.

Fig. 23. The urban plan of the city of Amsterdam that has been worked out by Erick van Egeraat & Associates (EEA) in 2002. From: Rijs, J. van, *Ondernemersplan Ontwikkeling IJ-oevers Amsterdam*, Amsterdam waterfront, 1993.

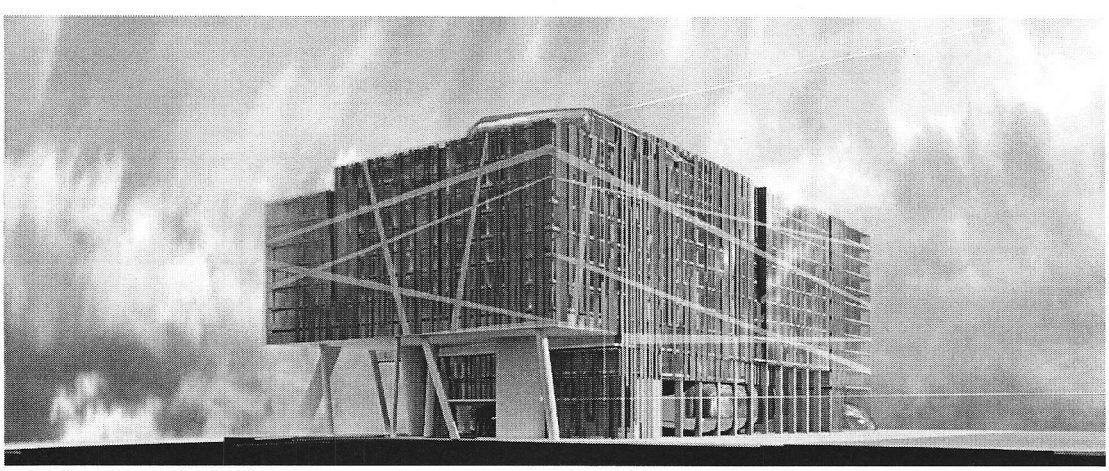


Fig. 24. A rendering of the transformed post office by Erick van Egeraat & Associates in 2003. From: Erick van Egeraat & Associates.

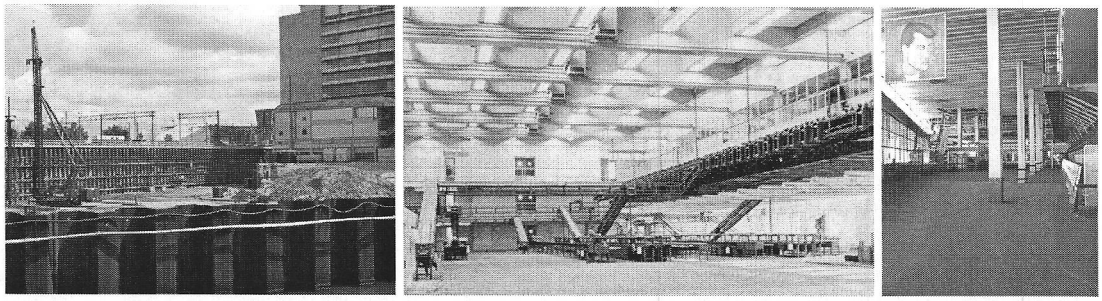


Fig. 25. The letter post office demolished. The building location for the new library of Amsterdam by Jo Coenen. from H. Zijlstra, 2004.
Fig. 26. A picture of the authentic distribution hall in the letter post office in 1964. From: *De Ingenieur,* (1966)49.
Fig. 27. The distribution hall of the letter post office in 2003. From H. Zijlstra, 2003.

Fig. 28. The parcel post office and tower regenerated as: Stedelijk Museum Centraal Station (SM CS). From H. Zijlstra 2004.

Fig. 29. Interior of the museum. From H. Zijlstra, 2004.

Fig. 30. An example of a minimal detail in the museum. From H. Zijlstra, 2004.
Fig. 31. The 'CS 11' restaurant. The place to be in Amsterdam. From: H. Zijlstra, 2004.

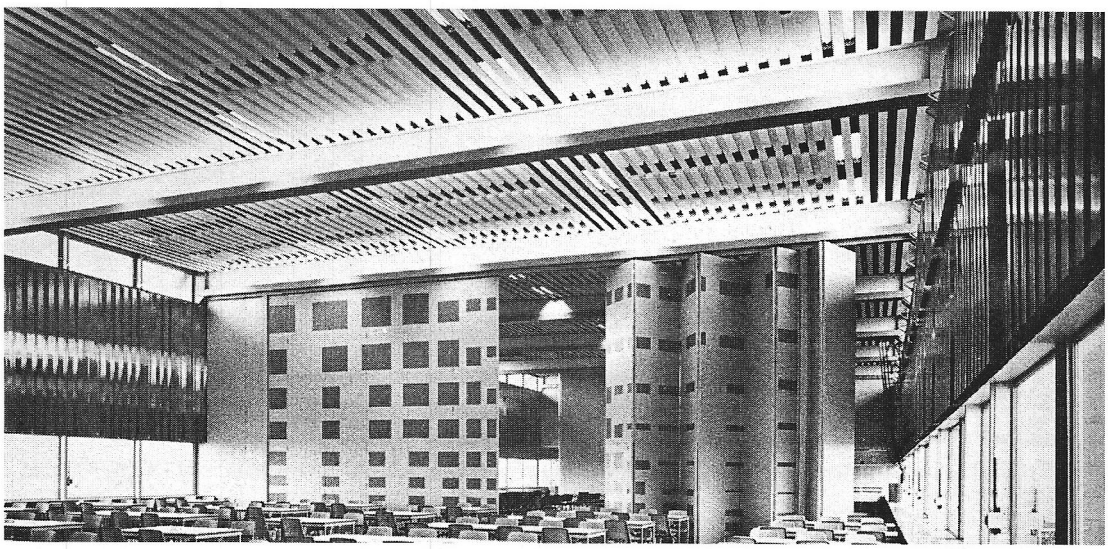


Fig. 32. A picture of the authentic canteen with black and white decorations as a piece of integrated art of Peter Struyken. From: Wiekart, K., 'Integratie van beeldende kunsten en architectuur. Het stationspostkantoor in Amsterdam', in: *Vrij Nederland*, 4 januari 1969, p. 10.

6. Conclusion

It is good to try to design new buildings in a flexible and energy saving way. But reusing, regenerating, existing buildings could be an even more flexible and energy saving opportunity as shown in this two examples in the Netherlands. But it could also be illustrated by international examples of well known architects.

Regeneration isn't a second grade commission for architects but a first class opportunity. Important in designing new buildings is to create enough space to make future changes, different ways of using it and new functions possible.