

# Kleverink

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# 1. Introduction

Quote 1.1  
Bijlmer in Tijd, 2016

Quote 1.2  
Stralen Mariëtte van, Algera, K., &  
Zuyl-Moores, J. (1998).

The idea of Klieverink being recognized as a monument comes from it being a part of the beginning of a long and complicated history of the district Bijlmer.

In 196's due to the urgent need for increased housing in Amsterdam, there was a urgent need for expanding the boundaries of the city. Finally in 1965 the urban design scheme for Bijlmer was laid out by Siegfried Nassuth <sup>1.1</sup> under the name "Grondslagen voor de Zuid-Oostelijke stadsuitbreidig".<sup>1.2</sup> The plans were inspired by CIAM, and were an example of the modernist movement. Back then the belief was that large scale, often honey-comb structures, lots of green space in between, and the vast majority of public space was a key to the future planning of the cities that would drastically improve the living conditions. The high-rise structures were highly favorable and subsidized by the city due to the need for affordable housing. Unfortunately soon after some of the first years, the district did not turn out to be what it was built for. This happened mainly due to urbanistic mistakes, inconsistent planning (for example delay of building metro line), the fact that the city abandoned building some of the crucial community buildings and due to poor management of the buildings and inhabitants interests by city and housing associations.

The plans for renewal of the area started in 1992 after an airplane crash known as Bijlmerramp. A cargo airplane collapsed and crashed into Groeneveen and Klein-Kruithberg flats resulting in serious damage to the buildings and the surrounding area.

After the buildings were repaired, it was decided that the area would benefit from further changes. The goal was to tackle the problematic reputation of the Bijlmeer associated with high level of criminality and low income demographics. Some buildings were scheduled to be renovated whilst others were to be demolished. Low rise buildings were built instead of the demolished buildings which facilitated more expensive dwellings, in hopes to attract individuals with higher income and thus balance out social demographics of the district. A total of 7,500 new homes would now be built, and 6,500 high-rise flats of the 13,000 would be demolished.

The building named "Klieverink" is one of the 4 towers existing in the district since the original plan started to be realised. The construction finished in 1970. The tower is situated in a neighborhood called K-buurt and together with a shopping center and metro station the area is better known

as "Kraaiennest". In 2007 the towers Kralenbeek, Kempering, Klieverink, Kouwenoord were renovated to fit the new vision for the K-Buurt. Main changes included renovation of the facade finishing by covering it with aluminium plates. Additionally, the entrances of each building were made bigger and brighter in color to appear more inviting from urban spaces.

### **Could Klieverink be considered a monument?**

This essay will examine whether Klieverink could be considered a monument based on its history and current relevance for the Bijlmer district heritage. The investigation has been done through various methods, including literature review, analysis of the definition of a "monumentality" through different points of view, as well as through creative research: mind maps and surveys that were done on-site.

What is very particular about the environment of Klieverink is that many social issues are happening. The aspect of community and diversity of people was not be disregarded. That is why the research included talks with people and including their views and opinions as a valid factor.



Image 1.1  
Archdaily, 2013

Image 1.2  
Kleverink tower, North-West facade





Image 1.3  
Klieverink tower, North-East facade

Image 1.4  
Kleverink tower, North-East facade



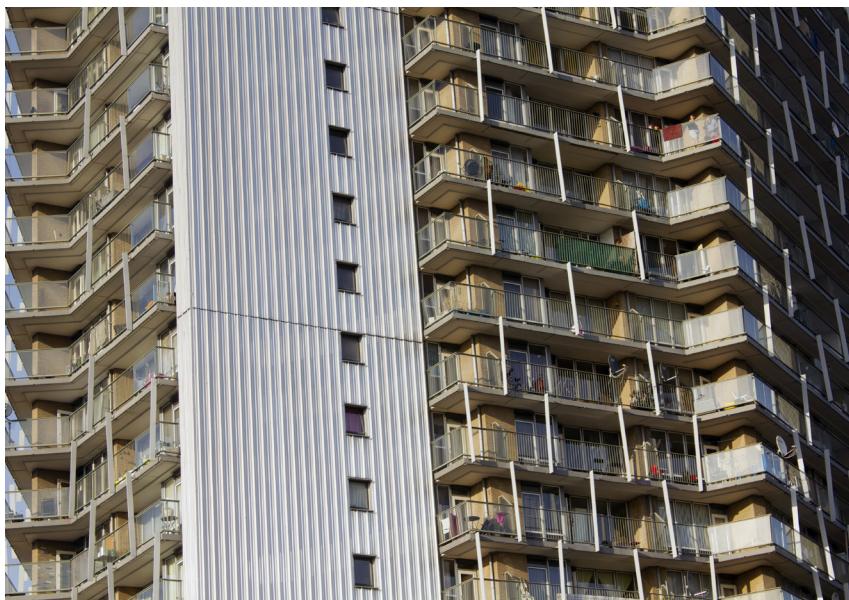


Image 1.5  
Klieverink tower, South facade



Image 1.6  
Klieverink tower, Entrance

## 2. Architecture as a time machine: an exercise in anachronism

### **Anachronistic method**

Quote 2.1  
sitography: Cambridge Dictionary

Quote 2.2  
Pisano, 2018

Quote 2.3  
Benjamin, 1927, 1940

By "anachronism", literally, we mean a person, thing, or idea that exists out of its time in history, especially one that happened or existed later than the period being shown and/or discussed.<sup>2.1</sup>

However, anachronism could be also an alternative to the traditional linear and chronological way of reading and interpreting the facts. In a few words, it's a method capable of highlighting the common characteristics of events far away in time and space.<sup>2.2</sup> In this regard, the philosopher Walter Benjamin argued the importance of the "anachronistic interpretation" as a knowledge tool. Furthermore, the object of history, in the words of Benjamin, must be taken away from the continuum of historical succession. In this way, it could be possible to show new meanings and connections that otherwise would have remained hidden.<sup>2.3</sup>

Anachronism could therefore help us understand modern architecture better, with the aim of interpreting the factors that make it difficult to appreciate the inevitable and often unsatisfying present.

Image 2.1

Anachronistic photo of bunker 599, designed by RAAAF and Atelier de Lyon. On the one hand tourists and visitors, on the other the military  
(source: [www.raaaf.nl](http://www.raaaf.nl))



## **Past, Present and Future**

The previous paragraph talked about anachronism as an alternative temporal method of interpreting history. This is a turning point, as it introduces the theme of time. Regarding this theme, Paul Weiss, philosopher and professor at Yale University, said with splendid clarity that "Architecture is a reservoir of time". Indeed, Weiss argued that every architecture must incorporate, in perfect balance, the art of the past, present and future.<sup>2.4</sup>

It is through this knowledge that, in our opinion, it is possible to investigate the main reasons that led to the failure of the Bijlmer district in Amsterdam, and consequently, also of the tower building called Klieverink. Indeed, it is a building that puts a stop to time and holds on to the present.<sup>2.5</sup> It is not an isolated case, but a characteristic of many modern architectures. According to Weiss, this happens because "architects are unconsciously operating under the Cartesian philosophy which says that the only thing that is real is the immediate".<sup>2.4</sup>

Architecture does not have its roots in the present, but takes the good aspects of the past and integrates them into the future.

## **(un)Touchable monumentality**

Buildings could shape the future. However, launching what good has been done in the past into the future is certainly not easy. Indeed, very often it is necessary to relate to the cultural heritage. First of all, it must be said that not everything around us is a cultural heritage, indeed, using the words of Henri Focillon, it is a conflict among what is precocious, actual or merely delayed.<sup>2.6</sup> Thus, we could easily say that a monument is a product of selection by society.

However, because of the status of monument, buildings, landscapes, and other forms of built heritage might become untouchable and unworkable to be conserved. Then, we need a radically new perspective on monumetality, because, ad Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen believes, "the power of architecture is not only to reflect historical conditions but in fact provide us alternative temporal realities and imaginaries that allows us to mediate the past, imagine the future and maybe also experience the inevitable present".

A virtuous instance is provided by the Dutch studio composed by the Rietveld brothers, called RAAAF. Their interventions have an imagination-based approach called "Hardcore Heritage". Such interventions open up ways of interpreting history towards the future.<sup>2.7</sup>

Quote 2.4  
Weiss, 1951

Showed in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen's online lecture, Delft Lectures on Architectural Design and Research Methods, fall semester 2021

Quote 2.5  
Pelkonen, 2019

A version of this essay was delivered at a panel "Remembering Vincent Scully" at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in Providence, Rhode Island in April 2019.

Quote 2.6  
Focillon, 1934

Showed in Eeva-Liisa Pelkonen's online lecture, Delft Lectures on Architectural Design and Research Methods, fall semester 2021

Quote 2.7  
sitography: Frontiers in Psychology

To be sure, art history has already changed for good after Sigmund Freud first introduce the notion of "unconscious" (1915). From that point onwards history began to be written from the perspective of the present and the benefit of the future. The RAAAF approach, for example, is proof of this.

## 3.1 Monument. Exaggeration? Or does it serve its purpose?

Marta Adamik

Kleverink is a perfect example of a difficult architecture in an uneasy environment containing a diversity of cultures and ethnicities. It is also a container of social problems and diverse list of tenants. What is more, it is a prime example of Modernistic aspirations in the field of housing at that time. There is a lot of speculation on the topic of monumentality in modern reality and whether the pieces of architecture like Kieverink proved that they are valuable structures. The question arises whether this building indeed has what is needed to be granted a status of a monument?

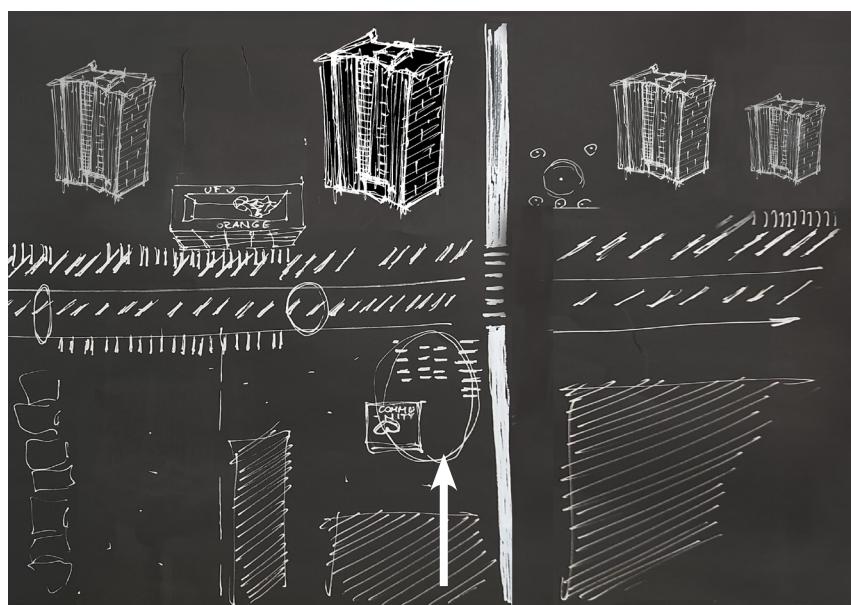
### **Socio-political and cultural influences on definition of monument**

Quote 3.1.1  
Riegl, 1982

Alois Riegl in his text "The Modern Cult of Monuments. Its Character and Its Origin" Separates the monument on intentional and unintentional. The latter to which Kieverink would be assigned is described as "a remain whose meaning is determined not by their makers, but by our modern perceptions of these monuments, that is by retrospective cultural memory."<sup>3.1.1</sup> In modern times this types of monuments are more popular. On contrary the definition of what is a monument became more vague. In the past, the strong political systems usually dictated the norms. Nowadays the democratic systems expose the complexity and diversity of society and its different opinions often arising from socio-cultural differences. Hence there are much more groups that can bring up the importance of some piece of architecture

Image 3.1.1

The drawing shows the schematic impression of the area when arriving from a marked spot (arrow). Kieverink building is very dominant and together with other buildings forms a noticeable and separate part of urban tissue. Further on the mosque is a noticeable landmark, however, from the approach side, Kieverink is more dominant as the mosque is hidden behind the railway which is a physical barrier and split the mosque but also the fourth building from the left side. The central public spot is located near the community center that is being extensively used by the locals. The hatched lines are big massive buildings that seem like a background mass for the amount of open space at the location. A very peculiar object (in the drawing called 'UFO') is an orange box/contained building for students. Although it is recent construction its placement is not in any way responding to the surrounding. Moreover the form of the building is a small variation of an enclosed guarded housing unit where the inner courtyard is visible from the outside but serves only students.



even if it was not considered so valid before. It becomes a matter of discussion and bringing up the “cultural memories” shared by groups of people. In that way of thinking Klieverink is a perfect example of collective memories shared by a group of people that could be still considered a minority even in Amsterdam. Those are usually people connected with the neighborhood. “Hart voor de K-Buurt”<sup>3.1.2</sup> could be stated as one of such representations of the group. At this point the discussion starts and the wider group of people needs to be convinced about the higher status of the building. Klieverink is a part of historical modernistic movement and modernist principles were used by the designers as they believed that they create a better future by realising them. The building was and still is a coherent part of the story of the Bijlmer.

Quote 3.1.2  
Hartvoordebuurt, 2021

For many, however, especially people from outside of the district, the buildings were examples of concepts that ended up dysfunctional, and although one could speculate whether it's the fault of architecture itself the building itself proved to be dysfunctional. On a physical level it had to be refurbished. On contrary one could speculate whether the errors of the past are not something that should be preserved in a way for the future?

### ***Architectural take on monumentality by Louis Kahn***

Besides the democratic approach or considering the building as part of bigger history, it is important to try to define what could be considered a monument. In this chapter the talk of L.K. on “Paul Zucker’s New Architecture and City Planning” Symposium<sup>3.1.4</sup> will be used to show a different perspective to what could be a modern monument.

For Louis Kahn monumentality is not only about its size and monstrosity but about how strongly it shows the kind of zeitgeist of the time it was created in and the aspirations of people that

Quote 3.1.3  
Kahn, L. I., & Twombly, R. C.  
(2003)



Image 3.1.2  
Archdaily, 2013

Quote 3.1.5, 3.1.6, 3.1.7, 3.1.8  
Avermaete Tom, Havik Klaske, Teerds  
Hans, 2009

created it. Louis Kahn states "Monumentality in architecture may be defined as a quality a spiritual quality inherent in a structure which conveys the feeling, in its eternity, that it cannot be added to or changed."<sup>3.1.5</sup> The monumentality for him cannot be "intentionally created"<sup>3.1.6</sup> for example by the use of so-called traditionally monumental materials, applying the important function and making the building gigantic. "Neither the finest material nor the most advanced technology needs to enter a work of monumental character for the same reason that the finest ink was not required to draw up the Magna Carta."<sup>3.1.7</sup> It needs to take the test of time and prove a kind of honesty of its creation and quality. His views are more in favor of modern architecture and its changes and progressions. For him there is no dependence on specific materials but the development of the technology is a crucial aspect. For L. Kahn the greatness can be achieved with new means and modern materials. The condition is that those materials, technology and idea stay intact with the meaning, quality, and feeling of eternity that it conveys and that it resembles certain spirit or times.

In that way, Klieverink should not be disregarded right away from being a monumental building just because it is not built from arches, or cladded with stone. Unfortunately there is yet another important aspect for Louis Kahn. It is the idea that monumental buildings should resemble and strive for technological greatness. The domes, gothic cathedrals, or vaults were all innovations, products of advanced knowledge of their times. "However our architectural monuments indicate a striving for structural perfection which has contributed in great part to their impressiveness, clarity of form and logical scale."<sup>3.1.8</sup> In that case, it is not any more convincing that Klieverink is a building that fulfills such requirements.

### **Everyday life in the building - voices from society**

As observed in the previous paragraph, the building is not an example of architectural or structural greatness. The question then arises, does Klieverink have enough historical and social value to be a monument. To answer that it was most interesting to ask people living in the building, some of them for very long time. One might imagine that such large housing unit, has been exploited quite intensely by diverse inhabitants, especially in a still difficult neighborhood of Bijlmer. After asking people on-site and analyzing more material it seems that there is a group of people that is especially afraid of changing anything in the state of buildings, on the contrary, usually young people are not that much afraid of changes. What is important for all of those people together, is the feeling of home and a sense of stable and familiar community and that is what the building provides them in the current situation. After a while, it seems that it is not that much about their opinion on architecture

but the importance of the community. After the talks it seems that one of the biggest values of the building is being a good container for diverse people living together in harmony.

### **Monument – what are the implications?**

Kleverink together with 3 other towers is a recognizable part of the K-buurt district. It is difficult to imagine that one of the towers could be gone due to some new development plans. And although no such plans are there in place, the recognition of the building as a ‘monument’ could secure its presence for the future. If however any plans were to be made to for example demolish the structure it must be noticed that the building is an inseparable part of the urban tissue together with 3 other towers and it’s home to about 200 people. If any major change was to come there would be a need to relocate them all what would be a huge commitment. The building should also be preserved for sustainability reasons. It does not ever make sense to tear down a building that has an important history and can be improved and well preserved. But, does preserving equals the fact that the building should be given the status of a monument? This seems like a bit of an exaggeration. Preserving the structure just for sake of history does not seem like a way to go. It is crucial that the building stays important, and that it is possible to engage with it and “relive it”. Then, the history of the building stays alive. Making it a monument might freeze any actions that are needed to keep the building “alive”. For now, the residents do not seek any changes, but it is important to remember that the building has been already refurbished throughout history and proved that some of its aspects were dysfunctional. After the changes, it seems that people care and appreciate the building much more as no one seems to dislike its look anymore.

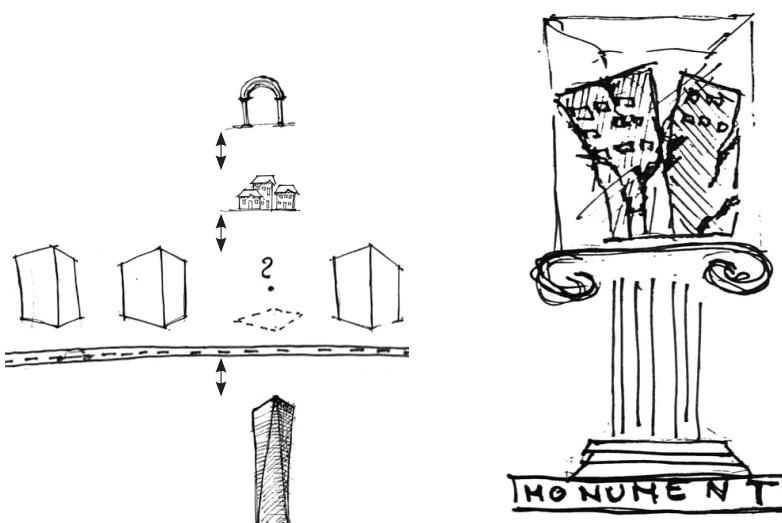


Image 3.1.3, 3.1.4

The drawings show respectively:

- The strangeness of possible removal of the building. It destroys the logic that the 4 buildings form together.
- The possible scenario of keeping the building a monument and stopping all possible improvements or changes it need to prevail functional in the future.

## 3.2 Standing stronger together

Robbert Laan

Similar to the current crisis, there was a large-scale housing shortage in the 1960s. As was already mentioned, the construction of the Bijlmer supposedly offered a solution to this problem and was seen as a model district for social-modernist architecture and urban planning. Light, air and space were considered as the core values for the new model homes to be built and thus recurred on all scales. Like all other buildings in the Bijlmer, the Kleverink building is a link within a larger urban plan that was based on the collective rather than the individual.

### ***Monumentality versus modernism***

Architect Hans Kollhoff argues that it is precisely this collectivity that defines neighborhoods such as the Bijlmer. Individually, according to Kollhoff, none of the buildings qualifies as a monument (we will get to this later). Within the urban context, however, a certain notion of monumentality does emerge. The cohesion between the buildings emphasizes the way in which you experience each building individually. If you take the modernist Kleverink building out of its original context though, nothing but an "Architectural monstrosity" is left, according to Kollhoff.

Kollhoff substantiates this statement by explaining that modernist architecture shows major flaws, especially in terms of materialization and use. These 'flaws' also mean that, as far as Kollhoff is concerned, modernist architecture is opposed to any form of monumentality. Kollhoff argues

Image 3.2.1

The sight of the first apartment buildings out of context, in the middle of the meadows, must have felt surreal.

Andere tijden (NTR), 2016



that monumentality above all implies being timeless. In order to achieve this timelessness, an architect has to think about sustainability in terms of both materialization and use. However, when architecture becomes a mass product of the consumer society, this inevitably means this will be at the expense of its sustainability. By only designing for the needs of the current generation in a rapidly changing society, any form of timelessness and thus monumentality is excluded, according to Kollhoff.

The architecture of the Bijlmer is an excellent example of the 'commercial' modernism Kollhoff so very much disgusts. Born out of a housing shortage resulting from the independence of Suriname, one could consider the Bijlmer as a (temporary) dwelling solution. In addition the buildings are constructed of steel, concrete and glass, which, according to Kollhoff, further emphasizes this temporality.

In addition to this explanation of how modernism and monumentality are in many respects each other's opposites, Kollhoff has reservations about the green and expansive layout of the Bijlmer as well. For Kollhoff, the city and the countryside are extremes of each other. The city is busy, chaotic and petrified, whereas the countryside is a place to relax in nature. Any mixing between these two extremes should be avoided as much as possible, as this will detract from the benefits of both urban and rural areas. By building 'green' cities, the journey to the 'real green', or the countryside, is becoming longer and longer. As far as Kollhoff is concerned, the green city is a compromise between the city and the countryside that should always be avoided.

In summary, the Bijlmer is everything that disgusts Kollhoff. The urban plan is extensive and the architecture is a textbook example of commercial modernism. The same modernism that, according to Kollhoff, represents everything that monumentality does not stand for! Unlike Louis Kahn, for example, Kollhoff attaches great value to the timelessness of monumentality. The fact that the Bijlmer is a great example of modernist urban planning and thus reflects the zeitgeist is therefore of minor importance.

### ***Kleverink - a monument in itself, or part of a monument?***

Returning to the first part of this text, in which it was discussed how the cohesion between the buildings has an emphasizing effect on the experience of the individual buildings: The buildings define the context, and visa versa the context defines the buildings. Individually, the Kleverink building may not be

a monument, but within the context of the Bijlmer, the building could be considered as an important link; a link within the larger urban plan.

Although modernist residential buildings can be found in several places in the Netherlands, the Bijlmer is unique in its kind. The construction of a then ultra-modern neighborhood to accommodate immigrants is part of the national history. A part of history some people nowadays seem eager to forget. As Riegl describes in his text, monuments arise from events that are part of our collective memory. The independence of Suriname and the subsequent wave of migration to the Netherlands and the Amsterdam Bijlmer could be seen as such an event.

Not only the urban plan, the architecture or the zeitgeist of the 1960s are arguments to designate the Bijlmer in its entirety as a monument. The district's over 50 years of history can also be taken into consideration, as will be explained by Alberto further on. Not only was the district part of Dutch history, but above all it has shaped the lives of different generations. The migrants who arrived here had children on their own whom thereafter gave birth to the current third generation.

The people who live in the Bijlmer have seen their neighborhood change drastically in recent years. Many of the original buildings have been demolished, which makes you wonder how monumental the Bijlmer still is today. Again, you could argue like Kollhoff the buildings individually should not be granted the monument status. The consequence of this, however, is that the larger 'monument' the Bijlmer is losing more and more of its identity. How many pieces of the puzzle can be removed before the overall image fades and eventually disappears?



Image 3.2.2

The original urban plan for the Bijlmer with a lot of attention to the public spaces. As you can see the buildings need each other to define this public spaces.

Bijlmermuseum, 2019

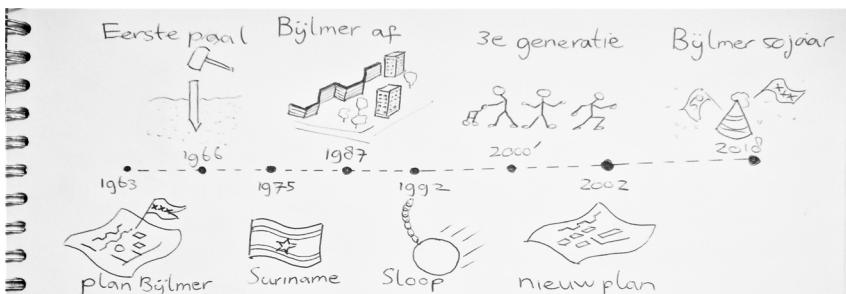


Image 3.2.3

Timeline of the Bijlmermeer taken from my sketchbook (but based on real events)



Image 3.2.4

The independence of Suriname had a huge impact on the national housing shortage. The Bijlmer offered a solution to this crisis and thereafter shaped the life of many generations as these generations gave shape to the Bijlmer themselves.

Bijlmermuseum, 2019



Image 3.2.5

New buildings in red, renovation projects in brown and planned projects in purple (2013).

Projectbureau vernieuwing Bijlmermeer, 2014

### 3.3 Monumentality in community

Anna Serysheva

Quote 3.3.1  
Bijlermuseum.com -  
Bijlmer in tijd, 2021

In order to understand the monumental value of the building and the district, one first has to dive in to its history. why was it created, who was it created for, how did it age and what are the consequences of its existence. The following chapter summarizes the history of Bijlmer and discusses monumentality from the point of view of the people who lived there.

#### ***How it all started***

The K-Buurt was one of the several districts which created a region known as Bijlmer. Bijlmer was designed after the second world war with an innovative approach to separate functions of the cities into several levels. Housing was placed into high-rise residential buildings. Public space was left on the ground level and the cars would drive on elevated roads so that pedestrians would walk on the ground without being interrupted by other traffic means. This approach was formed by members of the infamous CIAM (International Congress of Modern Architecture) which, amongst other modernist architects, also included several of the most devoted believers of modern architecture - Le Corbusier and Alvar Alto. The CIAM of 1933 discussed urban architecture, and the idea of separating the functions within the city was developed as a response to the many common problems of old European cities such as pollution, congestion, and noise.<sup>3.1</sup> The separation of urban functions into several levels and districts seemed like a perfect solution for all those problems. Le Corbusier orated the utopian ideas of new city building in several countries and the governments liked it due

Image 3.3.1  
Le Corbusier's urban vision



to the potential low costs of the mass building and saw it as the solution to the economic crisis and housing shortage. City planners of Amsterdam, including Siegfried Nassuth, saw this as an opportunity: 'Nassuth was an idealist who felt the cities of the past had failed and needed to be rebuilt from scratch, using the modernist principles developed by CIAM'. His plan was approved almost without changes and the building of the promised city of the future started in 1963 with reclaiming the land of Bijlmermeer polder and then finishing the first concrete buildings in 1968 in Hoogoord, in the H-neighbourhood.

Quote 3.3.2  
99% Invisible, 2018

### **Failed paradise**

The newly built district was advertised as a picturesque idea of new high-rise buildings surrounded by fields of greenery perfect for walking around the area, without being disturbed by cars and other motor vehicles. However, the paradisal picture quickly began to fade when the new inhabitants of the complexes started complaining about the lack of basic facilities. The metro line and the roads that were supposed to connect Bijlmermeer to the rest of Amsterdam were delayed by a few years. For a while, the only connection between Bilmer and Amsterdam was a single dirt road. Other facilities such as shopping centers also came to the area with a big delay. On top of all that, the empty sandlots also took a few years to develop to the promised greenery with vital grass and trees.

When the roads were built, after all, they were build on elevated bridges separated from the pedestrian ground level, just like the CIAM preached. However, it was hard to orient oneself due to the countless lookalike buildings out of concrete all around and no pedestrians to ask for directions. Before the promised city of the future was even finished, there were no more people willing to live there.<sup>3.2</sup> The modernist values which were preached by modernists in the '30s and '40s and which



Image 3.3.2  
Queen of Netherlands on the balcony of Kleiburg, 1971

Quote 3.3.3  
Bijlmermuseum.com -  
Bijlmer in tijd, 2021

were implemented in Bijlmer were later massively criticized by the whole world, including one of the members of CIAM - Aldo Van Eyck. A good example of such critique is a text by Leon Krier the Blind Spot which will be further discussed later. Many middle-class families left the area, yet the plan wasn't finished and more and more housing units were erected together with storage units, garages, and hundreds of kilometers of indoor corridors. The vacant housing units of Bijlmemer as well as vast unoccupied and unmonitored covered public spaces became the perfect conditions for the thrive of criminality and drug usage.<sup>3.3</sup>

### **Leon Krier's "The Blind Spot" and its relation to Bijlmemer**

Quote 3.3.4  
Krier, 1978

Quote 3.3.5  
Krier, 1978

Quote 3.3.6  
Krier, 1978

Quote 3.3.7  
Krier, 1978

Leon Krier wrote an essay named the Blind Spot in which he sarcastically refers to modern architecture as "the art of packaging"<sup>3.4</sup> arguing that the emptiness excluded modern architecture from being architecture altogether - "Modern architecture did not belong to building"<sup>3.5</sup>. This can be directly related to the complaints that were voiced by the first inhibitors of Bijlmer who emphasized that it was hard to navigate the streets and see the difference between the buildings. All buildings looked very similar to each other giving the impression of concrete boxes - packaging with no identity. "The city of stone became, to the profits of mobility, synonymous with deathly inflexibility or even laziness"<sup>3.6</sup> Laziness, because the modernist buildings that are also seen in Bijlmer are designed as massive and repetitive concrete packages, copy of each other, as if the planners were too lazy to think about the uniqueness of the different buildings. Klieverink is the perfect example of that - the tower is very prominent in the area and has a specific majestic feel to it. Yet that majesticness is undermined by the three other copies of the same tower that form the Kralenbeek, Kempering, Klieverink, Kouwenoord towers complex.

Krier also argues that architecture should remain distanced from politics to remain durable and transcend the lifespan of one generation. Bijlmer is a great example of the opposite - politics, the rush of building 'the city of the future and cheapness made the urban planners blind towards the actual future of the cities thus resulting in the great fall of paradise. Krier practically describes the fate of Bijlmer when he claims "Virtually all large-scale building operations of the last thirty years have to be condemned; they are inhuman, inefficient, ugly, badly-built and costly to police. [...] These human deserts have to become the main concern of future interventions. Not only have they destroyed parts of lively urban centers, but they are also in need of technical and social repair; they need, so to speak, to be de-zoned and urbanized"<sup>3.7</sup> And that precisely

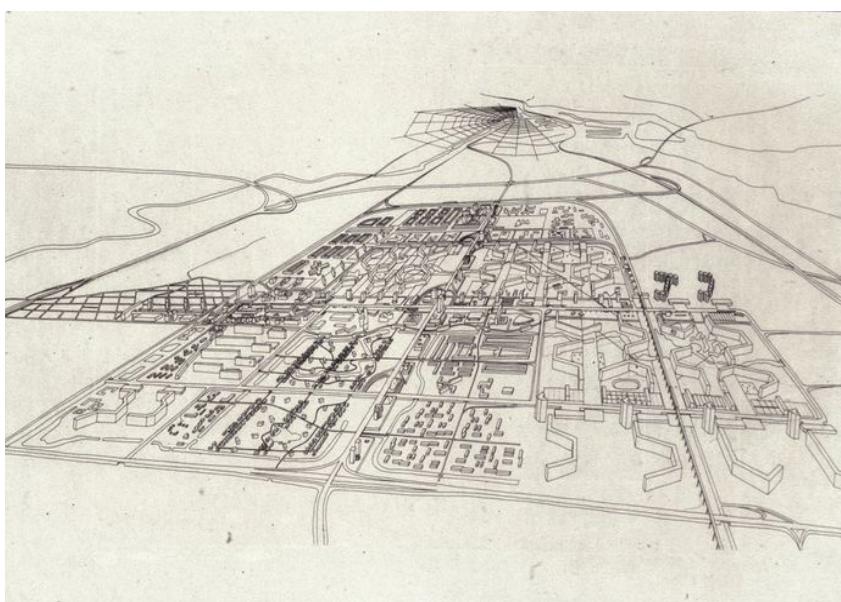
what happened when the municipality of Amsterdam proposed massive redevelopment plans for the area after 1992.

"The Bijlmermeer, and maybe a lot of Modernism, was architecture for architects."<sup>3.8</sup> "It's arrogance, but the modernist were arrogant... and paternalistic. They knew better..."<sup>3.9</sup>

**"We were never the problem, we were the solution to the problem"**<sup>3.10</sup>

After the painted paradise of the modernist Bijlmer failed, many middle-class residents of Bijlmer left. It became clear that the people who could afford to live in the area did not want to live in the area. Coincidentally, the fall of Bijlmer synchronized with Surinamese independence which resulted in a big relocation wave of, back then still dutch citizens from Caribbeans to the Netherlands. The Dutch government was not ready for such a huge wave of new residents. The new and shiny development of Bijlmer was standing vacant which proved to be the perfect solution to facilitate all the newcomers. The vacant housing units of Bijlmer became occupied again and the district became more crowded than ever. Guilly Koster, who emigrated with his parents to the Netherlands in 1962, says it was a great time to grow up in Bijlmer. "We could play our music loud [...] People could sit on their balconies and watch "Laurel & Hardy"<sup>3.11</sup> which was projected by one of his neighbors to the wall across the courtyard.

After the unfortunate El Al Flight 1862 crash in 1992, the massive redevelopment plans took off. Some buildings were chosen to be preserved and were renovated. Yet the majority of buildings were demolished to be replaced by low houses to attract middle-class families to the district, forcing the former lower-income inhabitants of the demolished highrise buildings - the members of the tight community of Bijlmer- to relocate somewhere else in Amsterdam.<sup>3.12</sup>



Quote 3.3.8  
99% Invisible, 2018

Quote 3.3.9  
Urbanist Zef Hemel, 2018

Quote 3.3.10  
Guilly Koster, 2018

Quote 3.3.11  
Guilly Koster, 2018

Quote 3.3.12  
Interview with tennis coach, 2020

Image 3.3.3  
OMA proposal for redesigning of Bijlmermeer

### ***It's all about the community***

When we visited the area and asked the residents questions about Klieverink and other buildings of Bijlmer, it became clear to me that very few people actually pay attention to the buildings around them and we're noticing the architectural quality of the buildings or their aesthetics. The majority of the residents were more concerned about the social or political aspects of the area as well as the new developments and what it means for the current residents and the community. The area was revived after its grandiose fall when it was populated by newcomers from outside the Netherlands. Yet it seems like the current redevelopment strategies work hard on destroying the formed community. The strategies plan carefully how to preserve the important buildings of Bijlmer as the monuments of the modernist era yet it seems like the municipality doesn't really concern itself with preserving the actual monument of the area - the people, the community that was built, and the history behind it. People of Bijlmer have been through a lot, including being labeled as the "ghetto" of Amsterdam, the high criminality and drug usage levels, the horrible airplane crash, and much more. All of this has brought the community tighter together, making the people proud of being part of it and part of Bijlmer. Destroying the community that reformed the district and became its identity for the sake of improving the reputation of the district is as bad as demolishing monuments that formed our cultural heritage and history. The identity of Bijlmer should be carefully cherished and that identity is formed by the people who lived in the old buildings of Bijlmermeer such as Klieverink and Kleiburg. Therefore, these buildings became the monument of Bijlmermeer and should also be preserved- not because of their architectural quality, but because of what they mean to the community and how they reflect its past.



Image 3.3.4  
BIJLMERMENS '70 / '80



Image 3.3.5  
Haart voor de Kbuurt

## 3.4 New Behaviours

Alberto Merisio

Quote 3.4.1

Rem Koolhaas, 1976 in: Polano, 2018

"The Bijlmer offers boredom on a heroic scale. In its monotony, harshness and even brutality, it is, ironically, refreshing." <sup>3.4.1</sup>

The Bijlmermeer district of Amsterdam is a district composed of an articulated complex of residential buildings. It is in this peripheral context that the residential tower called Klieverink is located. The heroic scale of the housing experiment and the popularity obtained, even if above all in a negative way, certainly make the entire neighborhood a monument.

A monument that symbolizes the uncontrolled city expansion that took place between the mid-sixties and the mid-seventies of the twentieth century.

### ***The monument of decay***

Image 3.4.1

Removal of the ruins after the Boeing 747 crash occurred in 1992 (source: volkskrant.nl)

Immediately after its construction, the entire neighborhood underwent a rapid process of decay, to which were added unpredictable events such as the descent of the Surinamers and the Boeing 747 crash that occurred in 1992.



The dramatic accident, however, managed to rekindle the spotlight on this neglected area, starting a long and complex regeneration process.

Making use of Alois Riegl's reflections, Klieverink can therefore be considered an unintentional monument.<sup>3.4.2</sup> That is, its meaning is not determined by its designers, but rather by our modern perception of seeing the architecture and the city.<sup>3.4.3</sup> Today this building is perceived as a by now derelict witness of the epic of mass housing construction.

### **Symbolic power**

A tense relationship has always existed between modernity and monumentality. Indeed, modernity is always associated with a sense of cultural crisis linked to new transformations.

The transformations create confusion on the image of oneself, of society and of nature. Therefore, a continuous search for new meanings and values is generated that modify the character of social practices.<sup>3.4.4</sup>

This constant alteration changes our perception of things and the city over time, thus allowing even a modern and degraded building like Klieverink to obtain a symbolic power very similar to that of historical monuments.

In support of this thesis, according to the philosopher Paul Weiss, "there is no difference in kind between what the modern architecture is doing and what the old architecture was doing". Indeed, architecture physically "never changes... It is immutable and absolute".<sup>3.4.5</sup> The only difference is "our relationship to these things in time". Indeed, Vincent Scully defined architecture as "a question of time".

**Quote 3.4.2**  
Avermaete, Havik, Teerds, 2009

"One thinker who has explicitly theorized the relationship between modernity and monumentality is Alois Riegl. In his famous study "The Modern Cult of Monuments", he distinguishes between two kinds of monuments: intentional and unintentional."

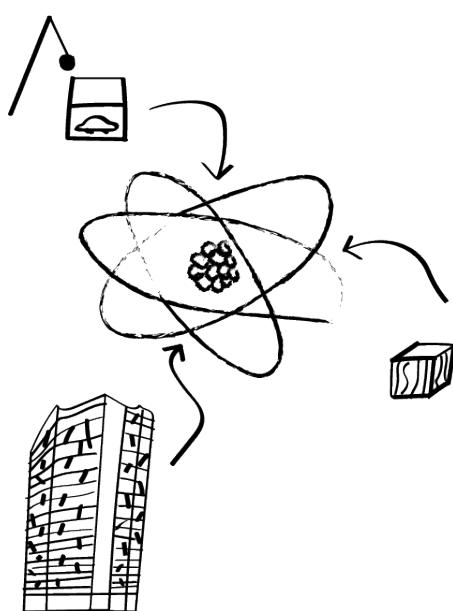
**Quote 3.4.3**  
Riegl, 1982

**Quote 3.4.4**  
Giddens, 1990

"The reflexivity of modern social life consists in the fact that social practices are constantly examined and reformed in the light of incoming information about those very practices, thus constitutively altering their character."

**Quote 3.4.5**  
Pelkonen, 2019

A version of this essay was delivered at a panel "Remembering Vincent Scully" at the 72nd Annual Meeting of the Society of Architectural Historians in Providence, Rhode Island in April 2019.



**Illustration 3.4.1**  
Metaphorically speaking, the Klieverink Tower functions like an atom. Indeed, it is an attractive place that has that symbolic power capable of stimulating the urban environment.

## ***Is it an advantage for klieverink to be considered a monument?***

Quote 3.4.6  
Bourdieu, 1991

As far as I am concerned, the answer is yes. Indeed, it is around the monuments that the places of concentration of human activities are concentrated.

The monuments are characterized by a double strength: the internal one, which increases the sense of belonging to the place and therefore plays the role of cohesion in the neighborhood, and the external one, of attraction towards other elements.

It is thanks to this force of attraction that since the early 2000s Klieverink has undergone several renovation projects. The intrinsic symbolic force in each monument has in fact the great ability of making people see and believe in something, fueling the effect of mobilization.<sup>3.4.6</sup>

Furthermore, being considered a modern monument, it is open to innovations and modifications. The main intervention concerns the renovation of the four-tower buildings, including Klieverink, which took place in 2017.<sup>image 3.4.2</sup> Also noteworthy is the demolition of the Kempering garage<sup>image 3.4.3</sup> and the presence of numerous small initiatives, such as the predator blocks project.<sup>image 3.4.4</sup> Finally, it is also necessary to mention the risk that the mobilization force entails: the possibility of superficial and too aggressive interventions that could erase even what is positive in the area.

Illustration 3.4.2  
Robert Venturi, Denise Scott Brown, "I am a monument", 1972, ink on paper

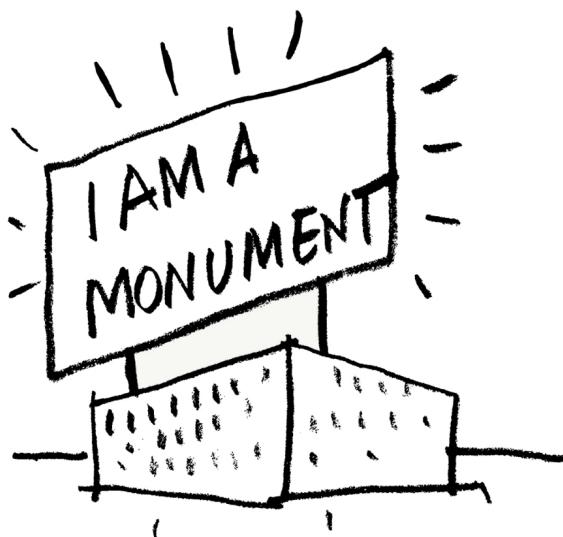




Image 3.4.2

The renovation of the residential towers. The plates have been added to the balcony plates and break the monotony of the stacking of the horizontal lines and give the more residential tower the size of a home. (source: archdaily.com)

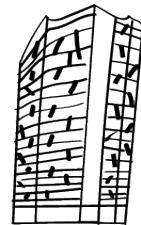


Image 3.4.3

Demolishing isn't always the best choice. The municipality sought solutions to maintain the Kempering garage, but they were too expensive. The curious fact is that the garage, before being demolished, was greeted with hundreds of candles.

In fact, when the neighborhood was still poor in services, it was used not only as a garage but also as an African Pentecostal church for more than thirty years. (source: parool.nl)



Image 3.4.4

The project called "Predator blocks" covers the small electricity units and plays with this cliché of the urban jungle, while also creating a spatial dislocation, and hints at the social meanings that are associated with wearing or using different types of tiger and leopard skins.

The project was produced in 2008 as a commission from the building society De Key in collaboration with the Amsterdam Foundation for Art, for the so called 'K-towers'. (source: helmutdick.com)



## Consumption behaviours

Quote 3.4.7  
Secchi, 1992

"City planners utilise the term 'positional assets' to indicate goods which cannot, with ease, be furnished by the market only, which have an intrinsic, exclusive value: a good view an isolated position, a prestigious street or quarter."

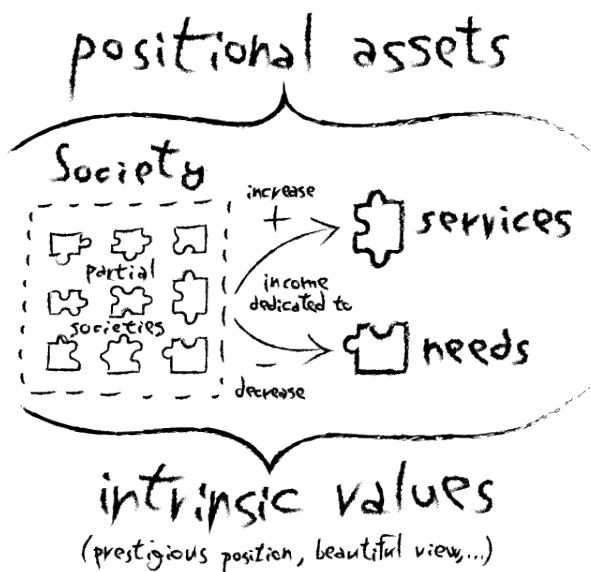
Bernardo Secchi argues that contemporary society is now a combination of many different minorities (or partial societies). According to Secchi, the origin of this parzialization there are mainly two distinct phenomena: on the one hand the new consumerist behaviors of modern society, on the other hand the rules that seek to regulate the interaction between the different components of society.

Observing the consumerist behaviors of European countries in recent years, it is evident that there is an increase in the percentage of revenues dedicated to the consumption of goods and services.

In particular, it is interesting to note that there is a transferral of consumer attention from needs (food, shelter, ...) to services (car, country house, travel, sports, entertainment, fashion). Furthermore, urban planners pay particular attention to the processes concerning the so-called "positional assets".<sup>3.4.7</sup> Indeed, many minorities take the form of groups that decide behaviors and strategies to use or possess these assets. It is therefore easy to understand how the issue of the quality of urban space is only a superficial problem in the historical phase we are going through.

The increasingly fragmented society also causes new problems for city planners. The norms that try to regulate the interaction between the different components of society are not effective and are causing the abandonment of the discipline in favor of the realm of negotiation. The increasing importance assumed by new behaviors requires that planners immerse themselves in social interactions, to understand the importance of these dimensions. In the next paragraph, the behaviors of mobility are treated, because they are the ones that today most of all influence sociality in the contemporary city.

Illustration 3.4.3  
The transferral of consumer attention  
from needs to services



## **Mobility behaviours**

In order to finally regenerate the neighborhood where the Klieverink building is located, it is essential to study the changes in society in depth. One of the most significant changes is that concerning mobility, that is the society's need for connections in the urban space.

Quote 3.4.8  
Albini, 2016

But what effects does mobility have on the city project? Indeed, today's mobility implies not only material connections (roads, canals, displacements, ...) but also immaterial ones (not visible). In short, people not only move in the physical spaces of the city but also often move in virtual spaces. In fact, the online world allows you to virtually communicate with any place from any place in the world.<sup>3.4.8</sup> Unfortunately, this condition of great freedom and availability also has several disadvantages.

Quote 3.4.9  
Pisano, 2018

For example, these networks reduce physical experiences and social cohesion, generating a sense of claustrophobia. Daily habits have also changed dramatically. For example, today people already know before leaving the house which streets to take, which neighborhood to avoid, where to eat for lunch, etc...

In this way, says the writer and urban planner Paul Virilio, the world shrinks instead of growing. It is therefore not surprising that the new networks are making the territory indifferent to localization by generating the sprawling city in which we live today.<sup>3.4.8</sup> On the other hand, these digital networks create new immaterial relationships that can reduce the importance of the material ones.

According to David Grahame Shane, the parts of the city are patches that are recombined in social practices in a myriad of different assemblages. Each citizen, therefore, experiences the city in a different way, and each patch builds relationships with other patches regardless of their geographical location.<sup>3.4.9</sup> This it can certainly be a turning point for those buildings located in "unfortunate" physical areas such as Klieverink.

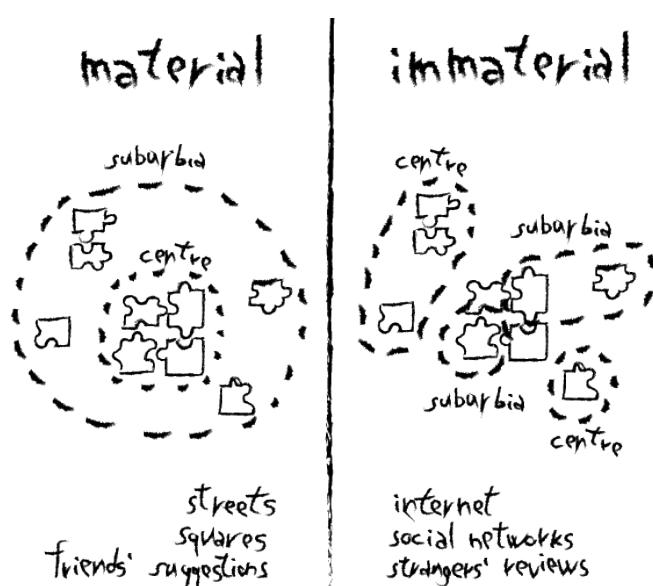


Illustration 3.4.4  
Mobility behaviour: between material and immaterial

## 3.5 Actual life in Klieverink

### Inhabitants of the building

The analysis of the building and the idea of it being a monument is a good example of trying to position the Modernistic heritage in very classically understood frames and set of rules. A lot of arguments and ways of thought were presented, however, what was missing in between the lines of famous architects and literature reviews, was the inhabitant's factor. The conversation about Klieverink being a monument came from a kind of bottom-up approach where people want to protect the history and significant heritage of the district. It seemed crucial to ask people themselves how does it feel to live in the district and in the building in particular and what they actually think about it in terms of social problems, values, architecture, location, history.

Moreover, going to the location and asking that in-person gave much more insight into how it feels to be at that location and reflect both on the personal experience and on what was said by the inhabitants.

The experience influenced all the written parts, however, it was important to mark the inhabitants' comments and histories as a separate chapter. Below the QR code connects to the article that was formed based on that.



## 4 Conclusions

Kleverink is an example of what Alois Riegel would call an unintentional monument. The building was created as a housing unit in times when Modernism prevailed as an architectural style. It is one of the buildings that reflects that era and problems that came with some design ideas. Indeed, a tense relationship has always existed between modernity and monumentality, and this building provides an example. However, in democratic times there is more and more space for a wider discussion on Modernistic heritage acquiring a status of a monument. Therefore, a continuous search for new meanings and values is generated that modify the character of social practices and consequently, our perception of architecture and the city. Indeed, it is not architecture that changes, but rather the way we relate to it over time.

In the case of Kleverink, a smaller group of inhabitants starts a discussion about a building although not significant for others, is a part of their history and for them has a monumental value. Kleverink is a part of the big history but also a housing unit that proved to be dysfunctional and problematic for some time. And although this happened also due to larger social issues, it must be said that the building is not an example of a state of the art technological development of its times or an example of some especially original architectural ideas. Hence, the idea of it being a monument might be too big of a statement and might do the opposite to the building than what is meant. Instead of keeping the building alive and functional, categorizing it as a monument might prevent any necessary actions needed to be done to the building in the future, and it might change the specific mixture of people living in it. However, the building is a materialization of the zeitgeist of its times, is home to the community and forms a part of urban tissue that is created by 4 identical towers.

For these reasons, it is essential to focus our attention on the changes that modernity continuously brings to society and to people's behavior. Indeed, the fact that today the different patches of the city communicate with each other regardless of their geographical location, and the increasing importance assumed by positional assets, such as having a beautiful view from one's apartment (as happens for example in the Kleverink tower), they could finally represent a moment of redemption for this urban reality. Because of that, it should not be treated like a regular building and possibly ever be torn down without very specific reasons.

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