

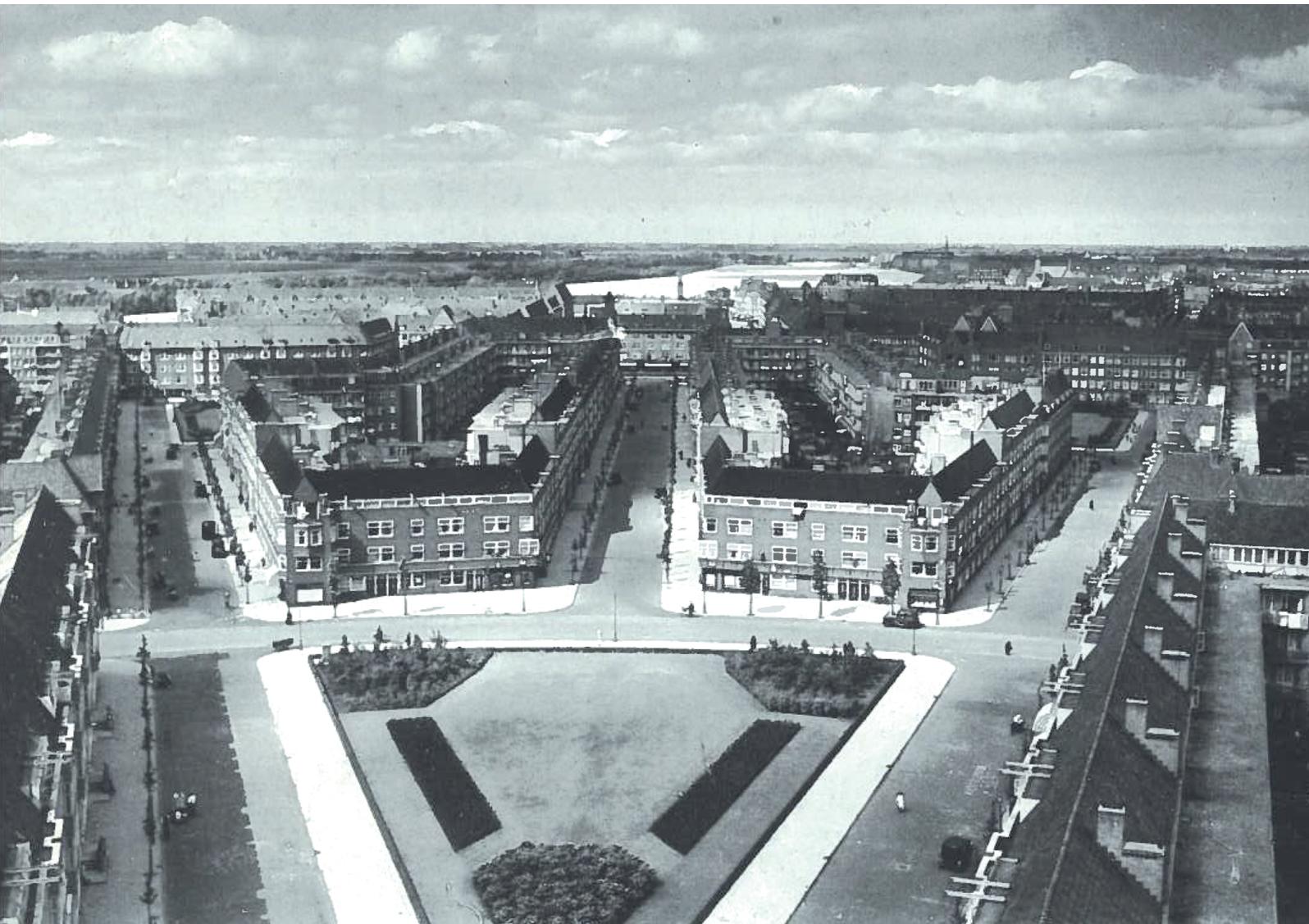
# THE CONTINUOUS FAÇADE

The Importance of a Continuous Cityscape, according to Berlage in Context of  
'Plan Zuid' in Amsterdam

By Stefan Sinnige submitted on the 14<sup>th</sup> of April 2022

Supervisor: A.J. Oxenaar

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## ABSTRACT

Berlage completed the design for the expansion plan of the south of Amsterdam in 1904. This plan was approved by the local council, but did not remain uncriticized. Among others, J.H.W. Leliman commented that the plan did not meet the demand for affordable housing and suspected the direct implementation of Camillo Sitte's theories. Berlage himself preferred a monumental approach and he often referred to the Paris development by Haussmann. However, at that time, monumental urban planning in Amsterdam was received as provoking and this was not accepted by the local council. The execution of the first 'Plan Zuid' delayed, among others as a consequence of the First World War. Ten years later, in 1914, the plan had to be revised. Fortunately for Berlage the discourse on monumental urban planning took off in the interim period. In 1914, Berlage gave four lectures about urbanism. The quoted sources in these lectures are consulted to gain a deeper understanding of Berlage's Theories. Berlage explained the historic development of urban growth. Because of the subjective individual style and the lack of a generic style it was impossible to obtain a coherent cityscape without regulations by authority. For a coherent cityscape, an urban plan should not only contain the street layout and the division of land, it should include how to build on the created plots as well. Additionally, a façade influences the street and eventually the city and that is why this should not be left to the individual. Consequently it would be ideal to develop an entire block of housing at once. However, this also led to monotonous façades. Thus, to stimulate the development of an entire block façade with architectural quality, it was unavoidable to use regulation and provide economic advantages. When Berlage revised 'Plan Zuid', which was approved in 1917, he created the monumental urban plan he preferred. Regulating the execution of the plan started with experimental committees. The influence of the committees concerned the assessment of submitted designs and increased by providing silhouettes as a framework for architects. Eventually the 'Commissie Zuid' was appointed in 1925. The members of the committee worked extremely precise. The designs were discussed and adjusted many times before they were approved. They had a considerable influence on the execution of 'Plan Zuid', of which the quality relied on the regulation of the execution.

I want to thank Aart Oxenaar for the inspiring guidance and the live performed German poems as part of the conversations we had.

CHRISTIAN MORGENSTERN - DER LATTENZAUN

*Es war einmal ein Lattenzaun,  
mit Zwischenraum, hindurchzuschauen.*

*Ein Architekt, der dieses sah,  
stand eines Abends plötzlich da --*

*und nahm den Zwischenraum heraus  
und baute draus ein großes Haus.*

*Der Zaun indessen stand ganz dumm,  
mit Latten ohne was herum.*

*Ein Anblick grässlich und gemein.  
Drum zog ihn der Senat auch ein.*

*Der Architekt jedoch entfloh  
nach Afri- od- Ameriko.*

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## INTRODUCTION

This thesis is about the discourse on the importance of continuity of a cityscape at the start of the 20th century and the influence it had on 'Plan Zuid', situated in Amsterdam. Berlage designed the extension to the south of Amsterdam in 1905. But, he had to revise this plan in 1917, which resulted in a completely different outcome. In the interim period the discourse on monumental urban planning started and this enabled Berlage to proceed with the creation of a continuous monumental urban plan for the revised 'Plan Zuid'.

This led to the formulation of the following main question:

*What was the importance of continuity for urban planning according to Berlage in context of 'Plan Zuid'?*

Research has been conducted on 'Plan Zuid', as well as on the work and theories by Berlage. Stissi (2007) pointed out that Berlage was a theorist, a working architect and urbanist. This combination of practice and theory was an exception in that moment. By combining Berlage's theories, the research he referenced and the practical context of the execution of these theories, this thesis is an addition to the already conducted research. On top of this, sources in various languages are referenced. This is an extension of the consulted sources, since multiple sources are written in Dutch or German.

In the structure of the thesis, context, theory and the execution practice are separated in three chapters. The first chapter provides the context about the housing situation in Amsterdam and the first version of 'Plan Zuid' created by Berlage. Here will be discussed why it was important for Berlage to move towards a more monumental approach.

The second chapter is based on the lectures about urbanism Berlage gave in Delft in 1914. To understand the arguments he made, the quoted and cited sources are consulted. In this chapter the theory about the importance of monumental architecture and continuity, at the start of the 20th century, will be explained. To the end of the chapter the focus will move to the importance of regulation during the execution of an urban plan.

The execution of the revised 'Plan Zuid' will be examined in the final chapter. The search by the local authorities to successfully execute a monumental urban plan, is described by giving an inside in the many committees that existed in Amsterdam.

During conducting the research for this thesis the realisation grew about the connection to current affairs. After concluding the findings of this thesis this connection will be briefly discussed.

## CHAPTER ONE\_ 'PLAN ZUID'

## THE '1901 WONINGWET'

The industrialisation in the late 19th century attracted workers and their families to Amsterdam. Many of them were living in bad conditions without any sanitary facilities. As a consequence many civilians became ill or passed away (Roegholt & Heijdra, 2018). When new housing was developed outside the area enclosed by the canals, it was of poor quality. The new neighbourhoods were built in a cheap and fast way. The goal of speculative developers was to make as much profit as possible. People that did not have any background as architect or contractor started to work in the construction sector and developers did not hire a professional architect. The quality was never examined, let alone the aesthetics (Beek, 1985).

The circumstances in Amsterdam became unacceptable. The regulation of housing by Dutch municipalities did not exceed fire prevention and the conserving of the appearance of upper class neighbourhoods. The '1901 Woningwet' (housing act) obligated the municipalities to create building regulation. The regulation had to include the positioning and height of buildings, the size of the interior spaces, the disposal of drinking water, the presence of daylight and fresh air and the discarding of smoke, water and garbage. It was not obligated to include regulation for the design of the houses, however every municipality was allowed to add specified regulation (Beek, 1985). On top of regulations, multiple controlling instances were created, like the 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' (building and housing supervision), housing inspectors and health-committees (Stissi, 2007).

The most important part of the housing act, for the creation of social housing, was the possibility to request government support when developing housing. This was a loan, which had to be paid of annually within fifty years, including interest. This was more convenient than a general mortgage, since there was no need for a collateral and the interest was slightly lower (Stissi, 2007).

## THE EXPANSION PLAN FOR THE SOUTH OF AMSTERDAM

If a town contained more than 10.000 inhabitants, the municipality was obligated to work on an expansion plan (Stissi, 2007). After changing the border of Amsterdam in 1896, the city was in need of a plan for the new, southern area. The 'Dienst der Publieke Werken' (service for public projects) made a design, known as plan Lambrechtsen, which was the name of the head of the instance. The plan was presented to the local council in 1899, but was not approved, because of critique on the aesthetics. There were comments on the similarities to the new neighbourhood De Pijp, which was the most criticized neighbourhood of the 1890s, mostly due to the extreme monotony (Van Rossem, 1992).

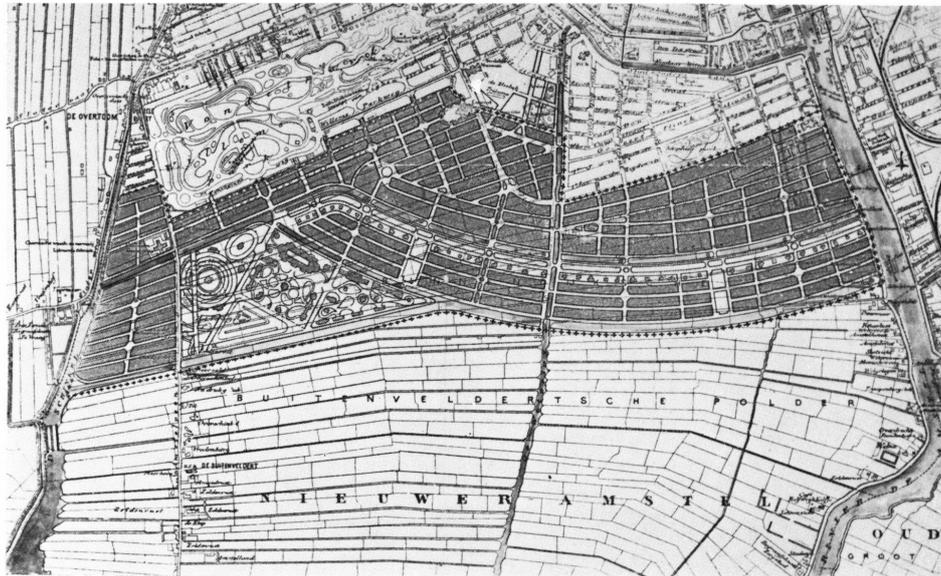


Figure 1. Map of Amsterdam with 'Plan Lambrechtsen' 1898-1899 (Fraenkel, 1974, p. 201)

When the plan by Lambrechtsen was not accepted by the municipality, Berlage received a letter from the municipality of Amsterdam on the 28th of March 1900, to inform him that he was invited to design an urban plan for the area south of Amsterdam between the waters: the Amstel and the Schinkel. This was the first time Berlage was appointed to design an urban plan (Fraenkel, 1974).

His plan for Amsterdam South did not have the similar monotonous buildings as the previous plan of Lambrechtsen, because Berlage implemented a diverse streetscape (Van Rossem, 1992). The plan designed by Lambrechtsen was designed according to a system of curved canals, as a literal expansion of the Amsterdam city centre. Instead of the long curved streets Berlage used squares and points to structure the design of the streetscape (Fraenkel, 1974). Berlage responded to the long curved streets in 'Plan Lambrechtsen':

“Het valt echter te betwijfelen of zulk een uitbreiding zou hebben voldaan. In het algemeen kan een zekere vorm niet steeds worden vergroot; een dergelijke uitbreiding n.l. zou c.q. hebben geleid tot cirkellijnen van te grote lengte, waarvan een dienovereenkomstige eentonigheid onvermijdelijk het gevolg zou zijn geweest.” (Berlage in Fraenkel, 1974, p. 204)

Art and architectural historian Manfred Bock (1983) wrote that it seemed like Berlage, with his criticism on 'Plan Lambrechtsen', wanted to suggest that the designers in charge should have felt the obligation to implement the theories by urban planning theorist Camillo Sitte. Berlage was familiar with the theories by Sitte. In 1891 Berlage gave a presentation for the architecture union 'Bouwkunst en Vriendschap' in Rotterdam. He mainly presented a translation of the theories by Camillo Sitte (Bock, 1983).

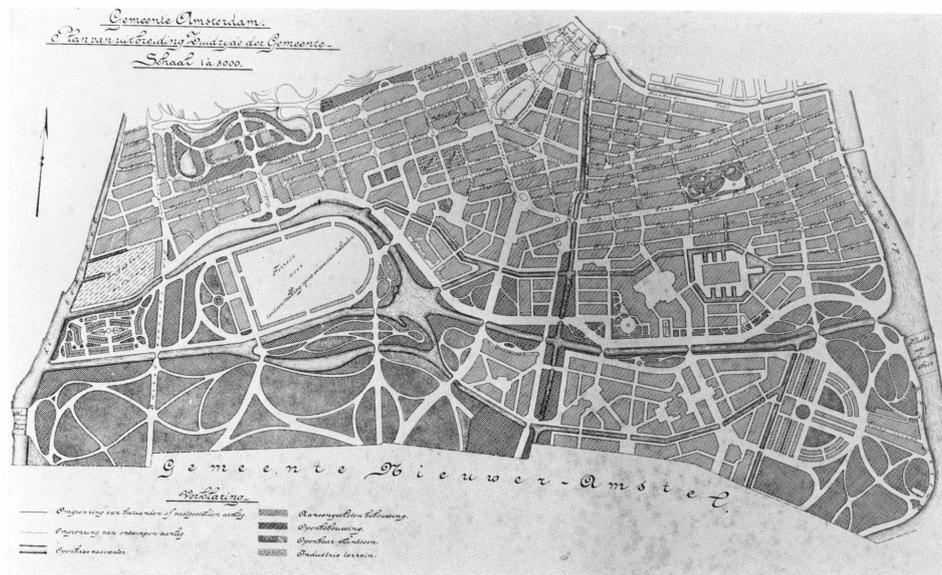


Figure 2. The first 'Plan Zuid' by Berlage 1904, approved in 1905 (Fraenkel, 1974, p. 205)

The existing roads and waters and the demand to connect the new plan to the old part of the city made it difficult for an urban planner to come up with a personal urban expression. However, Berlage was rebelling against the usual 'bouw-maar-raak' (just build it) urban development, in which the government only influenced the building line of the façades. Planning of streetscapes often followed the, for centuries existing, polder layout. New streets were only created to connect new plans. The urban plan by Berlage was a progressive plan, in which he emphasized the transition between landscape and city and the connection to the existing city (Fraenkel, 1974).

#### CRITIQUE BY J.H.W. LELIMAN

Berlage's plan was approved by the local council and the first phases of the plan were executed according to this plan, starting from the border with the existing city (Fraenkel, 1974). Nevertheless, there were two main points of critique by Architect J.H.W. Leliman. First, he pointed out that the ratio of housing types was not balanced. Namely, Berlage implemented many villa's, despite the fact that there was no demand for this type of housing (Van Rossem, 1992). This was not in favour of the demanding working class.

Within five years after building the first complex as a result of the '1901 Woningwet', the housing shortage grew. When the city was just starting to control the demand, the working class had to mobilize during the war; material was scarce and due to the economic crisis and the stream of refugees the demand for affordable housing increased. In addition, the building costs in 1919 contained 350% the amount of the building costs in 1914 (Stissi, 2007).

Between 1905 and 1917 buildings were developed according to the first version of 'Plan Zuid'. Buildings arose from the border with the existing city (Fraenkel,

1974). But, the urban plan from 1904 had to be revised ten years later, as mentioned in the housing act. (Van Rossem, 1992). Also difficulties considering the train station were an impulse to reconsider the plan. (Fraenkel, 1974). Especially, considering the critique on Berlage's first plan and the recent developments, reviewing the distribution of building typologies in 'Plan Zuid' was unavoidable.

In 1917 a new plan was proposed by Berlage. Fraenkel (1974) wrote that, in the revised 'Plan Zuid' Berlage divided the buildings in three classes. The first class contained villa's; the second class buildings were split horizontally to house two families vertically; the third class existed of the building blocks housing multiple families, accessible through a central staircase. Furthermore, this was automatically a social class typification. Only 25% of the available land was reserved for the first and second class. So, for the third class 75% of the land was left for building plots (Fraenkel, 1974).

The second point of critique, by J.H.W. Leliman, on Berlage's first 'Plan Zuid' was the density of the buildings with the tight street pattern. He suspected the direct implementation of the theories by Camillo Sitte, which he recognized in the medieval like network of tiny streets and squares (Van Rossem, 1992). The implementation of Sitte's theories was not unexpected after he criticised the lack of the theories in 'Plan Lambrechtsen'.

Nevertheless, years before the design for the south expansion of Amsterdam was created by Berlage, he advocated for a more monumental approach in the modern urban planning. As van Rossem explained (1992), Berlage realized a new era had begun when he was experiencing the development of Amsterdam at the end of the 19th century. He realized that the rapid growth would create new architectural and urban planning problems. His companion, Theodor Sanders, thought him that modern city traffic needed a lot of space. The historic centre of Amsterdam did not meet the requirements. Berlage argued in 1883, that it was possible to drain canals, broaden alleys and renew bridges, but this would ruin the cityscape. Berlage pointed out that, different than the pictorial, old centre of Amsterdam, the new city expansions should be monumental. Similar to the Paris cityscape and its avenues, designed by Haussmann, which according to Berlage was the most appealing example of urbanism. However, to obtain a similar result the building of housing in Amsterdam had to be reorganised (Van Rossem, 1992).

In 1893 Berlage argued again in favour of a monumental cityscape. He claimed that building blocks with hundreds of identical houses could be the architectural standard and also an essential element in the modern image of the city. Nevertheless, this was a provoking theory in Amsterdam. The rental house was considered a pure practical solution. The idea that this type of housing would define the cityscape was received as frightening instead of appealing (Van Rossem, 1992).

Berlage wrote that his plan was no utopian plan, despite its grandness (Fraenkel, 1974). If he had the chance he would have designed a more monumental plan, but it was not allowed, as he wrote in his plan explanation:

“Aan de andere kant geloof ik toch waarlijk niet het onbereikbare te hebben gewild, want in dat geval zou het plan er nog anders hebben uitgezien. Maar dat mocht niet, en dat is ook niet nodig, want Amsterdam behoeft geen buitenlandsch karakter te krijgen.” (Berlage in Fraenkel, 1974, p. 208)

## CHAPTER TWO\_TOWARDS MONUMENTAL URBAN PLANNING

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF CONTINUOUS CITYSCAPES

After Berlage was criticised by Leliman, he continued to research the monumental city. If the debate about urbanism would raise, he would be able to argue the advantages of the monumental city (Van Rossem, 1992). Fortunately for Berlage the discourse on the new insights about urban planning raised in the period between the first plan, approved in 1905, and the second revised plan, approved in 1917. In this interim period multiple German authors published theory on the history of monumental urbanism and its importance. A.E. Brinckmann published *Platz und Monument* in 1908 and *Deutsche Stadtbaukunst in der Vergangenheit* in 1911. Also, in 1911 *Die einheitliche Blockfront* was released by W.C. Behrendt. These sources were quoted multiple times in the four lectures by Berlage called 'Stedenbouw' (urbanism). He gave these lectures in 1914 for the Practical Studies in Delft (Hoekstra, 2012).

Brinckmann (1908) argued that Camillo Sitte extracted his theories from looking at the medieval cities. He prized Sitte for stressing the fact that urbanism is an artistic activity. Mainly the lack of an artistic expression in the 19th century, made Sitte look back at past times. Berlage also declared that Sitte was searching for the beauty in medieval cities, since he was not able to find this charm in the modern cities (Bock, 1983). Brinckmann (1908) assumed that Sitte was a romanticist, since he was primarily concerned with the medieval period and did not look at the 18th century baroque urbanism. Brinckmann also claimed that Sitte was looking at the medieval cities from a modern perspective. He did not strive to find the logic behind the cityscapes.

However, Camillo Sitte (1889) was aware of the importance of finding the logic behind the origin of the historic towns. He aimed to learn from what caused the positive aspects and translate this into guidelines for the planning of modern towns.

“Es müssen unbedingt die Werke der Vergangenheit studiert und an Stelle der verlorenen Kunstüberlieferung die theoretische Erkenntnis der Gründe gesetzt werden, weshalb die Anlagen der Alten so vortrefflich wirken. Diese Ursachen der guten Wirkung müssen als positive Forderungen, als Regeln des Städtebaus hingestellt werden.”

(Sitte, 1889, p. 135)

Berlage (1914a) had doubts about whether the pictorial medieval towns were a result of conscious design. He described the medieval towns as structure within the chaos. Brinckmann (1908) explains that in medieval towns the street plan was straight but the façades were built at different offsets. This led to the irregular contours and fragmentation of views. These types of streets were often described as pictorial. Berlage (1914c) pointed out that this was not part of the urban plan, in contrast to what Sitte claimed, but the result of building individual houses.

In the medieval times people were subordinate to the community as an individual, resulting in a similarity in style. This would also realm in the architecture, since people believed in similar architectural expression. The medieval towns, labelled as pictorial, were after all a coherent whole. According to Berlage, this was why in the medieval city, despite the chaotical aspects, was found more serenity than in the modern monotonous city (Berlage, 1914a).

In the Renaissance city it was still visible that the individual was inferior to the community. Each house expressed as an individual compartment, but was designed as a whole, similar to the barrack housing in old Rome. The medieval organic evolution of cities was no longer the standard. Urban planning developed to a monumental, top down approach to create regular plans with broader streets and bigger housing blocks. The spacious openness was architectural, while the narrow and intimate spaces became pictural. Despite it was planned out, the pictural building blocks still made it appear as subjective urbanism (Berlage, 1914a).

In the Baroque period, urban planning, for the first time, had no similarities with the medieval cities. In the medieval and classical cities, the organic development of cities was the origin of a coherent city and its common beauty. In the Baroque cities this changed to a beauty as a result of culture. The church and kingdoms built monumental buildings, which dictated the new architecture. The profane, however, were not part of the origin of the new style (Berlage, 1914a).

According to Berlage (1914a), the conscious design of building blocks with coherent façades originated in the 18th century. The blocks of housing had similar ornaments, roofs and ratio between openings and closed surfaces. He claimed that this could be seen as the most important development in urbanism.

After the French revolution, in the 19th century, the artistic importance of urbanism dropped and the development of the city was again directed by the building of housing. Therefore, the urban plan became a formality. This individuality started to develop differences by subjectivity on style, due to the lack of a generic style. This resulted in incoherent cities, which in accordance, did not meet the expression of a 'pictural' city (Berlage, 1914c).

#### THE IMPORTANCE OF A GENERIC STYLE

Berlage (1914a) explained that, the artistic chaos in the 19th century, initiated the insight for the importance of a generic style. Beauty committees, consultancies and researches like the 'einheitliche Blockfront als Raumelement im Stadtbau' were a result of the growing believe that the personal subjectivity without any restrains by tradition should be prevented. However, Berlage (1914a) claimed that it would take generations to overcome the lack of a generic style and create a coherent style again. This could only be achieved by a naturally developed subordinate feeling to the generic style. This meant that the only possibility to create coherence in the cityscape on a relatively short notice was to organize it through authority. This explained the fact that the 18th century Baroque urbanism became the reference and why the work by Sitte, who looked at the medieval organically grown towns, became less relevant for the future development of cities. Sitte (1889) also realized that it would be a mistake to believe that organic urban development automatically would have led to a beautiful result during the development of modern cities.

“der Zufall auch heute ganz von selbst, Schönes zu Stande bringen würde, wie in alter Zeit, steckt... ein gewaltiger Irrthum” (Sitte, 1889, p. 135)

Berlage (1914c) considered Paris the most appealing monumental city. He quoted German art critic Karl Scheffler, who wrote the book 'Paris' in 1908. Scheffler said that Napoleon I created two kilometre long continuous façades on the Rue Rivoli.

He obtained this not with autocratical buildings, but with domestic housing. The street was built with solely one type. Through the absolute monotony, the urge for a feeling of uniting the masses, was answered by the architectural expression.

Accordingly, Behrendt (1911) referred to the French urbanist Haussmann. Behrendt wrote that, only by combining the individual fronts within a block it is possible to create large-scale, monumental architecture that largely dominates the open street space. With strict consistency, the satisfaction of a mass need has also been expressed architecturally in the absolute uniformity of the town house architecture. Behrendt thought that these factors were essential in the age of great linear breakthroughs, like planned for Paris by Haussmann in 1860.

The closed building blocks, with a continuous façade, was a means for the creation of the new urban thoroughfare. The buildings elevated the monumental effect of the street. Haussmann was praised by Berlage (1914c) for his understanding of the symbiotic relationship between the street and the façades. Haussmann created regulations for the building line and horizontality of the façades.

#### THE SYMBIOTICS BETWEEN THE STREET AND STREETWALL

Before Haussmann, architectural theorist Laugier (1753), who was extensively cited by Berlage wrote about the importance of regulation in his 'Essai sur l'architecture'. When a town is mapped out, the most difficult part is done. Regulating the exterior of buildings only remained. However, he stressed, if men wanted to obtain a well-built city, it was important to not leave the façade design to the individual. He advocated that everything influencing the street must be designed by authority. Not only the place to build, but also how to build.

This argument was also made by Behrendt (1911). He wrote, that if urban planning was regarded an expression of artistic will, then the work of art, which is the city, could not be regarded as completed with only the laying out of good streets and the creation of spaces. If the city as a whole was to represent a work of art, organization of the cityscape also had to be found in the expression of the planned, rhythmic formation of the street wall.

Behrendt (1911) named the uniform formation of the block wall, the space defining element of urban architecture. Brinckmann (1908), who influenced the work of Behrendt, stated:

“Das Haus bestimmt die Physiognomie der Straße, der Stadt, es ist das Material der Stadtbaukunst. Städte bauen heißt: mit dem Hausmaterial Raum gestalten!” (Brinckmann, 1908, p. 170)

Brinckmann claimed that, the house determines the character of the street and eventually the city. The cityscape is defined by the buildings that enclose the street, not by the street as an independent element. Behrendt (1911) argued that with a closed mass the hollow space of the street can be mastered more easily than with the mass of small, individual parts. Not the house but a group of houses, forming the block wall, had to be developed into an architectural unit in the streetscape. The extended optical scale of the modern urban planning and the increased spatial dimensions made the house a subordinate element of the monumental street wall.

Also Berlage (1914b) concluded, in his second lecture, that the buildings and streets influence each other and should not be seen as separate elements of the urban fabric. He claimed that the design of the buildings eventually determined the cityscape:

“Want het is vanzelfsprekend, dat het beste stadsplan, het fraaist ontworpen stratennet door de bebouwing kan worden bedorven, terwijl ook omgekeerd een slecht stratennet door de bebouwing in aspect kan winnen.” (Berlage, 1914b, p. 2)

The explanation by Berlage (1914c) about the origin of the monumental square sketched the symbiotics between buildings and the street. Monumental buildings were often situated at the squares to guarantee the possibility to experience the grandness of such buildings. The fact that the monumental and public buildings were concentrated at the squares meant automatically that the square gained importance over the surrounding streets. So, the development of the street did certainly rely on the development of the building blocks defining it.

Berlage (1914b) referred to Brinckmann (1911), who stressed that architects should stop recognizing a building as a separate unit, but start to see that every building had an obligation to fit in with the surrounding buildings and the rest of the city. It did not necessarily mean that the building should have a ‘good’ appearance, which again could become too subjective. The importance was in what the effect was on its surroundings and what was achieved for the situation by adding a certain building.

Brinckmann (1911) referred to the coherent monumental inner circle of Karlsruhe. The most distinguished houses did not stand out. In the 18th century the feeling of refinement was restraint. Even the city-hall had a modest appearance.

“Man hatte Gefühl dafür, daß Vornehmheit Zurückhaltung ist, nicht darin besteht, daß man jedem Vorübergehenden zuruft, er solle aus- sehen, man wäre das und das.” (Brinckmann, 1911, p. 41)



Figure 3. Karlsruhe – Innerer Zirkel (Brinckmann, 1911, p. 41)

In Karlsruhe the architect Heinrich Sexauer bought the necessary building sites from his own funds to build a series of residential buildings with a strictly symmetrical layout and consistent uniform architecture. By doing this he ensured the uniform implementation of an urban plan (Brinckmann, 1911).

Behrendt (1911) noticed a different attitude at the beginning of the 20th century. He saw a senseless egoism in the architecture of residential buildings. The main objective was to surpass the neighbour in order to assert oneself. This individualism was to blame for the fragmentation of the street walls and for the disordered impression left by modern urban expansion areas, despite the most artistic development plans. Brinckmann (1911) concluded that, usually the architecture should not have been left to the individual, from whom a deeper understanding is not expected. Authoritative bodies should have organized and secured the continuous expression.

So, in the practice of modern town planning, the formation of uniform block fronts to obtain spatial compositional elements, faced significant difficulties because of the fragmentation of landed property. Ideally an entire block of housing was developed at once (Behrendt, 1911). Berlage (1914c), took this a step further by advocating for the appointment of one architect per street.

“Vandaar dat de eenige mogelijkheid om in dezen tijd een bevrede-  
gend stadsbeeld te verkrijgen, zou bestaan in het geven van de op-  
dracht tot bebouwing eener geheele straat aan een enkel architect...”

(Berlage, 1914c, p. 145)

However, executing monumental urban plans heavily relied on the plot sizes. Usually, an architect did not have the possibility to design a whole street. And when they were assigned to design a long façade, they tended to break it up in segments of three or five houses. The street ended up to consist out of multiple different designed elevations (Berlage, 1914c).

This was why an urbanist should not only design the street network, which was the usual proceeding. In practice an urbanist was not likely to be involved in designing the architecture. But in addition to the street plan, an urban planner could depict the ideas they had to indicate the goals of an urban plan (Berlage, 1914b).

#### THE MODERN 'HOUSE'

Modern urban planning strived for the individualization of streetscapes, not that of the individual house. Within the individual street, a variety of individual architecture would only confuse. A harmonious unity could be achieved more easily, when the individual homes were no distinct individuals (Behrendt, 1911).

Berlage (1914c) referred to Scheffler, who emphasized on the proceeding of the term 'house' in times where a house is no longer an independent unit. Instead the home became the independent unit. In the same lecture Berlage quoted Viollet-le-duc. According to him the modern home in the city became a part of a 'family-warehouse'.

The architecturally uniform design of the blockfront is not a decoration to satisfy representative desires. It was rather demanded by aesthetic needs as a social consequence, due to the architectural development of mass housing with a typical repeating floor plan. This systematic way in which city expansions were carried out according to uniform development plans, taking into account social aspects, must also find expression in the architectural design of the street wall (Behrendt, 1911).

However, as a negative effect of this modern typology, housing became a mass-production and this has led to the avoidance of special architectural form. Typical designs were more objective and thus more neutral. This was the general proceeding with mass production, when taking the consumer in consideration. Because, the more neutral a design was, the bigger the target group, since it answered the average appreciation for its appearance (Berlage, 1914c).

Mass production would allow the architect to detail parts independently from case to case, which could always be supplied according to a special drawing and would thus free him from the constraint of the most artistically unsatisfying products. However, although the modern block formation of urban development plans pushed for uniformity by the big building industry, the old-fashioned, artisan production method still prevailed (Behrendt, 1911).

Behrendt (1911), observed that almost never a block enclosed by four streets was developed according to a single plan with one developer. The enclosed area was subdivided in scraps of land. Everyone built houses for themselves, even though the houses were impersonal and quiet similar. Additionally, Behrendt (1911) claimed that the building site trade, with its commercial interest, could not be expected to influence entrepreneurs in favour of architecturally uniform designs. Besides that, most of the developers worked without an architect, since they did not want to spend money on the architects fee. From a pure business perspective no contractor would think about the architectural expression, since they also had a product without it.

There also was fear, that potential tenants would get the impression of a barrack building. Even the average educated tenant called the uniformly designed block a barrack, which was confirmed by the housing cooperatives. Complaints arose

about the barrack principle (Behrendt, 1911). As Berlage (1914c) addressed in his third lecture, people preferred to see personal influence on their surroundings. This is why people appreciated the pictorial medieval cities. However, as Behrendt (1911) stated, the educated middle class pushed itself to become a member of the building cooperatives, because the buildings met their artistic requirements to a greater extent than the speculators tenements did.

#### OBTAINING COHERENCE IN PRACTICE

The barrack housing in the medieval towns, inhabited by the working class, was not only a result of the subordination of the individual and the proper architectural expression of mass housing, it was also a result of an economic advantage, since it was cheaper to build a row of the same houses instead of multiple different houses. Furthermore, this way of developing was not only for the classes with a lower income financially beneficial. Also the middle class would, as a result of economic benefits, built a large number of the same type (Berlage, 1914c).

Behrendt (1911) stated that the lack of relationships between the individual house façade on a street, which he called the fundamental evil of modern urban architecture, would only be eliminated if the private building sector could be won over to combine individual fronts into a block wall. Which could be achieved when a central office manages the architectural development according to a uniform plan. This demand had a meaning for the urban development beyond the aesthetic question of taste. Ultimately, it is only a matter of fulfilling a program that is primarily determined by economic tendencies.

Entrepreneurs would be more willing to accept proposals to develop multiple plots, stimulated by authorities, if they are made tempting by granting building concessions or dispensations. This kind of cooperating was not infrequently introduced during the development of difficult corner plots (Behrendt, 1911).

Perhaps, Behrendt (1911) questioned, the desired goal of a coherent cityscape with the use of the street wall as a shaping element, could only be fully achieved if the town planner collaborates with the architect to simultaneously sketch out the urban plan, the floorplans and façades. The buildings should be roughly sketched, not only before the plots were divided, but even before the precise street alignments were established. This would be similar to the collaboration between constructor and architect, which became indispensable during the engineering of buildings.

An example of a successful development, because of the influence by the authorities, is the rebuilding of the marketplace of Croßen, which was destroyed by fires in 1708. The authorities defined the regulations for the rebuilding of Croßen and included the importance for continuity of the architecture. It said that someone must pay attention to the regularity and equality of clusters. Those who act against this would be punished. The row of houses obtained unity and the block was structured with fire gables visible on the roof (Brinckmann, 1911).



Figure 4. Croßen – Westseite des Marktplatzes (Brinckmann, 1911, p. 48)

Brinckmann (1911) also priced a grouping of buildings from 1709, which includes the city hall of Croßen. A uniform effect of the block was achieved and yet there was a very clear differentiation of the monumental building. The freedom of representation within given dimensional relationships was a criterion for the ability of the architect: the storey heights were the same, but the proportions of windows and their distribution on the façade differed. Only the free corner was decorated with cornerstones, on the other side of the façade the lack of these stones emphasized the cohesion.



Figure 5. Croßen – Nordseite des Marktplatzes mit Rathaus (Brinckmann, 1911, p. 49)

To conclude this chapter, to obtain a coherent cityscape in a period of individuality and subjectiveness, the need for authority was undeniable. Small plots should be combined and developed as one building block. The influence of a building on the street and the surrounding city had to be understood by the urban planner at any time. By creating a complete vision besides the usual street layout, the subjectivity of the individual could be minimized.

When the authority would make a masterplan, the architect could be granted full freedom and independence in order to be successful as an artist, without the danger to become an employee of society (Behrendt, 1911).

“Nur der bewußte Wille zur Kunst vermag auf höherer Entwicklungsstufe die Schwierigkeiten zu überwinden, die Technik und Wirtschaft ihrem Gedeihen entgegenstellen.” (Behrendt, 1911, p. 99)

## CHAPTER THREE THE EXECUTION OF 'PLAN ZUID'

In 1915 Berlage was certain about using a more monumental approach. The revised 'Plan Zuid' was approved by the municipality in 1917 (Van Rossem, 1992). As made clear in the previous chapter, a monumental urban plan would not be successful without the policy and regulations for the design of façades. To enforce this, controlling instances had to be created. In the plan description Berlage repeated the importance of not leaving the design to individuals (Van Rossem, 1992).

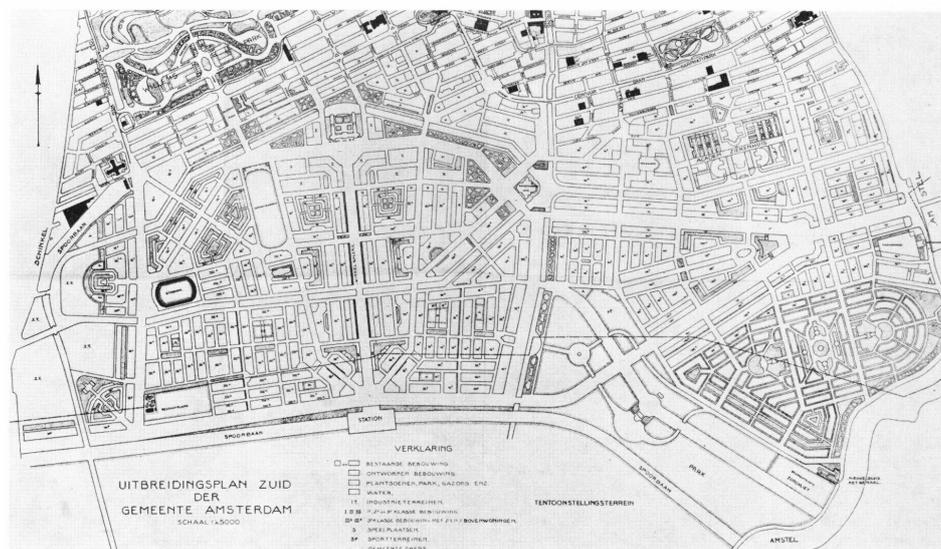


Figure 6. The revised 'Plan Zuid' by Berlage, approved in 1917 (Fraenkel, 1974, p.209)

In Amsterdam existed a beauty committee since 1898, the members were mainly concerned with the area surrounding the Rijksmuseum. In 1915 this committee was officially renamed as the 'Schoonheidscommissie' (beauty committee). From this moment on they were in charge of advising the local council about the façade designs and the maintenance and improvement of the cityscape (Beek, 1992). According to Beek (1992), despite the changed name, the influence of the committee remained limited. They only had to approve the designs for plots leased out by the municipality (Stissi, 2007). In contrast to Beek, Stissi (2007) claimed that from 1915 on the committee reviewed all the designs for new buildings, including the ones on private land. They had to approve every design and this was a binding assessment for the continuation of the development. However, from time to time the council would withdraw the decision to accelerate the building of housing.

The most prominent advocates for the employment of such a committee were the architecture unions. An architect did not have a protected title, so by supporting the designation of a committee they tried to reduce the power of speculative developers that did not employ an architect (Beek, 1992). However, architects could feel restricted by the influence of such a committee, as Beek (1992) shows according to correspondence between architects and the beauty committee. However Stissi (2007) points out that the committee usually was forgiving. They only dis-

approved the designs by builders with unprecise drawings or a design in a historic style.

In the council debate about the regulations by the beauty committee in 1915 in Amsterdam, councillor and architect Z. Gulden advocated for the addition of an urban planner to the committee. At that moment all the members of the committee were architects. The problem occurred that they did not have the knowledge about the plans for the entire street. As a result they only assessed the submitted façade design as an isolated element (Beek, 1992). In the future development of 'Plan Zuid' this would have problematic consequences for the execution of the ideas by Berlage.

Who also referred repeatedly to the importance of the unity of the cityscape was A. Keppler, a member of the beauty committee (Beek, 1992). Keppler was one of the most important advocates of social housing. He was active at the 'Bouw- en Woningtoezicht' (building and housing supervision) since 1905, first as volunteer, later as head of the department concerning working class housing. He published articles and gave lectures about public housing on a regular basis. In 1915 he became the director of the 'Woningdienst' (housing service) (Stissi, 2007).

Not all the members of the committee were on the same page as Keppler about the importance of coherence. But, despite the distrust of the committee, Keppler kept trying to improve the unity Berlage argued for. In 1917 he gave the architects, who were designing a neighbourhood in the north of Amsterdam, the assignment to discuss the designs with each other to improve the coherence. Unfortunately, the result did not turn out the way Keppler would have liked. The next trial he started was in 1919, still without the support of the committee. For the development near the stadium in 'Plan Zuid', Keppler appointed a supervisor. He picked the chairman of the 'Schoonheidscommissie', Jan Gratama. Gratama was in control of the coherence of the architecture and aimed to obtain harmony in the streets and squares. He did this by determining the silhouettes of 'street-walls' and 'square-walls', street profiles and planting, as well as by picking the colour of, among others, bricks and paint. Now the control on coherence did not only happen with the assessment of a design but also by prescribing guidelines. This method exceeded the abilities of the beauty committee. This experiment succeeded well enough to carry on with this structure for the execution of the next part of 'Plan Zuid': the land leased by the 'Amstel Bouwvereniging'. The cooperation existed of many entrepreneurs and architects, so a new committee was employed by the municipality, including Jan Gratama. This time the members were on paid positions (Beek, 1992).

The new committee went by the name of the 'Commissie van Vier' (the committee of four). They started to determine the silhouettes of the streets with height differences and accents. Thereafter, they decided which fragments had to be designed by a single architect. The architects had to make sure that their façade designs corresponded with the silhouettes. They submitted a sketch for a review by the committee. If the sketch was approved, the design could be further developed. The committee also used perspective drawings as a means of communication (Beek, 1992). In line with the importance of depicting the goal of an urban plan, argued by Berlage. As explained in the previous chapter.

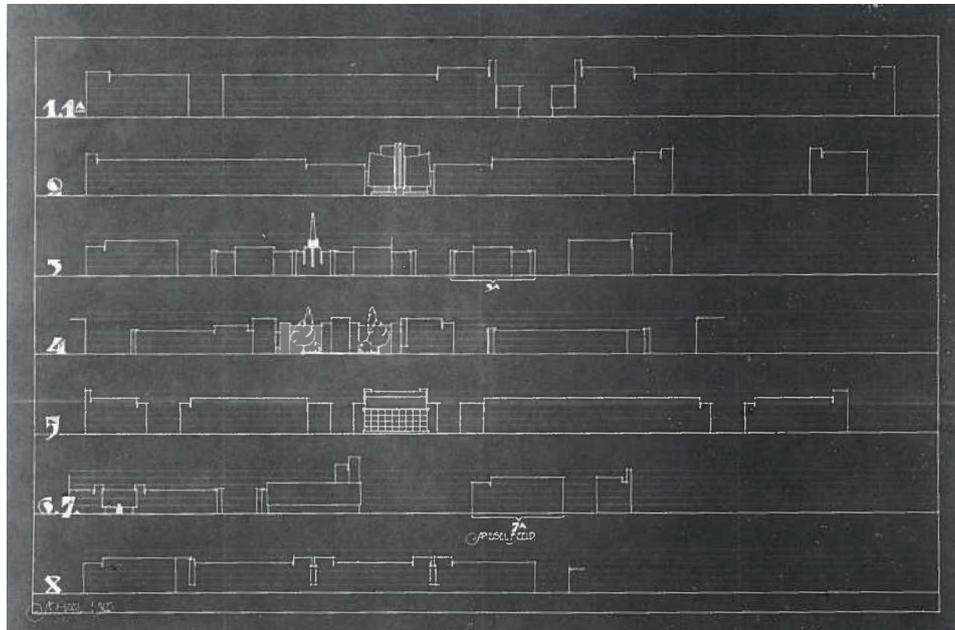


Figure 6. Prescribed silhouette drawings north of the 'Vrijheidslaan' as part of the execution of 'Plan Zuid', by the 'Commissie van Vier' ca. 1920 (Beek, 1992, p. 31)

A similar method was used by another committee, known as the 'Silhouettencommissie', appointed in 1925 by the municipality of Amsterdam. This committee was in charge of the development near the 'Amstelkanaal'. The members were all part of the beauty committee and again Jan Gratama was one of the members (Beek, 1992).

The appointment of several committees for various parts of the plan did not become the standard. Despite the experiments with the employment of committees there was no real change in policy. In 1925, Gulden spoke out his preference to hand over the aesthetic supervision from the committees to an official civil servant. A member of the same party, G. van den Bergh, stressed the importance of informing the council, because to them it was unclear what was going to happen in the South of Amsterdam. Bergh recognized the success of individual buildings developed in the south of Amsterdam, but according to him the aim for coherence of the neighbourhoods was not achieved (Beek, 1992).

In the meantime ground was leased without the aim to obtain architectural units. A part of the development was not turning out how Berlage imagined. Van den Bergh stated that only the council was able to turn the tide. According to him it was better to carefully consider the development of a part of the city that was going to last for eras, than avoiding negative consequences for private parties involved in the development (Beek, 1992).

'...dat het beter is, een stadsdeel, dat eenige eeuwen zal bestaan, zoo goed mogelijk te maken, dan te voorkomen, dat eenige particulieren eenige schade lijden' (Van den Bergh in Beek, 1992, p.35)

As a response a new committee was created in 1925, the 'Voorlopige Commissie Zuid' (temporary committee south), to examine the already created plans. This

time, the committee only consisted out of civil servants, like Gulden pleaded for (Beek, 1992).

The aesthetic supervision on the submitted designs became more strict, which lead to critique by architects and builders. For some it seemed like the municipality preferred *Amsterdamse School* architects (Beek, 1992). However, as Stissi (2007) stated, concerning the architecture of housing in Amsterdam almost every architect designed in the style of the *Amsterdamse School* in 1925.

After all the criticism was collected, again a new committee was created. From 1926, a committee would be appointed for every direction from the city centre. For the south of Amsterdam this was 'Commissie Zuid'. The committee was in charge of the aesthetic development in its entirety. Also Berlage was invited to join this committee, but he declined because of shortage in time (Beek, 1992).

Beek (1992) shows the way this committee worked on the city development by writing about the discourse between the committee and a developer. First, the committee asked everyone that requested to lease a plot of land, to send them a sketched design. If this sketch was not approved the developer would get a second chance. If the second attempt also did not meet the requirements by the committee the land would not be leased to this developer. Second, the committee stressed the importance of considering the connection to the surroundings. Sometimes they drew the silhouette of the street as a guideline and sent it to the architect employed by the developer. If an element or detail was not meeting the standard it had to be redrawn. It also happened that the committee sent some suggestions to the architect to solve the problems they had with the design. In the final phase of the correspondence the developer had to present the chosen materials to the committee. If everything was approved they were allowed to start with the build.

The way of working was extremely precise. It could take up to fifteen meetings before the design was approved (Beek, 1992). This final form of regulation was to control the continuity of the street and cityscape in the best possible way. Despite the sometimes complicated relation with architects, the unity was the most important aspect for the committee.

## CONCLUSION

The demand for housing in Amsterdam grew rapidly during the industrial period. Since the '1901 Woningwet', municipalities with more than 10.000 inhabitants were obligated to make expansion plans. For the new area south of Amsterdam a plan was made by the 'Dienst Publieke Werken' and named after the director Lambrechtsen. The plan was not approved and Berlage was asked to design his first urban plan. He criticized the continuation of the canals in plan 'Lambrechtsen' and created a more diverse streetscape. Berlage's plan was approved in 1905 but did not remain uncriticized.

Architect J.H.W. Leliman criticized the ratio of housing types. Berlage designed many plots for villas, despite the urgent need for working class housing. This need for affordable housing grew during World War I. Ten years after the plan was designed, the plan had to be revised in 1914. It was unavoidable to reconsider the division of plots between classes. In the new plan 75% of the building blocks were reserved to develop into affordable housing.

Leliman also suspected Berlage to rely extensively on the theories by Camillo Sitte, who preferred to use medieval city structures. But on the contrary, Berlage wished to create an urban plan like the plan for Paris by Haussmann. Berlage preferred the monumental urban planning, but this was not possible to pursue, since in Amsterdam this was received as a frightening idea. Fortunately for Berlage the discourse about monumental urbanism started before he had to revise the first 'Plan Zuid'.

Citizens preferred the medieval pictorial cityscape because of the influence of individuals. Due to the subordination of individuals to the community the medieval towns ended up to be more coherent than modern monotonous cities. In the baroque period, in among others Paris, the cities were developed through urban planning and regulation. In the 19th century the importance of urbanism dropped and the development of the city was again directed by the building of individual houses. However, in contrast to the medieval towns, the lack of a generic style created incoherent cities. It would take ages to overcome this lack of style. So, to obtain a coherent city there was a need for an urban plan regulated by authority.

An urban plan should not only exist of the planning of streets and building plots. It should also contain guidelines on how to build, since the façades influence the identity of the street and city. Ideally an entire block of housing was developed at once, supressing the influence of individuals and their subjective style.

However, as a result of the development of entire building blocks, housing became monotonous. A more neutral design was more likely to answer the average taste. Also, it was no exception to develop housing without the employment of an architect, since the lack of architectural expression did not mean that the developer had no product to rent out.

To obtain a coherent cityscape with architectural quality the provision of economic advantages and regulation were unavoidable. In Amsterdam, after the creation of the revised 'Plan Zuid' in 1917, the search for the way to deal with the execution of the new plan started. From 1915 on, the 'Schoonheidscommissie' of Amsterdam was in charge of advising the local council about the façade designs. To improve the methods of regulation for among others 'Plan Zuid', multiple experiments were conducted.

During one of the experiments the method of providing the outlines of silhouettes was used. This became a returning element while communicating the demands to architects. Despite the improvements as a result of the experiments, there was no change in policy. Neither was every part of 'Plan Zuid' supervised by a committee. The criticism was collected and a new committee was found. 'Commissie Zuid' contained members on paid positions and their influence increased. The committee had a considerable influence on the architecture of the execution of 'Plan Zuid' from 1925 onwards. The architecture of a façade was assessed as a part of the street and cityscape, not as an isolated building. They worked with extreme precision and the designs were discussed and adjusted many times before they were approved. To succeed 'Plan Zuid', of which the quality relied on regulation during execution, this was of great importance, however complicated to obtain.

## DISCUSSION

The subjectivity of style has continued to grow in the last era, possibly in line with the growing amount of building methods and the increased globalisation. The complexity of controlling the execution of a coherent plan is made clear in this thesis and this remains an interesting topic up to today. How to find the right balance between regulation and the freedom of individual architects to express themselves? Is it possible to employ a similar amount of civil servants to assess and advice during the execution of an urban plan?

As well as at the start of the 20th century a housing crisis is one of the current obstacles in the Netherlands. Often this issue is labelled as the need for one million new homes. These claims emphasize on quantity instead of quality. The quote by G. Van den Bergh included in the last chapter indicates the importance of quality assurance during the rapid development of new housing, since the buildings might be there for eras. Almost a hundred years later 'Plan Zuid' remains one of the most appreciated neighbourhoods of Amsterdam. If future housing is developed, the search for the same amount of consideration and collaboration, as happened during the planning and execution of 'Plan Zuid', can lead to qualitative projects that last for eras. This way of developing would not only meet the demand for more housing but will also be durable, which remains to be the most sustainable way of building.

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