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A flat of one's own: The Elisabeth Brugsmaflat in The Hague (1945–1958)

In the 1950s, married women in the Netherlands were assimilated into the fixed ideal of heteronormative family and traditional family housing standards which were the norm; single women were not. Single women represented not only a separate category in post-Second World War society but also a stigmatised one. What was a woman without a man? Women were simply not expected to live alone. In the mid-twentieth century, however, high-rise residential projects were designed to enable women to live independently. Over a period of more than thirty years, Dutch women's organisations and pioneering women architects made a key contribution to collaboratively develop emancipatory and innovative residential projects in the country's biggest cities. In 1948, the Elisabeth Brugsma Foundation commissioned the architectural office Pot & Pot-Keegstra to build the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat in The Hague. The process was difficult, and took a long time, before the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat finally opened its doors in 1958. It was an important step to the progressive normalisation of women living independently, and also contributed to the improvement of housing standards for all.

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Introduction

The history of women in architecture has too often been obscured. However, as Zaida Muxí has pointed out on many occasions, women have always been part of the architectural world, designing and building spaces as clients, advisors, interior architects, theorists, and construction workers, even if they were — explicitly or implicitly — barred from formally studying architecture and practising the regulated profession.¹

In the first decades of the twentieth century, when pioneering women in the Netherlands were able to graduate with architecture degrees, volunteer women activists and organisations already had a long tradition as active agents in the built environment.² At a time when they were not allowed to vote, women volunteers collectively organised to perform unpaid work, challen-

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ging the boundaries between the separation of private and public spheres. As a result of the women's suffrage movements, 'domestic', 'private', and 'personal' issues were transformed into political campaigns, incorporating the fight for housing rights for women who wished to have financial, spatial, and spiritual independence. This required the design of autonomous, self-governed, and independent spaces. As Virginia Woolf described in her influential feminist lectures of the first decades of the twentieth century, the injustices that women faced unquestionably restricted their life opportunities. In *A Room of One's Own* (1929), she emphasised the impact of housing conditions on women's opportunities for artistic expression, characterising intellectual production as 'the work of suffering human beings, and [...] attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in'.³

As in the case of Julia Morgan working for the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA) in the United States during the first decades of the twentieth century, paid assignments for the first women architecture graduates were often related to women's organisations and female developers or clients.⁴ This was also the case in the UK, where women were first admitted to the Architectural Association School of Architecture in 1917 and, as Elizabeth Darling and Lynne Walker have noted, early graduates worked 'collaboratively with their marital partners or other women, and often for women clients'.⁵ But feminist ideas on housing had already reached London before the 1920s and 30s. As Dolores Hayden describes, the writer Charlotte Perkins Gilman's input on cooperative housekeeping influenced the attempts of city planners like Ebenezer Howard to put those ideas into practice. As long ago as 1913, an English critic acknowledged this revolutionary potential, explicitly mentioning the 'Feminist flat', since it 'strikes at the root of the economic system, [and] may involve vast readjustments of land-tenure, communal building and taxation'.⁶ Some years later, the suffragist Etheldred Browning led another interesting initiative in London. After founding Women's Pioneer Housing Ltd (WPH), she managed donations to set up houses for newly independent women. Interestingly, Browning, who visited the Netherlands in the 1930s, declared that she wished to avoid 'masculine' design conceptions and trusted a 'competent' woman architect to help her, Gertrude Leverkus — an illustration of why pioneer women architects were involved in such processes.⁷

These precedents demonstrate how, in the Netherlands, the designing of emancipatory women-only spaces was a matter of common interest, and these architectural works would likely not have been possible without the 'informal', voluntary, or unpaid social work of women's organisations and activists. These spaces became even more distinct when they were designed or co-designed by professionally accredited women architects who collaborated with Dutch women's organisations as part of an ongoing tradition of women's activism around housing, mainly after the Second World War.

In the context of what has been called the first wave of feminism in English-speaking countries, being a 'single working woman' — who was paid for her work outside the domestic realm — meant being outside the norm and, consequently, outside building standards envisioned for heteronormative couples

with children. In general, this was still the case in the Netherlands in the 1950s. However, buildings for promoting the independence of 'single' and 'working' women had been advocated by women's organisations since at least the 1920s, though they only materialised thirty years later, in the post-Second World War period. An architectural typology emerged that allowed women who performed (mostly underpaid and feminised) labour in the public realm (including nurses, teachers, and civil servants) to live independently while also supporting pioneering women in traditionally male-dominated professions — including women architects. In this sense, exploring women's agency in architecture concerns not only developers (mostly women's organisations' co-activism) but also pioneer women architects in the Netherlands, who authored or co-authored some of the most emancipatory projects including Het Louise Wenthuis (1937–1964) in Amsterdam by Margaret Staal-Kropholler; the Oranjehof in Amsterdam (1939–1942) by Pot & Pot-Keegstra; the RVS Flat in Rotterdam (1947–1958) by Wilhelmina Jansen; and the Oudenoord in Utrecht (1953–1957) by Helene E. van Hulst-Alexander.

A less celebrated, but nonetheless important, example is the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat in The Hague, a women-only building constructed in the 1950s that includes a total of 145 studio apartments or flats, each with an exterior space and access to some common facilities. It was developed by the Elisabeth Brugsma Foundation, and designed by Koos Pot-Keegstra in partnership with her husband, Joop Pot, and in collaboration with Gerrit Westerhout, a male architect based in The Hague. The garden was designed by the woman landscape architect Mien Ruys. The Elisabeth Brugsmaflat was a building *for* independent women, collectively developed *by* women, and collaboratively designed by two women and two men. It contributed to changing building standards to include those considered outside the architectural norm.

This article investigates the social and architectural history of this building, bringing to light the circumstances and processes that made its construction possible, and analysing how it contributed to changing the building standards of (officially recognised) housing typologies for one-person homes in the Netherlands.⁸ As noted by Marco Stoorvogel during his 2015 speech at the Elisabeth Brugsma memorial:

At first glance there is nothing special about this flat building today: [it is] a flat building from the fifties common in many places. However, because of the target group for which it was exclusively intended in the 1950s, this flat building was a true revolution.⁹

Elisabeth Brugsma, the Elisabeth Brugsma Foundation, and the category of 'single working women'

Binary categories such as 'single' and 'married' are patriarchal constructions that have always conditioned not only women's calls for respect but also their civil and material status. In general, social ideals in this period dictated that, while married women sustained the lives of their husbands and children and were not paid for their reproductive labour, single women without children

could carry out some specific remunerated jobs that were normally underpaid. The (care)work performed in the domestic realm necessary to sustain humans' lives was considered neither work nor employment. 'Housewife' became a synonym for 'married', and 'working woman' became a synonym for 'single woman'. Despite carrying the considerable social stigma of being 'bitter', 'anomalous', and 'incomplete', working women found themselves — by serving a new form of capitalist production — within the accepted bounds of public morality. However, this category did not include all single women. Those who were considered 'fallen' women, such as single mothers or sex workers, were instead considered immoral and socially unacceptable.¹⁰

The civil status of women was thus a key issue. Since married women and their children were under the authority of their husbands, some decided to remain single to maintain their independence. Working-class women could rarely afford to access the education required for a highly skilled job or even to stay single, so it was more common for middle- and upper-class women to remain independent. Among other issues, the inequality of the institution of marriage clearly undermined full female citizenship. During the struggle for suffrage and matrimonial legislation, the women's movement asked for rights instead of protection. Although marriage legislation improved slightly, new efforts emerged to restrict and forbid married women's paid labour. Legal inequality was not only established between women and men, but between married and unmarried women — the latter having more rights as independent citizens. Until the late 1950s, married women in the Netherlands owed obedience to their husbands and could not control their own property, among other strictures.¹¹

However, single women's labour was often restricted to work of a caring nature, and confined to gendered professional niches in offices (secretaries), shops (assistants), healthcare (nurses), and education (teachers). By the middle of the twentieth century, there were approximately 5,500 women with a university degree in the Netherlands —given that the total population in 1950 was around 10 million, and it is estimated that half of the population were female; this meant less than 1% of the female population had access to a university degree.¹² Of those 5,500 women, just 57% were employed. Due to the widespread practice of not hiring married women at that time, the percentages of employed women were 83% for single women, 64% for widowed or divorced, and 34% for married women — like Pot-Keegstra.¹³ It should be borne in mind that the restriction or expressed prohibition of employing married women in the Netherlands had been in the political agenda since 1904, and was not revoked until 1957.¹⁴ These measures had consequences for all professional women in every field.

The emerging professional women were underpaid by around 30% in the 1950s.¹⁵ Their salaries were so low, in fact, that they could not rent or own a house. The Second World War exacerbated the situation, as the number of single women grew. Even if they could afford to live independently, there was little housing stock available, since the market consisted of family homes with more than two bedrooms. Due to these barriers, unmarried women usually lived with their parents or siblings, in a hostel, or under the guardianship of a landlady. Even though women's organisations in the Netherlands acted as



Figure 1.
Elisabeth Brugsma in her
workspace in her house in The
Hague, photographer unknown,
courtesy of Gijs J. C. Schilthuis,
facilitated by René van Duuren

housing associations, single women were not considered a priority by the government when subsidising social housing. But in the 1920s, groups of women had already envisioned an architectural solution in The Hague. There, the Vereniging Gemeenschappelijk Wonen voor Vrouwen [Association for Collective Housing for Women], founded in the same city in 1925, conceived Het Wilhelminahuis, designed by the male architect Jan W. E. Buys. However, it never proved possible to build.

Among the supporters of Wilhelminahuis was Elisabeth Brugsma.¹⁶ Petronella Elisabeth ('Betsy') Brugsma (1887–1945) was a feminist activist and doctor. She participated in the first wave of feminism in the Netherlands, and was active in the suffragist movement that led to women being granted the active right to vote in 1919.¹⁷ In 1906, she started to study medicine at Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, and became a member of the first women university students' association in the country, the Groningsche Vrouwelijke Studenten Club 'Magna Pete' (GVSC) [Groningen Female Student Association] founded in 1898.¹⁸ It was no coincidence that she went on to serve as the GVSC's chairwoman from 1910 to 1911. In the Netherlands, medicine was one of the first university courses with women role models, and in which some barriers were broken down.¹⁹

Elisabeth Brugsma specialised in psychiatry and neuropathology, and in 1921 completed her thesis, 'De bruikbaarheid der definitiemethode in de kliniek' [The Usefulness of the Definition Method in the Clinic]. She worked as a neurologist in The Hague, running her practice from her home (Fig. 1), and contributed to establishing the Stichting Onderlinge Polikliniek Bierkade [Mutual Polyclinic Foundation Bierkade], where she worked until 1944. We know very little about her living conditions or home.²⁰ A writer, however, noted in a magazine in 1953 that she had been drawing up a plan in which a large number of independent women, employed and retired, could have their own domain.²¹

Figure 2.
Sorooptimists brochure with a song
to commemorate the tenth
anniversary of the organisation in
the Netherlands in 1937,
honouring 'working women from
every country', courtesy of Gijs
J. C. Schilthuis, facilitated by René
van Duuren



In November 1927, Elisabeth Brugsma joined the newly founded Sorooptimist-club, and became its chairwoman in 1939. The Sorooptimist Club in The Hague, in the context of the international Sorooptimist movement, was the first established in the Netherlands, and expanded significantly following its foundation (Figs. 2 and 3).²² Sorooptimist clubs were collective women's organisations of volunteers with an active agenda based on the emancipation of women.²³ By then, members were often middle- and upper-class white feminists with a higher

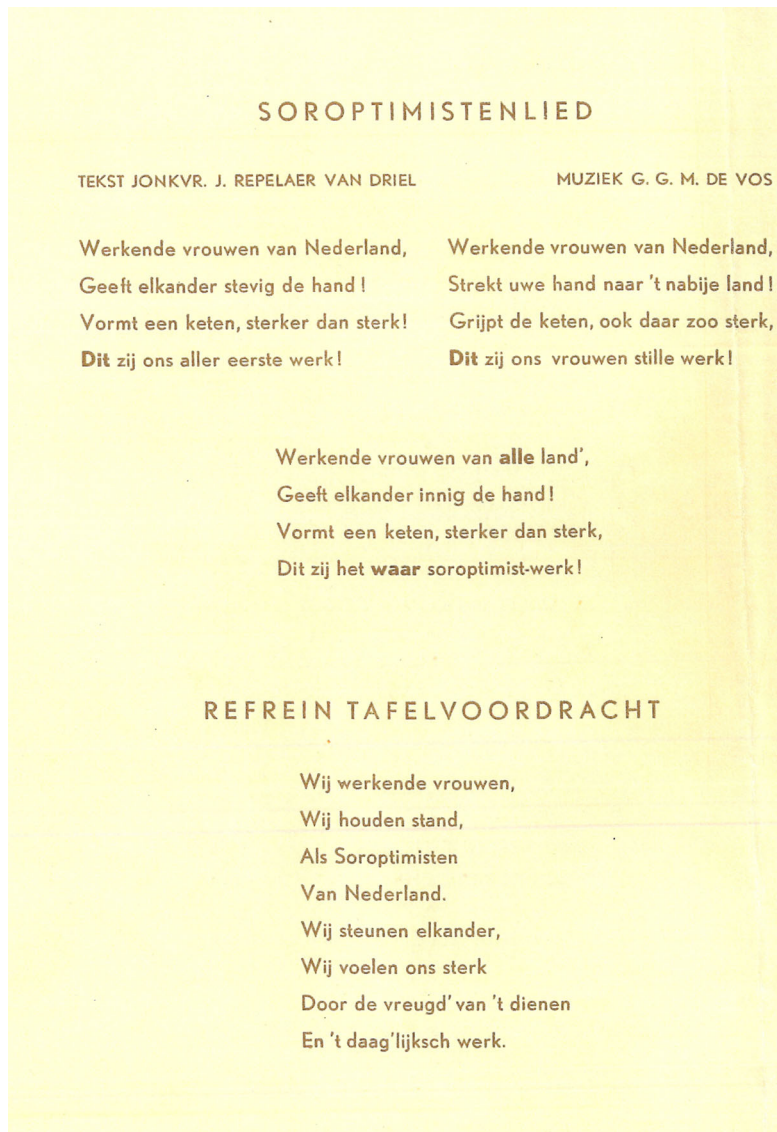


Figure 3.
Soroptimists brochure with a song
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van Duuren

education — including pioneers in performing paid jobs.²⁴ During this time, Elisabeth Brugsma visited the British Soroptimists and participated in international congresses, such as the one held in Atlantic City in the summer of 1938, in which a total of 90 clubs from the United States, 40 from Britain, and 10 from other European Federations took part. This was the largest Soroptimist convention, and the last to be held until 1948, after the Second World War.

Some years later, during the German occupation of the Netherlands in the Second World War (1940–1945), Elisabeth Brugsma became a member of

Medisch Contact, the resistance organisation of doctors. According to the research of her great-nephew, Gijs Schilthuis, she certified exemptions for many young Dutch people, saving them from being sent to Germany to work, without real medical reasons.²⁵ She was reported to the Gestapo, and arrested in 1944 by the German occupying forces, before being transferred to the prison in Scheveningen (Oranjehotel). From there, she was transferred to the Vught concentration camp, and was later deported to the Ravensbrück women's concentration camp, where she suffered inhumane treatment. Shortly after the liberation by the Allies, she died of the effects of dysentery and typhus on 25 April 1945 (the officially established date).

On 29 November 1945, seven months after her death,²⁶ Soroptimists from The Hague created the Elisabeth Brugsma-stichting (EBS) [Elisabeth Brugsma Foundation], with the intention of developing the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat (EBF), which was finally built ten years later in the mid-1950s. Annie C. Stas, president of the EBS and head of the secretary of the public housing department of the municipality, and Jeanette (Nettie) Ten Broecke Hoekstra, a member of the city council and the Soroptimist Club, played key roles in the process. The EBF, then, was developed collectively by women's organisations to endorse the independence of single working women. But what did that imply in social, economic, and spatial terms?

Social and financial means to develop the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat, or how women's organisations, besides being developers, had to become researchers (1947–1954)

A housing shortage or *woningnood* has long been a problem in the Netherlands. Social housing associations first emerged at the beginning of the twentieth century, after the Housing Act of 1901 opened the possibility of subsidised housing. Their initiatives increased after the Second World War, when inadequate and substandard housing and the destruction of the war explosively combined with the return of repatriates and a boom in the number of marriages. The history of social housing in the Netherlands shows that civil associations were largely responsible for developing housing projects, even if the influence of the municipalities grew after the 1950s, particularly after the Woonruimtetwet [Living Space Act] of 1947, which increased the power of municipalities to grant permits.²⁷

This context provided an opportunity for women's associations to become involved in housing development. After the war, women's organisations from The Hague acted again, and in 1946, after Elisabeth Brugsma's death, the Soroptimists continued gathering to find a solution.²⁸ According to Salomé Bentinck and Annerieke Vos, in 1947, the EBS sent out a circular and questionnaire to potentially interested single women, informing them of their plans to build an apartment building for women. The circular acknowledged the achievements in Amsterdam and Rotterdam while denouncing single working women's living conditions in the city.²⁹ By December 1947, the EBS had collated the gathered data, and the results revealed a strong

demand for a housing project for single women. The EBS began securing funding to move the project further towards realisation, and asked for voluntary contributions to raise money to hire an architect to carry out the design work.

This survey was ground-breaking; only in 1954 would the state conduct a significant investigation into the living conditions and housing rights of working women living independently in the major Dutch cities.³⁰ These surveys were mostly answered in Amsterdam and The Hague: in the latter, they received 1,788 answers from the 7,000 forms distributed.³¹ The EBS's motivations for conducting the survey were numerous: hostels were considered a transitional, but not permanent, solution for working women; hostesses usually preferred men, for whom there was no need of emancipation; and in relation to the census of 1947, there were around twice the number of single women than men in The Hague. Since women younger than twenty-five years old could marry, and thus had no need for independent living solutions, the survey was targeted at women of working age. Most respondents wished to have a home in a mixed flat, where families lived, probably for fear of being (further) stigmatised for living in a women-only building since living among traditional families was the 'normal' way. They wished to have a simple two-room apartment (with a living room and separate bedroom), and a central restaurant was also desirable.

In 1957, the final report was sent to the Minister of Wederopbouw en Openbare Werken [Reconstruction and Public Works], Herman B. J. Witte.³² It resulted in the amendment of the subsidies scheme to facilitate the construction of homes for single people, and the assignment of designing of a housing type for single persons of 40 sqm to the Bouwcentrum. This led to the 'Huis voor één' exhibition, organised in 1958 and 1959. The Bouwcentrum working group published a report some years later in 1961, 'Huisvesting van alleenwonenden' [Housing for people living alone]. Their mission was to help establish a building type for single people, to standardise the unusual. After a decades-long fight, single people finally became 'normal' like nuclear families. In 1958, the subsidies scheme [Bijdrageregeling] officially changed to include one-person homes. By then, the EBF had already been built.

Indeed, long before all these procedures had begun, the EBF was already in process. The path to finance the building, initiated in 1945, though, was far from smooth. The EBS initially did not have enough funds, as the housing law excluded homes for single people from state subsidies and they could not find a private investor. Although financing was not secured at the time, in June 1948, the Amsterdam-based architecture firm, Pot & Pot-Keegstra, accepted the invitation to design the EBF in collaboration with the architect Gerrit Westerhout. As a citizen of The Hague and a senior civil servant, Westerhout had good contacts in key local networks.³³ For their part, Pot & Pot-Keegstra had already designed the Oranjehof building in Amsterdam, developed by H. van Saane, an earlier typology for single working women combining apartments, rental rooms, and a restaurant. With the architects in place, the focus shifted to securing a site for the building. Although the

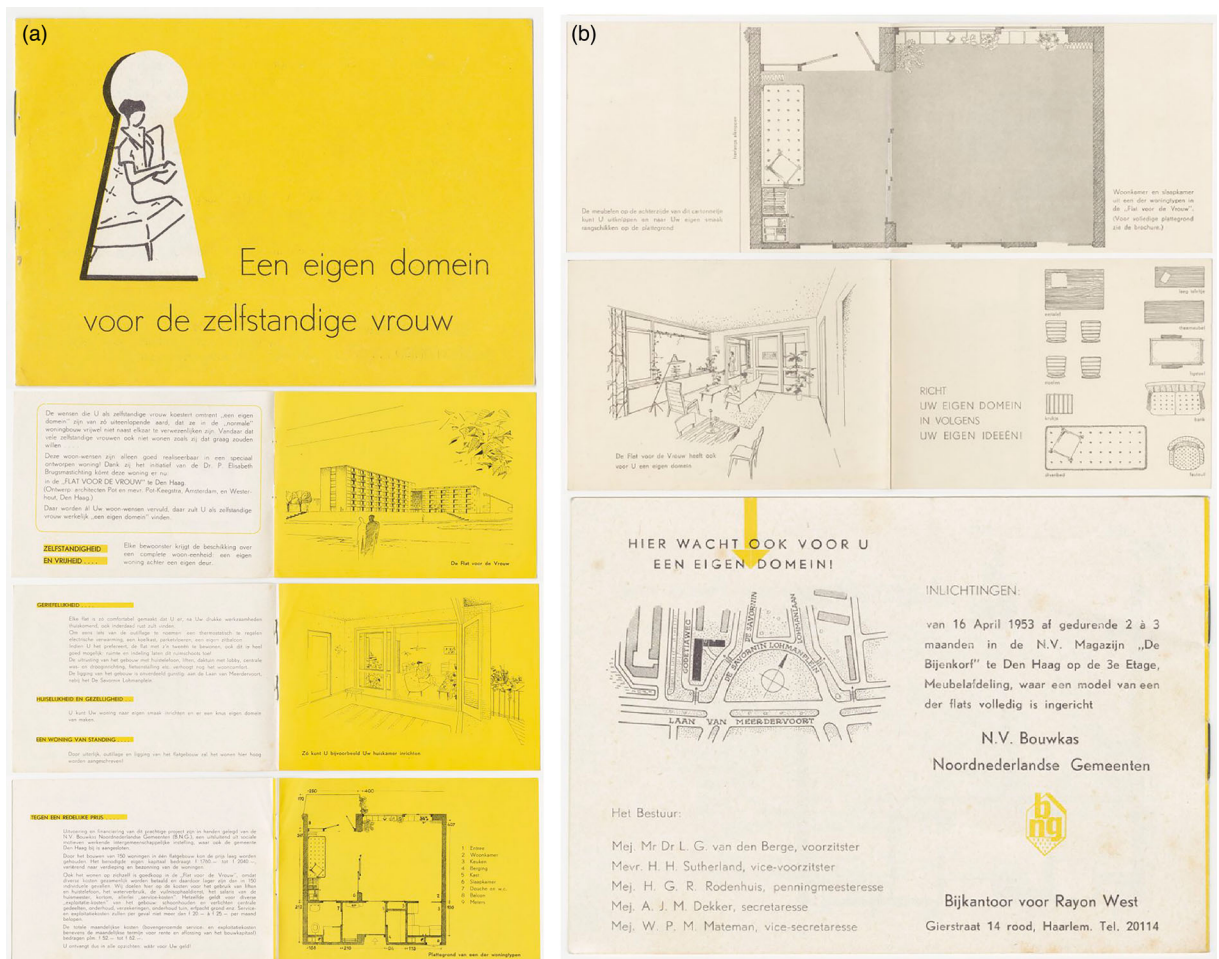
financing of the scheme remained unclear, in 1950, the municipality assigned a plot to the EBS, so that the architects could start the design.³⁴

Negotiations with the Ministry proved tough. To qualify for a subsidy, the architects had to temporarily design flats with two rooms for more than one person. By the end of 1951, the only option seemed to be to create a hostel instead of an apartment building.³⁵ To be able to design one-room apartments, the EBS approached the N. V. Bouwkas Noord-Nederlandse Gemeenten (BNG) [Northern Dutch Municipalities Building Society], an intermunicipal institution that funded social housing. In 1952, the Municipality of The Hague joined the BNG.³⁶ As the BNG financing model did not support rental properties, they granted an advance payment for flats to be sold (loans). Although the EBS wanted to let some of the flats to women with lower incomes, this did not seem feasible. The director of the west district of the BNG, R. R. Karsten, worked together with the EBS; both expected some financial help from the Municipality. In the face of a new impasse in negotiations, in 1953, the EBS pushed to develop the building on a cooperative basis, and created a board with representatives of the EBS and future inhabitants.³⁷ However, the BNG's financial support was the only solution that got the project running.

Interest in the building grew once its development on a collective basis became public knowledge. By 1953, things seemed to be moving again. From 16 April 1953, a model apartment, fully furnished, was exhibited on the third floor of De Bijenkorf — a popular shopping centre in The Hague — for two to three months. The exhibition brochure especially focused on the idea that the EBF was an apartment building where single women could finally have their own domain — otherwise impossible to find in 'normal' construction (Figs. 4a and 4b). The exhibition itself was targeted at middle- and upper-class single women who could contribute financially to the development of the building. By 1955, most of the flats had been sold.³⁸

However, not all future inhabitants were working women, and at this stage the EBF documents already incorporated an important change: the 'flats for working women' were renamed 'flats for women'. As records show, in the beginning, 144 women lived in 142 flats.³⁹ Of those, 106 (73.6%) were single, 37 (25.7%) were widows, and one was married. Among other professions, 28 (18.1%) worked in education, 16 (11.1%) were civil servants, and 7 (4.9%) were nurses. Surprisingly, a total of 53 (36.8%) of them were registered as 'without profession', 27 (51%) of whom were widows, and 26 (49%) unmarried. A possible explanation for the number of women without professions who could afford a flat is that they had inherited money, or were supported by other single working women relatives who could get a loan. This was the case for at least one of the owners, who bought a flat for her widowed mother.

Despite all the apartments being sold, the building's construction was subject to further delays. Chiefly to blame was the deferral of the *woningpremie* or subsidy. In response to the delays, in April 1954, Jeanette Ten Broecke Hoekstra presented a municipal motion signed by all the women on the city council to secure the project.⁴⁰ In August that year, the EBF co-operative became lease-



holders of the plot,⁴¹ and soon afterwards, a subsidy was secured.⁴² Planning permission was finally granted in September 1955, seven years after Pot & Pot-Keegstra first accepted the invitation to design the building.

Working women at work: the role of the architect and the landscape architect

As mentioned above, the building was co-designed by Jacoba Froukje (Koos) Pot-Keegstra in partnership with her husband, Johan Willem Hindrik Cornelis (Joop) Pot, and in collaboration with the architect Gerrit Westerhout. R. H. Sutherland, an interior designer and expert on kitchen installations, worked with them.⁴³ Koos Pot-Keegstra was part of the first generation of Dutch women architects to graduate in architecture from one of two main

Figure 4. Pages of the advertising brochure of the exhibition in De Bijenkorf, 'Een eigen domein voor de zelfstandige vrouw', with a game including furniture and a plan of the living room (and bedroom), where you could 'set up your own domain according to your own ideas', 1953, POTK, 175t2-1, courtesy of Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection

institutions: the Technische Hogeschool in Delft (TH) [Higher Technical School]⁴⁴ and the Voortgezet en Hooger Bouwkunst Onderricht (VHBO) [Secondary and Higher Architecture Education] in Amsterdam.⁴⁵ In the Netherlands, women were able to study architecture, first as auditors of art history and drawing lessons, and then by registering in the official study programme from 1904 onwards. Very few completed their studies, and after the (minimal) 'peak' of registered female students at the TH in 1921, they were discouraged from accessing the job market due to the financial crisis. In 1924, the government legally approved dismissing female civil servants who married, and during the 1930s the employment of graduates was still uncertain. As a result, granting women access to education was perceived as a 'failure'.⁴⁶ In this sense, Koos Keegstra was a student who broke new ground. After a childhood in contact with the world of architecture, she became the first and only woman among 300 students studying at the Middelbare Technische School (MTS) [Secondary Technical School] in Haarlem from 1927 to 1930.⁴⁷ The school building, which opened its doors in 1922, had to create a female lavatory just for her.⁴⁸ She went on to work at the municipality and with the architectural firm Heineken en Kuipers while studying architecture at the VHBO in the evenings (1931–1935). There, she became the first woman architecture graduate in 1935.⁴⁹ Only ten years later would Lotte Stam-Beese, a former student of the Bauhaus, become the second woman graduate at the age of 42.⁵⁰ In 1948, there were 21 graduate women architects living in the Netherlands, just 13 of whom were employed. Of those, only 6 were self-employed, including Koos Pot-Keegstra.⁵¹

Koos Keegstra (Fig. 5) worked for the Municipality of Amsterdam before and after graduating in 1935. From 1930 to 1932, she prepared technical drawings at the Gebouwen [Buildings] department at the Dienst Publieke Werken [Public Works Service], from 1932 to 1936 at the Gemeentelijke Bouwen Woningtoezicht [Municipal Building and Housing Supervision], and again, from 1936 to 1938, for the Dienst Publieke Werken [Public Works Department]. There she worked first as a draftsman, and later as a technical supervisor.⁵² After her training as an architect, she also spent some time at the housekeeping school to gain insight into the practical organisation of homes. At the Dienst Publieke Werken, she worked with Jakoba Mulder,⁵³ and when, after marrying in 1938, she was not allowed to keep her job as a civil servant, she practised with her husband, Joop Pot.⁵⁴ Koos Keegstra and Joop Pot met at the VHBO while studying architecture, the latter graduating one academic year later than his future wife. He had previously worked at the offices of Hendrik Wijdeveld and Wieger Bruin and, from 1932 to 1936, headed the drawing office of H. van Saane, a construction company based in Amsterdam. Their partnership at their joint architectural firm lasted more than three decades. They used a modernist architecture style and their projects continued the Nieuwe Bouwen and the Goed Wonen ideas. Though they mainly focused on housing, one of their most famous designs was the Bijlmerbajes prison in Amsterdam (1964–1978, closed in 2016). The Oranjehof, the apartment building built by van Saane that provided housing for 148 single women in



Figure 5.
Koos Pot-Keegstra, c. 1940s/50s,
POTK_f26-1, courtesy of Het
Nieuwe Instituut Collection

Amsterdam, was one of their first commissions, its construction beginning before the Second World War.

In general, the profession of architecture was still not accessible to women in the Netherlands during the 1940s and 50s, and those who worked in architectural firms were often allocated small-scale and decorative assignments.⁵⁵ Women, however, faced fewer barriers at landscape and interior design schools than in technical studies, owing to the stereotypes associated with femininity. Although until 1945 there was no specific educational programme for landscape professionals in the Netherlands,⁵⁶ from 1907 female students could attend the Tuinbouwschool voor Meisjes Huis te Lande [Horticultural School for

Girls] in Rijswijk, which was co-founded by the biologist Jacoba Hingst.⁵⁷ Nevertheless, this was not the path taken by one of the best-known Dutch landscape architects of the mid-twentieth century.

Mien Ruys grew up surrounded by nature in an upper-class family that owned Moerheim, the renowned plant nursery and gardening company, in the rural area of Dedemsvaart. After working as a draftsman for the family business, she continued her training in Germany during the 1920s, later studying architecture for a short period in Delft. There she developed her interest in landscape and gardening in relation to architecture and urbanism. As her biographer, Leo den Dulk, has demonstrated, Mien Ruys developed a successful career lasting more than 70 years (1923–1995), mostly working as a self-employed landscape architect in Amsterdam.⁵⁸ She pursued her vocation and did not immediately marry — probably inspired by her older sister, Anna Charlotte (Lotte) Ruys, a pioneering doctor specialising in medical feminism, and friend of Marie Anne Tellegen. After the Second World War and the reconstruction period, Mien Ruys embraced the Modern movement, producing her most outstanding works in the 1950s. These include the design of the green plan of Nagele, the well-known modernist village by De 8 en Opbouw, which includes 32 farmworker houses by Lotte Stam-Beese in collaboration with Ernest F. Groosman.

During that period, Ruys was also hired to design the gardens of Elisabeth Brugsmaflat. Here, several connections can be made. She had previously worked on housing projects by H. van Saane — Geuzenhof (1933–1935) and Muzenhof (1938–1939) — and in Alkmaar — Bergerhof (1942) — the latter designed by Pot and Pot-Keegstra. In 1954, she also designed the gardens of their house and office in Haringvlietstraat 12–14, Amsterdam-Zuid. She had also formerly taught Gardening Art at the VHBO in Amsterdam between 1924 and 1952 when Pot and Pot-Keegstra were students. She was the first woman professor in the history of the institution, and a role model for the generations that followed.

Ideological connections can also be made. Although not a member herself, Mien Ruys, a prolific writer, had also written in her diaries that she was not completely dismissive of the Soroptimists.⁵⁹ She wished to join forces with other working women to resist marriage as their fate, to overcome their ascribed inferiority, and to prove they should be valued equally with everyone else.⁶⁰ She participated in the large protest against banning married women from working in the civil service and companies — consequently forcing them to stay at home — organised in Amsterdam Concertgebouw on 7 February 1938. Furthermore, during the German occupation, her sister was a member of the Dutch organisation of doctors of the resistance, *Medisch Contact*, in which Elisabeth Brugsma was also active.

It can therefore be concluded that it was not a coincidence that women's organisations asked women pioneer professionals and mixed gender teams to participate in their projects. In a period where the gendered division of labour was even more explicit than today, the organisations probably under-

stood that, due to their situated expertise, women professionals would better understand their needs while also supporting their career development through the commissions.

Architectural and urban design: the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat, its gardens, and the Elisabeth Brugsmaweg (1947–1957)

The development of women's lives and women's associations, the EBF, and the war were intrinsically connected, defining not only the building's final design but also its ultimate placement. The plot was in the Loosduinen district, an area of dunes on the southwest of The Hague developed through the Plan West of 1927. It was located in the Bohemen en Meer en Bos neighbourhood, surrounded by parks and forest, where almost every street was named after a plant. During the occupation, part of the district was demolished for the construction of the Atlantic Wall — an extensive line of defence along the Nazi-occupied European west coast built in the early 1940s. The population was displaced, and existing buildings were seriously affected by military activity in the area. After the Second World War, the reconstruction started in phases, and the priorities of the municipality changed. As a result, room was made for building the EBF in the southern part of Godetiaweg [Godetia Street], close to the De Savorin Lohmanplein square. The elongated shape of the plot led to the characteristic L-shape of the building, whose entrance opens onto the square.

Interestingly, in April 1955, the municipality agreed to rename different streets in the city, including the south-east section of Godetiaweg. However, following complaints from residents, only the part of Godetiaweg that faced the main entrance of the EBF changed its name to the Elisabeth Brugsmaweg; the EBF is the only building with an Elisabeth Brugsmaweg address.⁶¹ The new street sign was unveiled on 9 June 1956. The president of the Soroptimist Club in The Hague, L. A. van Straaten, and Elisabeth Brugsma's sister, Schilthuis-Brugsma, were both present at the event (Fig. 6). The building — started at the end of 1955 — however was not yet finished.

As previously stated, the architects formally accepted the invitation in 1948, a year before the plot was officially assigned to the project by the Municipality. The first drafted plans of the EBF, from an unknown date before 1952, show the basic design of the building and the apartments, always furnished, probably to be discussed with the EBS during the design process (Fig. 7). In these first versions, the flat typologies vary, but most have a slightly bigger kitchen and different bedroom solutions, including fixed beds. The balconies and planters are already included.

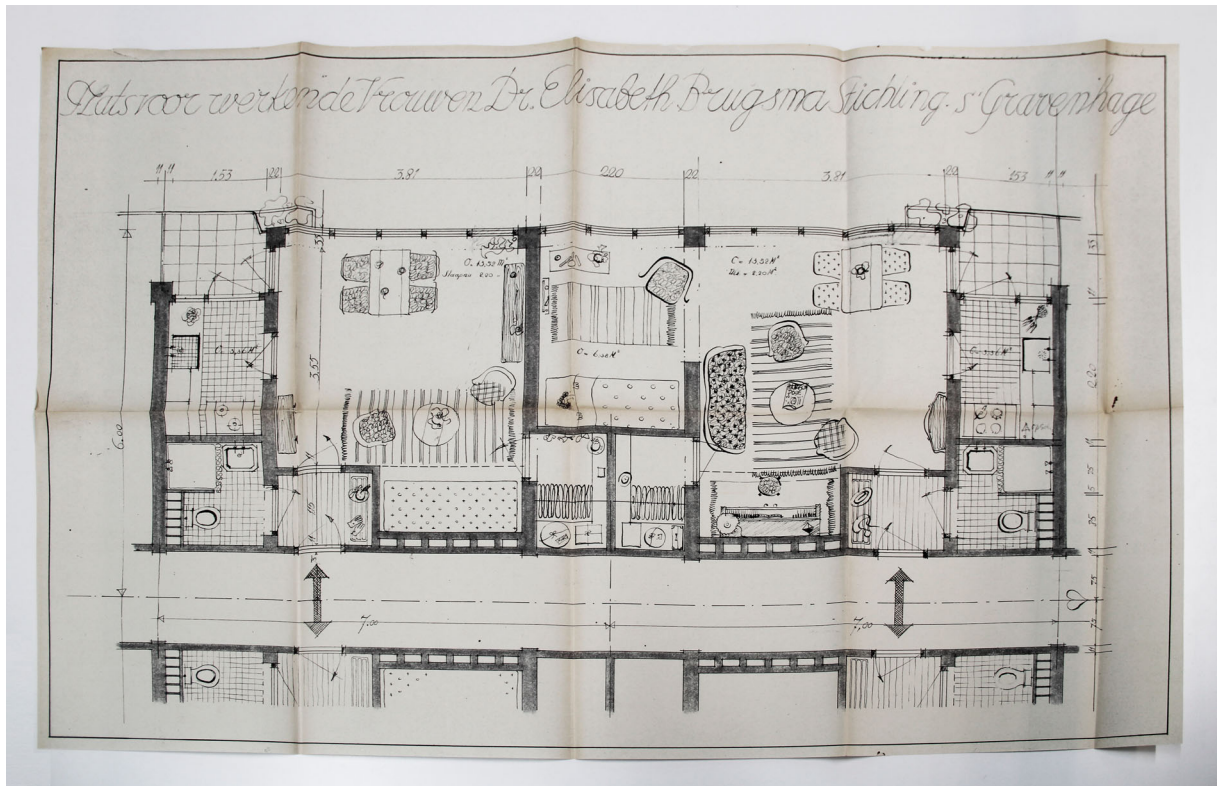
In 1952, the flats were symmetrically organised, but the programme is similar to the final version: small kitchens at the back, with access to the balconies through the bedrooms. The roof and the volume are also very similar to what was actually built. In 1954, the project was ready, and after few variations it was submitted to the Municipality in 1955. From then on, the build-

Figure 6.
The unveiling of the Elisabeth
Brusmaweg street sign, 9 June
1956, Stokvis, courtesy of Haags
Gemeentearchief collection



ing did not substantially change — only tiny modifications were made, in the form of the detailed design of the stained glass in the entrance volume, and the incorporation of Mien Ruys' garden design in 1958. That year, Joop Pot was in contact with the firm Kuiper, Gouwetor, De Ranitz & Bleeker, in charge of the RVS in Rotterdam together with Wil Jansen, to compare budget estimations.

In a period of material scarcity and housing shortages, the construction had to be fast, functional, and cheap. The final project of the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat followed this criterion of strict economy while paying attention to the quality of the minimum-sized apartments and the provision of sunlight (Fig. 8). The L-shaped volume comprised a high, longer wing of 7 floors (south side of the plot, including 125 apartments) and a shorter, lower wing of 5 floors (north side of the plot, including 20 apartments). There is a total of three types of apartments: A, B, and C. The higher volume includes one-room apart-

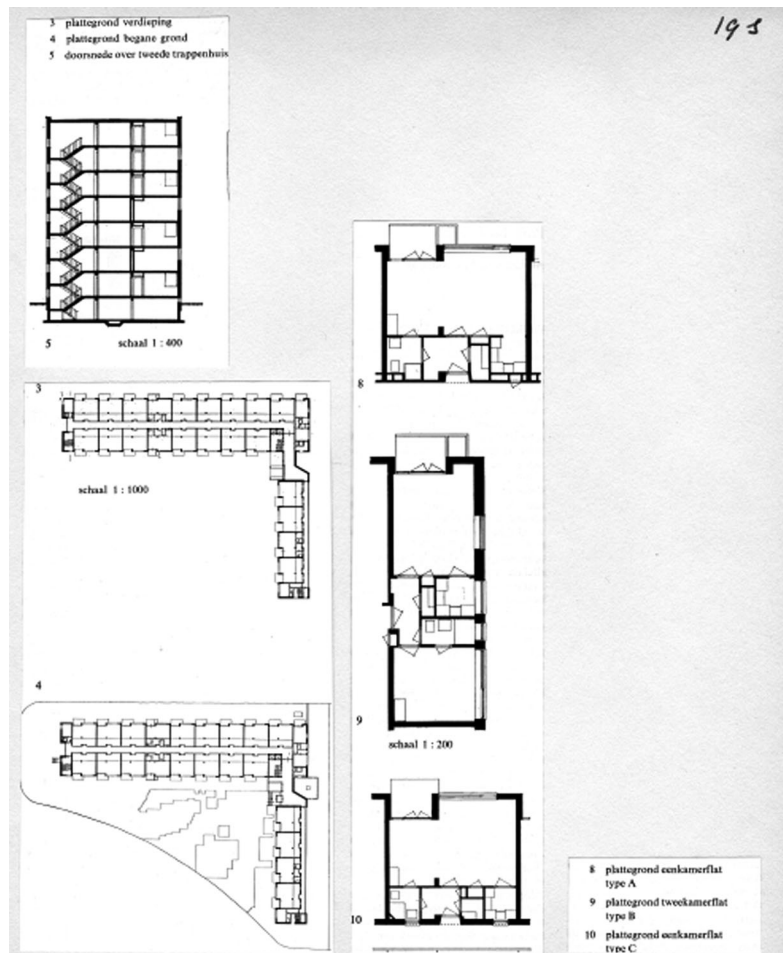


ments, placed at both sides of the central corridor, facing east and west (type A, 44.17 sqm), and two-room apartments placed at the corner, next to the central staircase, facing north and west (type B, 45.41 sqm). The short, lower part includes one-room apartments facing south, connected through a gallery facing north (type C, 48.03 sqm). The orientation of the apartments to the sunlight and the shape of the plot determined the design of the whole building, which includes a total of 145 studio apartments and a guest room next to the secondary staircase on each floor.

Communal spaces to facilitate social interactions are distributed throughout the building, such as the main terrace and the staircase and landing area. The main central facilities, however, are located on the ground floor and in the basement. On the ground floor, when entering, you immediately find the main hall, the concierge's lodge, storage cabinets for milk and dairy products, a telephone box, and garbage room with a vertical collection system stretching from the top floor to the basement. Other telephone boxes and garbage rooms are thus identically placed on each floor. Beyond these are the main staircase and two lifts. In the basement, there are more communal facilities that defined the singularity of this typology. These include the recreation room,

Figure 7.
Plans, including detailed furniture, probably to be discussed with the Foundation, of flats for working women, Dr. Elisabeth Brugsma Foundation in The Hague, date unknown, POTK, 175t14, courtesy of Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection

Figure 8.
 Collage with the plans of the building, including the three types of apartments A, B, and C, by the architects Pot and Pot-Keegstra, unknown date, EBF website, POTKfd13, courtesy of Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection



with an adjoining kitchen where a wide range of social events took place (Figs. 9, 10, 11 and 12); storage space for each apartment; the general garbage room; laundry facilities; a power transformer station, electricity metres; and a bicycle and motorbike storage room. Finally, the complex includes a family-apartment for a (married) housekeeper. The building ran on electricity — including the heating — but due to residents' complaints, butane gas for cooking was incorporated under the responsibility of the BNG and the inhabitants themselves.⁶²

Besides the importance of the individual exterior space of each dwelling, the design also pays special attention to the public exterior space. Each apartment has a *zitbalkon* or sitting balcony, and apartments in the high wing have a concrete planter. The shadows cast by the shape of this planter, specially conceived for women to plant flowers, lends the building external distinction. On the roof



Figure 9.
Communal spaces: the staircase
and landing, 1959, Dienst voor de
Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of
Haags Gemeentearchief collection

Figure 10.
Communal spaces: hall, 1959,
Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling,
courtesy of Haags
Gemeentearchief collection



of the lower wing there is also a common *zonneterras* or solarium, a sunny terrace on which to enjoy the good weather (Figs. 13 and 14).

Mien Ruys not only designed the gardens of the EBF (Figs. 15 and 16) but also the contents of its characteristic planters. The former was commissioned by the

Figure 11.
Communal spaces: view of the
recreation room, 1959, Dienst voor
de Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of
Haags Gemeentearchief collection

Figure 12.
Communal spaces: view of the
recreation room, 1959, Dienst voor
de Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of
Haags Gemeentearchief collection



BNG as part of the project: the architects sent the plans in June 1957, in July she had produced a draft, and in September they accepted the budget. The Woonvereniging Dr Elisabeth Brugsma cooperative, under the initiative of the first inhabitants, specifically commissioned the planter designs in September 1957. In December that year, Ruys submitted her designs and final list of



Figure 13.
The roof terrace and balconies,
c. 1957, photographed by Jan
H. Wessel, Haags Gemeentearchief
collection



Figure 14.
The roof terrace and balconies,
c. 1957, photographed by Jan
H. Wessel, Haags Gemeentearchief
collection

plants, but even if the garden was planted, it would not be ready until 1958. The project, like others designed by her between 1950 and 1960, follows a modular garden design. In connection to modernist ideals, she thought sober architecture should be combined with a voluptuous communal garden. Her main guiding ideas were socialism and collectivisation, to improve the quality of city living while making gardening available to everyone.

Flexibility, as in the RVS project, was also important. The design of the type A and type C flats (Figs. 17 and 18) and their sliding doors allowed residents to

Figure 15.
The garden and exterior space
surrounding the building: 1961,
photographed by Fotoburo Meyer;
courtesy of Haags
Gemeentearchief collection

Figure 16.
The garden and exterior space
surrounding the building: 1958,
Dienst voor de Stadsontwikkeling,
courtesy of Haags
Gemeentearchief collection



create an independent sleeping space or a larger studio, depending on their needs. The architects and the company pushed for this option, following the wishes of the inhabitants.⁶³ This last issue had been on the agenda since 1950,⁶⁴ and was specifically included in the advertising brochure, 'A Private Domain for the Independent Woman', published in 1953. Individual residents



Figure 17.
The interior of the apartment 305,
1959, Dienst voor de
Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of
Haags Gemeentearchief collection



Figure 18.
The interior of the apartment 305,
1959, Dienst voor de
Stadsontwikkeling, courtesy of
Haags Gemeentearchief collection

had different needs for how to divide the space, so leaving the space open to a flexible solution was the most logical choice. The toilet is always accessible from the hall and bedroom, and the minimum-sized kitchen can stay open-plan or, with little difficulty, be partitioned from the living room.

Social organisation at the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat (post-1957)

The official inauguration of the EBF took place on 19 March 1959 — more than a year before the first inhabitants moved in. The artist Marijke Stultiens-Thunnissen created a special tapestry of the city of The Hague for the occasion. It was unveiled by Annie C. Stas, president of the EBS, and Dr. Louise J. Th. Wirth, an inhabitant and the president of the association of owners (*Vereniging van Eigenaren Elisabeth Brugsmaflat* 1). After more than a decade, the building was finally completed, its goal achieved, and the EBS donated its capital to the new association before officially dissolving in 1962. That day, they stated that ‘the experiment has been successful, and we will continue to show the world how women can do such a thing’.⁶⁵

The inhabitants immediately established different suborganisations: the Gym club [*Gymnastiekclubje*]; the commission for the plants and flowers [*plantenen bloemencommissie*]; the household commission [*huishoudelijke commissie*], which also prepared tea and coffee at the meetings; the cultural commission [*culturele commissie*], which organised evening events; the commission for the library [*bibliotheekcommissie*], which started with 200 books in the recreation room; and the television commission [*televisiecommissie*], which organised television night three times per week. The television was a gift from the BNG in 1959. In April that year, they established their own internal rules of procedure.⁶⁶

Lastly, safety was a priority in the EBF. They had a separate archive in the building, where the data of each resident were kept.⁶⁷ In case of emergency, they could immediately take measures in order to take care of each other, and generally feel safe. On the other hand, informal control was still present in a way. New inhabitants were vetted by the *ballotage* commission, and were supposed to prove their [impeccable] behaviour according to accepted moral values.⁶⁸ Inevitably, beyond one's morality, proving one's ability to pay the monthly contribution was also an important requirement.

The building did not enjoy a strong presence in the media, nor was it particularly celebrated. It was mainly covered as a social achievement; thanks to this initiative, 145 single women had a place to live.⁶⁹ The people who witnessed its origins are no longer with us and, over time, its history has been forgotten. Today, the EBF is still in use, and inhabited by all kinds of people living on their own.⁷⁰

Concluding remarks

Even if the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat does not seem a particularly striking building, and despite the initial motivations of the women behind it, when it was built in the mid-twentieth-century, it represented a ‘luxurious’ building for single middle-class Dutch women. Living independently, having their own toilet, sink, shower, and kitchen, was a dream come true for many of them. Women volunteers collectively organised and developed a safe net of places in Netherlands where single women could live independently — though the

entrance was still controlled by a concierge (the only married woman in the building, and her husband). Still, even a concierge responsible for the whole complex of independent, fully-equipped homes was a major improvement on previous accommodation solutions for single working women. They were paying the concierge for services rendered, and not paying a manager or proprietor for being hosted. The EBF is a material witness of a fundamental shift from 'guardianship' to 'autonomy' — towards self-protection and self-governing.

What was a woman without a man? Before the advent of initiatives like the EBF, women were simply not expected to live alone. More importantly, women's co-activism in architecture led to a key change in the history of housing in the Netherlands. Through feminist advocacy, women introduced the concept of 'housing for single people' to political discussions, based on an ongoing tradition of women's struggles around housing. This, however, required the completion of not only the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat, but the development of research, women's organisations, and other apartment buildings. These buildings, such as the Oranjehof in Amsterdam (1942), the Oudenoord in Utrecht (1957), and RVS in Rotterdam (1958), facilitated to different degrees both the independent and communal life of single women. As a result, any person living alone could also benefit from their architectural activism; from then on, subsidies were feasible for one-person homes. Feminism here was, as Silvia Federici writes, part of a movement of liberation and social change, not only for women but for the whole of society.⁷¹

Though it remained largely unknown to the public, Elisabeth Brugsmaflat played a key role in the process. Like other contemporary buildings, it was already in progress when formal surveys and legislative changes took place. The architectural solution sought to grant the spatial, spiritual, and financial independence of single women: an important step to the progressive social de-stigmatisation of single women, and the normalisation of women living independently. However, the difficulties of finding financial help to create a social project led to the decision to follow an ownership model. This affected women with lower incomes, who had more difficulties to overcome to become homeowners and have a flat of their own. Some of the original intention survived, nonetheless, in the low purchase price maintained through the design of minimum-sized flats in a high-rise building that still incorporated comfortable liveable spaces. Despite their small size and limited facilities, each apartment had a private exterior space as well as common exterior spaces and gardens or floor terraces.

Building regulations in the Netherlands officially changed in 1958. The new subsidies scheme [Bijdrageregeling] included one- and two-person homes, specifying that they should be fully equipped (with a kitchen, shower, toilet, etc.) as well as included in complexes with other family homes.⁷² Exclusionary buildings (such as women-only complexes), however, were no longer subsidised, which implied the ultimate end of central communal facilities for cohabitating groups of single people. Following this, the flat typology diversified the size and

number of rooms in each home, definitively lost its communal spaces, and those buildings for single people which were already in the process of being constructed were made available to both men and women — such as Het Louise Wenthuis in 1963.

The work of women had an essential social function in this. Indeed, such places would not have been built without women's unpaid voluntary work, but their paid work also contributed to making them possible. If women architects had not been personally involved in these projects, would they have been so effective? On the other hand, no doubt having their own *domain* contributed to single women's empowerment, despite their lower incomes. Although this architectural solution improved their living standards, it did not strategically question the perpetuation of their lower salaries over time.

All in all, the history and stories around Elisabeth Brugsmaflat prove that women not only fit into urban history, but were active agents of innovation in the field, playing a key role in contributing to the emergence of a housing typology for people living on their own. The EBF was not only named after and co-designed by women, but its building process eventually challenged the material basis of gender inequality — it contributed to women no longer depending on men's wages for survival.⁷³ Activists against discrimination pushed to create their own housing solutions, managing to build an empowering building type combining communal facilities and independent flats.

Ultimately, it was a form of architectural feminism that challenged living, architectural, and social standards to make architecture more plural, accessible, and equitable for all.

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3. Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own* (London: Grafton, 1977), first publ. in 1929.
4. Sara Holmes, *Julia Morgan Architect* (New York, NY: Abbeville Press, 1988), p. 95.
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6. Walter Lionel George quoted in Dolores Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution: A History of Feminist Designs for American Homes, Neighborhoods, and Cities* (Cambridge, MA, and London: MIT Press, 1982), p. 231.
7. 'Grootsche Plannen Voor Werkende Vrouwen', *Haarlem's Dagblad*, 24 September 1937, p. 2 <<https://nha.courant.nu/issue/HD/1937-09-24/edition/0/page/2>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
8. Industrialisation, overcrowding, and inappropriate housing conditions caused recurring health issues in Dutch cities during the nineteenth century. The regulatory framework started with the Housing Act of 1901, which gave the State the authority to subsidise housing, assist municipalities, and facilitate the emergence of social housing associations as developers. Over the years, this implied the creation of a formal framework of housing codes.
9. Marco Stoorvogel speech at the 'Herdenking Elisabeth Brugsma', written by René van Duuren, 24 April 2015, translated by the author.
10. Different housing solutions were envisioned for them. Further, in that period, it was presumed that single mothers 'could not afford' to stay single for long.
11. Marianne Braun, *De prijs van de liefde: de eerste feministische golf, het huwelijksrecht en de vaderlandse geschiedenis [The Price of Love: The First Wave of Feminism, Marital Law and Dutch History]* (Amsterdam: Het Spinhuis, 1992).
12. Statistics Netherlands (CBS), 'Population; key figures', 22 August 2022 <https://www.cbs.nl/en-gb/figures/detail/37296eng#TotalPopulation_1> [accessed 1 March 2023].
13. As we will see, this trend is not applicable to free professions such as architecture; see Marie C. van der Kolf, *Zeventig Jaar Vrouwenstudie [Seventy Years of Women's Study]* (Rotterdam: W.L. & J. Brusse N.V., 1950), p. 123.
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 18. Initially known as the Groningsche Dames-Studenten Debatingclub [Groningsche Ladies-Students Debating Club], it changed its name to Groningsche Vrouwelijke Studenten Club in 1903. The words 'Magna Pete' were added in 1912. See Inge de Wilde, *Nieuwe Deelgenoten in de wetenschap: vrouwelijke studenten en docenten aan de Rijksuniversiteit Groningen, 1871–1919* [*New Companions in Science: Female Students and Teachers at the University of Groningen, 1871–1919*] (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1998), pp. 232–6.
 19. The first female graduate of a university in the Netherlands, Aletta H. Jacobs, completed her medical degree at the same educational institution in 1879. She was also a feminist who, after 25 years of medical practice, completely dedicated herself to the cause.
 20. After establishing herself as a neurologist in Kortenaerkade, she lived in a spacious house at Groot Hertoginneland 1, The Hague.
 21. Willy Leviticus, 'De flat voor de werkende vrouw' ['The Flat for the Working Woman'], *Haagse Post*, 2 May 1953, p. 17.
 22. The Soroptimist movement started in the USA in the 1920s. In 1924, the first European club was founded in Paris by Suzanne Noel. This influenced the creation of the first Dutch club in The Hague in 1927, which inspired the foundation of others. The Dutch National Federation was set up in 1928, the same year that the European and (North) American federations emerged. In 1938, the Soroptimist International Association converged in Atlantic City. The next international convention was organised ten years later, after the Second World War. See Janet Haywood, 'Nazism and Fascism Excluded Women and Some Clubs Dissolved Even Before the War', in Janet Haywood, *The History of Soroptimist International* (Cambridge: Soroptimist International, 1995), p. 12.
 23. As usual, people from more affluent circles with material possibilities and access to education could afford to start, develop, and preserve the emancipation process. It makes sense to assume that at least a substantial part of the Dutch women from that period carried the privileges of predominantly white Dutch culture. In any case, all consulted photographs do not prove otherwise. Although not further specified in the rest of this article, this is the general understanding throughout the whole piece. On the other hand, the Dutch language distinguishes between *ongehuwde* and *alleenstande* women, which has been translated in both cases as 'single', and sometimes as 'independent'. For women at that time, the first adjective had a more positive connotation, since *alleenstande* referred to the state of being alone. They claimed that, even if single, they were not alone. Finally, the understanding of 'working' in this text, as previously noted, implies the condition of women being paid for their work (productive sphere). However, the author equally considers unpaid work performed by women throughout history, especially through international housewifisation (reproductive sphere), to be work.

24. Soroptimist International (SI) is rooted 'in the vision that women and girls achieve their individual and collective potential'. Regarding the name, 'Soroptimist was coined from the Latin *soror* meaning sister, and *optima* meaning best. And so, Soroptimist is perhaps best interpreted as "the best for women"'. Soroptimist International, 'History', n.d. <<https://www.soroptimistinternational.org/about-us/history/>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
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28. Including A. C. Stas, C. de Vos-Versteeg, J. H. H. ter Pelwijk, and J. C. Tukker, 'Flat voor vrouwen' ['Flat for Women'], *De Vrouw in haar Huis*, June 1953, pp. 250–2.
29. See Bontinck and Vos, 'Zedelijkheid en zelfbeheer', p. 275; and 'Aan de belangstellenden bij de plannen der Dr-P-Elisabeth-Stichting' ['To Those Interested in the Plans of the Dr-P-Elisabeth Foundation'], letter signed by the board: A. C. Stas (president), C. Roeper Bosch-Versteeg (secretary), J. C. Tukker (treasurer), A. M. Binnenerts-Bodde Bouman, I. Stibbe-Koopman, J. H. J. ter Pelwijk, J. S. Oberman-Baerents, N- Drijver, J. Wolff, and C. Stoové, all members, 29 December 1947, courtesy of René van Duuren.
30. It is highly likely that these events had an impact at a national level related to the construction of Het Louise Wenthuis in Amsterdam, where Wilhelmina C. Blomberg was not only a member of the Vereniging Amsterdams Bouwfonds housing association but also a promoter of a new body founded in October 1953 — the Landelijke Commissie Woongelegenheden Alleenstaanden [National Housing Committee for Single People], chaired by the architect Margaret Staal-Kropholler until 1956. During the 1950s, they became more vocal in their demand for state-subsidised housing for single people. Specifically, they demanded special policies based on the higher number of single people. Following the example of The Hague, and in collaboration with the municipalities, they sent the same survey to single women in more than ten Dutch cities. The largest circulations were in Amsterdam (12,500 forms) and The Hague (7,000 forms). Blomberg was in charge of combining the results at a national level. The survey had three sections, regarding the existing housing situation, housing needs, and social circumstances. In The Hague, the results were published in December 1954, the same year it was sent, and in 1956 in Amsterdam. Bontinck and Vos, 'Het onderzoek naar de woontsoestand en woonbehoeften van alleenwonende en werkende vrouwen te 'S Gravenhage' ['The Study into the Living Conditions and Housing Needs of Single and Working Women in The Hague'], in Bontinck and Vos, 'Zedelijkheid en zelfbeheer', the annex part.
31. Bontinck and Vos, 'Zedelijkheid en zelfbeheer'.
32. It was signed by the Nederlandse Bond van Vrouwen in Bedrijf en Beroep and Vrouwenbelangen, and supported by eight other organisations from the Nationale Vrouwenraad [National Women's Council]. After the complaints, the minister sought advice from the Voorlopige Raad voor de Volkshuisvesting [Provisional Council for Public Housing] which, among others, included the Nederlandsche Vereniging van Vrouwen met Academische Opleiding (VVAO) [Dutch Association of Women with Academic Education], the Nederlandse Vereniging van Huisvrouwen, and Vrouwenbelangen.
33. Letter from Koos Pot-Keegstra to Ms. ter Pelwijk, one of the members of the EBS, in response to her concerns, 10 March 1950, POTK175d2 Correspondentie. Het Nieuwe Instituut Collectie, Pot and Pot-Keegstra Archief, Rotterdam.

34. Letter from Westerhout to Pot & Pot-Keegstra, 24 May 1950, POTK175d2, Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection.
35. Letter from the EBS to Pot & Pot-Keegstra, asking for their fee once the provisional project was completed, 17 December 1951, POTK175d2, Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection.
36. 'No. 716. Toetreding tot de N. V. Bouwkas Noord-Nederlandse Gemeenten' ['No. 716. Joining the N.V. Bouwkas Noord-Nederlandse Gemeenten'], *Gemeenteraad Verzameling*, 29 December 1952.
37. Letter from Westerhout to Pot & Pot-Keegstra, 17 January 1953, POTK175d2, Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection.
38. 'Wolkenkrabber flatgebouw voor werkende vrouwen' ['Skyscraper Apartment Building for Working Women'], *De Telegraaf*, 21 July 1955, p. 5.
39. There was probably one extra flat for the concierge, and two others were empty. Two women lived together in flats 201 and 220, and single women in each of the other flats.
40. Women on the city council included Ms. Ten Broeke-Hoekstra, Ms. Ten Cate, Ms. Mayer-Landmann, Ms. Vanden Bosch-De Jongh, and Ms. Walhain. Gemeenteraad, 'Handelingen van 1 April 1954' [Proceedings of April 1, 1954] (The Hague: The Gemeenteraad [The City Council], 1954), p. 384. Ms. Ten Broeke-Hoekstra and Ms. Ten Cate continued to push for the project at the municipal council until construction started in 1955.
41. 'No. 591. Uitgifte in erfpacht van grond, gelegen aan de Elisabeth Brugsmaflat' ['No. 591. Issue in Long Lease of Land, Located on the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat'], *Gemeenteraad Verzameling*, 26 August 1955.
42. If the total costs were around 2,500,000 guilders, the premium covered 361,350 (14.5%). Still, the BNG secured loans for owners up to 1,800,000 (85% of the net price), for a maximum of 50 years and, in any case, before 1 January 2006. 'No. 455. Garantie geldleningen Dr. Elisabeth Brugsmaflat', *Gemeenteraad Verzameling*, 25 July 1958, p. 3.
43. 'Flat voor vrouwen' ['Flat for Women'], *De Vrouw in haar Huis*, June 1953, pp. 250–2. Unfortunately, no further information has been found about her.
44. The first woman to graduate as a building engineer was Grada Wolffensperger in 1917. However, this milestone did not imply a change of trend; in 1941, there were 2 women students in an enrolment of 129. There were no women professors at all. Marina van Damme-van Weele and Jacobien Rensing-Wolfert, *Vrouwen in techniek: 90 Jaar Delftse vrouwelijke ingenieurs* [Women in Technology: 90 years of Delft Female Engineers] (Delft: Deltech, 1995), pp. 13–4, 19, 32–4.
45. The VHBO was founded in 1908 in Amsterdam. Margaret Staal-Kropholler was a student in the 1914–1915 academic year.
46. Frida de Jong, 'Stabdhouden in Delft' ['Staying in Delft'], *Gewina*, 20 (1997), 227–42 (p. 232) <<https://dspace.library.uu.nl/handle/1874/251388>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
47. Koos Keegstra was the only daughter, and eldest of the three children, of Wietske Posthuma and Harke Keegstra — a teacher and a civil servant at the municipal finances department in Amsterdam. Her father, Harke Keegstra, was also an initiator and chairman of the ACW Samenwerken housing association in Amsterdam. Harke Keegstra, considered a progressive man, supported his daughter's enrolment in architecture in Haarlem. She had previously applied to the MTS in Utrecht, but her application was rejected. In Haarlem, she was welcome under one condition: that she did not marry until she received her diploma. After that, her father refused to let her go to Paris on her own to study urban planning, and so she started to work at the municipality of Amsterdam. G. B., 'Iedereen heeft recht op een goede woning' ['Everyone has the Right to a Good Home'], *Het vrije volk*, 22 September 1956, p. 4.
48. Gerrit Korenberg, *Voormalige Ambachtsschool en Middelbare Technische School. Verspronckweg 148–150 Haarlem* (Haarlem: Monumenten Advies Bureau, Gemeente

- Haarlem, 2017) <<https://gemeentebestuur.haarlem.nl/bestuurlijke-stukken/2018347220-6-Bijlage-5-Bouwhistorische-verkenning-Waardestelling.pdf>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
49. Dave Wendt, Indra van't Klooster, and Pieter Winters, *Academie Van Bouwkunst Amsterdam, 1908–2008* (Rotterdam: 010, 2008), p. 67.
 50. Hélène Damen and Anne-Mie Devolder, *Lotte Stam-Beese, 1903–1988: Dessay, Brno, Charkow, Moskou, Amsterdam, Rotterdam* (Rotterdam: Devoider, 1993), p. 29.
 51. According to Van der Kolf, *Zeventig Jaar Vrouwenstudie*, pp. 84–94, there were 20 women. Six were self-employed architects, 6 worked in government public institutions, and the rest in the educational field. Of those 20, 11 were married, 7 single, and 2 widowed or divorced. From the total of 13 employed women, 8 were married, 3 single, and 2 widowed or divorced. According to this data, it was easier for a married woman architect to work in the field (73%) than for single ones (46%). This data opposes the general trend for the total of graduated women (34% versus 83%). This was also the case in other free professions. Most likely, this was because only single women were hired by the government, and many women architects used to marry male architects, which meant that they could perform the profession in partnership. In 2022, researcher Erica M. Smeets-Klokgieters documented in her thesis how a total of 21 women architects graduated in the Netherlands before 1946; see Smeets-Klokgieters, “Hulde aan onze kranige architecte!”
 52. Het Nieuw Instituut, ‘Pot, J. W. H. C. (Johan Willem Hindrik Cornelis) en Pot-Keegstra, J.F. (Jacoba Froukje) / Archief’, 2000 <<https://zoeken.hetnieuweinstituut.nl/en/archives/details/POTK>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
 53. Ineke Teijmant, ‘Jacoba Froukje Pot-Keegstra (1908–1997): Meer Halen Uit Minder’, *Amstelodamum*, 104.1 (2017), 3–17.
 54. However, the stereotypical division of labour was far from explicit in their shared work at the office; while she was concerned with the big lines, programme, and spatial organisation, he mainly focused on the details. Jeanne Roos, ‘Praten met: Koos Pot-Keegstra’, *Het Parool*, 9 March 1978, p. 17.
 55. Marjan Groot, ‘Margaret Kropholler (1891–1966)’, in *MOMOWO Women: Architecture & Design Itineraries across Europe*, ed. by Sara Levi Sacerdotti, Helena Serazin, Emilia Garda, and Caterina Franchini (Ljubljana: Zalozba ZRC France Stele Institute of Art History, 2016), pp. 175–6.
 56. Arlette Strijland, *Vrouwelijke tuin- en landschapsarchitecten in Nederland 1898–1998. Een geannoteerde bibliografie met inleidend essay over de positie van vrouwen in onderwijs en beroep* [‘Female Garden and Landscape Architects in the Netherlands 1898–1998: An Annotated Bibliography with Introductory Essay on the Position of Women in Education and Occupation’] (Haarlem: Hogeschool van Amsterdam, 1999).
 57. Frans Holtkamp, ‘Hingst, Jacoba (1871–1950)’, *Online Dictionary of Dutch Women*, Huygens ING, 19 February 2018 <<http://resources.huygens.knaw.nl/vrouwenlexicon/lemmata/data/Hingst>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
 58. Leo den Dulk, *Mien Ruys: Tuinarchitect 1904–1999, De Complete Biografie* (Rotterdam: Uitgeverij de HEF, 2012).
 59. She wrote extensively throughout her long career, though she focused especially on this facet after marrying the publisher Theo Moussault in 1947. With the objective of socialising gardening, she edited the garden magazine, *Onze Eigen Tuin* [Our Own Garden], and released the widely known *Het vaste planten boek* [The Book of Perennials] in 1950.
 60. Den Dulk, *Mien Ruys*, p. 93.
 61. ‘Onststemming bij bewoners over Dr. El. Brugsmaweg’, *Het Vaderland*, 6 August 1955.
 62. Letter from the architects to the BNG, 22 February 1957, POTK175d2, Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection.

63. Document sent from the BNG to all participants of the EBF, including the number of their front door, 19 November 1955. The document also includes a list of questions, asking for the resident's wishes regarding the use of electricity for cooking, and how they would like to design the wall between the sleeping space and the living room, among others. On 28 February 1957, the architects wrote to the BNG, concerned about the changes that future inhabitants were implementing in the project, and demanding that they should not exceed the perimeter of the flat, and respect the rules.
64. Letter from Westerhout to Pot & Pot-Keegstra, 17 January 1953, POTK175d2, Het Nieuwe Instituut Collection.
65. 'In Elisabeth Brugsmaflat vonden 145 vrouwen een thuis' ['145 women found a home in the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat'], *Het Vaderland*, 20 March 1959, translated by the author.
66. This included a system of fines. *Huishoudelijk Reglement*, 7 April 1959, p. 4.
67. There was a personal card for each occupant of the building. It included the following details: name, age, number of apartments, and the names of a family member and doctor.
68. At that time, unmarried women were not expected to have sex.
69. 'In Elisabeth Brugsmaflat vonden 145 vrouwen een thuis', *Het Vaderland*, 20 March 1959, translated by the author.
70. The first laws against gender discrimination in the Netherlands were the Equal Pay Act (1975) and the Equal Treatment Act for Men and Women (1980). In 1981, Ms. Eerdman asked the owner's association to admit single men. Apparently, it was more difficult to sell a flat to single women than to single men. There were also around 35 very old women, and the flats were getting empty. The Dutch Constitution [*Grondwet*] enshrined the principle of equality in 1983. Eventually, the Elisabeth Brugsmaflat had to adapt to changing times.
71. Silvia Federici, 'Marxismo y feminismo: historia y conceptos', *ctxt: Contexto y Acción*, 4 April 2018 <<https://ctxt.es/es/20180404/Firmas/18800/Silvia-Federici-Lectura-el-patriarcado-del-salario-feminismo-marxismo-introduccion-libro.htm>> [accessed 1 March 2023].
72. Report of the Centrale Directie van de Volkshuisvesting [Central Office of Housing], depending on the Ministry, active from 1958 to 1965, published in 1958. See Bentinck and Vos, 'Zedelijkheid en zelfbeheer', pp. 211–6.
73. Silvia Federici, *El Patriarcado Del Salario. Críticas Feministas Al Marxismo* (Madrid: Traficantes de Sueños, 2018), p. 24.