



## **DIALOGUE BETWEEN ALDO ROSSI AND CAREL WEEBER: WITH THE CASE STUDY OF SLACHTHUISTERREIN**

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## INTRODUCTION

The landscape of urban planning in the Netherlands has changed over the decades, constantly shaped by the Dutch sociopolitical environment. In the 1920s, the scale of urban planning increased beyond the borders of the city. The expansion went beyond the historical border of the city centre. Large public housing projects were introduced to urban planners.<sup>1</sup> In the 1980s, the economic crisis struck Europe, industries fell, subsidies in public housing were reduced, and in the new housing state, owner-occupied housing became the norm. Urban planners faced a new set of challenges, involving the need to reconstruct the already built-up areas. Moreover, many of the former industrial sites, now abandoned, offered great opportunities for redevelopment. Designers were challenged to offer these urban districts not just accessible housing, but also a fresh perspective on urban planning. Urban projects were expected not only for demanding social needs but also to contribute to the cultural and aesthetic quality of the city.<sup>2</sup>

Prior to the 1980s, cities focused only on large-scale expansions; however, these expansions often lacked attractive architectural qualities. It became necessary for Dutch municipalities to invest in urban planning and architecture to strengthen the city's image and urban identity.<sup>3</sup> As a result, many urban renewal movements and initiatives began in major Dutch cities, including Rotterdam and Den Haag.

AIR Rotterdam was one of the first experiments in this artistic reconstruction of building a city image. Many symposiums were held in Rotterdam, including *Designer and History, History and Design* in the early 1980s, and *Urban Identity and Collective Memory* in 1988. The symposiums and AIR brought together many internationally renowned architects into the Dutch urban context and explored the importance of understanding the city's morphology, typology, and collective memory in shaping a better image of the city.<sup>4</sup> In Den Haag, Adri Duivesteijn, appointed as alderman of the city responsible for the city's urban renewal plan, promoted a campaign where he emphasised the importance of *Urban renewal as a Cultural activity*.<sup>5</sup> Both cases will be further elaborated in the first chapter.

This thesis aims to use the case study of the Slachthuisterrein— a former slaughterhouse site in Den Haag, located near Laakkwartier and the Neherkade— to illustrate the shift in Dutch urban planning through the collaboration between Aldo Rossi and Dutch architect Carel Weeber. Rossi, known for his theoretical work on the city, memory, and typology, brought an artistic and historical perspective to urban design.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, Carel Weeber, a prominent figure in Dutch architecture known for his pragmatic and

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<sup>1</sup> Wagenaar, C. (2016). Past and future challenges of urban planning, as exemplified by the Netherlands. *Architectural studies*, (2, Num. 1), 65-68.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

<sup>3</sup> Bosma, K., & Berens, H. (1990). *Verleidelijk stadsbeeld : ontwerpen voor stedelijke vernieuwing*. Nederlands Architectuurinstituut.

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<sup>4</sup> Barbieri, U., & Weeber, C. (1982). *De kop van zuid : ontwerp en onderzoek*. Rotterdamse Kunststichting Uitgeverij.

<sup>5</sup> Geurtsen, R., Verschuren, P., Kwakkenbos, G., & Jonquière, P. (1989). *Stadsontwerp in 's-Gravenhage*. Publikatieburo, Faculteit der Bouwkunde. 38

<sup>6</sup> Barbieri, U., & Weeber, C. (1982). *De kop van zuid : ontwerp en onderzoek*. Rotterdamse Kunststichting Uitgeverij.

sometimes controversial approach,<sup>7</sup> played a key role in translating Rossi's vision within the Dutch planning framework. This thesis examines how this artistic approach to urbanism influenced the current image of the city. How do the historical and cultural dimensions emphasised by Rossi align with or challenge the objectives of modern Dutch urban planning? To what extent has the execution of Carel Weeber's De Lamel building affected the neighbourhood scale and also the city scale? How was it perceived, what was the public reaction at the time of the completion and how has it shaped the neighbourhood today?

This thesis primarily bases its research on the archival collection from Het Nieuwe Instituut, materials from the Carel Weeber and Aldo Rossi collections. These include a collection of drawings, photography, interview extracts, press publications and correspondence reports from the project. Additionally, a few newspaper articles are also consulted. The thesis is structured in four chapters: chapter one elaborates on the concepts of urban identity and collective memory in the context of Rotterdam and Den Haag; Chapter two examines the urban plan drafted by Aldo Rossi for the Slachthuisterrein site; Chapter three focuss on the execution of the plan, specifically the De Lamel building developed with Carel Weeber; and Chapter four explores public's reaction to the completed project.

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<sup>7</sup> Vanstiphout, W. (2024). *Autonom : 100% Carel Weeber* (M. Provoost, Ed.). Maas Lawrence.

# 1 URBAN IDENTITY AND COLLECTIVE MEMORY, DESIGN AND HISTORY

## 1.1 AIR 1982: NEW IMAGE OF ROTTERDAM

During the late 20th century, the Netherlands faced large housing construction and rapid urban expansion due to economic crisis and housing shortages.<sup>8</sup> These circumstances not only influenced the physical growth of Dutch cities but also brought the need for renewed urban identity. Using Rotterdam as an example, a city that had long struggled with post-war reconstruction and a fragmented urban landscape, with its many industrial lands losing their functionality, these locations served as new testing grounds for the Dutch urban transformation and regeneration.<sup>9</sup>

*Designer and History, History and Design* in the early 1980s, and *Urban Identity and Collective Memory* in 1988 were two important symposiums that greatly influenced the conversation.<sup>10</sup> Even though Rotterdam was the location of these symposiums, their impact extended beyond the city and influenced broader conversations about urban redevelopment throughout the Netherlands. Architects, planners, and theorists were brought together to reconsider the past limitations of functionalist planning and to think about how typology, history, memory, and morphology could influence new urban plans.<sup>11</sup>

By referencing French and Italian urban concepts of morphology and typology, especially that of Aldo Rossi, these symposiums emphasise that cities should be viewed as cultural and historical objects rather than just a technical problem. A key concept was collective memory: people perceive urban space through memory, which is experienced informally and emotionally. This everyday memory provided an alternative to rationalist urban planning methods. Instead of neglecting the past, understanding the urban identity may be a new tool for the new urban renewal.<sup>12</sup>

A part of these ideas was tested through the AIR (Architecture International Rotterdam) event in 1982, curated by architect Carel Weeber, aimed at shaping a "new image of Rotterdam."<sup>13</sup> Many internationally renowned architects, such as Aldo Rossi, Oswald Mathias Ungers, Josef Paul Kleihues, and Derek Walker, were invited to propose new urban perspectives for the redevelopment of Kop van Zuid, a former industrial port area in Rotterdam.<sup>14</sup>

Weeber drafted the spatial and programmatic requirements for the design area. However, the end product was expected to be images which serve as conceptual perspectives for the area.<sup>15</sup> Rossi's proposal consists of a layered urban landscape, shaped by the powerful elements of the

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<sup>8</sup> Wagenaar, C. (2016). Past and future challenges of urban planning, as exemplified by the Netherlands. *Architectural studies*, (2, Num. 1), 65-68.

<sup>9</sup> Nuijten, B. (2018). *Stadsdijken: the dikescape of Rotterdam*. Student thesis: Master

<sup>10</sup> Reijndorp, A., & Meijer, H. (1989). Het beeld van de stad. Stedelijke identiteit en collectief geheugen, OASE, (24), 2-13. Retrieved from <https://oasejournal.nl/en/Issues/24/HetBeeldVanDeStad>

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Barbieri, U., & Weeber, C. (1982). *De kop van zuid : ontwerp en onderzoek*. Rotterdamse Kunststichting Uitgeverij.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid. 6

<sup>15</sup> Ibid. 20

harbour, the basins, warehouses, rail tracks, and roads.<sup>16</sup> The contrast between the intimate scale of typical Dutch homes and the massive scale of industrial infrastructure is reflected in his design. It combines large-scale linear structures with smaller architectural interventions. For Rossi, these spatial elements were not just formal tools but carriers of meaning, forming the basis of a new urban identity rooted in memory and continuity.<sup>17</sup>

Thus, the combination of theoretical discussion and experimental design proposals in Rotterdam offered an alternative strategy for urban transformation, one that valued morphology, typology, and collective memory as essential components of city making.

## 1.2 ADRI DUIVESTEIJN: URBAN RENEWAL AS CULTURAL ACTIVITY

While Rotterdam was organising symposiums on the future of its urban identity, Den Haag was taking its own approach to urban renewal.<sup>18</sup> In 1980, Adri Duivesteijn was appointed alderman and became responsible for the city's renewal policy.<sup>19</sup>

By the mid-1980s, Duivesteijn began to question the direction of Dutch housing policy.<sup>20</sup> Where the main focus was on delivering large quantities of affordable housing quickly and efficiently to accommodate the growth of the population.<sup>21</sup> However, he felt the architectural and spatial quality of these developments was being neglected, especially when the neighbourhoods are changing due to the influx of migration and diverse population groups. In response, he launched the campaign *Urban Renewal as a Cultural Activity* in 1985. He aimed to rethink urban renewal as more than just a technical solution to housing shortages. He emphasised the importance of history, identity, and the changing social needs of residents. He believed that recognising the existing character of areas and involving residents in planning were essential to improving long-term outcomes.<sup>22</sup>

This campaign advocated mixed-use development, increased density, and the incorporation of landmark structures and infrastructure into city designs. Effective space organisation was no longer the only goal of urban planning; it was also important to consider the potential of certain locations. Architecture had a social function for Duivesteijn, who saw it as more than just an artistic or technical field. Good architecture, in his opinion, should be grounded in actual social settings. Well-known planners and architects from around the world were asked to work on Dutch

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<sup>16</sup> Rossi, A., Ferlenga, A., Njikiktjien, A., & Spijker, Q. (2001). *Aldo rossi : zijn complete werk*. Könemann. 107

<sup>17</sup> Barbieri, U., & Weeber, C. (1982). *De kop van zuid : ontwerp en onderzoek*. Rotterdamse Kunststichting Uitgeverij. 55

<sup>18</sup> Geurtsen, R., Verschuren, P., Kwakkenbos, G., & Jonquière, P. (1989). *Stadsontwerp in 's-Gravenhage*. Publikatieburo, Faculteit der Bouwkunde.

<sup>19</sup> Duivesteijn, A. (n.d.). 'Intuition, zoektocht naar Stadsvernieuwing als Culturele Activiteit', film van Marit Geluk | Adri Duivesteijn. <https://www.adriduivesteijn.nl/de-film-van-marit-geluk-intuition-zoektocht-naar-stadsvernieuwing-als-kulturele-aktiviteit/>

<sup>20</sup> Ibid.

<sup>21</sup> Mota, N. (2021). Building Together: Citizens' participation in the urban renewal of The Hague (Netherlands) in the 1980s. In Á. Maqueira Yamasaki (Ed.), *Comunicación, Ciudad y Espacio Público* Fondo Editorial de la Universidad de Lima. 12

<sup>22</sup> Duivesteijn, A. (n.d.). 'Intuition, zoektocht naar Stadsvernieuwing als Culturele Activiteit', film van Marit Geluk | Adri Duivesteijn. <https://www.adriduivesteijn.nl/de-film-van-marit-geluk-intuition-zoektocht-naar-stadsvernieuwing-als-kulturele-aktiviteit/>

projects to improve the quality of urban design. However, Duivesteijn emphasised that their participation had to make sense for the particular area and its inhabitants, but it did bring attention and ambition for the local initiatives. He believed that people should shape cities. People should have ideas, values, and a sense of place.<sup>23</sup>

Part of this group of internationally well-known architects, Duivesteijn invited Rossi to design the urban plan for the former Slachthuisterrein site.<sup>24</sup> Unlike in Rotterdam, the urban plan was executed beyond a paper study. In 1988, the site was incorporated into the city's planning framework. However, in order to meet Dutch building regulations, local architects were invited to assist with the execution.<sup>25</sup> The following chapters will consist of a description of the detailed urban plan drafted by Rossi. Although Rossi's original design was altered in the process, Den Haag has become one of the few sites where his theoretical ideas were put into practice. Duivesteijn's dedication to incorporating architectural and cultural elements into urban regeneration was a major factor in this.<sup>26</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Tonvanderpennen. (2020, January 25). IN GESPREK MET ADRI DUIVESTEIJN – stadsvernieuwing als 'kulturele activiteit' – Van alledag (HIER AANBELLEN). <https://tonvanderpennen.nl/?p=788>

<sup>24</sup> Geurtsen, R., Verschuren, P., Kwakkenbos, G., & Jonquière, P. (1989). Stadsontwerp in 's-Gravenhage. Publikatieburo, Faculteit der Bouwkunde. 123

<sup>25</sup> Ibid.

<sup>26</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992. Article from Anne Wolf. Oprisping aan zee.

## 2 INDUSTRIAL REFORM AND URBAN RENEWAL: CASE STUDY ON THE FORMER SLACHTHUISTERREIN, DEN HAAG

### 2.1 BACKGROUND HISTORY

In the 1980s, Den Haag was experiencing a significant housing shortage, much like Rotterdam, where population growth created an urgent demand for more living spaces and commercial premises to retain residents and foster economic activity.<sup>27</sup>

The Slachthuisterrein site, located next to the Nerkade and Laak neighbourhood in Den Haag, is one of the large inner-city building locations included in the 1986-1990 policy program. With a capacity for approximately 800 residential units and 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> of commercial space, its strategic location within the existing urban fabric offered significant potential for spatial and architectural qualities.<sup>28</sup>

In relation to the Slachthuisterrein, the surrounding area of Stieltjesstraat and the "lage huisjes" were developed according to Berlage's expansion plan from 1911. The municipality outlined several requirements for this area, including diverse housing typologies, business facilities, parking solutions, and high-quality green spaces.<sup>29</sup>

In 1988, Aldo Rossi was commissioned by Den Haag's alderman, Adri Duivesteijn, for this urban development plan, primarily due to his decision to preserve the existing site structures, such as the glass roof and the chimney of the old slaughterhouse factory, which he regarded as classical symbols integral to the site's historical identity.<sup>30</sup>

### 2.2 HISTORY OF THE SITE

From the mid-19th century, public health became an increasing concern, urging the establishment of a dedicated slaughterhouse site in 1876 near Den Haag's port and railway connections. Completed in 1911 and strategically located on the city's periphery, the facility enabled the delivery of livestock without disrupting residential areas, but was still close to the city centre. Over time, additional structures were constructed, and existing facilities modernised, particularly after 1945, transforming the site into one of the largest industrial complexes in the city. During the 1960s and 1970s, it developed into a key centre for meat trading. However, by 1980, operations had been transferred, and following bankruptcy in 1985, only a small portion of the complex remains active, with the majority now in a state of disrepair. Despite its condition, the site's architectural appeal remains. The simple ornamentation and repeated masonry details reflect the care taken in its design, though its style leans more toward a romanticised view of early industrial architecture than the practical, efficiency-focused approach typical of factory design. Key features, such as the entrance flanked by two identical villas, the large tree-lined square

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<sup>27</sup> Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). *Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuisterrein den haag*. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 3

<sup>28</sup> Ibid. 8

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid. 3

where the supply and discharge routes meet, and the glass-roofed passage along the slaughter halls, are still clearly visible.<sup>31</sup>

Impressies van een verloren allure

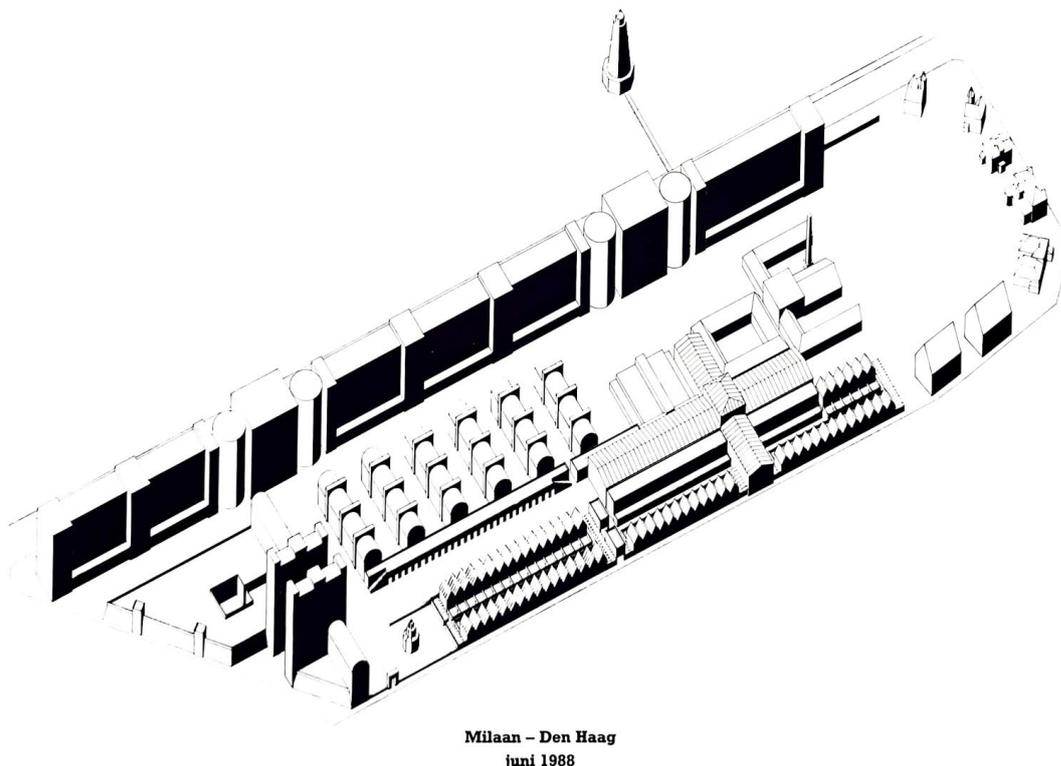


**Figure 1** Impressions of the former Slaughterhouse ground. Image taken from Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). *Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuisterrein den haag*. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 18

<sup>31</sup> Ibid. 4

## 2.3 FIRST DRAFT PLAN BY ROSSI

An urban development plan had been drawn up on the former slaughterhouse site, in which existing elements were integrated with new construction, in which both businesses and residential were situated. The plan was characterised on the one hand by a gradient height from Neherkade to the Laak and on the other hand by a progression in building volumes from large to small. In addition, the retained chimney, the restored and extended glass roof and the new residential tower functioned as important landmarks.



**Figure 2** Axometric view of Rossi's first draft plan. Image taken from Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuissterrein den haag. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 9

The high wall, which was later referred to as De Lamel, along Neherkade, combined commercial spaces on the ground floor with residential units above, accessed by a north-facing gallery connected to elevators, stairwells, and a parking tower with storage on each floor. This 500-meter-long wall also incorporated parking decks for both businesses and residents, as well as a parking garage beneath the pedestrian avenue. Other public areas were designated car-free, with pedestrian priority, though accessible in emergencies.

Residential buildings between the car-accessed streets and pedestrian avenue were designed as four-story transverse strips, connected by a two-story, largely open floor. This layout created a covered gallery along the pedestrian avenue, linking green courtyards. The pedestrian avenue led from Slachthuisplein to the residential tower, a 10-floor structure with four homes per floor,

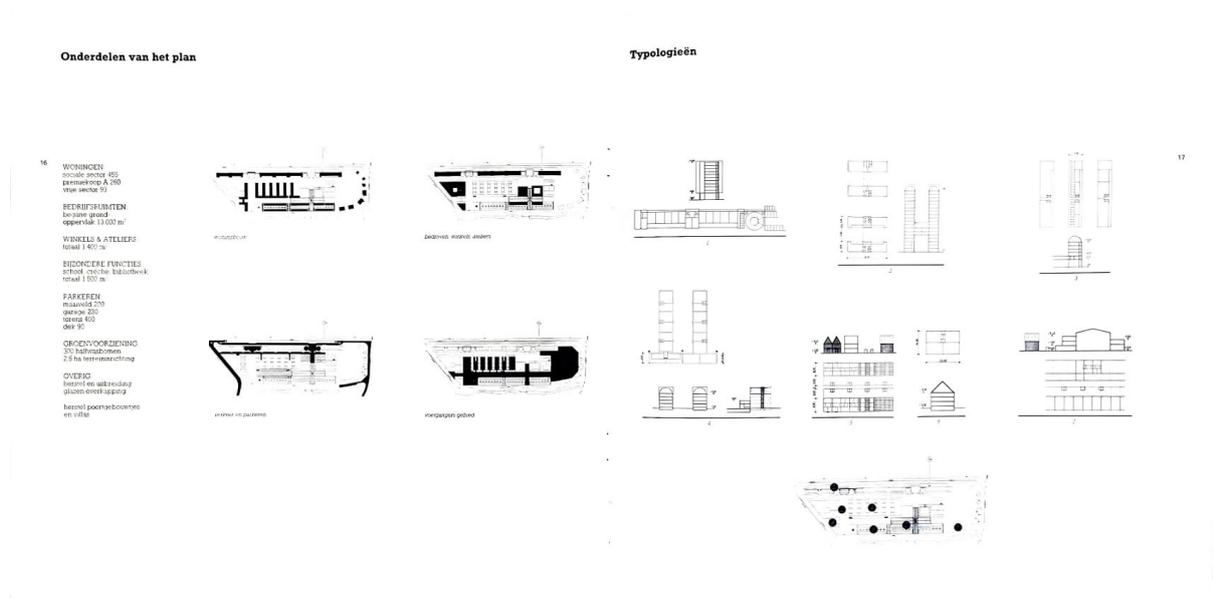
integrated with business premises, a parking deck, and tennis courts. The triangular form at the site's edge was designed as a bastion.

Single-family homes were located between the pedestrian avenue and Laak, with commercial spaces and apartments under the glass roof. A pavilion marked the end of the residential strip, linking the pedestrian avenue and the Laak strip.

Smaller volumes around Slachthuisplein, including preserved gatehouses, villas, and parts of the original boiler house, would house two new urban villas for residential use. An extension of the boiler house included a neighbourhood library, preschool, and nursery. The existing chimney remained a reminder of the site's industrial history.

Public areas would be defined by tree planting, with avenues lined with half-grown trees, green courts, and spaces at Slachthuisplein offering a village-like atmosphere.

Finally, a lighthouse-like object had been projected in the Laakhaven and was connected to the plan area by a footbridge over the Neherkade. A symbolic connection with the industrial estate of which the slaughterhouse complex was once part.<sup>32</sup>



**Figure 3** Overall planning scheme of the first draft. Image taken from Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuissterrein den haag. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 16

<sup>32</sup> Ibid. 8

## 2.4 ARCHITECTURE OF THE CITY/IMAGE OF THE CITY

The Slachthuisterrein plan is a great example of Rossi's architectural philosophy. The redesign of the Slachthuisterrein reflected both historical and topographical characteristics through the urban plan and its architecture. Situated between the industrial harbour zone of the Laak and a green strip bordering the Laak quarter, designed in 1911 by H.P. Berlage.<sup>33</sup> The site exemplifies the challenges of urban transformation. Moreover, it contains architectural and urban reminiscences that not only preserve the city's memory but also bring distinctive spatial qualities.

Rossi focused on maintaining, as much as possible, the original structure of the Slachthuisterrein, preserving the urban continuity and history of this area. This complex, dating back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, shows clear Berlagian style features and a construction of special architectural character. Even in the abandoned state, the buildings recall the beauty of the Dutch architectural tradition.<sup>34</sup>

The glass dome was maintained in the design as a "galleria", which formed the backbone of the site. The main entrance to the new Slachthuisterrein was marked by the two gate buildings, behind which lay the large open area designed as a public square. The existing, restored villas were located around this, and several new buildings would be constructed to complete the square wall. The passage was located on the square, dominated by the existing brick chimney that evokes the image of a bell tower. The passage and chimney were considered in the design as the cathedral and tower of the new, small, analogue city.<sup>35</sup>

For Rossi, the design approach adopted for the site was significant in that it mirrors the organic flow in which cities have historically evolved. Rather than prioritising individual buildings, urban development has been shaped by spatial forms, material continuity, building typologies, and, most importantly, social life.<sup>36</sup> Slachthuisterrein was not designed just as a functional plan, but also designed to reflect the architecture of the city while at the same time resonating with the city's campaign – Urban renewal as Cultural activity.

## 2.5 REVISED PLAN

The initial urban plan for the site was drafted in 1988, followed by a revised version by Aldo Rossi.<sup>37</sup> While in the revised plan, the central passage had been preserved, the side wings had been removed. The current design retained the large square, redefining it with a more structured architectural space. The passage, now placed prominently at the front, continued to serve as the core. A three-storey building wrapped around with a colonnade now forms the main façade of the square, housing a school, kindergarten, and office spaces. This section of the square functioned as a cultural and public centre. Additional residential units had been introduced along the edge

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<sup>33</sup> Rossi, A., Adjmi, M., & Stein, K. (1991). *Aldo rossi : architecture, 1981-1991*. Princeton Architectural Press. 133

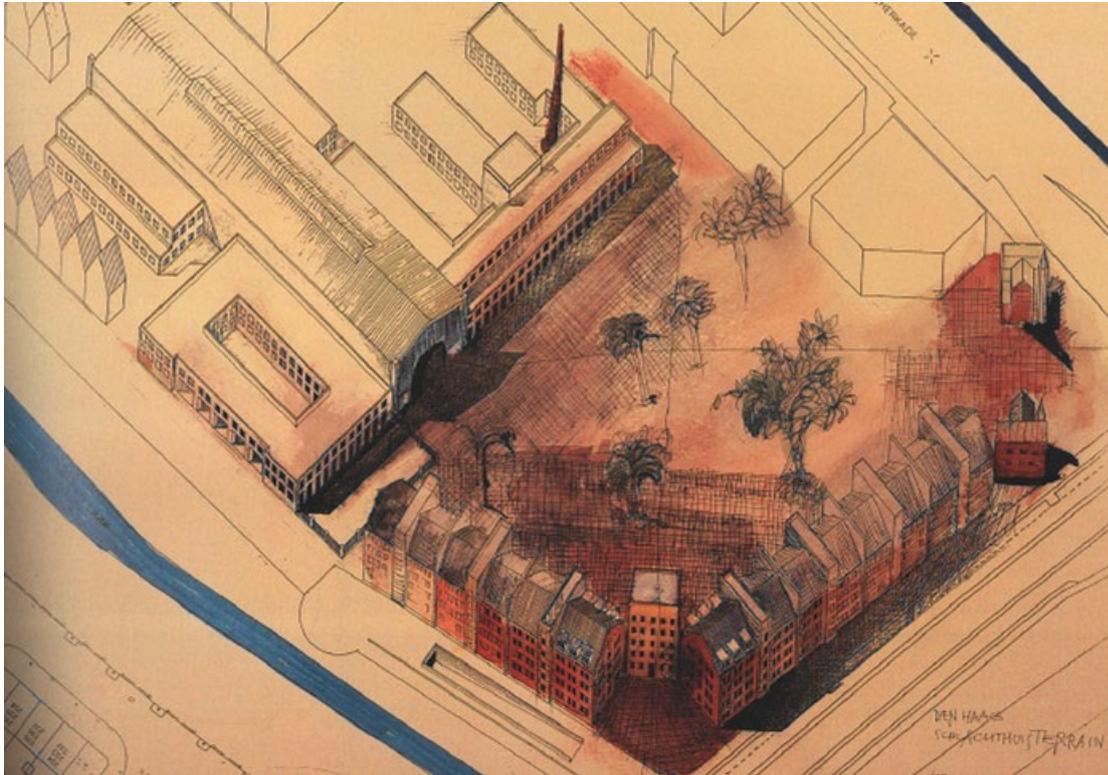
<sup>34</sup> Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). *Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuisterrein den haag*. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 14

<sup>35</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>36</sup> Ibid. 15

<sup>37</sup> Rossi, A., Adjmi, M., & Stein, K. (1991). *Aldo rossi : architecture, 1981-1991*. Princeton Architectural Press. 133

of the plot. The site's entrance remained marked by preserved gatehouses, preserving a sense of past reminiscence. Brick is the dominant material throughout, contrasting with the blue glass and iron details of the central passage, highlighting a playfulness between traditional and modern materials.<sup>38</sup>



**Figure 4** Revised plan. Image taken from Rossi, A., Adjmi, M., & Stein, K. (1991). Aldo Rossi: architecture, 1981-1991. Princeton Architectural Press. 133

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<sup>38</sup> Rossi, A., Ferlenga, A., Njiokiktjen, A., & Spijker, Q. (2001). Aldo rossi : zijn complete werk. Könemann. 197

### 3 ROSSI'S URBAN AMBITIONS IN THE DUTCH CONTEXT: DIALOGUE WITH CAREL WEEBER

The urban plan for the Slachthuisterrein was pushed forward into execution with the support of Adri Duivesteijn. The municipality of Den Haag decided to implement the plan in several phases, assigning each phase to a different Dutch architectural firm. These included DKV (with project architect Hermann de Kovel), the Van Rooden office, and architect E. van Sambeek. The most debated element of the plan—the high residential wall known as De Lamel—was given to De Architecten Cie, led by Carel Weeber.<sup>39</sup>

Weeber, a prominent yet often controversial figure in Dutch architecture known for his rationalist approach and large-scale housing projects, became involved early in the design phase.<sup>40</sup> This collaboration was done due to concerns from the municipality and clients that Rossi would not be able to deliver the project on time, within budget, or under Dutch building regulations.<sup>41</sup>

Carel Weeber was already acquainted with Aldo Rossi from the AIR project in the 1980s, and he was also familiar with Rossi's representative in the Netherlands, Barbieri, whom he had known for a long time from Delft. Additionally, he was also acquainted with Adri Duivesteijn, the alderman of The Hague, who had invited Rossi to work on the project.<sup>42</sup>

This chapter will focus on the collaboration between Weeber and Rossi on the execution of the De Lamel. It is mostly based on the interview done by Joris Molenaar for the Archis 1992 edition.

Once the design process began for De Lamel, the draft building design was drastically modified. This modification took place in close collaboration with Barbieri, who travelled to Milan every weekend to consult with Rossi.<sup>43</sup> The original scheme of the building consisted of three residential building blocks, interrupted by two equally high parking garages. Each garage had two spiral ramps functioning as on and off ramps, allowing residents to drive almost directly up to their residential gallery. Although this was an ambitious scheme, it was abandoned due to feasibility concerns. Traffic and cost experts opposed the design choice. Instead, the parking garages were translated into two underground parking levels, providing a total of approximately 400 spaces located between the homes and the commercial program on the ground floor.<sup>44</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> WEEB1129. Correspondence. Verslagen Inspraakavonden, Slachthuisterrein.

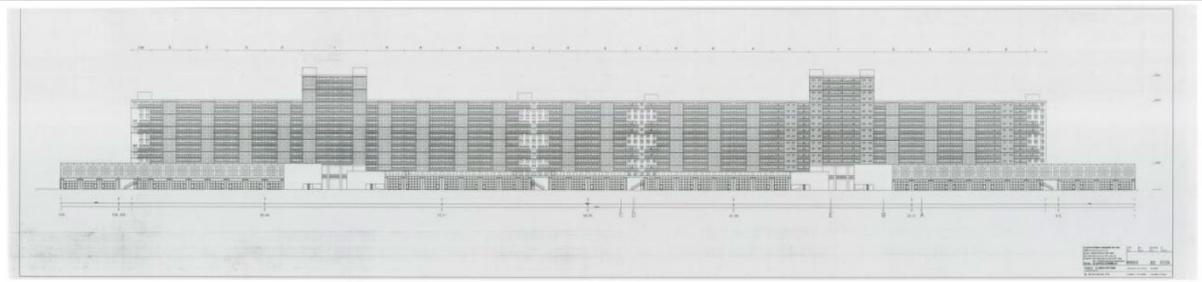
<sup>40</sup> Vanstiphout, W. (2024). *Autonoom : 100% Carel Weeber* (M. Provoost, Ed.). Maas Lawrence.

<sup>41</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992, Article from Albert Ravestein. *Die Lamelle*.

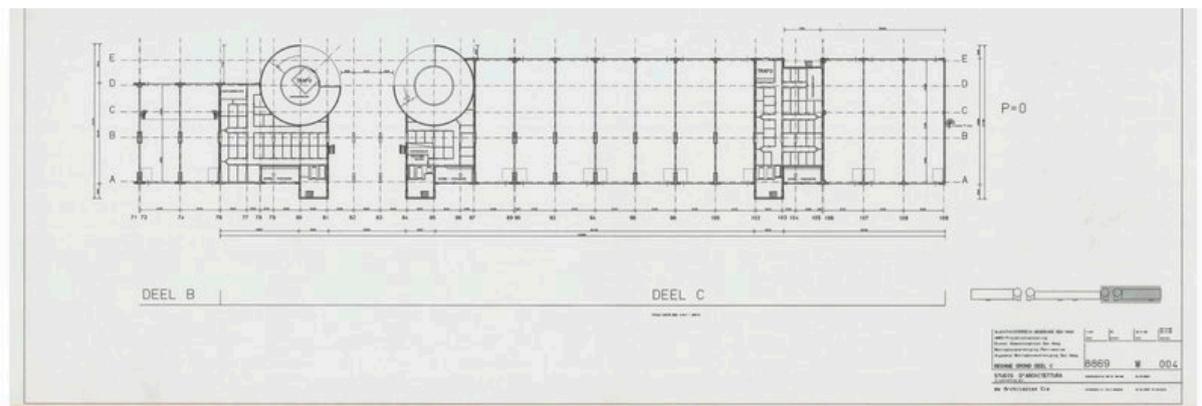
<sup>42</sup> Molenaar, Joris. (1992). *De Lamel van Rossi in het Nederlands vertaald : een vraaggesprek met Carel Weeber*. Archis. 1992, Num. 2, 38-40, 4 ill. ISSN 0921-8041

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*



**Figure 5** Elevation facing the Slachthuisterrein. Image retrieved from WEEB1093 Cutlery drawings, 11-01-1989 and 12-18-1989.



**Figure 6** Ground floor plan showcasing the relationship of the parking ramp with the residential building. Image retrieved from WEEB1106 Working drawings. Cover 2. 1989-1990.

Weeber emphasised in the interview that he did not redesign the project; the design remains true Rossi. Rather, he described their task as a translation: transferring the Italian architectural “narrative” into the Dutch context. Rossi himself, however, was not deeply concerned with the internal housing layouts.<sup>45</sup>

For Weeber, the architectural quality of the building lies in its monumental scale. Both by Dutch standards and internationally, it is unusually large for a residential building. Its sculptural construction of volumes, its plasticity, is outstanding. An example of this is the series of projecting boxes on the gallery façade, a classic compositional element from Rossi, resembling metopes in a frieze, that gives architectural expression to the building. On this side, the gallery is treated as the architectural front. The more monumental side of the building remains relatively quiet in expression; only the protruding kitchen elements and the building’s contour draw the dynamic articulation of the gallery side.<sup>46</sup>

The tiled façade blocks on the gallery side are sometimes interpreted as a "Weeberian motif." However, the use of these prefabricated tiled elements came from Rossi’s desire to use a different material on the protruding volumes. Weeber used building methods that were already known from his own work and was approved by Rossi. The use of prefabricated tiles also had

<sup>45</sup> Ibid.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

practical advantages, such as avoiding scaffolding that would delay construction of the commercial plinth.<sup>47</sup>

Weeber was not involved in the urban development phase and was surprised by the contrast introduced between Lamel, a high slab of social housing, and the more luxurious low-rise housing directly behind it. Initially, he believed that Rossi's concept would remain unbuilt as a paper design only. He was surprised that this unusual confrontation between large and small scales was realised as a building plan. The Lamel relates to the city, expressing Den Haag's dual identity as a village with international ambitions and as part of a metropolitan constellation that includes other large structures such as the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment, the Nationale Nederlanden building on the Utrechtsebaan, the new city hall, the Peace Palace, and the Kurhaus.<sup>48</sup>

Weeber did not feel his role was one of submission, but rather a kind of service. He functioned in the extension of another architectural view, one that he found very interesting. He tried to do justice to Rossi's vision as much as possible, but not only through service: he also corrected and guided where necessary, using his own experience with large-scale housing projects.<sup>49</sup>

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<sup>47</sup> Ibid.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid.

## 4 MORE ARCHITECTURE THAN URBANISM: PUBLIC RESPONSES TO THE SLACHTHUISTERREIN PLAN

Unusual architecture often gets criticised in the Dutch context, and the Lamel project was no exception.<sup>50</sup> It was the first building from the Slachthuissterrein plan to be built, so it received a lot of attention. The design was a confrontation between the typical Dutch objective urban planning and the poetry of the Italian archetype.<sup>51</sup> Because the design was not typical for the Dutch context, and due to programmatic adjustments, it led to a lot of criticism.

Barbieri characterised the De Lamel project as “an architectural plan with urban development elements,” rather than a fully competent urban plan. It is a structure that was intended to retain a spatial memory of the existing context. However, over time, programmatic adjustments and increased density requirements altered the initial vision.<sup>52</sup> Rossi’s original goal—to build a spatially homogeneous urban district while preserving existing structures—has been difficult to achieve due to the city’s financial constraints and cuts in housing subsidies. Large-scale uniformity now threatens to replace the variety he had planned. Despite the involvement of different architects, the variety of typologies in Rossi’s plan has yet to be fully realised.<sup>53</sup>

Firstly, the original plan for the Lamel project featured a housing block with two parking towers, one ascending and one descending, with commercial spaces on the ground floor and 10 residential floors above. The towers helped compartmentalise the large urban block and provided access to parking. This vertical solution was abandoned due to financial reasons. Instead, a horizontal parking solution with two garages at the block’s ends was adopted, increasing the number of residential floors from 10 to 15. This change, however, created visual and functional issues, making the building feel massive and disconnected from the urban space.<sup>54</sup> The increased number of homes also made the complex harder to manage.

The management issue in these massive anonymous social housing is an ongoing theme. In problematic complexes, interventions are made by dividing the complex into smaller sections under a caretaker’s supervision, sometimes with minor cosmetic improvements, involving residents in shared responsibilities and decision making.<sup>55</sup> Weeber anticipated this, and from the beginning advised housing associations to appoint caretakers and implement a carefully managed housing allocation policy. Because for projects of this scale, social oversight is vital, especially in the Netherlands.<sup>56</sup>

Looking at the floorplans, while they appear visually tidy, they prioritise standardised surfaces over residential quality, following an autonomous system developed over decades. Unlike Rossi’s

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<sup>50</sup> Molenaar, Joris. (1992). De Lamel van Rossi in het Nederlands vertaald : een vraaggesprek met Carel Weeber. Archis. 1992, Num. 2, 38-40, 4 ill. ISSN 0921-8041

<sup>51</sup> Drijver, P. (z.d.). Aldo Rossi’s Lamel - buried alive in an empty monument. SCALA Architecten. <https://www.scala-architecten.nl/artikel/de-lamel-van-aldo-rossi-levend-begraven-in-loos-monument>

<sup>52</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992, Article from Tony Tangle. De teloorgang van de poezie van buitenlandse architecten

<sup>53</sup> Ibid. Article from Albert Ravestein. Die Lamelle.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid. Article from Anne Wolf. Oprisping aan zee.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid. Article from Kees Overmeer and Peter Drijver. De Kwaliteit van woningbouw in de Haagse stadsvernieuwing

<sup>56</sup> Molenaar, Joris. (1992). De Lamel van Rossi in het Nederlands vertaald : een vraaggesprek met Carel Weeber. Archis. 1992, Num. 2, 38-40, 4 ill. ISSN 0921-8041

method, shaping space through absence or excess, these homes seem spatially unbalanced. The layout feels mismatched in size and function. Kitchens should have been placed where bedrooms are, and vice versa. The living room is too large for a dining kitchen, yet too small for a proper lounge, and although it borders a balcony, access is only from the living area. Sunlight is limited, and the master bedroom has fixed dimensions, reducing adaptability. The distant placement of storage areas gives parts of the complex an unsafe, inactive feel. Parking is inefficiently arranged. The commercial spaces have double-height ceilings and separate structures for support and ventilation. Above this base, the housing rises, with a third of the units facing a bare gravel roof, unused and inaccessible. These design choices raise the question of whether the needs and experiences of future residents were truly considered by the architects and developers.<sup>57</sup>

In the end, neither architect was fully satisfied with the outcome. Rossi openly expressed disappointment, stating that the built result was very different from his original design: "Now it is a long construction without life, which I find very ugly, to be honest." Although he had not yet visited the site, his judgment was purely based on published photos.<sup>58</sup> Weeber also questioned whether the final result truly reflected Rossi's early sketches, asking, "If not, how bad is that?" Barbieri added that there was no reason to feel disappointed, since Rossi was never especially known for the quality of his public housing designs.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992. Article from Kees Overmeer and Peter Drijver. De Kwaliteit van woningbouw in de Haagse stadsvernieuwing

<sup>58</sup> Rossi boos om Haags bouwwerk. "Het Parool". Amsterdam, 23-12-1991. Geraadpleegd op Delpher op 24-01-2024, <https://resolver.kb.nl/resolve?urn=ABCDDD:010845704:mpeg21:p006>

<sup>59</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992. Article from Tony Tangle. De teloorgang van de poezie van buitenlandse architecten

## CONCLUSION

The Slachthuissterrein project is an example to understand the changing dynamics of Dutch urban planning in the late 20th century. This thesis explored how the collaboration between Aldo Rossi and Carel Weeber brought together contrasting yet intersecting approaches to architecture and urban design. It showed how urban renewal, in the context of Den Haag, began to take on cultural and symbolic dimensions, going beyond the purely functional requirements of housing provision. With the help of the alderman, Adri Duivesteijn, Rossi was able to execute the draft design, although many considered that it should have stayed as a paper design.<sup>60</sup> It reflects a shift in planning culture that sought to reintroduce design as an identity-forming force in the city. These new building qualities can have a direct effect on the quality of the urban area around them.

Rossi's proposal for the Slachthuissterrein site is seen as an island of fragments, relating to the existing situation: villas, a chimney and the large glass hall.<sup>61</sup> It represents his architectural philosophy as he approached the city as a collection of memories. In contrast to the functionalist and pragmatic approach typical of Dutch planning, he placed a strong focus on monumentality, repetition, and historical continuity. The urban form in Rossi's design was intended to have symbolic value, establishing a spatial framework that allowed everyday life to develop with a feeling of identity and cultural integration.<sup>62</sup>

Despite its conceptual depth, Rossi's vision was difficult to put into practice. Compromises were unavoidable due to the Dutch planning framework, which included strict laws, constrained budgets, and practical housing demands. The collaboration with Carel Weeber was crucial in translating Rossi's abstract ideas into local requirements. With his practical experience with large-scale housing projects in the Netherlands it helped to adapt the theoretical design into something that could be realistically constructed.

The De Lamel building, a result of this collaboration, became a focal point of both architectural interest and public criticism. Its monumental scale and its unfamiliar form can be seen as a bold statement on one side, bringing a piece of landmark to the neighbourhood; however, on the other side, it lacks the sense of human scale, criticised for not being considered in the local context and user experience. To further understand the neighbourhood's long-term social reception, more research is required to evaluate how inhabitants now use and view the spaces.

Nonetheless, this project brought cities like Den Haag to rethink the cultural and symbolic role of architecture in urban renewal. It stands as an example of how city planning can engage with urban identity, even within the constraints of practical implementation. Even though Rossi and Weeber's partnership was not perfect, it represented an important effort to question what kind of urban environments we want to create, not just for function, but for meaning.

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<sup>60</sup> WEEB1134. Press articles between 1989-1992, Article from Anne Wolf. Oprisping aan zee.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid. Article from Kees Overmeer and Peter Drijver. De Kwaliteit van woningbouw in de Haagse stadsvernieuwing

<sup>62</sup> Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). *Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuissterrein den haag*. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 14

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## FIGURES

Frontpage

Foto uit het Verzameling HGA. *Gemeentelijk Openbaar Slachthuis, Slachthuisplein, 1912*. Stichting haags industrieel erfgoed.

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Figure 1-3

Image taken from Rossi, A., & Barbieri, S. U. (1988). *Stedebouwkundig ontwerp slachthuissterrein den haag*. Gemeente Den Haag, Dienst Stadsontwikkeling/Grondzaken (SO/GZ). 9,16,18

Figure 4

Image taken from Rossi, A., Adjmi, M., & Stein, K. (1991). *Aldo Rossi: architecture, 1981-1991*. Princeton Architectural Press. 133

Figure 5

Image retrieved from WEEB1093 Cutlery drawings, 11-01-1989 and 12-18-1989.

Figure 6

Image retrieved from WEEB1106 Working drawings. Cover 2. 1989-1990.