PLANS, WORDS AND THEIR MEANINGS

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ABSTRACT

The discipline of urbanism has its own notions; words with specific meanings, which are used by designers, policymakers and laymen to designate the concrete objects in the world around them: the parts of the city and the urban landscape, and their designs. These plans are always accompanied by written explanations of the designers, critical reflections of colleagues, policy documents and articles for (future) inhabitants. Because the building process has become more complex over the last few decades and more participants are involved than before, the importance of a clear meaning of the words that are used in these texts has increased. Based on two design cases in Amsterdam – the Plan Zuid ('Plan South') by H.P. Berlage (1915) and the Bijlmermeer by G.S. Nassuth and others (1965) – this paper will verify two hypotheses on urbanistic notions. The first hypothesis is that words can quickly change in meaning and moreover in quite an unnoticeable way, which leaves room for misinterpretation. The second hypothesis is that various users groups use words to a certain effect and therefore that they can have different meanings, also resulting in a possible lack of clarity. In the paper urbanistic and linguistic research methods will be used (plan analysis, text analysis, etymology), in an interdisciplinary way. With the results of the recent cases the awareness and comprehension of plans and their explanations can be improved for different user groups, therefore increasing the chance of successful and resilient planning.

1 INTRODUCTION

Like any other field of study the discipline of urbanism has its own notions; words with specific meanings, which are used by different groups of language users to designate the concrete phenomena in the world around them, in the case of urbanism the parts of the city and the urban landscape, and their designs. These urban plans are always accompanied by written explanations of the designers, and followed by critical reflections of colleagues, policy documents and articles for (future) inhabitants. Because the building process has become more complex over the last few decades and more participants are involved than before, the importance of a clear meaning of the words that are used in these texts has increased.

However, in this paper we will present two possible causes for a growing lack of clarity on urbanistic notions.[1] One of them has to do with the changing nature of notions themselves, the other with the different motives of the various language user groups. These two hypotheses will be verified by using two twentieth-century design cases and their written explanations and reflections.

With the results of these recent cases, the awareness and comprehension of urbanistic notions in plan explanations can be improved for different user groups, therefore increasing the chance of successful and resilient planning. Moreover it will be possible to gain more knowledge on the framework of notions within the theory of Dutch urbanism.

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[1] The paper is based on preliminary results of the PhD research 'The city in words: 100 years of urbanistic notions'. In this interdisciplinary research the author is combining his expertise as an architect and an urban designer on the one hand and as a linguist specialized in etymology on the other hand.

2 RESEARCH

2.1 Notions

According to the Oxford English Dictionary a *notion* is "a general concept, category, or designation, esp. one under which something is comprehended or classed; a classificatory term".[2] Thus a notion covers both the phenomenon and the term or word. When we zoom in on this, we can distinguish three aspects of a notion: (1) the *object* (the phenomenon in the real world), (2) the *word form* (the phonetic or written reproduction) and (3) the *meaning* (of the word, referring to the phenomenon). Using these aspects we will consider a notion as a triangular model with direct interrelations.[3]

2.2 Semantic fields

The framework of notions for the discipline of urbanism is very broad, especially because its products determine the everyday environment of ordinary citizens, which leads to a large overlap between common parlance and specialist language usage. In order to frame and limit the research, a choice has been made for notions within three semantic fields, each of them referring to objects in the real world on the one hand and in drawings and explanations on the other hand:[4]
- Public spaces
- Buildings
- The structure of the city (parts of the city)

2.3 Groups of language users and types of texts

Although more participants are playing a role in the building process, in this research four groups of language users will be investigated:
- Original designers: the designer(s) of the specific plan.
- Other designers: colleagues that reflect on the design after its publication.
- Policymakers: council members and others officials that defend or oppose the design.
- Journalists: laymen that write about the design for ordinary citizens.
This leads to four corresponding types of texts that will be analysed; the first as primary sources, the others as secondary sources:
- Plan explanations and other texts of the original designer(s).
- Plan reviews by colleagues in professional journals and books.
- Minutes of council meetings on the plan, including the proposals of the Mayor and Aldermen and the discussions in the city council.
- Articles in newspapers and other publications for laymen.
Besides, old, recent and etymological dictionaries will be used as tertiary sources.[5]

2.4 Cases

For a potentially theoretical subject as a research on notions, the relationship with the practice of urban design is crucial. Therefore the notions will be investigated through concrete design cases. In order to give the research a concentrated focus and guarantee the comparability of these cases, they have been chosen (1) within a period of a hundred years,

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[2] Simpson, Weiner 1989-2013.

[3] This model is based on the theories of: Ullmann 1972; Ogden, Richards 1923.

[4] A similar categorization has been used in the international research 'Les mots de la ville' [The Words of the City], see: Topalov et al. 2010.

[5] The following dictionaries have been used for word origins and developments: Van Malssen 1914; Koenen 1916; Kruyskamp 1961; Drewes 1966; Den Boon, Geeraerts 2005; De Boer 2006; Woordenboek der Nederlandsche taal, 1864-1998; Philippa, Debrabandere et al. 2003-2009.

that is between 1915 and now, (2) within one city, namely Amsterdam, and (3) with the same character, to be precise extension plans:
- Plan Zuid [Plan South] by H.P. Berlage (1915)
- Buitenveldert by C. van Eesteren and others (1958)
- Bijlmermeer by G.S. Nassuth and others (1965)
- IJburg by F. Palmboom (1995)

In this paper the first and the third case will be used.

2.5 Hypotheses

Two hypotheses on urbanistic notions will be verified in this paper:
1. Even within a period of a hundred years words can change in meaning and moreover in quite an unnoticeable way, which leaves room for misinterpretation.
2. Because various groups of language users have different motives they tend to use words to a certain effect, which can lead to different words being used for the same objects, resulting in possible unclarity.

2.6 Methodology

In both cases the design drawings are the starting point, because they show the concrete objects that the words of the plan texts are referring to. For this paper and the two discussed hypotheses, the most important notions will be investigated in three consecutive steps:
1. Notions of the original designer(s): with which words do the designers refer to the objects in the plan within the three semantic fields, and which meanings of these words can be distilled from the plan explanations, other texts of the designer(s) and contemporary dictionaries?
2. Notions of contemporaries: which words are used by colleagues, policymakers and journalists for these objects, and with which meanings (synchronic research)?
3. Development of these notions until now: which meaning developments of the words can be distilled from recent urbanistic texts and dictionaries (diachronic research)?

For the first step urban design analysis will be combined with linguistic (etymological) analysis. The second and third steps are mainly based on etymological analysis, completed with cultural-historical analysis.

3 PLAN ZUID BY BERLAGE (1915)

3.1 Introduction and plan description

Before we can explain the first case of the famous 1915 Plan Zuid of H.P. Berlage (1856-1934), it is important to realize that it was Berlage's second design for the location to the south of the existing city. He described his first Plan Zuid of 1900 as a compromise between a monumental and a picturesque design. The varied plan (figure 1) consists of two whimsical waterways, closed blocks with squares and short streets in the centre, and, as a contrast, open-space housing in parklike environments in the west and the east.[6]

Upon publication in 1904 the design was critically received by colleagues and council members, mainly because its unbalanced or hybrid – and according to critic J.H.W. Leliman of journal De Bouwwereld [The Building World] even "medieval" – character and its low density that made it very expensive.[7] In 1905 the plan was carried by vote in the city council, but not unanimously. Because the southern half of the area was no municipal property yet, realization was postponed, except for a few blocks in the northeastern part.

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[6] Berlage 1904, p. 1720. Here the drawing of J. Stübben (1918) is presented because in the original design by Berlage the difference between the closed blocks and the open-space housing is hardly visible.
[7] Leliman 1904.

Figure 1. Plan Zuid by Berlage (1900), as drawn by Stübben (1918).
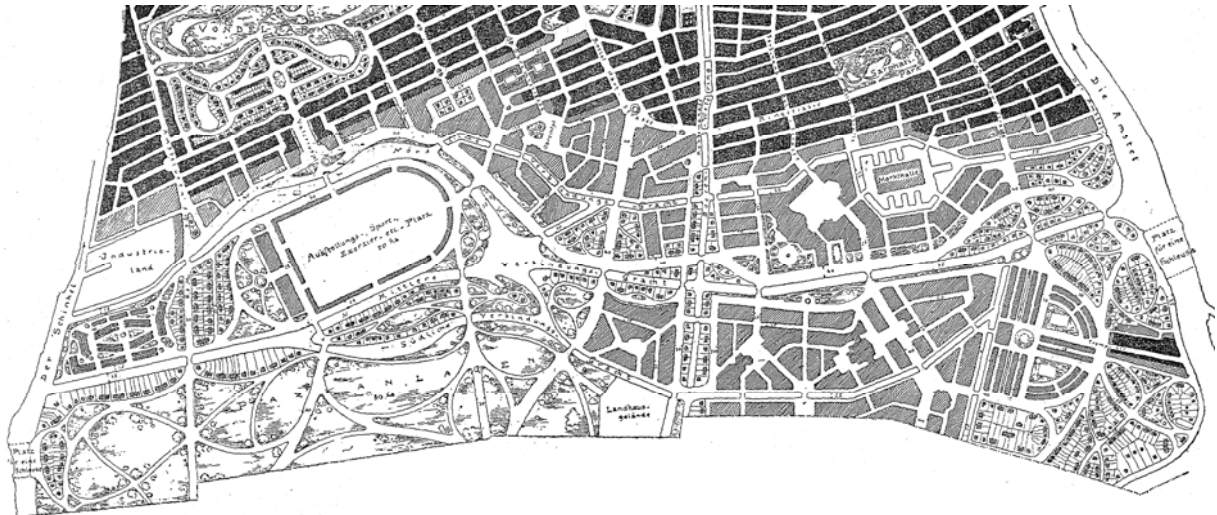
Source: TU Delft Library

Not until 1914 there were new developments and Berlage was asked by the municipality for an adjustment of his design, partly due to the newly planned railroad to the south of the area. In the meantime Berlage's urbanistic theories had evolved into a more monumental direction, with a focus on geometry and the urban spaces that could be created with blocks of houses. From lectures that Berlage gave in 1908-1909 and 1913-1914 it can easily be deduced that his new Plan Zuid would look quite different from his first attempt.[8]

Indeed his design of March 1915 was completely new (figure 2), although it still had the same ingredients: two waterways, closed blocks, open-space housing and a park. But the ratio between closed and open typology had been sharply shifted and the waterways now had a strictly geometrical form. Moreover, a hierarchic structure of important geometrical streets was added, each with an appropriate profile (below left corner).

Figure 2. Plan Zuid by Berlage (1915, including changes from 1916).

Source: Amsterdam Museum

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[8] Berlage 1909; Berlage 1914.

In the accompanying bird's-eye views (figures 3 and 4) Berlage showed that the buildings were supposed to be designed rather identically and traditionally, and that the focus was on the monumental public space. The bird's-eye views were published in 1915, but the plan was kept internally by the municipality. Only in 1916 the plan was published and proposed to the city council in 1917, but strikingly enough with different drawings. In the "hypothetical" elaboration (figure 5) the profiles were left out and the focus was on the buildings instead of on the public space, that was left unelaborated.[9] The official 'geraamteplan' [frame plan] for the city council (figure 6) was even less detailed, only showing the main streets and functions within the city limits.

Figures 3 and 4. 'Amsterdam South seen from above the Southern Bridge' and 'Amsterdam South seen form above the Southern Station' by Berlage (1915).
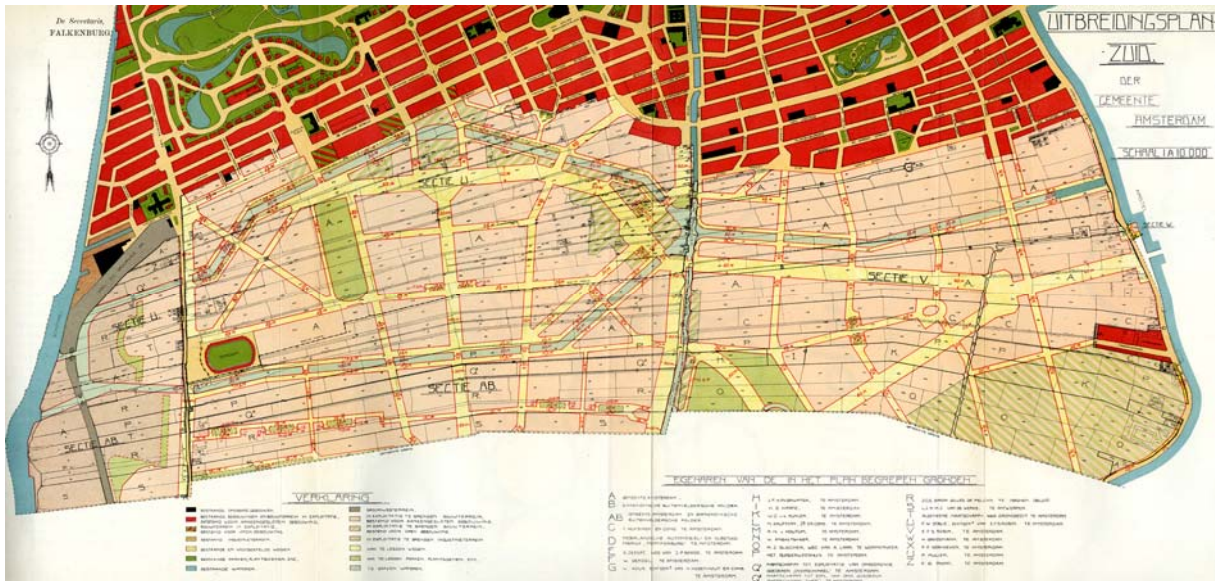

Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

Figure 5. Plan Zuid by Department of Public Works (1917).

Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

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[9] B en W 1917, p. 892.

Figure 6. Geraamteplan [Frame Plan] for City Council (1917).

Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

Nevertheless the design was better received than the first version. In international journals it was praised by important theorists as M. Eisler and J. Stübben.[10] Again there was criticism from J.H.W. Leliman, who now questioned the baroque character of the design as well as the risk that half of the monumental plan – including the new station and the park – was outside municipal territory.[11] Striking is also the report from the municipal Board of Health, that was critical about the small amount of green space and the high percentage of closed blocks; comments that were also made in the city council, but in the end the proposal was carried unanimously.[12] Several newspapers also paid attention the Berlage's design, often just quoting his 'Memorie van Toelichting' [Explanatory Memorandum], sometimes accompanied by the simplified plan drawing.

3.2 Notions for the structure of the city

Unlike the notions in the other categories, the notions for city parts normally cannot be pin-pointed in design drawings. However, they are often intrinsically visible and moreover used in the plan explanation to position the design in respect to the existing city and to divide the design in smaller parts.

In the case of the Plan Zuid four different words were used by Berlage for these parts. The first notion is the most general: *stadsgedeelte* [urban portion]. This occasional compound of *stad* [city] and *gedeelte* [portion] does not have a well-defined meaning, which is also proven by the fact that it is only mentioned in one of the six selected dictionaries.[13] Therefore it is not unexpected that Berlage used the word in his Memorandum and his lectures for urban parts of different sizes: sometimes the existing city, sometimes the whole plan area and sometimes only a part of this area.[14] Nowadays the word is less frequently used, possibly due to the rise of the word *stadsdeel* [district, literally urban part], mainly with an administrative connotation.[15]

Berlage's usage of the other three words on city parts is more surprising. Apparently he was using the words *kwartier* [quarter], *wijk* [district, smaller than *stadsdeel*] and *buurt*

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[10] Eisler 1916; Stübben 1918.

[11] Leliman 1917. This indeed caused a different realization for the southern part of the design.

[12] B en W 1917, p. 921; Gemeenteraad 1917, p. 2056.

[13] Kruyskamp 1961.

[14] Berlage 1909, p. 121; Berlage 1914, pp. 3, 9, 265.

[15] Den Boon, Geeraerts 2005; De Boer 2006.

[neighbourhood] interchangeably for objects of the same size, while today especially *wijk* and *buurt* have different meanings: according to the dictionaries a *wijk* is clearly larger than a *buurt*.[16] Berlage's usage of the words can be illustrated by the following quote: "If one puts the first and second class together for Amsterdam as the quarter [*kwartier*] of the upper-middle class and the third class as the actual working-class neighbourhood [*buurt*], then the division between these two districts [*wijken*] will be marked by the Ruysdaelkade and its continuation, the Boerenwetering."[17]

At first glance the interchangeability of these notions could be a slip of Berlage's pen, but his contemporaries used these words in the same way. Moreover this usage is confirmed by the dictionaries of 1914 and 1916, which are mentioning *buurt* and *wijk* as synonyms.[18] Their etymological origins can easily unravel the similar meaning: both words are going back to forms meaning a 'group of houses'.[19] During the twentieth century these two words must have gone their own way, possibly under influence of modernist urbanism.

3.3 Notions for public spaces

In Berlage's Memorandum the main focus was on the hierarchical street network, which he elaborated in profiles with different spatial characteristics defined on four levels.[20]

On the highest rank were three 60 meter wide *verkeerswegen* [traffic roads]: one from the planned bridge in the east through the area to the northwest, one branching off from this one in a southwestern direction to the station and further on to the west, and one along the north-south waterway crossing the centre of the plan. Despite their functionally sounding compound name, the *verkeerswegen* were not only meant for traffic, because the (then unpublished) profiles (figure 7) and original plan drawing showed wide walkways, bridle paths and double rows of trees (which are all lacking in the published plan). Not for nothing Berlage included them in the realizable park area of 90 hectare and once described them as *Parkweg* [Parkway].[21] Here the capital P indicates a loan translation, in this case from the American nineteenth-century invention of the parkway.[22]

In the second place Berlage designed eight north-south streets with a width of 50, 30 and 25 meter: the *straalvormige hoofdstraten* [radial main streets] that connected the plan area and the station with the existing city. The profiles again show double and single rows of trees.

Thirdly came eleven east-west 25 to 15 meter wide streets: the *ringvormige hoofdstraten* [concentric main streets] that were meant as internal connections within the plan.

On the lowest level within this monumental system were the simple, short and 12,5 meter wide *woonstraten* [domestic streets] that were lacking in the frame plan of the municipality and had no trees in their profiles.

Summarizing it may be said that Berlage used the main notions *weg* [road, literally way] and *straat* [street], preceded by functional specificators as *verkeers-* [traffic], *hoofd-* [main] and *woon-* [domestic]. That Berlage used the word *weg* for the public spaces with a traffic function in particular and *straat* for those with an important relationship with the buildings, is corresponding to the formal meanings of these words: all dictionaries define *weg* as a 'strip of land for traffic' and *straat* as a 'paved road between rows of houses'.

While Berlage was thus very systematic in his Memorandum, the objects in the legend of the original plan drawing show a less clear definition: here the *verkeerswegen* and *hoofdstraten* were summed up as *hoofdwegen* [main roads] and the *woonstraten* as *wegen* [roads]. However, this is corresponding to the language usage of Berlage's contemporaries as well as to our present common parlance: both notions are partly overlapping or are at least used that

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[16] Den Boon, Geeraerts 2005; De Boer 2006.
[17] Berlage 1916, p. 68.
[18] Van Malssen 1914; Koenen 1916.
[19] Respectively Middle Dutch *gebuurte* and Latin *vicus*, see: <http://www.etymologiebank.nl>.
[20] Berlage 1916, pp. 65-67, 86.
[21] Berlage 1916, p. 65.
[22] The parkway was introduced by F.L. Olmsted and C. Vaux in their design for a scenic access road to the Prospect Park in New York (1866).

way. Apparently the language user does not see the connotation 'between rows of houses' as dominant. Besides, *weg* is a more comprehensive notion, that can also be used for a lot of *straten*, as long as they are suitable for traffic and have a certain width. Conversely very wide *wegen* will not often be called *straat*.

This is also proven by the reactions of Berlage's contemporaries on his *verkeerswegen* or *Parkwegen*, the only type of street which was no consensus about yet. Therefore also other, more expressive words were used by council members and professional reviewers, such as *boulevard* [id.] and *laan* [avenue, literally lane], both words with 'trees' in their definition.[23]

Figure 7. Profiles with different widths by Berlage (1915, detail of figure 2).
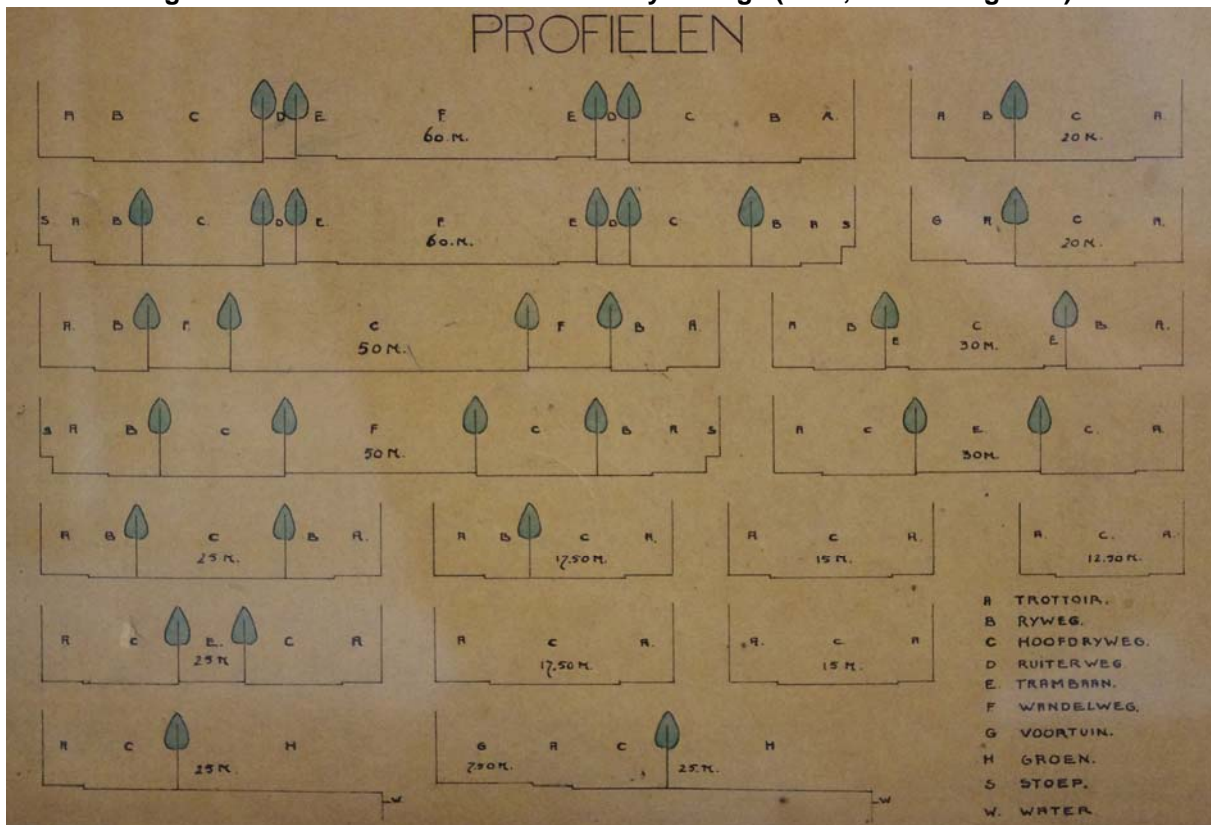
Source: Amsterdam Museum

The other notions for public spaces played a less prominent role in Berlage's design and Memorandum. The geometrical waterways merely had the function of drainage and were not determinant for the structure of the plan. This is also shown by the fact that Berlage did not draw symmetrical profiles for them, only two quay profiles with green banks (below in figure 7). Nevertheless he used the word *gracht* [urban canal] in his Memorandum, which nowadays has a very urban meaning.[24] But the dictionaries show that around 1915 the notion *gracht* still stood closer to its original meaning of 'dug watercourse': ultimately the word goes back to a form of the verb *graven* [to dig, related to grave].[25] Still Berlage's contemporaries often used the more neutral word *kanaal* [canal (abstract)] in order to refer to the waterways in the plan, for instance in the review in newspaper De Amsterdammer [The Amsterdammer] of March 24, 1917.[26] Apparently the word *gracht* has undergone a specification of meaning, in a more urban direction.

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[23] B en W 1917, p. 892; Gemeenteraad 1917, p. 1996; Van Malssen 1914; Koenen 1916.

[24] Cf. the Amsterdam *grachtengordel* [ring of canals].

[25] The original word *graft* changed into *gracht* according to the Dutch sound law *-ft* > *-cht*, cf. English *after* with Dutch *achter*.

[26] Het uitbreidingsplan Zuid, 1917.

3.4 Notions for buildings

For the last category of building notions we will focus on two elements only: housing and the way of building.[27] For housing Berlage used three classes: *ééngezinshuizen* [single family houses] shown in red, *tweegezinshuizen* [two family houses] in white, and *volksklassehuizen* [working-class houses] in ochre.[28] The first class consisted of villas and semi-detached houses along the canals and of closed blocks in the northwestern part. While in this class the notions *huis* [house] and *woning* [dwelling] coincided, in the latter two one *huis* [house] could contain several *woningen* [dwellings, in this case apartments]. This usage of the notions is corresponding to Berlage's contemporaries.

In fact what is happening here, is the opposite of what we saw with *weg* and *straat*: in all dictionaries *huis* and *woning* are considered to be more or less synonymous, but in common parlance the language user feels a difference between the two notions, with *huis* having a more physical meaning (the 'building') and *woning* a more abstract connotation of 'accommodation'. However, today *huis* is no longer being used for a building containing more *woningen*; for this concept the words *woongebouw* [dwelling building] and *appartementengebouw* [apartment building] have come into use.

The *wijze van bebouwing* [way of building] was very important for Berlage: he argued strongly in favour of what he called *blokbouw* [block building].[29] At that time this notion already caused confusion, because it could refer to two different objects: building in closed blocks on the one hand, and building in larger architectural units than the individual dwelling on the other hand. Although his contemporaries mainly referred to the first, it can easily be deduced from his Memorandum and lectures that for Berlage the latter was the most important.[30] Illustrative for this is the following quote: "One used to consider every house as an individual (aesthetic) entity, but now this should be extended to the street, the square or the urban portion [*stadsgedeelte*]."[31] Despite his efforts, Berlage's coinage did not make it into the twenty-first century, also because building in closed blocks got out of fashion around 1930. Still the realization according to the principles of the Amsterdam School – much more decorated than Berlage had in mind – can be seen as a result of the *blokbouw* building rule.

4 BIJLMERMEER BY NASSUTH AND OTHERS (1965)

4.1 Introduction and plan description

As the plan for the Bijlmermeer was designed by the municipal Department of Urban Development, the planning process was very different from that of the Plan Zuid. Already during the 1920's Berlage's southern extension turned out to be insufficient for the long-term growth of Amsterdam. Therefore the 'Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan' [General Extension Plan] or AUP had been drawn up, which reckoned with 960.000 inhabitants in 2000 and was passed in 1935. However, in the 1950's new plans were necessary, because the planned density of 70 dwellings per hectare was not realized in the new districts, and especially because dwellings became larger while at the same time they were inhabited by less people.

Because there were no areas available within the municipal boundaries, the city of Amsterdam already began to aim at the annexation of the southeastern polder Bijlmermeer in 1953. Although the national government was very hesitant about this idea, Amsterdam formed a so-called 'Stadsrandcommissie' [City Fringe Committee] with its neighbouring towns in 1957. This led to the presentation of a structure plan, at first for the southern and southeastern parts in 1959 and in 1962 for the whole 'Agglomeratie Amsterdam' [Conurbation Amsterdam] (figure 8).

[27] For elements like public and special buildings the specific list is too long for the scope of this paper.

[28] Berlage 1916, pp. 67-68; in the published plan this division was only indicated by very small Roman numerals.

[29] Berlage 1916, pp. 77, 84-86.

[30] The large amount of closed blocks was one of the most criticized elements in the city council, see: Gemeenteraad 1917, pp. 1974-1975, 1984, 1991-1992, 2020-2021, 2029-2030, 2035, 2051.

[31] Berlage 1916, p. 85.

**Figure 8. Agglomeratie [Conurbation] Amsterdam based on proposals of the
Stadsrandcommissie [City Fringe Committee] (1962).**
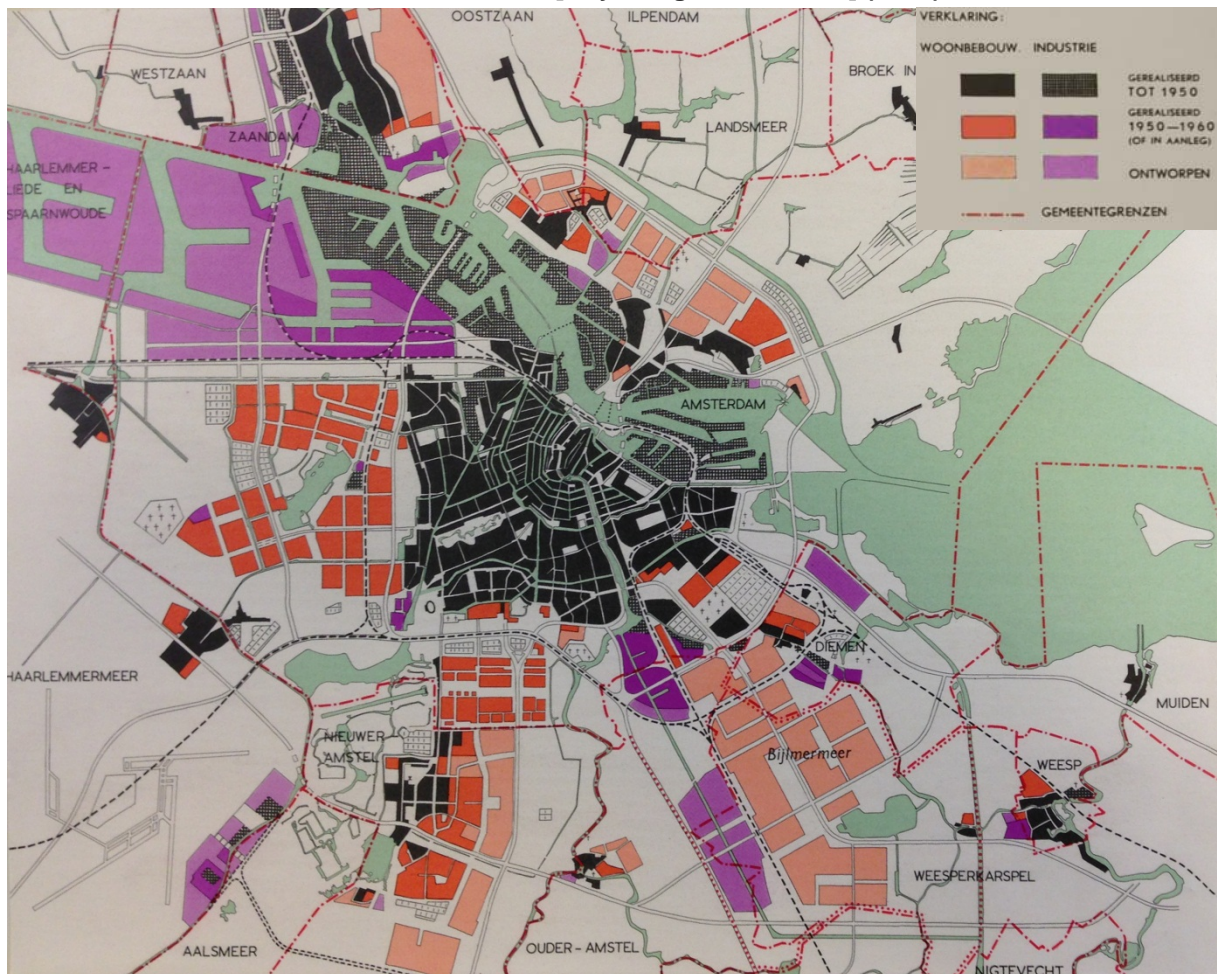
Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

For the southeastern 'lobe' a project team was formed within the municipal Department of
Urban Development, with G.S. Nassuth (1922-2005) as head of the design team, under
supervision of the head of the Department, J.H. Mulder (1900-1988). From 1962 the team
concentrated on the central zone of the Bijlmermeer.

Around the same time there were increasing discussions going on about the desired way of
building. In the postwar districts that were based on the AUP the first high-rise had been
built, but mainly on specific locations with a spatial effect. In 1956 the national 'Commissie
Hoogbouw-laagbouw' [Committee High-rise Low-rise] was installed, in order to investigate
the large-scale use of high-rise. Mulder was a member of the committee, which published its
report in 1961. The main conclusion was that high-rise (defined as more than five floors) was
"for the time being unsuitable as a general type of housing, but suitable in particular as
housing facility for a restricted category of culturally well-developed families of a medium or
higher income level".[32] In spite of this objection, high-rise became more popular in the Dutch
practice, partly due to the introduction of industrial construction methods that made it
affordable.

The Bijlmermeer ought to become the 'City of the Future', with social housing meant for
relatively wealthy inhabitants of the AUP districts, for whom the municipal Department of
Public Housing wanted a lot of large dwellings. Therefore all plans of the project team were
characterized by a large amount of high-rise, situated in a parkland.

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[32] Commissie Hoogbouw-laagbouw 1961.

At the same time the plans were strongly influenced by the ideas of a strict functional segregation, especially of the different means of transport: the existing main railroad in the west, and one new access road for cars in the centre, flanked by two aboveground metro lines. Around its stations the dwelling density – and thus the amount of high-rise – would be maximized.

On this amount however, fierce discussions were going on between Nassuth and Mulder. The first favoured 80 percent of high-rise in eight floors and only 20 percent in three floors or less, mainly in the southeast of the plan. The latter questioned the urban quality and variety of this proposal and asked staff member H.G. Ouwerkerk to develop an alternative, which had 71 percent high-rise, 19 percent in five floors and 10 percent low-rise (figure 9).

Although Mulder was head of the Department, Nassuth's design was elaborated, into the famous hexagonal or 'honeycomb' structure (figure 10). There were two main reasons for this. In the first place the municipality in 1965 finally got the (temporary) annexation accepted by the national government, which increased the need for an ambitious project. Secondly, Mulder would retire in 1966 and she did not want to hamper Nassuth.

Figures 9 and 10. Model variants for Bijlmermeer by Ouwerkerk (1963) and Nassuth (1965).
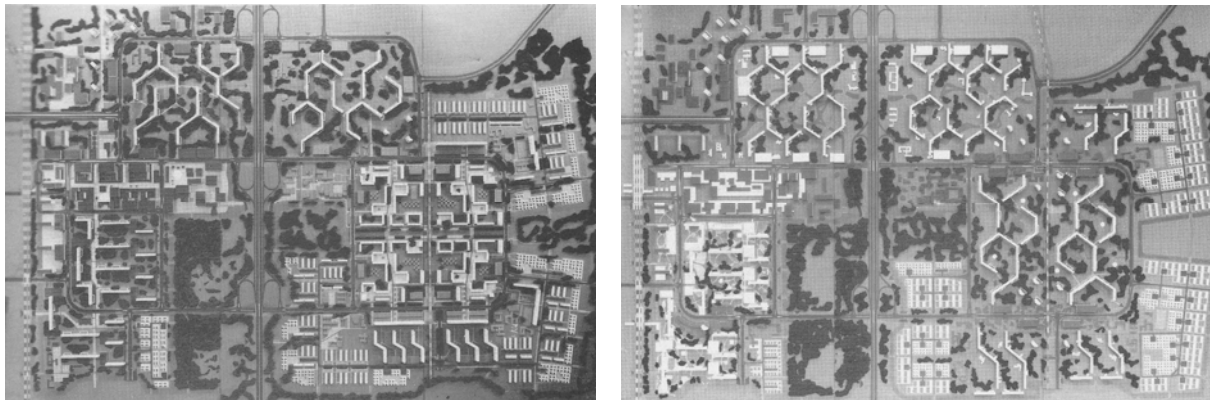
Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

In February 1965 a structure plan was ready (figure 11), together with a lot of schemes, profiles and a detailed model (figure 10), but without a concrete zoning plan, which was still "in study". Because of this, there was no official proposal by Mayor and Aldermen to vote on in the city council, which lead to frustrated reactions of council members.[33] Nevertheless the plans for the Bijlmermeer were made public in July 1965, in a presentation by the mayor, which showed no sign of internal disagreement.

Because the design – and the model in particular – was clearly daring, the reactions were mixed, from enthusiastic to very critical. In newspapers the first reviews called the plan "an ideal residential city" and Amsterdam's "striking comeback in the world of urbanism".[34] Fellow urban planners and architects were also impressed, although professors G.A. Wissink and W. Steigenga were more critical, particularly on the small amount of single family houses and the lack of urbanity.[35] Architect T. Hazewinkel even published a full-page, prophetic objection in the Algemeen Handelsblad [General Commerce Paper], criticizing the massiveness of the green spaces and the high-rise, that in the meantime had been extended to nine lifted dwelling floors.[36] In spite of the critics five partial development plans A to E were accepted by the city council between June 1966 and June 1967, when council members even praised the daring of the municipality repeatedly.[37] Strangely enough, no official plan for the Bijlmermeer as a whole was proposed nor accepted.

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[33] Mentzel 1989, pp. 157-162.
[34] Mastenbroek 1965, p. 10.
[35] Mentzel 1989, p. 221; Steigenga 1966.
[36] Hazewinkel 1965.
[37] Gemeenteraad 1966a; Gemeenteraad 1966b; Gemeenteraad 1967a; Gemeenteraad1967b.

Figure 11. Structuurplan Zuid-oost [Structure Plan South-East] by Nassuth and others (1965).

Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

4.2 Notions for the structure of the city

In 1965 two reports were published by the Department of Urban Development, as explanatory texts on the structure plan: in February the 'Grondslagen voor de Zuid-Oostelijke stadsuitbreiding' [Fundamentals for the Southeastern City Extension], and in July the 'Grondslagen voor een coördinerende supervisie bij de realisering van de Zuid-oostelijke stadsuitbreiding van Amsterdam' [Fundamentals for a Coordinating Supervision on the Realization of the Southeastern City Extension of Amsterdam].[38] The first text explained the starting points of the design, the latter the procedure for realization according to the three appointed supervisors, F.J. van Gool, E.J. Jelles and D. Slebos.

In the two Fundamentals the general word *stadsgedeelte* [urban portion] was not used, but on the largest scale the related *stadsdeel* [district] did appear. While this word today has

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[38] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965b; both in: Mentzel 1989, pp. 249-260.

merely an administrative connotation, in the 1960's the general meaning of 'part of the city' prevailed, as can be concluded from both the Fundamentals, extra texts of for instance Mulder and other contemporary reactions: sometimes the word refers to the existing city and sometimes to the new extension area as a whole.[39] It was not in the dictionaries of 1961 or 1966.

Again the words *wijk* [district] and *buurt* [neighbourhood] showed up to designate the smaller parts of the city, but in this case with a difference. According to the Fundamentals the whole Bijlmermeer consisted of several *wijken* [districts], probably corresponding to the five partial plans of high-rise plus the low-rise in the south and the east (figure 10). But contemporaries also referred to the Bijlmermeer as one *wijk*.[40] The dictionaries of the 1960's already formulated a scale distinction between *wijk* and *buurt*.[41] From that perspective it is interesting to see that the last word only appeared in the first Fundamentals, and then merely in the compound *buurtcentrum* [neighbourhood centre], referring to one of the four amenity centres near the metro stations, of which the northwestern one was also the *stadsdeelcentrum* [district centre].[42] Apparently the distinction between *wijk* and *buurt* was not yet as clear as the dictionaries suggested.

4.3 Notions for public spaces

In the first Fundamentals the main focus was on the "traffic organism" and the corresponding public spaces.[43] The first element of the infrastructure was formed by the *verkeerswegen* [traffic roads], a notion that had hardly changed in meaning since Berlage (although the amount of traffic had changed). Nassuth and his team also designed a hierarchic road system, but here not in a monumental but in a purely functional way.

On the highest level were the *rijkswegen* [national (trunk) roads], of which two radial ones were already there and three tangentials were newly planned but left unelaborated, being a national affair. The word *rijksweg* was common in the 1960's and is still in use today for the important motorways.

Secondly, one *primaire weg* [primary road] for cars would function as the central access road from the existing city in the northwest. According to the profile in the first Fundamentals this road was projected on a 6 meter level, with a width of 40 meter, but with a 55 meter wide bank on each side (figure 12).

From this road and the *rijkswegen* one could descend to the *secundaire wegen* [secondary roads]: a car network with a mesh of 800 meter situated on a level of 3.3 to 4.5 meter, with a width of 60 meter including two banks of 16 to 17.5 meter (figure 12).

Both categories of roads were generally accepted in the 1960's; the contemporaries only had doubts about the very strict and elevated realization. Critic Hazewinkel favoured the secondary roads on ground level and stated: "A *boulevard* planted with trees would have an ordering structure of great beauty."[44]

One of the most striking features of the Bijlmermeer design was the absence of *tertiaire verbindingen* [tertiary connections] or *buurt- en wijkstraten* [neighbourhood and district streets].[45] More than that, the remark that streets are lacking, is the only time that the notion *straat* is mentioned; quite unique for an urban design.

Instead of streets, large parking garages were planned along the secondary roads (figure 12). One could enter by car on the 4.5 meter level and exit as a pedestrian on ground level. From the garages one could reach the blocks of flats without getting wet: so-called

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[39] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965b; in: Mentzel 1989, pp. 249-253, 256, 259; see also: Mulder 1965.

[40] Moderne woonwijk zonder modern verkeer, 1965.

[41] Kruyskamp 1961; Drewes 1966.

[42] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; in: Mentzel 1989, pp. 252-253. Based on the first letter of the names of the high-rise blocks, this later led to the naming of the G-buurt, K-buurt and H-buurt, and to the north of district centre the F-buurt (and further north the D-buurt and the E-buurt), but this usage was not yet common in the 1960's.

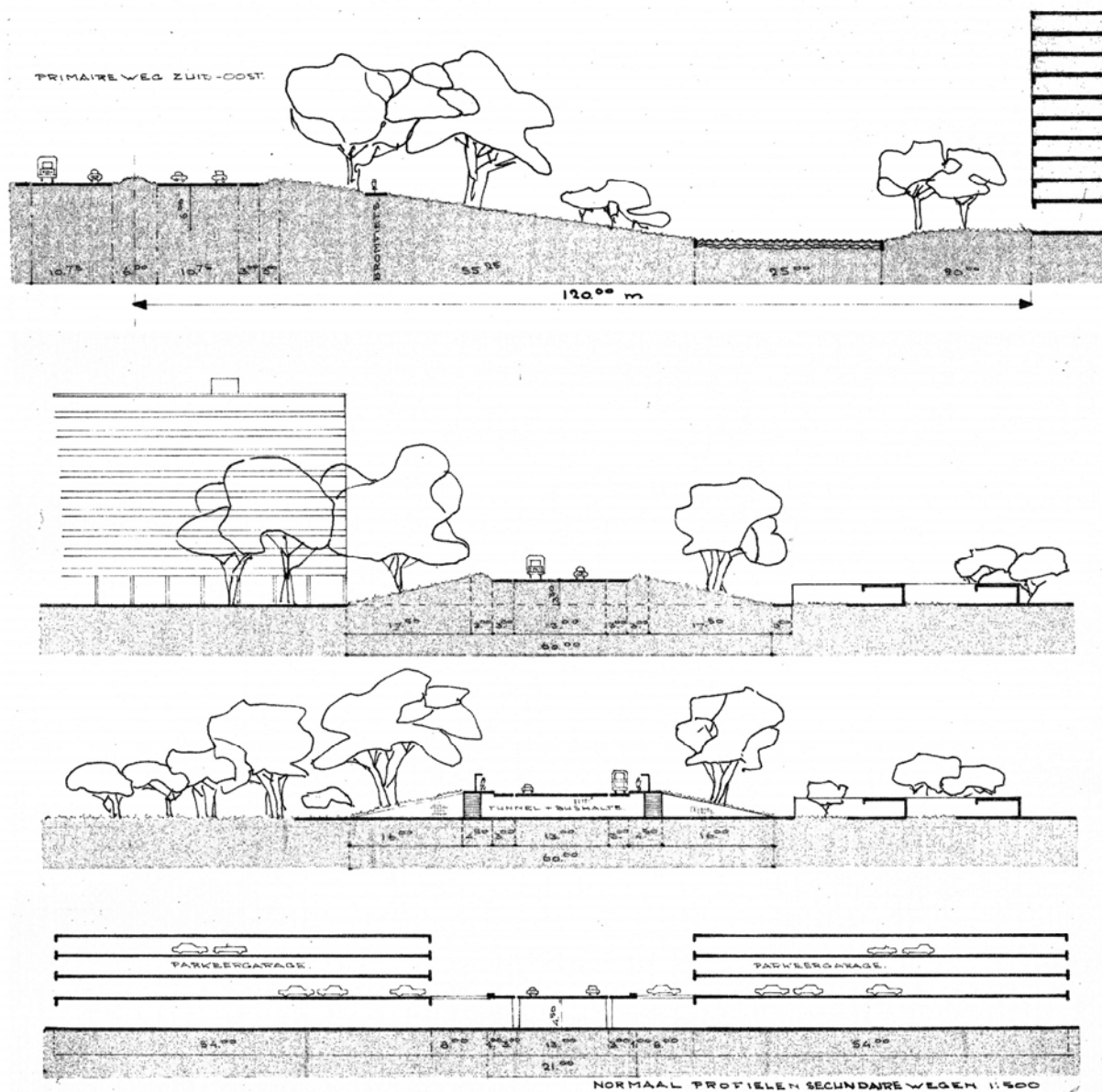[43] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; in: Mentzel 1989, p. 250-253.

[44] Hazewinkel 1965. In the 1990's these roads were indeed partly changed into ground level boulevards.

[45] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; in: Mentzel 1989, p. 250.

drooglopen [dry-walks] were planned to connect the garages with the blocks and from there one could use the elevators to the nine lifted floors.[46] The coinage *droogloop* remained a rarity and was not often used in literature, nor selected in any dictionary. In reactions it was often preceded by "z.g" or "zogenaamd" [so-called].[47] Later colleagues and the municipality itself used the more familiar sounding compound *binnenstraat* [interior street], that did not make it into the dictionaries either, but was and is still used.[48]

Because of the elevated roads and metro lines on a 9 meter level, all traffic types were strictly segregated: pedestrians and cyclists would be able to pass freely under the lifted blocks and roads, by means of two extensive networks of *voetpaden* [footpaths] and *fietspaden* [cycle paths], with a respective mesh of 200 and 600 meter. These two notions were and are very common, for laymen as well as for professionals, and have not undergone any changes in meaning.

Figure 12. Profiles of primary road and three secondary roads by Nassuth and others (1965)

Source: Municipal Archive Amsterdam

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[46] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; in: Mentzel 1989, p. 252. In the end these *drooglopen* were realized on the first floor, on top of a ground floor with storerooms, resulting in blocks of eleven floors.
[47] Gemeenteraad 1966a, pp. 1167, 1170.
[48] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1968, pp. 3-4.

4.4 Notions for buildings

Again we will focus on types of housing and the way of building only; subcategories that in this case coincide. Both Fundamentals namely contained the distinction between "8 à 10%" low-rise *eengezinshuizen* [single family houses] or *eengezinswoningen* [single family dwellings] and the other *woningen* [dwellings] in the high-rise blocks, specified in *2-kamerwoningen*, *4-kamerwoningen* and *5-kamerwoningen* [two-, four- and five-room flats].[49]

Once more we can see that *huis* and *woning* can overlap, but that *huis* refers more to the physical object: the dwellings in the high-rise blocks were not called *huizen*. In addition to this, the planned high-rise in the Bijlmermeer clearly was too large to be called *huis*. Instead the word *blokken* [blocks] was used in the Fundamentals to denominate the high-rise, although they did not have a square form. This usage might have been influenced by standard English *block of flats* but did not last long, probably because of the confusion with *blok*, meaning 'closed block of houses', and the popularity of the word *flat*, that in Dutch can mean 'apartment' as well as 'block of flats'; the latter meaning being a shortening from *flatgebouw* [flat building], attested for the first time in 1950. Hazewinkel called the *blokken* pejoratively *plakken* [slices].[50]

Next to *blok* the high-rise was described in the Fundamentals with *hoogbouw* [high building], a loan translation from German *Hochbau*.[51] It is interesting to see that the dictionaries of 1961 and 1966 downgraded this word, that is attested for the first time in 1955, as a "reprehensible Germanism", while this remark is neither made in recent editions nor for the then also used antonym *laagbouw* [low building].[52] As can be concluded from the introduction, the notions *hoogbouw* and *laagbouw* were becoming very popular in the 1960's, by designers and in common parlance.

A last word that was used for the low-rise housing was *patiobouw* [patio building], because the designers thought that in low-rise privacy could only be guaranteed with *patiowoningen* [patio dwellings].[53] In the 1960's the Dutch word *patio* was not very common, not to mention *patiowoning*. This dwelling type would by the way become better-known after the implementation in the Bijlmermeer during the 1970's.

5 CONCLUSIONS

5.1 Constant words, changing meanings

The above shows that notions always are in motion, even within a century. When we focus on the diachronic development of the first hypothesis, we can discern four groups as a conclusion.

In the first place a lot of notions do show continuity. Many words have more or less the same meaning. Even pairs of notions that overlapped partly in Berlage's and Nassuth's time, like *huis* [house] and *woning* [dwelling] or *straat* [street] and *weg* [road], still have this same quality. Nevertheless it is important to be observant, because while words and meanings often stay the same, the objects can adapt to the changing reality: a *verkeersweg* is still a traffic road, but because traffic was totally different in Berlage's time, the meaning of the notion is not exactly the same.

Secondly, some notions have become unpopular or even obsolete, usually because reality became too complex, like *kwartier* [quarter] that only worked for cities consisting of around four parts, or because the words were too confusing, like Berlage's *blokbouw* with its two meanings and the word *blok* for 'block of flats' and 'closed block of houses'. In this case it is easy to misunderstand historical plan explanations.

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[49] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965b; in: Mentzel 1989, pp. 252, 258.

[50] Hazewinkel 1965.

[51] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965a; Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965b; in: Mentzel 1989, pp. 252, 258.

[52] Kruyskamp 1961; Drewes 1966; Den Boon, Geeraerts 2005; De Boer 2006. The German cognate is *Flachbau* [flat, even building].

[53] Afdeling Stadsontwikkeling 1965b; in: Mentzel 1989, p. 259.

The same can happen with the third group, when new notions come into use. While the Dutch word *flat* now is very common for 'apartment' as well as for 'block of flats', the latter meaning was more special in the 1960's and absent in the 1910's. Another emerging word was *patiowoning* [patio dwelling].

A last group is even more subject to misunderstanding: the notions that have undergone specification of meaning or connotation change. Examples within the scope of this paper are *stadsdeel* [district, literally urban part] that developed from a general into a more administrative meaning, the synonyms *buurt* and *wijk* that separated into two different meanings ('neighbourhood' and 'district'), the word *gracht* [canal] that got a more urban meaning, and the word *hoogbouw* [high building] that lost its bad taste of a Germanism.

5.2 Words with a reason: reasoning with words

On the second hypothesis of differences for various groups of language users we can conclude the following per group.

For the original designers it is obvious that they often take a clear position, in order to express their opinion and enforce their arguments. Particularly within the semantic fields of public spaces and buildings, designers like referring to something familiar on the one hand, or rejecting a known object on the other hand. In this way Berlage embraced the *gracht* [canal] and *blokbouw* [block building] and Nassuth and his partners dismissed the *straat* [street] and the *eengezinshuis* [single family house].

Furthermore it is striking that both Berlage and Nassuth were using very functional language to describe their plans. For the Bijlmermeer this is in accordance with the almost mechanical look of the plan and the spirit of the time, but for the monumental Plan Zuid it comes as a surprise that Berlage used words as *verkeerswegen* [traffic roads] and *straalvormige hoofdstraten* [radial main streets]. However, when we take the poor realization of his 1900 design into account, his usage of functional notions might have been well-considered. Indeed his second plan was accepted and realized more smoothly (except for the southern part that was no municipal territory). The same went for the Bijlmermeer plan, but this area was largely dismantled during the 1990's.

The controversial character of both designs provoked explicit reactions of the second group of fellow designers. In relation to the first conclusion it is interesting to see that they were often critical on the starting points: as a counter-reaction they preferred more villas and used the more abstract *kanaal* for the Plan Zuid and the word *straat* in their disapproval of the parking garages and the lack of streets and single family houses in the Bijlmermeer.

In the third place, the policymakers can be characterized by their efforts to underpin their viewpoints towards opponents. In positive and negative reactions they often did this with expressive instead of functional words, like *laan* [avenue] and *boulevard* [id.] for *verkeersweg*. It is also remarkable that council members seemed to pay more attention to costs and living conditions, resulting in a focus on the buildings instead of on the public space.

The last group of journalists had yet another reason to comment on the designs, namely to inform their readers in common language. This normally led to the avoidance of jargon and again to the use of specific words, like the negative *plak* [slice] for the neutral *blok*. In both cases the really critical reactions did not come directly after publication though, but only after the first realization of the plans.

5.3 How to read plans and their explanations

The conclusions on both the hypotheses in this paper are teaching us that with plans and their explanations, it is very important to be aware of the period of creation and to check the objects and meanings that the familiar sounding words are referring to. Only in this way, by combining the original texts with the original drawings and sufficient background information, we are able to avoid the risk of reading and understanding texts according to our present standards, with the danger of missing the original intentions.

Furthermore it is important to read between the lines, in order to see whether the language usage of designers, colleagues, policymakers and laymen is influenced by their opinions, purposes or even personal interests. It is wise to be suspicious in this matter, because language is frequently used as a vehicle for getting things done. Often the common opinion lies somewhere in between the words of the inspired designer and the fierce critic.

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