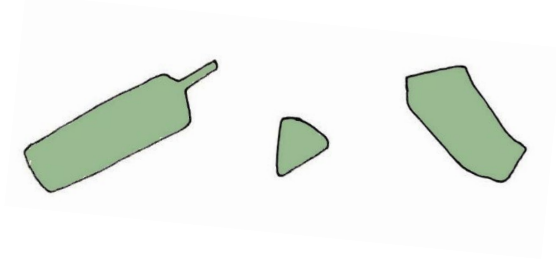
From Grey to Green

Case studies into the use of collective green spaces in Amsterdam
built late 19th/early 20th century



Question
How did the use of collective green spaces, built in Amsterdam over a century ago, change to present ideas on collective green spaces?

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Introduction

Green spaces are all around us, even in densely populated cities. This connection to nature, even if seemingly fading due to urbanisation, is being increasingly advocated to be necessary for a good quality of life. "'Green' refers to the role of nature in urbanism, either managed by man or proliferating by itself…" (Christiaanse, 2015: 70). Historically, green spaces have had different forms and uses. For many people, they were and are an oasis or a retreat, where the current need to 'unplug' from 'constant connectivity' is very prevalent (Urban Escapism, n.d.). They can also form a network of parks, squares, courtyards and open spaces, vital to introduce light and air to dense cities.

Figure 1. Sitting on a bench in Vondelpark, man enjoys the surroundings (Vondelpark: Man enjoying the sun, 1963)

The investigation, design and implementation of green spaces is of relevance today as climate change and the current pandemic highlight the need and confirm the environmental, psychological and economical benefits of green space in rapid urban densification. The green space, either public, private or collective aids, in building civic engagement. This changing role of our interaction with green is evident through increasing implementation of green on facades, transformation of parking spots into pop up gardens and constructing allotment gardens on roofs to make local produce. This research focuses on the grey area of collective green spaces as it lies in between the black and white of public and private green spaces, influenced by an interwoven web of tangible and intangible factors like spatial, social, political and economical aspects.

Figure 2. Will this be a new way of working? Man sitting outside offices (Anonymous, n.d.)

This thesis endeavours to address the question: *How the use of collective green spaces, built in Amsterdam over a century ago, changed to the present ideas on collective green spaces?* It focuses on collective green spaces built in Amsterdam late 19th, early 20th century, that are within walking distance from residential housing. Firstly, the difference between public, private and collective domain and space is defined and explored. Secondly, an overview of the changing function of green spaces will provide a global and historical reference point, expanding on cultural, social, environmental, economical and political shifts. Thirdly, the research delves into the historical positioning of green spaces in Amsterdam. Finally, three case studies situated in Amsterdam, built during the period 1850 - 1920 are investigated.

Figure 3. Parklets in cork, pop up green spaces (Hickney, 2021)

Information and data are collected through primary sources: Amsterdam archival photographs, maps and newspaper articles and site visits. Literature reviews and articles are secondary sources used to gather contextual information. Three case studies will be identified out of a number of potentials using a tool combined with criteria. These are compared through three key characteristics: ownership, access and sociability. The comparison will aid in identifying the tangible and intangible differences and similarities in the case studies. This paper will take on a multi-disciplinary approach as it tackles the subject through landscape architecture, sociology, urbanism and architecture.

Academic Context

Architects alongside urbanists, scientists, doctors, psychologists, designers and geographers have exposed the effects of nature on people and cities. Doctors and scientists have investigated health concerns in cities, places where green spaces can improve residents' health and immune systems (Hancock, 1993). Research into green spaces from WHO and UN Habitat are based on politics, economics and policies and are actively promoting healthier and safer cities. Urbanists and (landscape) architects have researched biodiversity and green spaces in relation to housing typologies. Recently, Bons (2021) reiterated our changing relationship to green, identifying a greater need for more space, post Covid-19 pandemic. The architectural journal, OASE, has explored the definition of public, private and collective space over the years *#54 Re:Generic City* (Musch (ed.) and Schreurs (ed.), 2001) and #71 *Urban Formation and Collective Spaces* (Avermaete (ed.) et al., 2006). Relatively little research has delved into combining green spaces with the different domains (private, public and collective). OASE Journals, *Domestic Nature* and *Home and Garden* explore the relationship between people and private gardens (Bijlsma et al., 2001). As this is only limited to the private domain, architectural researchers from TU Delft, Coolen and Meesters (2011) explore both domains of green spaces in direct relationship with housing and their social effects, *Private and Public Green Spaces Meaningful but Different Settings*.

While a broad range of research has tackled green spaces in different ways, the canon of research potentially overlooks uniting the different disciplines. These studies focus on public or private green spaces, where the grey area of collective green space is acknowledged but never put against case studies. The canon also misses research that closely delves into the different domains, in relation to green space and in turn in relation to housing. Ideally, it needs an overview which intersects the different disciplines and reflects the nuances within the term of collective green spaces. Research also seems to lack investigations linking the above with places in Amsterdam.

Study into collective green spaces is important as it reflects and adds to the current debates on trending 'green urbanism'. With cities rapidly growing, metropolises need new models of housing to integrate green space. The Covid-19 pandemic has also

illustrated the need for and importance of these green spaces. The public, private and collective realms also become heavily intertwined as work and life merged considerably, due to increased working from home, during the pandemic, and the people's need to have more spaces available they feel comfortable spending time in.

This thesis endeavours to deliver a first pass at closing the gaps mentioned above by integrating urban green space planning with historical and sociological research combined with case studies of collective green spaces in Amsterdam.

1 Private, Public and Collective Space

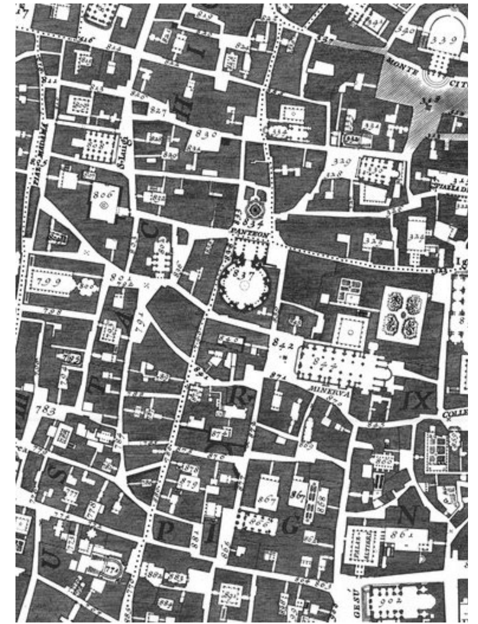
Figure 4. Tile 5 of Nolli Map of Rome 1748 show permeability (Nolli, 1748)

In 1748, Gianbattista Nolli drew a figure-ground map of Rome, where black represented private spaces and white, the accessible spaces. This mapping technique, known as the Nolli map, was the first depiction of the limits of public and private space, where “it is a coherent map of accessibility and permeability of the city’s urban fabric, trying to prove its relative continuity” (Scheerlinck, 2013: 10). This two tone depiction disregards the ambiguous multiplicity of transitions between these spaces.

Birch (2008), professor in urban design and de Swaan (2008), sociologist, both do not recognize the either/or depiction of public and private space as, in reality, there is a continuous interplay between these spaces. So, if public and private spaces can overlap, is there a defined space in between? Before we can answer this question, we should define public and private spaces. Architectural critic, J.B. Jackson defines a public space as “a place (or space) accessible to all citizens, for their use and enjoyment.” (Jackson, 1974: 52). Birch (2008) states that a private space should be open to those authorised by custom or law.

Manuel de Sola Morales, a Spanish architect, attempted to define the *collective space* in 1992: “Collective spaces are not strictly public or private, but both simultaneously. These are public spaces that are used for private activities, or private spaces that allow for collective use, and they include the whole spectrum in between.” (de Sola Morales, 1992). Collective space is therefore an umbrella term for the gamut between typical public and private spaces, and having a similar value to these within the urban realm. This ambiguity is rooted in a collective space being a space shared by a group of people performing specific activities motivated by the architectural expression, where its size and ownership is not necessarily a determining factor. Collective space is therefore not a “synonym for in-between space, semi-public/private, threshold or transition space” (Scheerlinck, 2013: 7). The collective space thus depends heavily on the intangible ‘social domain’ and becomes a synonym for the parochial space, which is a space “characterised by a sense of commonality among acquaintances and neighbours who are involved in interpersonal networks” (Lofland, 1998: 10).

The Rotterdam-based architectural research practice ZUS’s (Zones Urbaines Sensibles), investigation into the complexity of

public, private and collective spaces at the Rotterdam Hospital describes physical distinctions between the extremes. “Truly private space is clearly marked off by walls, fences and locks. But truly public space, characterised by openness and randomness, is being gradually replaced by space in which use, behaviour and experience are regulated in more or less subtle ways.” (van Boxel and Koreman, 2006: 134). Following ZUS’s characterization, we can assume more restrictions mean more private and less restrictions mean more public space. However, ZUS (2006) argues that archetype public spaces are disappearing, shifting towards the canon of collective spaces as aforementioned. The collective space, therefore, is a unique combination of the two spaces where access is regulated and boundaries are ambiguous.

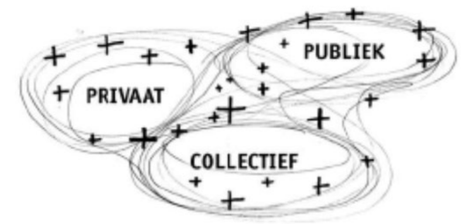

Figure 5. Intersection of private, public and collective domains (van Boxel and Koreman, 2006)

Koolhaas and Ungers (1977) discuss their take on collective spaces in *Berlin: A Green Archipelago*, as an important network in the city, where they are: “offering cohesion and a sense of community, with the extensive desire for individuation that is also part of contemporary society.” (Schrijver, 2006: 18). The collective space should therefore simultaneously provide a sense of individuality and community and where a multitude of collectives can feel comfortable to meet and interact with others. Examples of these are Central Park, New York City and Hyde Park, London, which are public green spaces rooted in creating equal access, for residents, tourists and marginalised groups, to nature in the city.

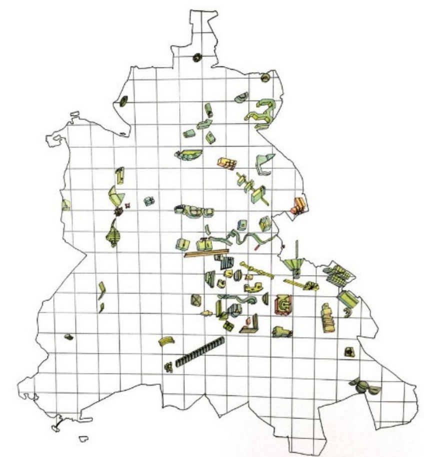
Figure 6. The city in the city, green spaces as a network (Riemann and Ungers, 1977)

The communal garden in Londons’ metropolis is shared by a group of local residents having privileged access, providing them with, essentially, an outdoor living room. Most are lusciously planted and well-maintained, where they are “ornamental pleasure grounds or grounds for play, rest and recreation.” (City of Westminster, 2004). Following ZUS’ characterization, these typify private spaces as they are privately maintained, have restricted access through locks, are surrounded by fences and occasionally have (quaint) rules, like, if you are aged over 12 you are not allowed to throw a ball around (Fowler, 2019). These gardens are intended for exclusive use by the residents from the surrounding homes (Fowler, 2019). As some of these gardens are accessible by the public at certain times of the day, for example Pembridge square, Ladbroke Square Garden, Belgrave Square, and Kensington Square (1685), these spaces are collective (green) spaces.

Figure 7. Communal gardens feel like escapes from the city (Bryanston Square, London, 2021)

De Sola Morales (1992) states that collective spaces can be both an outdoor living room and at the same time a space for all social groups. As collective space positions itself on a spectrum, the typical notions of public and private spaces become less evident as seen in the discussion above. A major challenge is answering the question: Where does private space end and public space start? For this thesis we acknowledge the ambiguity and nuances by accepting collective spaces as a concept.

2 History of (collective) green spaces in urban planning

2.1 Towards an enclosed garden embedded in the city

Green space is an overarching term for space that contains any kind of vegetation, for example: parks, gardens, open space with natural elements, allotments and cemeteries (Taylor and Hochuli, 2017). This umbrella term conceals an elaborate history of the role of green spaces within urban planning as depicted in the figure on the side.

Time period	Uses for urban green
600 BC	Private power and social status
1300 AD	Innovative agriculture
1700 AD	Collective gardens for knowledge
1900 AD	Food production
2000 AD	Leisure and recreation
2010 AD	Health and ecology

Figure 8. Different uses for urban green spaces through history (van Leeuwen, 2010)

Early descriptions of enclosed green spaces, known as gardens, are of the biblical Garden of Eden. This garden is referred to as a paradise, an idyllic place, 'a world of eternal happiness' (van Bergerijk, 2001). This distinction is evidence of the social connection to green space; it is not merely any arbitrary space.

Figure 9. Garden of Eden from the Garden of Earthy Delights (Bosch, 1515)

The first civilization that acknowledged the (social) benefits of green spaces were the Romans (A brief history of urban green spaces, 2015). Luxury garden-palaces, known as *Horti*, were built as private enclaves for the wealthy; *Horti Luculliani* on Pincio Hill (100 BC) introduced the Persian garden to Rome (Gardens of Lucullus, n.d.). *Domus Aurea* (64-68 AD), known as Golden House, built by Emperor Nero in the centre of Rome, were Nero's palatial grounds, combining planned gardens with the untamed countryside. The Romans coined the phrase, 'rus in urbe', which translates to 'the country in the city'; they recognized the benefits of rural features in a city (A brief history of urban green spaces, 2015). The palatial grounds were largely for recreational use and noticeably, occasionally open to the public (Pagán, 2016). This transition from private to semi-private, recognized a shift to collective spaces, where, **"**The desirability of nature in Rome was seen as twofold: as a mark of civilization and as a promoter of health & well-being." (A brief history of urban green spaces, 2015).

At a smaller scale, the renewed interest in the enclosed garden, the *hortus conclusus*, originated in medieval Europe around 1300 AD (Aben and de Wit, 2001). The enclosed garden "captures and isolates aspects of nature and landscape in a relatively small, confined space." (Aben and de Wit, 2001) and later transformed into different types, where they are now embedded in the urban fabric as a garden, square and park.

Figure 10. Gardens of Lucullus (Lauro, 1624)

2.2 Green as advocator for healthier cities

In Western cities, the Industrial Revolution (1760-1840) saw the resurgence and prioritisation of green spaces. The hygienist

movement, early 19th century, also known as the sanitary reform movement or great sanitary awakening, was born in response to the horrific living conditions in cities, like Paris, London and New York. They promoted health and cleanliness; access to green space was one of the enablers.

This urgency from the medical field greatly influenced architect and urbanist thinking. Poninska (1874), a German urban planner, wrote, under the pseudonym Arminius: *The big cities in their housing shortage and the basics of a radical remedy*. As an unknown pioneer, she proposed more urban green spaces, with designs for apartment blocks with larger courtyards; this was radical at the time as narrow backyards were commonplace (Adelheid Poninska, n.d.). She advocated for more green spaces, such as, parks, playgrounds, gardens and allotments, resulting in 'the fewer hospital beds and patients there would be' (A brief history of urban green spaces, 2015).

Healthier cities were advocated after the Second World War, coinciding with the post war reconstruction. This was in response to the terrible living conditions which instigated, for example, the slum clearance in London in 1955. It was also a response to the changing society and to rapid technological advances. In the late 20th century, cities introduced health measures based on research informed policies. Health advocates assisted the World Health Organisation (WHO) and UN-Habitat to set up the Healthy Cities initiatives, promoting the health benefits of green spaces for physical well-being and social sustainability (Hebbert, 1999).

2.3 Productive green

In England, Ebenezer Howard, similar to Poninska, advocated the improvement of quality of urban life. The Garden City movement developed after Howard (1898) published *Tomorrow: A Peaceful Path to Real Reform*, which attempted to reacquaint society with nature in turn for a more self-sufficient community. Following in Howard's footsteps, Leberecht Migge, a German landscape architect, published *Green Manifesto* in 1919. This shifted the traditional garden or green space as a "bourgeois escape from industrialised society", to green space being productive, becoming "industrial products that were essentially tools for better living" (Leberecht Migge, n.d.). These spaces are "not of a nostalgic return to nature, but a synthesis of garden, dwelling, and

communal space that embraced the latest developments in technology.” (Haney, 2007). These responses to the rapid expansion of cities are attempts at creating better living conditions by introducing the country to the city, proposing self-sustaining food production and reusing urban waste (Historical importance and development of parks and public green grids, n.d.). In the Netherlands, at the beginning of the 20th century, Jac P Thijse (1865-1945) introduced *Heemtuinen*, man-made parks as a way of educating the population about nature.

2.4 Green and housing

New models of urban planning of green spaces came to a standstill after the Great Depression (early 1930s), where urban perimeter blocks lacked any vegetation or were privately owned. A resurgence sparked in the mid-late 20th century due to a shift from manual labour to office work. This shift focused on the possibilities of the environment, for example the transformation of previously industrialised spaces and the introduction of ‘light, air and space’ through the modernist movement (A brief history of urban green spaces, 2015). The figure on the right shows an overview of housing topologies over the centuries; of specific interest is the relationship to (collective) green space.

	Dutch name	*English name*	*Year*
1	Hof	Courtyard	1400s
2	Stedelijke bouwblok	Urban Block	1900s
3	Strokenbouw	Row housing	1920s
4	Woonerf	‘home zones’ (UK), ‘complete streets’ (US)	1970s
5	Daktuinen	Rooftop garden	current

Figure 11. Timeline of types of green spaces in relation to housing (Latour, 2021)

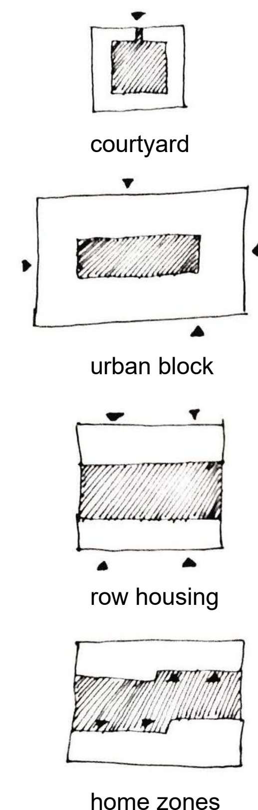

Figure 12. Diagram of relationship between green and housing (Latour, 2021)

2.5 Current ‘green’ trends

Recent projects like Vertical in Amsterdam, integrate planters into a multiple story apartment block. Not only is green being brought into the sky, so is a whole green landscape, as demonstrated at Dakpark in Rotterdam. Building with green has become the norm, now also known as ‘Green Urbanism’, where many architects, like Rem Koolhaas and Winy Maas have manifestos highlighting the benefits of green space. Petra Blaisse from Inside Outside, emphasises in her manifesto that a green space such as a park is “free space to inhabitants for encounters”, “bind different areas to one another” and provides “positive emotion” (Blaisse, 2017: 116-117). This ethnographic account of the importance of green illustrates its social value within the city; a facet that architects take very seriously. In summary, green space, either public, private or collective, can greatly increase civic engagement.

3 Green Spaces in Amsterdam (19th century until present)

Amsterdam is notoriously identified by its' canals in concentric 'rings' around the historic city centre. Amsterdam evolved from a 12th century fishing village to a thriving maritime port in the 17th and 18th century, greatly profiting from the spoils of the Dutch Golden Ages (History of Amsterdam, n.d.). So what is Amsterdam's history with green? From the 1650s onward, old maps show green spaces included in the urban master plans. It is unknown if these were public, private or collective spaces. The introduction of parks and larger *hortus conclusus,* enclosed gardens, only happened in the late 1800s.

Figure 13. Coloured in city plan (de la Feuille, 1682)

3.1 Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan (AUP)

The rapid expansion of the city prompted several new masterplans; proposals from Jacob van Niftrik, 1867, and Jan Kalff, 1877 included spacious layouts with a lot of green, which never materialised. In 1901, a housing act was developed in response to the poor living conditions, making new affordable housing possible for the working class and establishing social housing foundations (De stad voor het AUP, n.d.). In the 1930s, urbanist at the municipality of Amsterdam, Cornelis van Eesteren, designed the *Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan* (AUP) (General

Figure 14. Plan Van Niftrik (van Niftrik, 1866)

Expansion Plan) for Amsterdam. This masterplan accounted for an increasing population and improved living conditions. Some major changes proposed to close 'open' sewers and move the working class living on the streets into housing. The city expanded beyond the concentric rings and towards the *Westelijke Tuinsteden* (Western Garden Cities), *Plan Zuid* (Plan South) and included the integration of green spaces designed by HP Berlage. Van Eesteren's masterplan highlighted four thematic functions for the city: living, working, leisure and as an enabler, traffic. Living was designed to be separate but closer to the workplace and spaces with 'a lot of green' mediated between the two (Groene Tuinsteden, n.d.). The design was built with the modernist thinking of 'light, air and space' in mind, where Amsterdam expanded in *stroken (*strips*)*, providing plenty of space for recreation and relaxation. This was the first urbanist plan with this focus in the Netherlands. After the Second World War, the expansion to the five new surrounding garden cities for affordable social housing was realised: Slotermeer, Slotervaart, Overtoomse Veld, Geuzenveld and Osdorp.

3.2 Green in the Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan

Van Eesteren designed for the natural landscape to infiltrate the city through combs or fingers, opposing typical additions of large massed districts extending urban sprawl (Groene Longen, n.d.). This decision allowed every resident access to a green space within a maximum walk of ten minutes (Binnen tien minuten in een groengebied, n.d.). Special attention went to new neighbourhoods' access to *buurtgroen* or *gemeenschappelijke tuinen*, communal green spaces, publicly accessible green spaces and parks. It shifted away from the fully enclosed (private) green spaces in urban blocks towards publicly accessible green spaces (Rodenburg Wateradvies & Buro Bergh, 2017). *Buurtgroen* is a type of collective space as it encourages residents to be involved in design and maintenance. In the *Westelijke Tuinsteden*, schools, community centres and shops were at the centre of the neighbourhoods (AUP en Post-AUP, n.d.). At around the same time (1930s) other architects envisioned similar green incorporated designs. For example, Le Corbusier designed Ville Contemporaine, Plan Voisin and Ville Radieuse, utopias attempting to "reunite man within a well-ordered environment." (Ville Radieuse, n.d.). The designs proposed high-rise housing blocks, free circulation and ample green spaces, but these

Figure 15. The green lungs or fingers of Amsterdam (Van Eesteren, n.d.)

Figure 16. Groen in de buurt: Green in the neighbourhood (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.)

received negative critique as merely an orientation towards green does not create a sense of collectivity or attachment.

3.3 Green in contemporary Amsterdam

Contemporary urban planning in Amsterdam primarily incorporates the revitalization of green spaces, in all shapes and sizes. Especially old neighbourhoods in the city centre and the 19th century *grachtengordel* (canal belt), are not of this time according to designers and urbanists, as they lack green space and public access (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017). The municipality released the report, *Bouwen aan een groene stad* (Building a green city) in 2017 illustrating their aspirations for making Amsterdam greener and improving the quality of city life. Characteristics of collective green spaces come in all shapes and sizes. For example, *Park om de hoek* (park around the corner), *postzegelpark* (postage stamp park) and pocket parks are ‘small scale urban biotopes’ (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017). The municipalities’ aim is for a super-diversity and variety of *gemeenschappelijke groene ruimtes (*communal green spaces); these collective green spaces will play an important role in strengthening the social realm (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017).

Figure 17. Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan (Dienst der Publieke Werken, 1935)

4 Collective green spaces in Amsterdam - a closer look

In this chapter a number of case studies are analysed using certain characteristics to help understand the similarities and differences between the uses of collective green spaces, from past to present, in order to answer the thesis question: *How has the use of collective green spaces, built in Amsterdam over a century ago changed to the present ideas on collective green spaces?* The focus is on spaces built during the 1850s - 1920s. As we have seen, collective green spaces fall on a large spectrum. This scope of the case studies are collective green spaces that are 'a stone's throw away from housing' in the city and that incorporate any green e.g. vegetation, grass and trees.

4.1 Defining the characteristics

Public, private and collective (green) spaces were introduced, defined and put in context in earlier chapters. In order to analyse and compare the case studies properly, certain characteristics are required. Carmona et al. (2003) describes some attributes of urban public (green) spaces: safety and security, Gestalt principles of organisation and visual dimension (floors cape, street furniture, hard and soft landscaping). Carmona (2010) then delves into contemporary green spaces, where positive and successful public (green) spaces depend on: (1) accessibility and connectivity, (2) comfort and image, (3) uses and activities and (4) sociability. Gehl and Gemzøe (2004) identify the following qualities for public space: quality, inviting, function and space for walk, stay, and sit. Jackson (1974: 52) describes a public space as “a place (or space) accessible to all…” and Birch (2008) defines private space as being open to those authorised. ZUS' descriptions of architectural expressions of typical private and public space are in agreement with the above.

The common elements arising from the above mentioned characteristics are ownership, accessibility, use and sociability. These are, however, all described in relation to public spaces. Yet these attributes can equally apply to collective and private spaces, as per the discussion in Chapter 1. This thesis will use the following characteristics to analyse the case studies: ownership, accessibility and sociability. Note that 'use' will be included in accessibility. The three characteristics attempt to cover both the pragmatic and subjective nuances as the collective quality is the

interplay and intersection between these attributes. Definitions and descriptions will be provided for the characteristics, acknowledging that the meaning of these characteristics could otherwise be too broad.

4.1.1 Ownership

Ownership can essentially be defined in two ways, from exclusivity to exclusion. Exclusivity is covered by the dictionary definition of ownership: “The state, relation, or fact of being an owner” (Ownership, n.d.). Ownership by exclusion is stated as “the legal right to exclude others from the specific thing owned.” (Gordon, 2021). Ownership can be private, public or collective. For example, a public park like Regent park in London is owned by the municipality, a private garden by an individual, and a communal garden such as de Werf, Amsterdam, is most likely owned by a collective, such as a housing corporation or an owners association. Ownership and forms of access and activities are the pragmatic characteristics of the collective space, where the subjective characteristics emerge in appropriation and welcoming of ‘collective clusters’ and ‘light communities’ (Avermaete et al., 2006).

4.1.2 Accessibility

Accessibility is “the quality or characteristic of something that makes it possible to approach, enter, or use it” (Accessibility, n.d.). How easily can a green space be accessed? Is it accessible to everyone, particular (social) groups or only individuals? Access to public, private or collective spaces is regulated by the owner(s) through exclusivity or exclusion and realised by physical manifestations of access to green spaces by gates, fences, obstructions, opening hours and locks. It can also take the form of ‘surveillance and control’, a characteristic Sorkin (1992) describes as a trait highly prominent in North-American cities. Access to green spaces for particular groups or individuals can be discouraged through social control, signage, authority or supervision. The Amsterdamse bos is an example of a public park that is accessible 24/7 as is the Noordermarkt, a public square. Communal gardens, like the Begijnhof in Amsterdam, are accessible to all at certain times, and are private at other times. The Rosemead garden square in London can only be accessed by the residents. The ultimate accessible green space can be found

in Scandinavia, where the freedom to roam for recreation or exercise, ‘everyman’s right’, allows access to most land, public and private, with minimal restrictions. As mentioned above, for this thesis, use and activities are incorporated into accessibility. If it is not accessible, it cannot be used for activities.

4.1.3 Sociability

Sociability involves interacting with other people. “The quality of liking to meet and spend time with other people.” (Sociability, n.d.). Some characteristics of sociability are social networks, volunteerism, co-operative, interactive, street life and neighbourly (What Makes a Successful Place?, n.d.). The sociability of a space is not always easy to achieve, however once achieved people feel a stronger attachment to the space (What Makes a Successful Place?, n.d.). Ungers and Koolhaas (1977) posit that collective (green) spaces should both support individuality and community, where individuals and like-minded social groups come together informally and formally. Collective green spaces therefore become symbols or identity markers for people to identify themselves with (Birch, 2008). Examples of these are: Music bands and 60s fashion du
ring the weekend in Yoyogi park, Japan, Chinese chess players in Columbus park, New York, playing around the clock and Skateboarders at MACBA square, Barcelona. Sociability is in jeopardy when certain groups take over spaces, enforce strong social control, where everyone ‘acts and looks the same’. Not conforming means not feeling welcome.

4.2 Selection of collective green spaces

To aid in the decision which case studies to include in the analysis, a simple tool was developed to visualise possible choice. The tool consists of a quadrant with private - public accessibility on the x-axis and private - public ownership on the y-axis. The areas of interest are the collective spaces in the upper right and lower left quadrant, as fully private-private and full public-public do not cover the collective spaces of interest. Sociability is not included as it is more subjective and therefore difficult to measure.

List of (collective) green spaces in Amsterdam

Vondelpark
Bellamyplein
Zaanhof
Jan van Maijenstraat
Anna van Burenstraat
Da Costaplein
WG Terrein
Begijnhof
De Werf
Het Funenpark
Bellamy

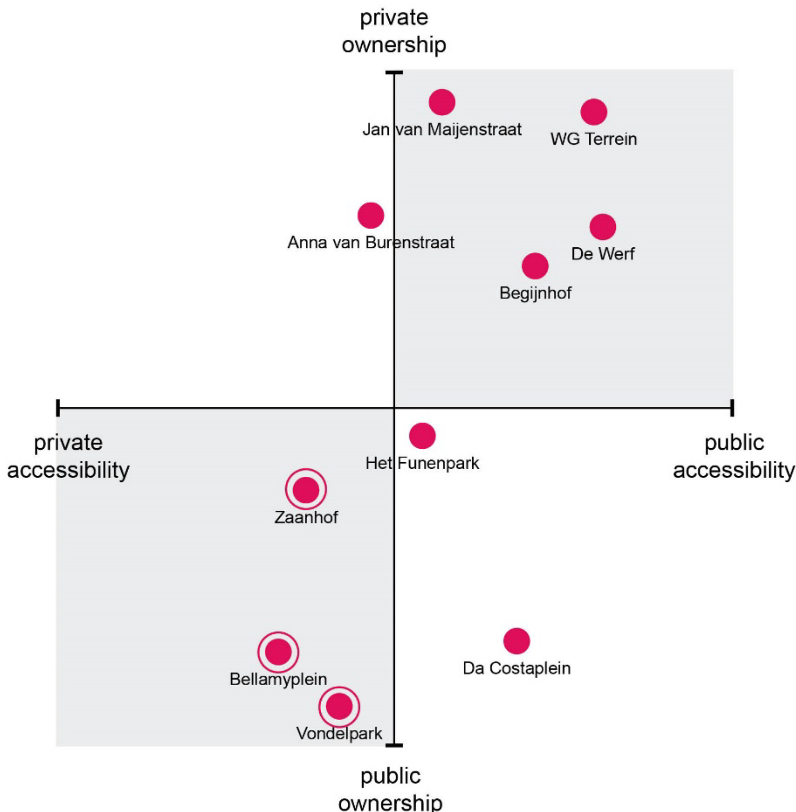

Figure 18. Accessibility - Ownership Quadrant for collective green spaces (Latour, 2021)

The quadrant was then populated with a number of green spaces in Amsterdam. The criteria for including collective green spaces are: situated in an urban environment, of different scales and periods, and in close proximity to housing. These were identified using the Municipalities' archive and on-line map database (Data en informatie, n.d.). Three collective green spaces were chosen as case studies, with the additional criterion that they had sufficient documentation. They are: Vondelpark, Bellamyplein and De Zaanhof.

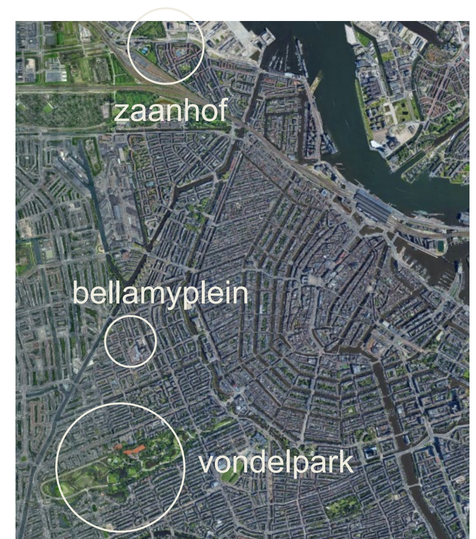

Figure 19. Situational map of chosen collective green spaces (Latour, 2021)

4.3 Case studies overview

Figure 20. Vondelpark in 1943 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1943)

The Vondelpark, originally known as *Nieuwe Park* (New Park) first opened in 1865 and completed in 1878. The park is designed in an English landscape style by landscape architect LD Zocher (1829--1915). It was a gift from CP van Eeghen and others, to the city of Amsterdam with the intention that Amsterdam's residents could enjoy nature in the city, be they elite or poor. The park arose in the late 19th century as a need to improve living conditions. Amsterdam was also in dire need of a monumental city park to measure itself to other large cities in Europe like London and Paris with their large public parks (Aanleg van het Vondelpark in 1865, n.d.). However, not everyone was in favour of establishing the new park as canals and water already characterised Amsterdam (IsGeschiedenis, n.d.). The park originated outside of the *grachtengordel* (canal belt), on the South-West side of the Leidsepoort where the first piece of *veenweidegebied* (peat meadow) was purchased, and transformed into a park with a biodiverse flora and fauna. The park is surrounded on three sides by terraced houses, of which some have private access to the park. As a stadspark, it currently forms an essential part of the city as a major open green space for residents and tourists alike with around 10 million visitors a year.

Figure 21. Bellamyplein in 1943 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1943)

The Bellamyplein situates itself in the Bellamybuurt, a neighbourhood which has a village-like character. Originating in 1905, as the PW Jansen Plantsoen, the smaller green space was originally situated in a country landscape surrounded by water (Bellamyplein (square), n.d.), after which it was surrounded by urban housing blocks and Amsterdams' tramdepot (now De Hallen). The square has a triangular shape and the initial intention was to provide a place for children to play, and from 1950s onwards children enjoyed the *pierenbadje* (wading pool) (De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad, 1905). The Bellamyplein recently underwent renovations which kept the layout similar, retaining the existing flora. It now also provides water resilience to prevent flooding in the immediate neighbourhood.

In the Spaarndammerbuurt on the northern side of the train tracks, close to the IJ river, sits a ‘double-shell’ building block surrounding a central green courtyard called De Zaanhof. The Zaanhof buildings were commissioned by the housing association *Het Westen*, and designed by Herman Walenkamp in 1916 (Peeters, 2021). This large and green oriented housing block was a modern example of social housing at the time (Peeters, 2021). Here traditional *hofbouw* (courtyard buildings) and the urban building block intersect. At the time, row housing was up and coming, where row housing also supported private gardens and low rise housing.

Figure 22. Zaanhof in 1943 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1943)

5. Case studies - analysis and discussion

5.1 Ownership

CP van Eeghen (1816-1889), a famed businessman and philanthropist, came up with the idea for a new park in the city, accessible to everyone (Heimans and Thijsse, 1901). It was primarily in response to the rapid expansion of the city of Amsterdam, where existing green spaces in the historic canal belt were being consumed by the need for housing. Van Eeghen initiated a search for individuals to help fund the park, where eventually a group of 34 wealthy residents established the *Vereeniging tot Aanleg van een Rij- en Wandelpark* (Association for the Construction of a Park for Riding and Walking) (Het Vondelpark: een geschenk van de elite, 2020). The premise was ownership exclusivity not exclusion. This collective ownership allowed the association to establish its own rules for the park, where guards and supervisors ensured people were behaving *burgelijk* (civil) (Het Vondelpark: een geschenk van de elite, 2020). Police and municipal authorities were not allowed to assert their authority in the park. The park maintained collective ownership for almost a century, with the association responsible for the maintenance and operation. A major disadvantage to collective ownership were financial limitations due to exceeding maintenance costs and thus in 1953 the Vondelpark was gifted to the municipality for 1 gilder (Het Vondelpark: een geschenk van de elite, 2020). The stipulation for handing over the park to the municipal authorities was that the park was meant for everyone (Heimans and Thijsse, 1901) and the shift to public ownership meant the park was now classified as public green space where different social groups come together and form different collectives. The *Vereniging Vrienden van het Vondelpark* (Society of Friends of the Vondelpark) became very concerned about the impact of the growing number of visitors and their activities on the fragile park and the immediate neighbourhood. Their discussion with the municipality was about curbing visitor numbers and diminishing trash. As the municipality now holds the fate of the Vondelpark, one wonders if the original collective ownership is a more appropriate way of preventing gentrification (Grinspan et al., 2020). Collective ownership can motivate locals to build a close community with a tighter attachment to their green space and neighbourhood, minimising developments that are potentially detrimental to the collective identity of the local community.

Figure 23. Entrance to Vondelpark through Stadhouderskade with the park rangers house (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1867)

Half a century later, in 1905, the Bellamyplein emerged not far from the Vondelpark. The *plein* (square) situates itself at the apex of the Bellamy neighbourhood and was built from the philanthropist PW Janssen's donation. A *comité* was responsible for finding an appropriate location for the square (De Tijd: godsdienstig-staatkundig dagblad, 1905). In 1907 it shifted to a public ownership as it was gifted to the municipality. This could suggest a collective ownership prior to 1907, but that cannot be substantiated through the literature search. Additional evidence in the form archival imagery may underpin this as gates are shown to be in place, indicating it was most likely still a collective space and not a public space yet.

Figure 24. P.W. Janssen Plantsoen (P.W. Janssen Plantsoen, 1910)

Figure 25. Bellamypark (Bellamypark, 1912)

The housing association *Het Westen*, now *Lieven de Key*, commissioned and owned Zaanhof. Archival photographs and information lead us to believe that *Het Westen* owned the collective green space as it was a gathering space intended for the workers and their families. Amsterdam's database shows the collective space is now owned by the municipality (Gemeente Amsterdam, n.d.).

Figure 26. Zaanhof right after it was finished, still bare in vegetation (Zaanhof, 1922)

The three examples started out as private or collective ownerships and ultimately ownership of all ended up with the municipality. The Bellamyplein and de Zaanhof, smaller scale collective green spaces, quite quickly transferred ownership after conception. The reason for this swift transfer may be that these were situated close to housing developments and were interlocked with stricter urban planning in the early 20th century. Another reason could be the exceedingly higher maintenance costs to bear by the small collectives who initially owned these spaces. Interestingly, the large-scale Vondelpark was owned by a collective until 1953 when ownership transferred to the municipality, due to increasing maintenance cost. Whereas early 20th century collective green spaces were often owned privately, over the last century, we see a rapid change to publicly owned green spaces. Most collective green spaces in Amsterdam are now owned by the municipality. It is an open question if it would still be possible to develop a privately owned collective green space in Amsterdam in the current strictly regulated environment.

5.2 Accessibility

Vondelpark was designed as a park intended for riding and walking (Rij en wandel park). A green space for leisure, providing the residents of Amsterdam a space where they could enjoy the beautiful nature in the summer (Heimans and Thijsse, 1901). The park was 'for everyone' as the elite and the working class should mix and everyone had the right to an open space (van Hasselt, 2020). This strongly suggests the park to be a form of collective green space with public accessibility while collectively owned by the association. Restrictions were implemented from the beginning to ensure orderly conduct in the park. Access was free for members and others had to pay an entrance fee. A *parkwachter* (park ranger) was assigned and lived on the premises, their responsibility was to ensure individuals did not tread on the grass, or drown, and to keep out the '*landlopers, dronkenlappen, straatventers en vrachtkarren*' (van Hasselt, 2020). Restricting access to some or being unaffordable negates the original intent of the Vondelpark as a park for everyone. It suggests an attempt at retaining a notion of paradise, where the rus in urbe, 'the country in the city' is introduced superficially.

Figure 27. A couple enjoying the spring weather, dressed neatly and acting civil (Genieten van het fraaie najaarsweer, 1956)

Figure 28. Couple biking, could only at certain times of the day (Deftige man en vrouw met een tandem., 1894)

The current, contemporary version of the Vondelpark is publicly owned and maintains the shallow image of its original intent with access not allowed for all activities related with the public domain. Public activity is limited to 'orderly' and 'civil' behaviour as police patrol to maintain order. Boundaries between public and private therefore become even more blurred as collective green space becomes increasingly intertwined with its multiple functions. Private activities, like birthday parties, picnics, concerts, dates and napping suggest the "synthesis of garden, dwelling, and communal space" (Haney, 2007). The architectural expression of the access restriction is through gates, fencing and locks; as ZUS describes, this is a marker for a more private space (van Boxel and Koreman, 2006). These gates have always been open, as Aeijelts, the *beheerder*, current manager, mentions with 25 exits it is almost impossible to close and empty the park every evening. However, during the Covid-19 pandemic the exits were frequently closed to regulate people's access.

The Bellamyplein could be defined as an original *postzegelpark* (postage stamp park) as it is a small green space in close proximity to housing and amenities. Archival imagery shows a fenced-off, cultivated space for leisure with lockable gates; potentially leading to segregations of social groups by restricting access (Borret, 2008). The original intention was to provide a space to play for children from the neighbourhood, however it had several other uses up until the Second World War. In the 1950s the square was revitalised to its original design but with smaller fences and gates and with a central *pierenbadje* (wading pool). In 2019 original higher fences and gate posts, without gates, were reintroduced; the space being accessible at any time but suggesting a self-defined collective.

Figure 29. View of the park after removal of soup kitchen, entrances with high gates (Merk, 1954)

Figure 30. New playground meant lower fences, more inviting for children (Bellamyplein: Speelvijver, n.d.)

The Zaanhof is surrounded by 'double-shelled' urban blocks, where private courtyards encircle the central courtyard. This central courtyard can be accessed at any time of the day through six access points without barriers. It is surrounded by a street and integrates green spaces, a playground and car parking. The architectural expression of the gatehouses give a monumental impression and act like the metal gates in the Vondelpark; they suggest a crossing of a threshold from public to private. The courtyard retains this private quality as it is free from sound and wind (Peeters, 2021). The architectural composition of the Zaanhof implies that the enclosed collective green space is a *gemeenschappelijke (kijk)tuin* (communal (viewing) garden) (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2017). The original design and use has not changed other than more green space and a playground.

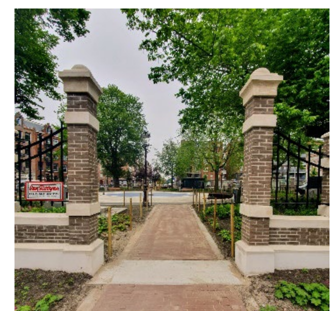
Figure 31. After renovation, (open) gates are reinstated (de Vente, 2019)

The research shows that accessibility of the Vondelpark and Bellamyplein has not significantly changed over the last 100 years. The use has seen no major changes other than the impact of the Depression and Second World War and changes supporting the prevailing zeitgeists over the years. De Zaanhof experienced the least change in accessibility and use over the century, perhaps as a result of the collective green space being enclosed and accessible only through the 'univiting' gatehouses and by residents' social control of the green space, perhaps a by-product of the rural character intended in the original design.

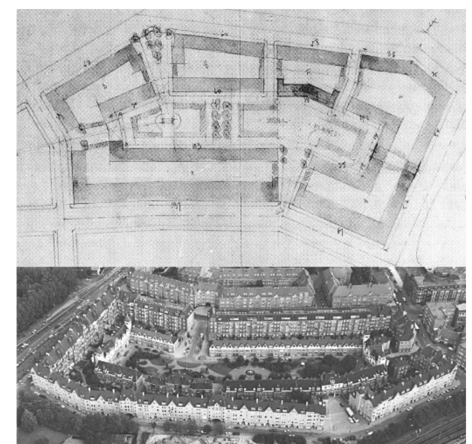
Figure 32. Position of central courtyard, birdseye view (Birdeye view of Zaanhof, n.d.)

5.3 Sociability

Figure 33. Vondelpark busy with cyclists (Fietsers en wandelaars, 1894)

Figure 34. Vondelpark continues to be busy with cyclists, alongside runners, skateboards and bootcampers (Vondelpark at different speeds, n.d.)

Collectivity arises from 'self-chosen communities' (Avermaete et al., 2006); the Vondelpark has transitioned and benefited from the occupation of different communities over the years. As seen in the images from 1865-1950s, the Vondelpark attracted 'civil' and 'dignified' people, partly due to the restrictions in access and activities (Het Vondelpark: een geschenk van de elite, 2020). Gradually, 'common' people started to enjoy the park. In the 1970s, the park became a hippie-paradise where thousands of youth occupied the park, forming a community where they smoked, played music, did crafts and slept in the park (Het Vondelpark: een geschenk van de elite, 2020). It appeared that at that time, in the Vondelpark almost everything was possible. The only aversion to this from the residents was the mess that was left behind, and not the activities and people themselves. Aeijelts (1998), the *beheerder* (current manager) of Vondelpark states that the success of the park is due to few rules; meaning more tolerance and a larger variety of uses. Fewer rules could lead to undesirable behaviour by some, negatively impacting others (Aeijelts, 1998). The size of the park and its varying spaces, bushes and hidden smaller pockets are the positives of the space as they allow for seclusion, intimacy and authenticity (Borret, K). That sense of belonging can stem from the lack of oversight of the park by the adjacent buildings, therefore, the park can "manifest the 'deeper' personalities of the parties involved." (Borret, K: 307). This is in contradiction to the 'arcadian atmosphere' that Aeijelts describes (Aeijelts, 1998), where the nature of the English landscape style with dwindling paths, unexpected spaces, suggest an idyllic park that is in friction with the roughness of different social groups, such as boot-campers, skaters, runners, bikers, activists and tourists.

The Bellamyplein originated as a square for 'civil' residents. This 'coded expression' of keeping private life concealed was removed in 1954 as it was in use as a publicly accessible pool. The contemporary communities evident at the square are the residents. Here, mainly families and couples express their fondness for the existing function as it has a communal purpose (Ontwerp Bellamyplein vastgesteld, 2017). It establishes an intimacy or place attachment as people show their authentic selves to the city (Borret, 2008). The *pierenbadje* (wading pool) is central in the square and is mainly visited by the children from the

Figure 35. Bellamyplein at the height of the summer, a children's paradise (Public swimming pool, 1954)

neighbourhood. However, this potentially alienates individuals visiting because of loud commotion and ‘disorderly’ behaviour.

Zaanhof’s original intention for the central courtyard was “to serve as a meeting place for residents and was supposed to offer the workers peace and quiet.” (Wiebenga, 2013). This suggests that outsiders were not explicitly welcome or not intended to be part of the collective atmosphere of the space. Housing directly attaches onto the courtyard where the watch full eye of a 360 degrees surrounded square suggests a certain control and surveillance of fellow residents and visitors of the courtyard. It highlights how the physical boundaries can (re)enforce the social domain. The collective green space integrates leisure, play and social interaction.

Figure 36. Houses have a watchful eye on the playgrounds and surrounding green spaces (Zaanhof 28-34: De speeltuin, 1952)

From the analysis it is clear that over the last century, the sociability characteristic for all three collective spaces stayed relatively similar. The Vondelpark has seen its share of social changes just like the rest of Amsterdam, but in essence it has always been that place for visitors to enjoy nature individually or together. The Bellamyplein and de Zaanhof were designed to bring residents together and provide playgrounds for children; that is still true for all three collective green spaces 100 years later.

Figure 37. Memorial day celebration, important for the community (Cremer, 2014)

Conclusion

Collective green spaces are essential mechanisms to bring life into the increasingly densifying city. (Landscape) Architects and urbanists can transform existing spaces and design new collective green spaces into buildings and streetscapes. Even if their ownership is private or public and access is at least temporal, these spaces have the opportunity to become vital community hubs, like the *Tuin van Jan* in Amsterdam, a transformation of an interior courtyard to a community garden. Globalisation, privatisation and digitalisation continuously transform social values and 'public ethos' in the city, in turn the term collective green spaces can cover these shifts and nuances (Banerjee, 2007).

Did this thesis manage to answer the research question: *How the use of collective green spaces, built in Amsterdam over a century ago, changed to the present ideas on collective green spaces?* The overall answer is affirmative but with some caveats. Major changes were limited to ownership, while accessibility and sociability experienced less change.

The ownership of collective green spaces, relating to the case studies (Vondelpark, Bellamyplein and Zaanhof) in Amsterdam has changed over the last century, where in the past private or collective ownership was common, public (municipal) ownership is now more prevalent due to higher maintenance cost and tight urban planning regulations. To foster place-attachment of the residents with collective green spaces in order to create a more equal city and develop a stronger sense of community, the municipality could provide funding support for new collective ownership models.

Accessibility and sociability characteristics in the case studies did not significantly change over the last century. However, the impact of the depression and the Second World War, economical challenges and cultural movements during the 20th century had an impact on these characteristics, but not to a major extent. As communities are built upon relationships (Sim and Gehl, 2019), Zaanhof and Bellamyplein were both designed to bring residents together, providing spaces for multiple functions: play areas for children, benches and vegetation to enjoy nature individually or together. The architectural manifestation of access points, boundaries or transitions, are blurred in Zaanhof and explicit at

Bellamyplein. Zaanhof illustrates the shift from enclosed to porous urban blocks where the boundaries between public, private and collective spaces become ambiguous. Collective (green) spaces near housing become extensions of living rooms where private and public activities occur.

There are a number of challenges encountered in this research. First, this was a small sample size and only some collective green spaces built around the 1900s. For the collective green spaces in Amsterdam and in particular the case studies identified, information sources covering the three characteristics of ownership, accessibility and sociability were limited. The characteristics chosen were a subset of Carmona's (2010). Ownership was clear. Accessibility could have been divided into access and use. Sociability is quite subjective and difficult to quantify; an option could be using individual and community instead.

A number of future research topics can be pursued. Revisiting the characteristics used in the analysis and ensuring their measurability is improved. Expanding the scope to national and international metropolises will extend the canon of collective green spaces. This will assist in identifying commonalities and develop typologies as cities grapple to intersect historic, industrial and suburban conditions.

From grey to green: from an ill-defined domain to a heterogeneous and flourishing field, collective green spaces are essential vessels for building community networks, social enclaves and healthier cities.

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