

GOVERNED FROM A PARKING LOT

THE DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL QUALITIES OF
THE FORMER MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
TEMPORARY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES



Figure 1 / Escalators in the lobby. Poelstra, 2021.
Picture front page / Canopy and facade. Poelstra, 2021.

ABSTRACT

The focal point of this thesis lies within the state building situated on Bezuidehouthseweg in The Hague. Having been inaugurated in 1985, the edifice functioned as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for approximately 35 years and, from 2021 onwards, as a provisional abode for the Dutch Parliament. This thesis, therefore, evaluates the building and its subsequent expansion concerning its role, architectural qualities, and functionality for both purposes. The thesis examines the overall development and situation of the building to provide a balanced answer to the main question, 'In what way do the distinctive architectural qualities of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs contribute to the building's functionality in its role?'

The structuralist design by Dick Apon is characterized by a strong emphasis on the human scale in form and finish. The fragmented facade design plays with introverted and extroverted parts, making it highly suitable for the ministry's function but less so for parliamentary functions, which benefit from a high degree of transparency. The strongly hierarchical structure of the building supports the ministry's working methods but completely stifles the dynamics between politicians and the press.

The thesis concludes that the building provides much more functional accommodation for the ministry than for the Dutch Parliament. Therefore, this thesis ultimately recommends relocating the ministry of Foreign Affairs after the return of the Parliament and restoring it to its former glory.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

It was mid-December when I followed the debate on the election of the President of the Second Chamber. Such debates often revolve around the qualities and integrity of the chairperson. This time was no different, but there was a notable part in the contribution of candidate-chairperson Martin Bosma. He turned the temporary parliament building into an election theme: he would do everything to leave this temporary building as soon as possible. I was deeply intrigued by the question of why, and I wanted to pinpoint the dissatisfaction with the temporary building.

Six months later, there is now a thesis that answers that question. I want to thank tutor Marcel Teunissen for the constructive guidance, substantive contributions, and excursion to this building. I dare say that no one in the history of this field has ever been stopped and questioned by the military police due to the topic of their history thesis.

Also, many thanks to Mario van Kooij, architect at Zecc architects from Utrecht, the architects of the transformation design of this state building, for the engaging conversation, which is also included in the appendix.

This thesis cites numerous sources on the subject. Each of them is highly recommended reading for anyone interested in politics and architecture!

Steven van Haaften
04.08.2024

06

PROLOGUE

This thesis discusses the architectural qualities of the building at the Bezuidenhoutseweg in The Hague which was the former ministry of Foreign Affairs and the temporary House of Representatives.

10

PART I - INTRODUCTION TO THE DESIGN

The first part reconstructs the history of the The Hague, the design process of the building. It also discusses the architect and the architectural style of the former department.

38

PART II - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VERSUS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Three sub questions are discussed: what is the role of the building? What are the architectural qualities? How does this building function within the different roles this building had over time.

84

PART III - COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

The third part of this thesis compares the results of part II, answers the main question posed in the introduction and advises on the use of the building after the relocation of the House of Representatives.

88

BIBLIOGRAPHY

In the bibliography the accountability for the use of literature, sources and imagery can be found.

96

APPENDIX

Quotes in Dutch and the interview with architect Mario van Kooij (Zecc Architects).



Figure 2 / The temporary accommodation of the Dutch Parliament. Own image, 2024.

PROLOGUE

Thursday, December 14, 2023.

"I will be a Speaker of the House for you with a sense of longing. New members may think that this is our real abode, but it is not so. This parking garage is merely our temporary domicile. The explorer [1] and the party leaders are now facing the drafty revolving doors, addressing the press, thus illustrating the absence of all grandeur, but that is not our natural habitat. We are fish out of water. I long for our return, and I will truly accelerate efforts to expedite our liberation from exile." (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2023 - annex 1)

This quote is a fragment from the response of then-candidate Martin Bosma (PVV) for the position of Chairman of the Dutch Parliament. Bosma and Van der Lee (Groenlinks-PvdA) primarily emphasized their chairing skills, which must have been evident from their past experiences. Themes such as neutrality, independence and effective chairing of meetings were central. However, Bosma turned a special theme into an election issue: the temporary Second Chamber building, the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the temporary accommodation during the renovation of the Binnenhof, the official residence of the Dutch Parliament and Senate.

In strong terms and with vivid metaphors, he spoke about the temporary accommodation. For instance, he said: "We are fish out of water. I long for our return..." This statement is not necessarily unexpected. Visitors to the Chamber can see a large clock in the entrance hall counting the number of days of "exile."

Chairman Bosma not only speaks for himself: he also articulates the frustration of Members of Parliament as they felt during the relocation (Tromp & Van de Ven, 2023). Former Speaker of the House Arib already fought hard against the relocation. She did not want to move to a building with small offices and narrow corridors (Winterman, 2020).

Nevertheless, the relocation received support from the coalition parties of that time: and so it came to pass. Despite the objections, there was still confidence that the building on Bezuidenhoutseweg meets the specified quality standards (Hoedeman & Winterman, 2021). Therefore, this thesis answers the following question:



In what way do the distinctive architectural qualities of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs contribute to the building's functionality in its role?

The thesis is divided into three parts: first, this study provides a general introduction to the design of the building and the context in which this building is placed and operates. The second part answers various sub-questions distilled from the main question. These three sub-questions are the following:

1. What is 'its role'?
2. What are the 'distinctive architectural qualities'?
3. What is 'its functionality' in 'its role'?

The sub-questions are answered according to each function, both for (the users of) the building as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and as the temporary Parliament's building.

Part three compares the results and draws a conclusion on the main question. The thesis concludes with a recommendation on whether the building, after being vacated by the Parliament, should be given a third life.

[1] The explorer investigates the various coalition possibilities that exist after elections. This individual is the first link in that process.



Figure 3 (left) / Clock in lobby counting the days away from the Binnenhof. Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, n.d.

Figure 4 (right) / Martin Bosma after being elected as chairman. Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2023.

This thesis focuses on the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The building at Bezuidenhoutseweg 67 in The Hague no longer serves as a ministry but as the Dutch Parliament building. The Binnenhof in The Hague relocated in 2021; the Binnenhof had to undergo extensive renovations to ensure safe and healthy working conditions (Binnenhofrenovatie, n.d.). In 2028, the House of Representatives hopes to relocate back to the Binnenhof (Rijksvastgoedbedrijf, 2023). What happens to the building thereafter remains uncertain.

This part reconstructs on the history of the building, doing so in four chapters, namely on the historical and urban context of the building and the design of the building itself, both the original and renovated design, the architect and the architectural style of this design.

PART I

INTRODUCTION TO THE DESIGN



Figure 5 / facade from the intersection of Bezuidenhoutseweg and Prins Clauslaan. Own image, 2024.



Figure 6 / Pond with vegetation in the courtyard of the ministry. Unknown, n.d.

1. HISTORICAL AND URBAN CONTEXT

The history of The Hague dates back to the thirteenth century. Count Floris IV built a hunting lodge by a lake, which later became known as the Binnenhof and the Hofvijver. The Hague forest (Het Haagse bos), near the Malieveld, was his hunting ground (M.M. Teunissen, personal communication, February 28, 2024). This led to the development of a village as a residence for other nobles: Die Haghe, referring to the hedge or the forest.

Because of this residence for nobles, such as counts and stadtholders, The Hague has always remained the political heart of Holland, later the Netherlands. Although the political heart was in The Hague, it remained a village for a long time. It had no wall. However, in 1806, The Hague, by way of exception, received city rights from then-King of Holland Louis Napoleon.

In the Dutch democracy, the representatives, the members of the Dutch Parliament, control the cabinet. The cabinet consists

of ministers and state secretaries who implement cabinet policy for their own policy area. A minister has his or her own ministry or department. Here, policies and laws are prepared to be presented to the Parliament. During the Rutte-IV cabinet, there have been 12 departments. Throughout history, this number fluctuated. (Parlement.com, n.d. (II))

The existence of the ministries dates back to the 18th century, when agencies were established during the Batavian-French era. Under Louis Napoleon, the name changed to ministries. In the 20th century, the need for government intervention grew: industry expanded, there was a need for housing, and there was a need for good education (Parlement.com, n.d. (II)). The number of ministries expanded over the years due to the extensive powers they received. Under the Rutte-IV cabinet, the cabinet at the time of this writing, five ministerial positions were added (Parlement.com, n.d. (I)).



Figure 7 / Binnenhof. ANP XTRA, n.d.



Figure 8 / Rutte-IV cabinet. Kuypers, 2022.



Figure 9 / Newspaper bulletin. De Telegraaf, 1985.

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs is one of the oldest departments in the history of the Netherlands; it was established in 1798 (Rijksoverheid, 2023). Until the realization of the department on Bezuidenhoutseweg in The Hague, the ministries were scattered throughout The Hague and beyond. In 1979, the year in which the Hollandse Beton Maatschappij was commissioned to start building the new department building, the ministry had about 1800 civil servants spread across 20 locations, as reported by the editors of De Waarheid (1979) and Trouw (1976).

Ironically, there is a three-and-a-half-year gap between the two quoted newspaper articles, although they both write the same thing: 'soon' the construction of the new Ministry of Foreign Affairs will begin. However, the construction was delayed by three and a half years. Trouw (1976) illustrates where this delay might come from. There is much criticism of the plans: why not thoroughly renovate the old buildings, for example, those on the Plein? Those who criticized argued that the new location is too far from the center and there is a chance of traffic congestion. Also, there is fear of vacancy of the old buildings and, not least, is it pleasant to work in this new building?

The delay in construction, but also the usefulness of the new design, will have everything to do with the departmental reorganization of the ministry. After World War II, the structure within the ministry changed several times. The last change was implemented around 1952 under Minister Stikker. He separated all administrative, advisory and policy functions from each other. Therefore, a spread across different buildings is a very logical consequence. In the 1980s, this separation was reversed and everything was centralized in one department, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on Bezuidenhoutseweg, which was opened on Wednesday, May 8, 1985, by then-Queen Beatrix.

However, in 2017, the department moved to the renovated Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment at Rijnstraat, south of Den Haag central station. How long this building will continue to be used for the housing of this department is a question. Since the move, civil servants have been complaining about a shortage of spaces, privacy, and the bleak interior, as reported by Architectenweb (2020) with sources from ANP.



Figure 10 / Current department of Foreign Affairs. Sisto Legnan & Cappelletti, 2020

2. THE ARCHITECT OF THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The architectural firm Apon, Van den Berg, Ter Braak, Tromp, later A.B.B.T., was commissioned to design a new Foreign Affairs department. That is a significant difference compared to how things normally went: the State Architect generally designed the government buildings, but now for the first time, a private architect is being commissioned. The most prominent name associated with this design is that of architect Dirk Cornelis Apon (Architecture in the Netherlands, n.d.).

Dirk Cornelis Apon, born in 1926, studied at the Hoge Technische School in Rotterdam and became an architect afterwards. Apon joined the military, spent service time in Indonesia, then worked for various architects and in 1955 formed the firm Apon, Van den Berg, Ter Braak, Tromp with J.A. van den Berg, A.J. ter Braak, and W.B. Tromp. In addition to being an architect, Dirk Cornelis undertook various roles, as reconstructed by Het Nieuwe Instituut (2000), such as a teacher, editor and member of the architectural review boards of various municipalities. Dirk Cornelis Apon passed away in the year 2002.

Apon was drawn to modernism but did not adhere to the large scale and strict implementation of modernism; for Dick Apon, the human scale was a necessity in design, and the separation of functions was a thorn in his side. The encounter between individuals in the design was important (Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2000).

Clearly, he was influenced by the Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne, the CIAM, which sought, in a modernist manner, the human scale, as stated by Zuccaro Marchi (2016). From CIAM arose Team X, a group of young architects who internally criticized the techno-rationalist approach to urban planning. Within modernism, they sought ways to create space with a balance between the collective and the individual. While CIAM sought solutions for local and culturally bound issues in a universal manner, Team X sought customized solutions for the same problems (Bekker et al, 2007, p.38). As stated in the archival material of Het Nieuwe Instituut (2000), it is not surprising that Apon felt even more closely connected to Team X than to the modernistic ideas of the CIAM.

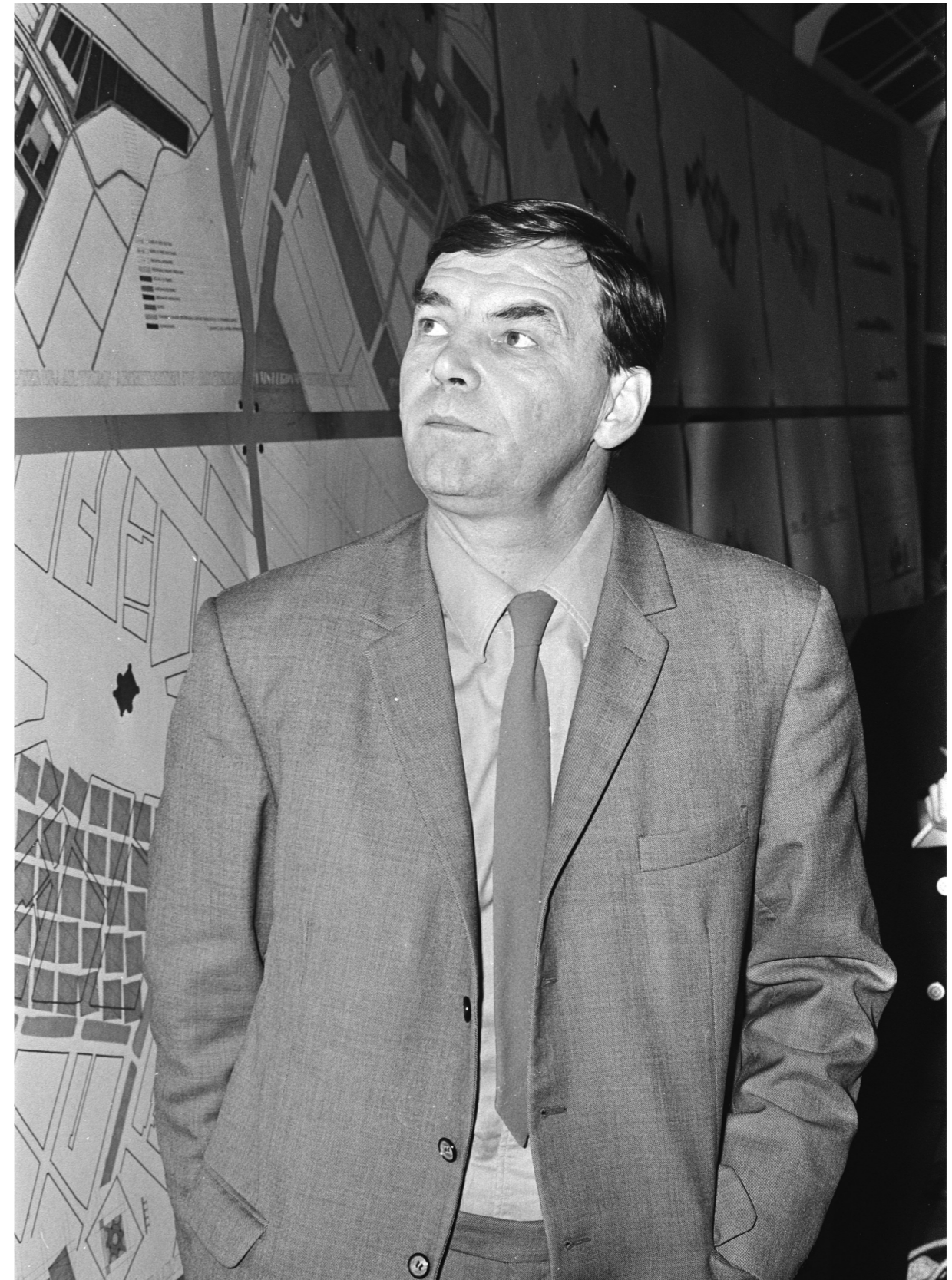


Figure 11 / Portrait Dick Apon. Anefo Reportage, 1970.



From top left horizontally to bottom right:

Figure 12 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 2. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 13 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 3. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 14 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 5. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 15 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 6. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 16 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 7. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 17 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 8. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 18 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 15. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 19 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 19. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

Figure 20 / Design model of Ministry of Foreign Affairs 20. Het Nieuwe Instituut, n.d.

3. THE DESIGN

As already explained, Dick Cornelis Apon was influenced by the ideology of the thinkers behind Team X, where the blend of functions and human scale were the focal points. Not only he, but also his partners at the A.B.B.T. firm. The bureau was commissioned to design the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Bezuidenhout. During the Second World War, this residential area was bombed. Afterwards, there were only scattered remnants of homes. The government decided to carry out land consolidation and use this land for the construction of government buildings. The plot was divided into four parcels. Among others, the National Archive, the Palace of Justice and the Royal Library were built on these parcels. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs was thus the last to be built on one of these parcels. (M.M. Teunissen, personal communication, February 28, 2024)

Apon's design encompassed a large program: meeting rooms of various sizes, office spaces, a reception area, a restaurant, a bicycle shed and a parking garage for 500

cars, as well as an emergency seat, in case of crisis, for a select group to govern the country.

The design can best be described with the metaphor of a rock. It is no coincidence that this design soon after its realization was nicknamed the 'Apenrots' or 'Aponrots' (English: Apon rock), referring to the architect. In plan, the design has a cruciform layout with a main core in the middle of the building. The cruciform on the trapezoidal plot was chosen to create the largest possible facade area (Van der Vlugt et al, 1985, p.667). In elevation, the building appears as a rock due to the stepped construction of the floors: the arms of the building are thicker and longer at the bottom, shorter and thinner at the top. Taken together, this maximizes daylight entry into each space, as noted by the editorial team of NRC (Editorial, 1976). Het Nieuwe Instituut (2000) adds that this method of construction works as camouflage. The office colossus does not read as an office colossus.



Figure 21 / Rocklike structure of design Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unknown, 1976.



Figure 22 / Stepped structure of the building. Own image, 2024.



Figure 23 / Grid in the facade. Own image, 2024.

The facade of the building is characterized by a strong rhythm. Within a grid of 7.2m x 7.2m visible on the façade of the upper floors: the columns of the design are outside the facade. As visible in figure 23, within two grids, between two columns, the facade is divided into three parts: the white steel ornaments divide the facade horizontally. Each floor is horizontally framed in two parts, an open and closed section. Dark frames, divided into a smaller subdivision and a concrete prefabricated element, made of a mix of Norwegian marble pieces and white cement (Den Boer, 2023, p.108). The marble type Hulstad has self-cleaning properties due to electrostatic charges (Rutten, 1985, p.182). The color of the concrete was chosen by looking at the colors of the Royal Library and Babylon, which are white and black respectively. The department's design contrasts with this. The architect wanted to reintroduce human scale by means of smaller subdivisions between columns, visible seams and a less hard color (Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2000).

This scale is also visible on the lower floors, but instead of concrete, brick has been used mainly as façade material. The difference in design is used to represent the differences in functions in the facade: special functions versus office spaces (Van der Vlugt et al, 1985, p.668). In total, 2.5 million bricks were used for this design (Den Boer et al, 2023, p.108). There are many larger areas closed, unlike the upper floors. Windows are recessed in the facade and are framed on the right and left by a brick column and at the top and bottom with a beveled concrete prefab element.

In the facade, the columns are clearly visible in the fixed grid of 7.2 meters by 7.2 meters. Two grids are superimposed. An orthogonal grid and the same grid rotated 45 degrees. The result is an octagon. This is very visible in the facade and in the interior, where the columns are left visible, one of Apon's starting points

Architect and project leader Mario van Kooij of Zecc Architects, the architect who designed the renovation and transformation of the department building, describes the structure of the building as "compelling" after inquiry (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2). Especially during transformation, this structure was challenging: the function changed, spaces were going to be used differently and, therefore, the new spaces needed different or larger dimensions. The building may be suitable for the function of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but is it also suitable as a temporary Second Chamber? Precisely while 'flexibility' was one of the principles in his structuralist design by Apon (Den Boer, 2023, p.108).

Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal



Figure 24 / Facade design bottom part of the building. Own image, 2024.

4. THE ARCHITECTURAL STYLE

The book BRUUT by Den Boer et al. (2023) provides a description of various brutalist projects in the Netherlands. From 500 submitted and self-preselected projects, the authors made a selection of 100 projects. They subjected these projects to the self-established criteria of B.R.U.U.T.: each letter represents a characteristic of the building. In short these criteria were: the design is characterized by rough and exposed concrete, unfinished surfaces and textures. The design is 'distinctive', 'large', and 'massive'.

The authors indicate that they took the liberty to define the term brutalism themselves. They argue that there is no definitive definition of the term 'brutalism' (Den Boer et al., 2023, p.10). They refer to the Atlas of Brutalist Architecture by the Paidon Editors (2018). Concrete is not even a requirement in that book. They seem to understand brutalism as 'unabashed presence'. For example, De Rotterdam by OMA is also included in the book, not necessarily a project that fits within the conventional definition of brutalism.

The conventional definition of brutalism dates back to 1952: the well-known modernist Le Corbusier introduced the term 'béton brut'. He argued that unfinished concrete served the same aesthetic function as stone or wood. In 1955, historian Reyner Banham, in the Architectural Review, described brutalism more as an attitude than a style. From the 1960s onwards, many saw brutalism as providing an answer to the demand for new monumentality (Den Boer et al., 2023, p.11).

The 'brutalist' ideology had a significant influence on the thinkers behind CIAM. A young generation of modernists rebelled against the old ideology of CIAM and founded Team X, from which structuralism emerged: human scale had to return to the design (Den Boer et al., 2023, p.12). Dick Apon was very convinced of the work of Team X. Their ideology is therefore visible in the design of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In Structuralism in Dutch Architecture (Van Heuvel, 1992, p.20), the author describes the ideology of Team X: they referred to the city seeking urban integration and multiple land uses. In contemporary terms: flexibility. Van Heuvel (1992, p.21) mentions some characteristics of structuralism: the building must be able to grow, adapt, and expand. But 'things must only be big as a multiple of units which are small in themselves...', as Hertzberger says, quoted in Van Heuvel (1992, p.22). Human scale must return.

Van Heuvel (1992, p.44) tallies all the characteristics and concludes that Apon's design for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs is indeed structuralist. The skeleton, the load-bearing structure, is placed entirely outside the wall, ensuring internal flexibility. The authors of BRUUT (Den Boer et al., 2023, p.108) agree with this. The rocky design, composed of 1500 different prefabricated concrete elements, meets that structuralist desire for human scale, although opinions on this are divided.

Writers generally do not agree on how to classify this building. They mention characteristics for both brutalism and structuralism but find it difficult to give a clear answer to which category this design belongs. The authors of Architecture in the Netherlands 2021/2022 (Van den Ende, 2021, p.31) clearly take a position: 'The 1985 building was designed [...] in a brutalist style featuring copious concrete and a dominant column structure.' Others, like Van Heuvel (1992), are more cautious.

However, placing a building in a category is only a starting point. It is more valuable to recognize the characteristics of brutalism or structuralism and, more importantly, to understand the effect of those characteristics on the functioning. The next part will discuss the functioning and the architectural qualities of the building. However, in order to understand why the architecture and how the building functions within its role, this part discusses the switch of function after 2017 in the last chapter of this first part.



Figure 25 / Meeting Team X in the backyard of Aldo van Eyck. Unknown, 1974.

5. THE TRANSFORMATION

Thirty-six years after the relocation of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the "Aponrots," the Second Chamber is housed in the building. In 2017, Zecc Architects was commissioned to realize the temporary design of the Dutch Parliament. For this purpose, the then Ministry of Foreign Affairs building was designated. That ministry moved to the design by Jan Hoogstad, in the former VROM ministry (Van Rossen, 1992). The building was renovated by Ellen van Loon, architect at OMA.

The contract was awarded due to the safety requirements of the design, which prevented tenders from being issued, which is normally the case for such a large project. Floris Alkemade, the State Architect at that time, compiled a list of firms that might take on the redesign of the ministry. Van Kooij, project manager at Zecc Architects, said: "They were looking for young firms, but with experience. That's a tricky mix, of course."

Despite Zecc being a young firm with little experience in this area, they were awarded the contract due to their pragmatic approach: "We're not a firm like OMA, who just says: this is what we want. Screw everything. This just needs to happen. This is the best, which of course yields very beautiful,

conceptual architecture." Van Kooij believes that this does not always result in architecture that the user ultimately appreciates. Or the planner or the financier. (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2)

The assignment involved transforming the department into the parliament building: "a replica of the Binnenhof." According to Van Kooij, despite the requirement, this is impossible: you cannot replicate a centuries-old Binnenhof with character in a typologically different building. Nevertheless, Zecc attempted to mimic the Binnenhof by analyzing the arrangement and grouping of spaces in the Binnenhof. (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2)

The building was internally transformed and externally adapted. The biggest intervention is indeed the entrance of the building, including the entrance hall. The public part must accommodate about 300,000 visitors per year, so there is a large public program that does not fit in the original entrance. The main entrance had to be relocated. The entrance shifted to the other side of the design, requiring an extension. A favorable side effect: visibility from the station is increased. The notching of the canopy required by the extension fits into the grid of the building. But with contrasting angles and colors. It adds something to the current design, according to Van Kooij. (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2)



Figure 26 / Entrance hall of temporary Parliament. Poelstra, 2021.

The brass-colored bands on the outside are also found inside in the entire interior of the public areas. The new entrance hall, with old facades as walls, houses lockers, a shop and restaurant, a security area, and two large escalators, towards the plenary hall. On the ground floor are the committee rooms. These are the public areas. Behind the next steps of security are office spaces, restaurants for politicians and the press, reception areas, meeting rooms, and workspaces for the civil service staff. (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2)

In the interior, neutral colors have been chosen. Shades of gray have been added to the design to enhance the contrast with the interior elements that have been moved (Van den Ende et al., 2021, p.29). In the new design, as many replicas as possible of characteristic elements from the Binnenhof have been adopted, such as the escalators, a true landmark in the entrance hall.



Figure 27 / Interior of entrance hall of temporary Parliament. Poelstra, 2021.

SUB-CONCLUSION

The construction by architect Apon has, to this day, cost more than 200 million in taxpayer money (Hoedeman et al, 2020). In return, the Netherlands obtained a Ministry of Foreign Affairs with a visually striking form. The history shows that this form emerged by taking into account various factors such as user perspective, urban integration, and architectural preferences. The structuralist design seems ahead of its time with flexible, open construction.

Flexibility; in contemporary architecture, flexibility is one of the major pillars. It ranks alongside circularity, sustainability. The building must be able to change function. No new construction, but renovation. The change in function of this building on Bezuidehouthoutseweg thus proves to be a good case study to test whether Apon's claim that the building is flexible in function holds true.



Figure 28 / The former Van Kleffensaal, now the Plenary Hall. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2015.

Figure 29 / Plenary Hall, the former Van Kleffenszaal. Tweede Kamer, 2021



In 2017, a process was initiated to change the function of the building on Bezuidenhoutseweg. From a building with office function to a building with versatile functions including office spaces, large halls, and meeting rooms. From ministry to Parliament. From the backbone of democracy to the heart of democracy.

Part two of this thesis addresses the main question of this research in great detail: In what way do the distinctive architectural qualities of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs contribute to the building's functionality in its role? This section is subdivided into three sub-questions concerning the role of the building, its characteristic architectural qualities and its functionality.

Each chapter is divided into two parts, discussing the former function and the current function of the building. The building as the ministry and the building as the temporary accommodation of the Dutch Parliament. The text is continuous, switching between the functions of the building in a clear division of chapters.

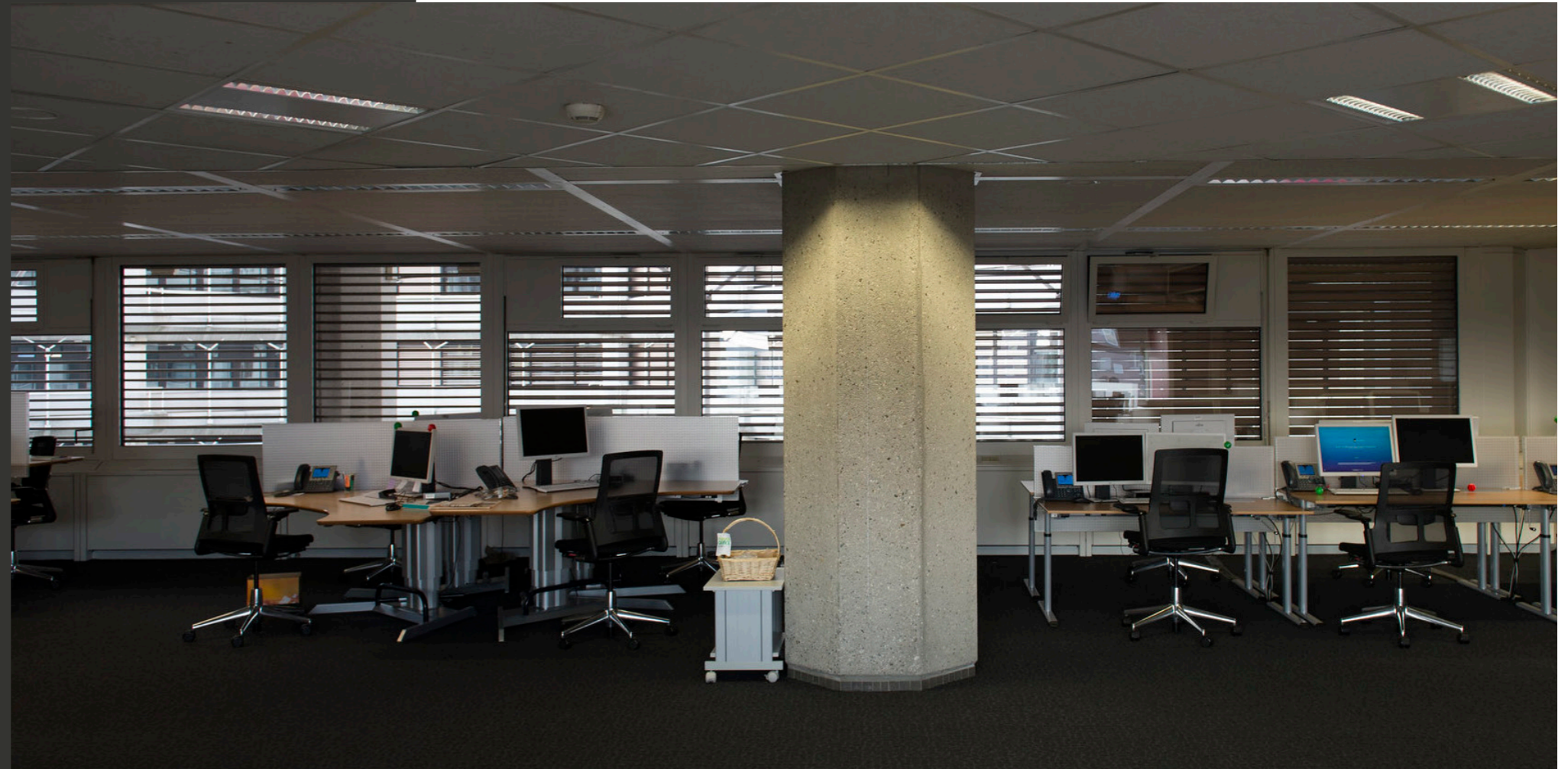


Figure 30 / Offices in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.

PART II

THE FORMER MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS VERSUS THE TEMPORARY HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

1. ITS ROLE

The building, now renamed as B67, a reference to the address where it is located, has changed its function over time. Initially serving as a ministry, the function shifted to temporary accommodation for the Second Chamber. Not only does the function change, but so does the type of user. And thus, the requirements in order to use this building change. The work conducted in the building changes. The type of visitor changes. The aspect of the main question addressed in this chapter is: What is 'its role'? And underlying, is the building suitable for its function with this purpose?

1.1 MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The design by Dick Apon, as previously outlined, was intended to accommodate a centralized Ministry of Foreign Affairs. This was a counter-movement against the trend initiated by Minister Udink of Housing and Spatial Planning. In 1972, he advocated for the decentralization of ministries and government buildings across the Netherlands. Consequently, the tax office ended up in Apeldoorn, the State Postal, Telegraph and Telephone Company (then still government-owned) in Groningen, and the Ministry of Education, Culture, and Science in Zoetermeer. (M.M. Teunissen, personal communication, February 28, 2024)

This decentralization effort was largely unsuccessful. In 1985 the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was finally opened in The Hague. It housed 1800 civil servants and later also agencies such as the Immigration and Naturalization Service (IND). Following World War II, the ministry experienced significant growth in size and responsibilities due to new international collaborations. Currently, the ministry's portfolio has expanded to include foreign trade and policy, European affairs, and international cultural, climate, and environmental policy. (Parlement.com, n.d. (III))

In general, the role of a ministry is to prepare and implement laws and policies. The department is hierarchically managed, with the responsible minister at the top of that structure. Ultimately, the ministry serves the Second Chamber of the Dutch Parliament. The Parliament directs, while the minister governs. The main users of the departmental building are therefore the ministers, civil servants, and to a lesser extent, the press and visitors—professionals who contribute to policy and legislation, mostly by invitation.



Figure 31 / Civil servants at work in the open-plan offices Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.



Figure 32 / Protestors in the entrance hall of the temporary House of Parliament. Van der Wal, 2024.

1.2 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The function of the building accommodating the Parliament is vastly different. It is the heart of democracy. Transparency of its proceedings is a top priority, contrasting sharply with the environment of a typical ministry where policy and laws can be developed securely. While the Chamber exercises control, but the Parliament itself functions under the control of the Dutch inhabitants. After all, the Dutch electorate chooses the Parliament through elections. The Second Chamber brings together a much wider array of actors than a ministry. The parliamentary building hosts and welcomes politicians, administrative support, the press and visitors such as lobbyists, regular spectators of the political process and professionals who provide information to politicians.

This significant difference in function between the Parliament and a ministry means a completely different set of requirements. While a ministry operates as a more inward-facing system, the parliament is an open and transparent institution. On the other hand, stringent security standards are in place: politicians must be able to make decisions and adjust policies in the national interest without external influence and in physical safety. They must be able to oversee legislation, make adjustments, and even act as co-legislators.

1.3 CONCLUSION

The significance of this analysis emphasizes the contrast between the two functions. This contrast reveals the substantial differences in the requirements of each. Even though the functional aspects may change relatively little, the distinction between public and private is sharply defined in a ministry, whereas it becomes blurred in the Second Chamber. This is not surprising: politicians are appointed by the public, the Dutch citizens.

2. THE DISTINCTIVE ARCHITECTURAL QUALITIES

In a typical scenario where a company or institution moves into a new premises, the building is shaped according to the requirements of the program. A different program entails a different form. But this situation is different. An institution relocates to a building previously used for a different function. Does a new function fit into a building shaped by the program of another function? Especially when this building is defined as a 'rock' or 'bunker'?

This section of the thesis analyzes various architectural features of Bezuidehouthoutseweg 67. The chosen themes for analysis stem from the used literature and from the interview with the architect from Zecc Architects, Mario van Kooij (appendix 2). The five overarching themes addressed are:

- Integration into the urban fabric;
- Human scale;
- Transparency;
- Construction;
- Interior.

Each theme is analyzed with sketches and photos, considering the building as both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and as the temporary accommodation of the Parliament. The analyses are interrelated, as the analysis of the Parliament building stems from and is based on the original situation when the building still housed the ministry.



Figure 33 / Facade of the Bezuidehouthoutseweg building. Unknorw, n.d.

2.1.1 INTEGRATION INTO THE URBAN FABRIC - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

In previous chapters, it has been explained how the plot for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs came into existence. The exchange plot of the Dutch government is divided into five parts. The unfortunate location along various arteries, the Bezuidenhoutseweg and the Prins Clauslaan, and the sunken Utrechtsebaan, along the plot and the surrounding buildings, force the design of the department to adapt to the situation.

The building can indeed be called the keystone: it acts as a connector between the gleaming white Royal Library and the dark, towering Babylon. In terms of color, B67 fits precisely in between.

However, this is about color, but not less important is the form. The Royal Library introduces a diagonal into the urban fabric. The plot becomes a trapezium. The

program of the design is large, but the plot is small. The narrow passage between the library and the ministry is a silent witness to this.

Despite the cruciform shape of the building, the originally designed 13-story high building fits well into the surroundings: the outer contours of the building take cues from the surroundings, while the arms of the building introduce a new direction, aligning with the diagonal of the Royal Library.

Thus, there is a significant connection between the buildings in this conglomerate of buildings. An almost impregnable fortress that can be approached from the outside. The passage between the buildings would have served as an entrance area between the buildings, but due to the completely closed facade facing these buildings and an opening from the station towards

Koekamp, the conglomerate is approached from the outside. B67 therefore has an opening on the Bezuidenhoutseweg.

This analysis does not stand alone. Rainer Bullhorst (1983, p.2) wrote, way before the opening of this building, in strong terms about the urban connection of the Aponrots, a reference to the building structure and the name of the architect, and the surrounding buildings: the accumulation of vivid metaphors count up to what he describes as a "spatial collision" (p.2).

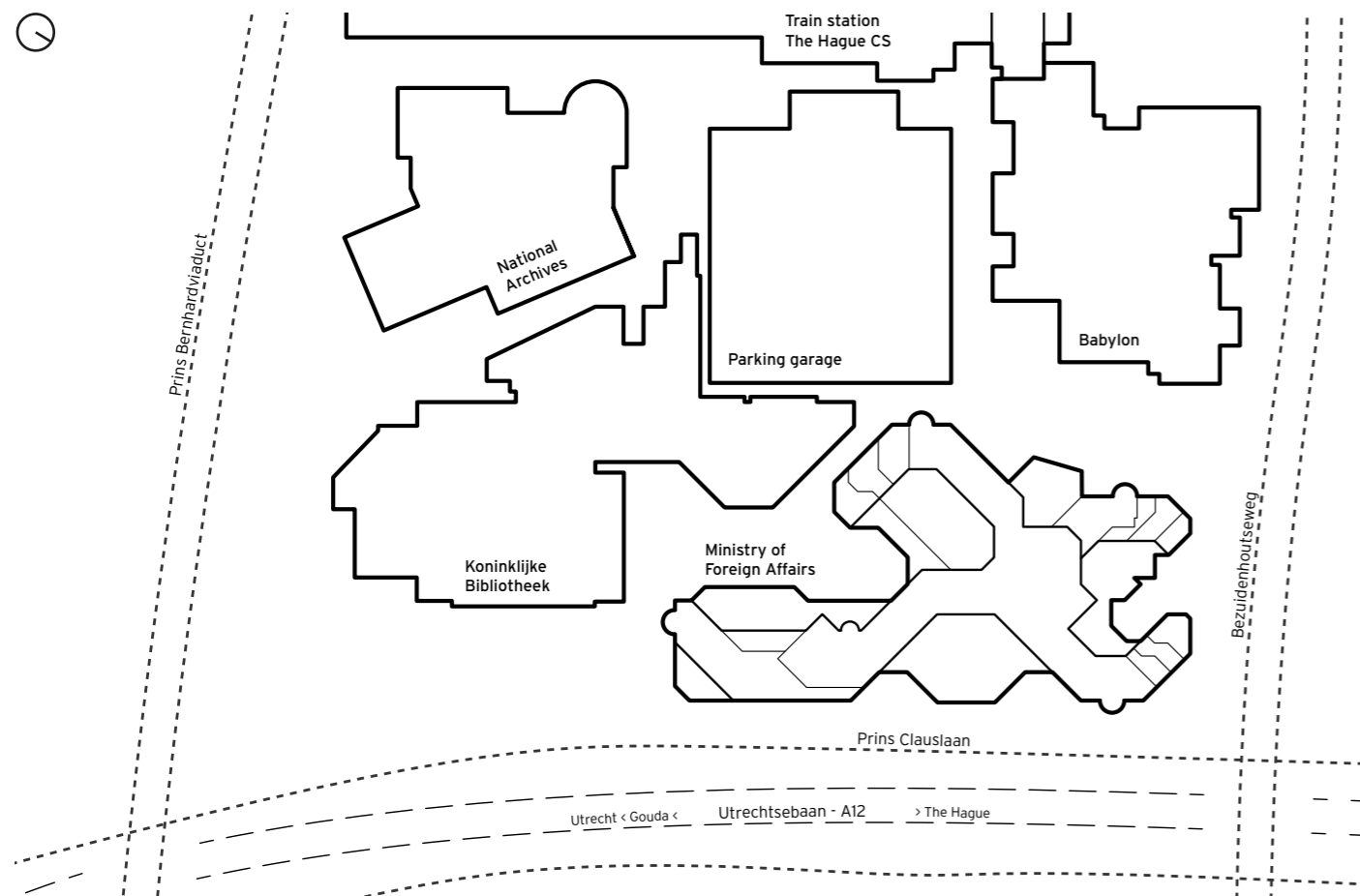


Figure 34 / The urban fabric context of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs - Scale 10000 (rescaled). Own image, 2024.



Figure 35 / The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in the urban context. Unknown, n.d.



Figure 36 / View from the train station. Own image, 2024.



Figure 37 / The square next to Den Haag CS, the building of University of Leiden and New Babylon. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014

2.1.2 INTEGRATION INTO THE URBAN FABRIC - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The parking garage between the central station and B67 was demolished and in its place, an university building with student housing and an underground parking lot has emerged, which is much smaller in contour, creating an opening towards the train station. The station, which underwent thorough renovation in 2010, opened up towards Bezuidenhout. Babylon was transformed into New Babylon: the shopping center was greatly expanded with many additional floors. From the perspective of the station, the new towers direct attention towards B67, towards the narrow passage between the buildings.

To the opinion of architect Bart Kellerhuis, responsible for the renovation, the building needed a much softer and lighter appearance (De Lange, 2021). The opening of The Hague Central Station and the new function of the building, intended to accommodate many more visitors, were reason enough for the relocation of the entrance to the courtyard. The newly created square between B67 and the train station has arguably a positive effect on the permeability of the conglomerate of buildings. However from this square the entrance is not visible in any way. Therefore, special attention was given to the passage by the use of lighting.

The introduced sightline from the passage to the opening between the buildings, where the entrance to B67 is now located, opens up the entire space. The contrasting facade shapes of the entrance hall, the contrasting colors, and the protruding canopy draw attention, and in this way, this impregnable fortress opens up. After passing through the passage, this dense urban development unfolds as if the visitor were in a valley, at the bottom of a mountain, a rock. The next chapter will discuss this opening in greater detail in relation to the human scale.



Figure 38 / The pass through between the Koninklijke Bibliotheek and the Parliament. Own image, 2024.

2.2.1 HUMAN SCALE - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As outlined in the preceding section of this thesis, architect Dick Apon was a fervent advocate of Team X, emphasizing the human side of modernism. He believed that each situation needed a context-specific solution, balancing the collective and individual needs. From this perspective emerged structuralist architecture: fragmented architecture divided into smaller units and in this way avoiding the monumental scale.

Apon himself stated (Het Nieuwe Instituut, 2000) that he achieved this by constructing the building like a rock: a broad base and a narrower structure towards the top. This attempt is clearly visible from the courtyard in the original design. After passing through the passage, which is anything but human in scale, the courtyard opens up to the visitor. A pond serves as the base for the rock, which builds up further. A sense of depth is created, diminishing the feeling of enormity.

The structuralist approach, dividing into smaller units, is prominently displayed in the repetitive facade elements of the upper half of the building. The prefab elements are fragmented, with visible seams between them. Elements become chunks, puzzle pieces. This concept extends to the window divisions: spaces between two columns are divided into three parts, which are further subdivided into smaller units. The user gains a sense of control over the building, as elements are brought down to a human scale.

However, not everyone resonates with the concept of the human scale. Koelé writes in Trouw (1985) about the experiences of ministry employees and outsiders, revealing differing perceptions of the building. When terms like "Suicide City" on the "Stalin Avenue" are used, perhaps one should take the term "human scale" with a grain of salt. Blindly adopting this term may not be appropriate in every context.



Figure 39 / Courtyard with pond. Unknown, n.d.

Figure 40 (right) / Facade facing the Bezuidenhoutseweg. Own image, 2024.

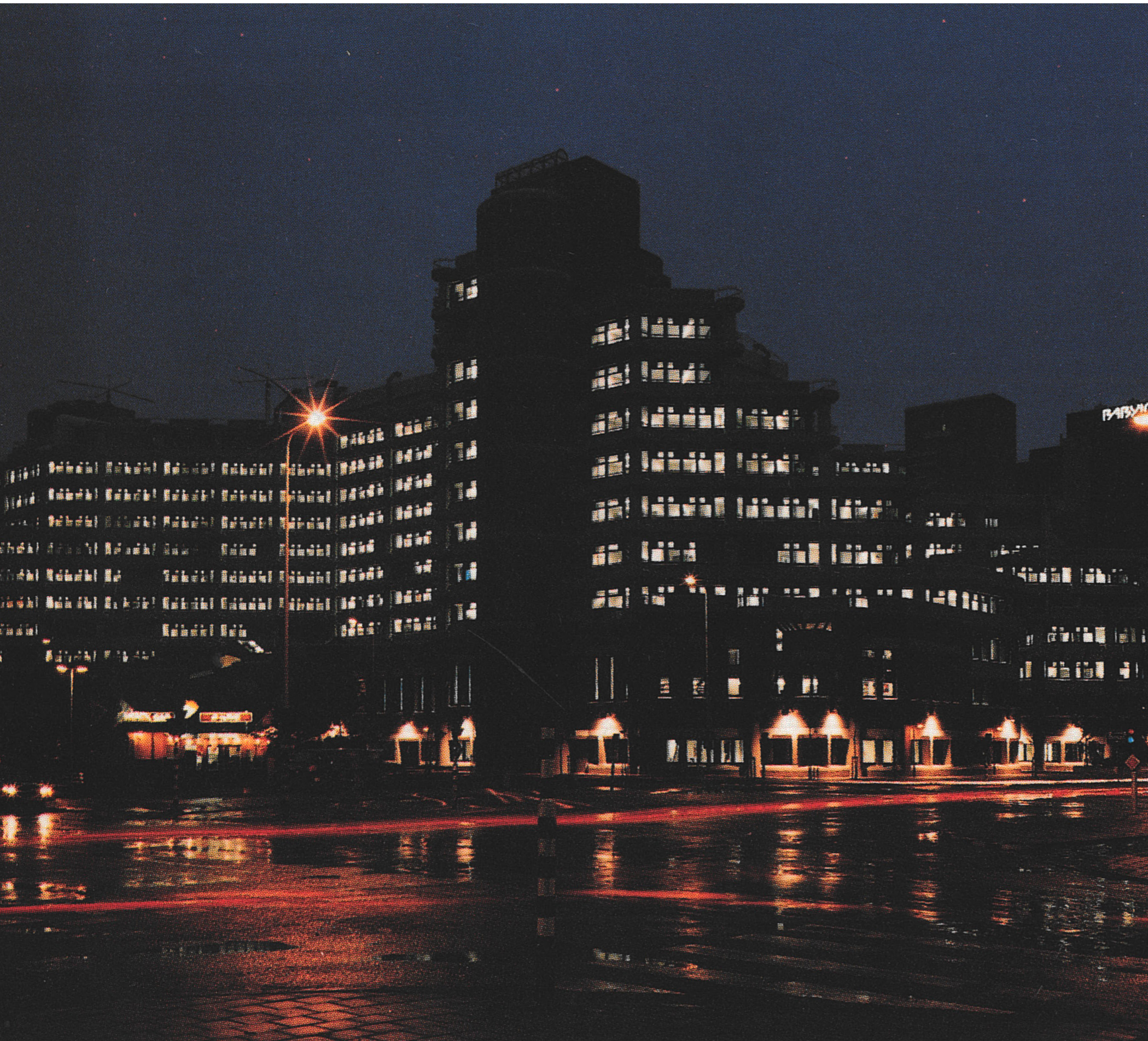


2.2.2 HUMAN SCALE - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The design by Zecc architects builds upon the groundwork laid by Dick Apon. In the interview, Van Kooij confirms the notion that the new entrance hall and canopies represent additional steps in the existing staircase of the building. However, it is not a mere extension of the staircase. Both form and materials are entirely different. Van Kooij himself remarks that, based on the principle that the building should feel warmer and lighter, existing materials cannot simply be adopted without consideration. The building must open up, according to Van Kooij's assertion (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2). With a contrasting entrance design, the building truly opens up. In comparison to the original design, the building now approaches the visitor. The steps in the original design were situated at a distance, far behind the pond, but now they begin right at the entrance. The building comes closer to the visitors of the building.



Figure 41 / The contrasting entrance hall as an addition to the rocklike structure. Poelstra, 2021.



2.3.1 TRANSPARENCY - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

As outlined in the previous chapter, in my opinion, the architects at Zecc have made a commendable effort to open up the building to its surroundings. The relationship from outside to inside, and vice versa, must be significantly improved. There is a reason for this: the function of the building.

Returning to the original design intended for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The first chapter of this section already explained how this building is used and by whom. The ministry is primarily an inward-focused organization and serves as a place to prepare and develop laws and policies in safety and seclusion.

The introverted function aligns with the facade's appearance. The building is divided into two parts: the lower portion, varying in height but generally comprising the first three to five floors, is highly introverted, turned inward. The upper portion appears much more transparent, lighter, and more open (figure 43, next page).

The explanation for this feature is quite straightforward. The upper eight to ten layers consist of two horizontal prefab elements and two columns. These serve as a frame for a single window element divided into smaller fragments. They are placed around the window frames.

This is very different from the lower portion (figure 44, next page). This part of the building reads as a solid facade from which elements have been cut out to create windows. A completely different principle: also the facade openings in the bottom part are framed by prefab elements, but the facade itself reads a plane with holes.

The façade of the bottom part is not a flat surface but divided into brick elements, with beveled concrete elements at the top and bottom of a recessed frame to soften the harshness of the facade. All these materials lie within the same plane. The result: it is perceived as a solid surface with a human scale.

Figure 42 / Ministry of Foreign Affairs by night. From *BOUW* (vol. 19, p.182) by Rutten et al., 1985.



Figure 43 / Facade, upper part. Own image, 2024.



Figure 44 / Facade, bottom part. Own image, 2024.



Figure 45 / The new entrance of the Parliament. Poelstra, 2021.



Figure 46 / The interior of the entrance hall, the Statenpassage. Tweede Kamer, 2021.

2.3.2 TRANSPARENCY - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The ministry is no longer a department building for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; it now serves as the house of democracy. Publicly accessible, transparent in its operations. This is despite the fact that the same types of spaces exist within the building. With the new entrance hall of the building, transparency is achieved. The fully glazed curtain wall provides a view of the central hall with its two large escalators. This is where politicians, visitors, press, and petitioners come together. The only element separating the outsider is the pond and the security scan area.

The colors, light gray tones and brass used outside are also found in the interior. Thus, there is a strong relationship between the exterior and interior. Similarly, forms introduced outside, such as the round columns seamlessly transitioning into the canopy ceiling, are visible from the outside in the towering columns of the entrance hall.

With the introduction of new forms and colors, the distinction between private and public becomes clear. The very open entrance hall and canopy contrast with the closed, introverted facades behind which functions are housed that are inaccessible to the public.

2.4.2 CONSTRUCTION - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

In the current design of the Parliament, the visible construction is also used as a strength in the interior design. In the façade, a contrast is designed between new and old, private and public. Clean shapes with rounded corners contrast with Apon's octagonal design. The same applies to the interior. It is precisely the structural framework that catches the eye in the interior due to its sleek framing. The structural framework and the structuralist (and brutalist) aspects of B67 are accentuated, restored to honor.

The added construction is designed to be as light as possible: the columns in the entrance hall have a thinning at the base and are materialised differently. Furthermore, the columns smoothly transition into the ceiling or roof. In this way, columns become part of the design but also have limited visual impact. This also fits with the architect's competence to open the building to its surroundings and to lighten it.



Figure 48 / Old and new construction. Poelstra, 2021.

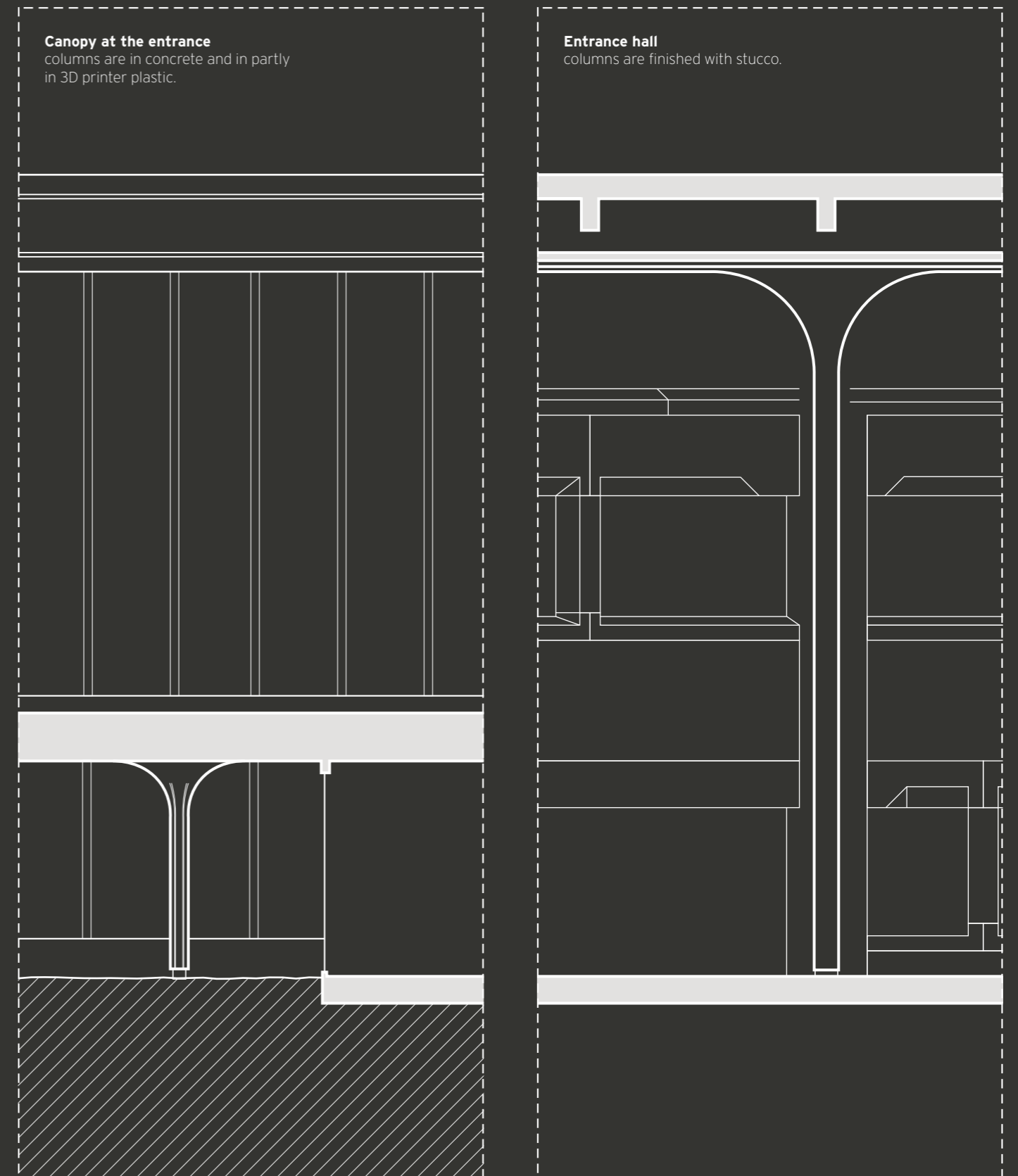


Figure 49 / Columns designed by Zecc Architects for the newly designed canopy and entrance hall. Own image, 2024.

So far, much praise has been given to Dick Apon's integrated design, but there is also a downside to Apon's design. Although the original construction may appear suitable for flexible use, this design reveals that not every open-construction building, with an open structural framework, is as flexible as thought.

Two factors are important to mention in the partial transformation of the building. Firstly, the commission determined that efforts should be made to replicate the Binnenhof as closely as possible. Secondly, the design was made to house a ministry, not a parliament. Together, these factors have posed significant challenges in the redesign.

The structural framework heavily influenced the layout of the floor plan. Columns stood in the way of replicating the plenary hall. Various alternatives were explored, including implementing a different type of meeting

room to circumvent the construction. There were even discussions about implementing a "House of Commons" arrangement, which would have had a significant impact on the functioning of democracy. Fortunately, for the sake of democracy, it was decided to cut off columns and reinforce the structure with an enormous truss on the roof.

The committee rooms on the ground floor were also forced to be accommodated in this space. In the original design, this area housed storage and transportation of goods. These spaces have large spans, suitable for larger rooms, and are the only option for accommodating such rooms. According to Van Kooij, these spaces are quite tight but also intimate. (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2)

The construction undoubtedly has aesthetic quality, but in this case, functional quality is not always present.

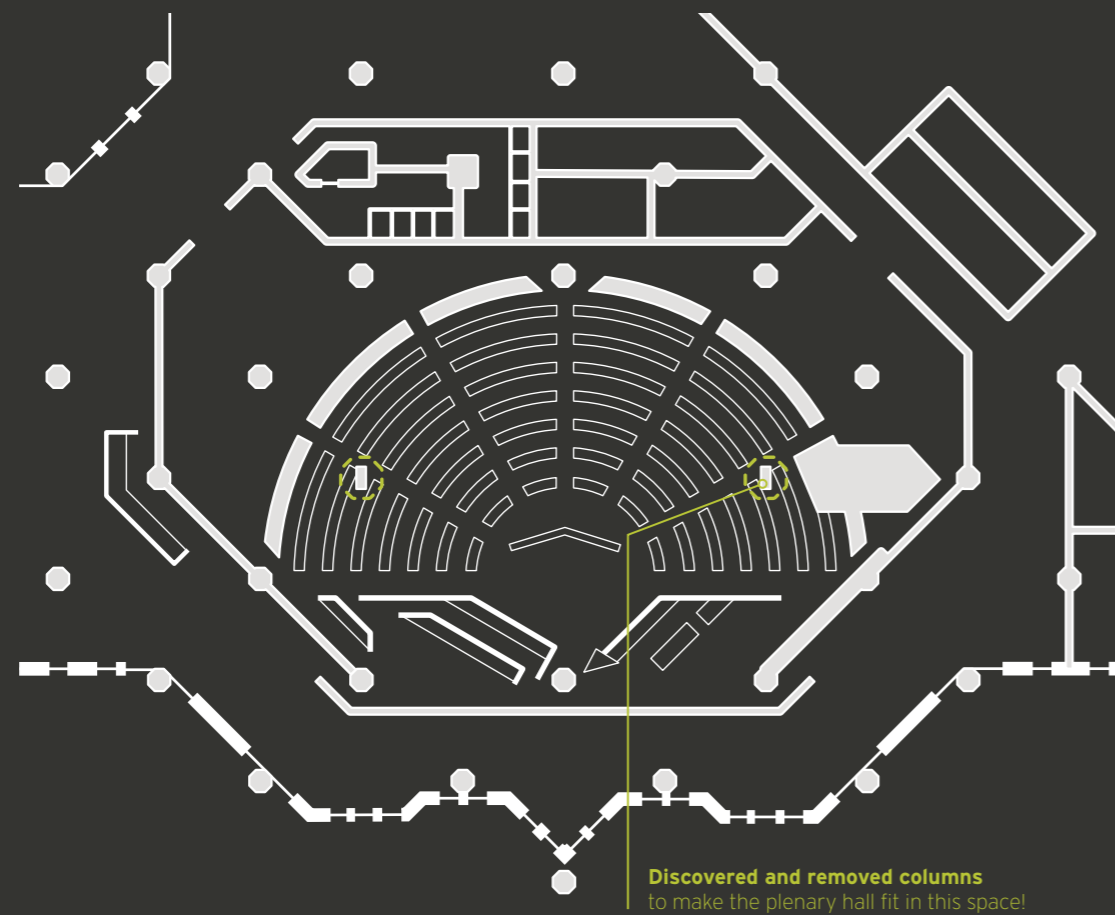


Figure 50 / Positions of columns in and around the plenary hall. Own image, 2024.



Figure 51 / House of Commons. Encyclopædia Britannica, n.d.



Figure 52 / Interior of a committee room. Poelstra, 2021.

2.5.1 INTERIOR - MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

In the previous analysis, it became apparent that the grid is so rigid that changes in the floor plan were almost impossible during the transformation of the building. The building is shaped according to its original function, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The floor plan (figure 53) confirms that: generally, columns are part of a partition wall. In large spaces, such as the expedition rooms and the internal parking garage, there are columns, but they will not hinder the use. The floor plan is characterized by a clear structure. Office spaces are located at the facades, while spaces not adjacent to a facade are generally supporting spaces such as archives

and storage spaces. On the lower floors, there are also large spaces with skylights, such as the large conference room, or spaces with views of an inner courtyard, such as the restaurant.

Dick Apon has thus carefully considered how light enters this office colossus. However, despite this, there are also spaces where daylight cannot penetrate and where the human scale is completely absent. Examples include the core, the heart of the building and the corridors alongside the archival rooms.

From top to bottom

Figure 54 / Van Kleffenszaal. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2015.

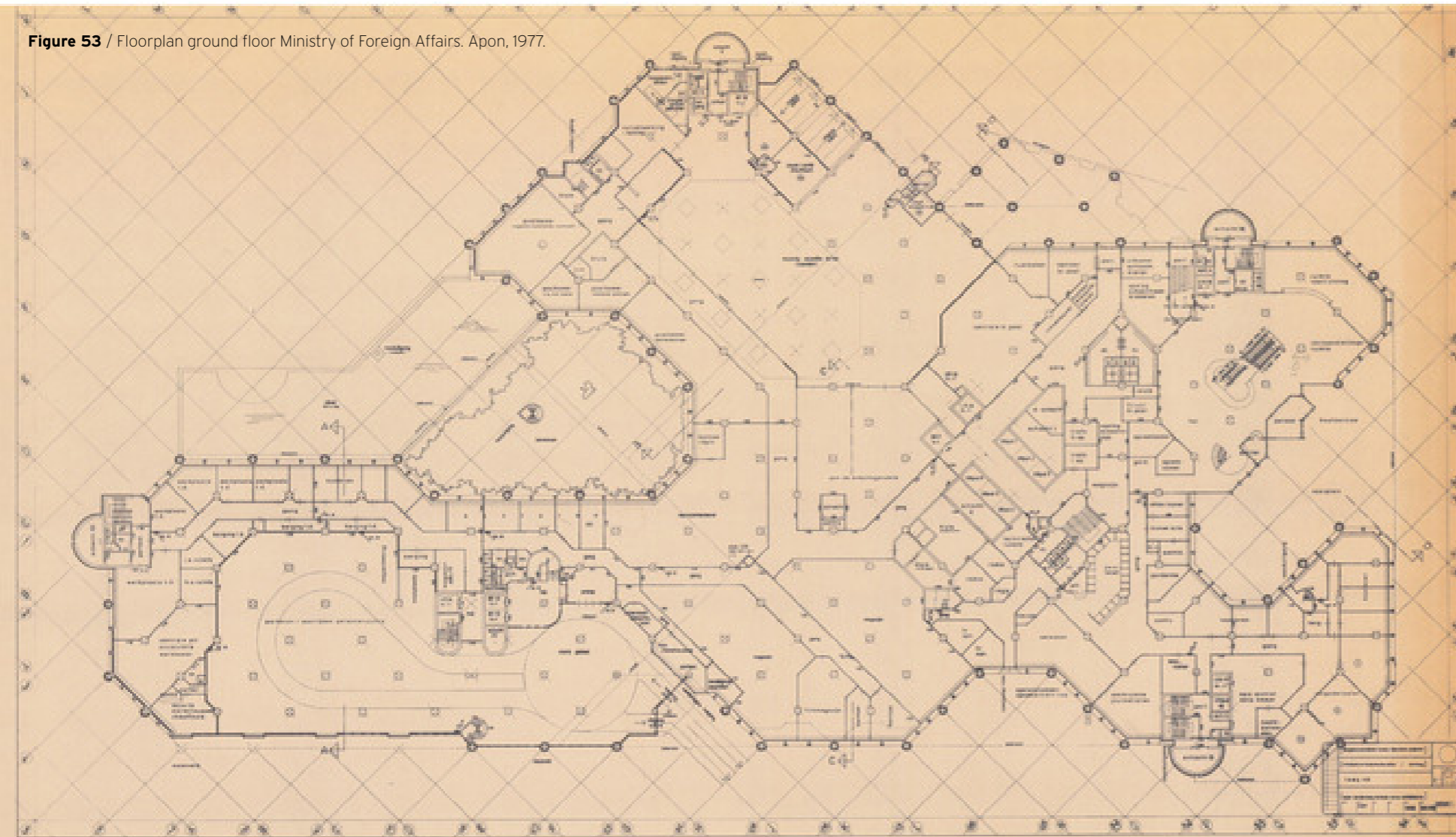
Figure 55 / Pond and courtyard at the first floor. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.

Figure 56 / Hallways in the heart of the building. Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017.



Donkere gangen en allemaal kamertjes.
Dat stond mij nog bij van elke keer dat ik het bezocht.

Figure 53 / Floorplan ground floor Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Apon, 1977.





Also, the floor plan clearly shows that the wishes of the civil servants themselves have been taken into account, namely the small spaces for a maximum of two to four civil servants per office. Even more interesting is that over time, this ideal has been abandoned. Walls were broken down to create open-plan offices: workspaces became much lighter and thus the atmosphere improved. The era of the laying battery came to an end.

The interior looks light and spacious. The change in the interior must have come from a dissatisfaction with the building, which probably was due to the stifling nature of all the small spaces. This stifling effect is common throughout the building. The interior, designed by the firm Salomonson, Tempelman, and Egberts, consists of many robust materials of the construction, finished with wooden paneling. It has an acoustic effect on the space, but above all, it creates a warm atmosphere. Combined with the sometimes small or recessed windows, it creates a suffocating effect. The fact that adjoining walls are often finished in the same materials, colors, or textures does not help. The analyses before concluded that the bottom part of the building is not transparent from the outside to the inside. From this analyses the conclusion can be drawn that we can also say that for the transparency from inside to outside. The then common and extreme nickname for this building, Suicide City, suddenly becomes much more understandable (NRC Handelsblad, 1985).



Figure 57 (above) / Office spaces in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.
Figure 58 (under) / General space with original interior. From *BOUW* (vol. 19, p.182) by Rutten et al., 1985.

2.5.2 INTERIOR - HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

In the quest of the architects at Zecc architects, making the building lighter and more open than before was the objective. The interior supports this. Very light gray tones have been chosen, forming a neutral base for the interior in the Parliament.

The plenary hall also plays an enormously important role in this. Even in this hall, colors have been kept neutral to enhance the blue seats and pear wood tables that have been moved with them. Despite the neutral colors, the interior does have character: this is due to the clever graphic design of the interior: the application of different textures, seamless wall connections (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2). In this way, the current construction also contrasts with the interior, thus coming into its own. The character of the building, which was less recognizable in the interior of the former ministry, is now vibrant again.



Figure 59 / Front view plenary hall. Poelstra, 2021.



Figure 60 / Different materials and textures in the design of the plenary hall. Poelstra, 2021.



Figure 61 / Hallway in one of the fingers of the temporary House of Representatives. Poelstra, 2021.

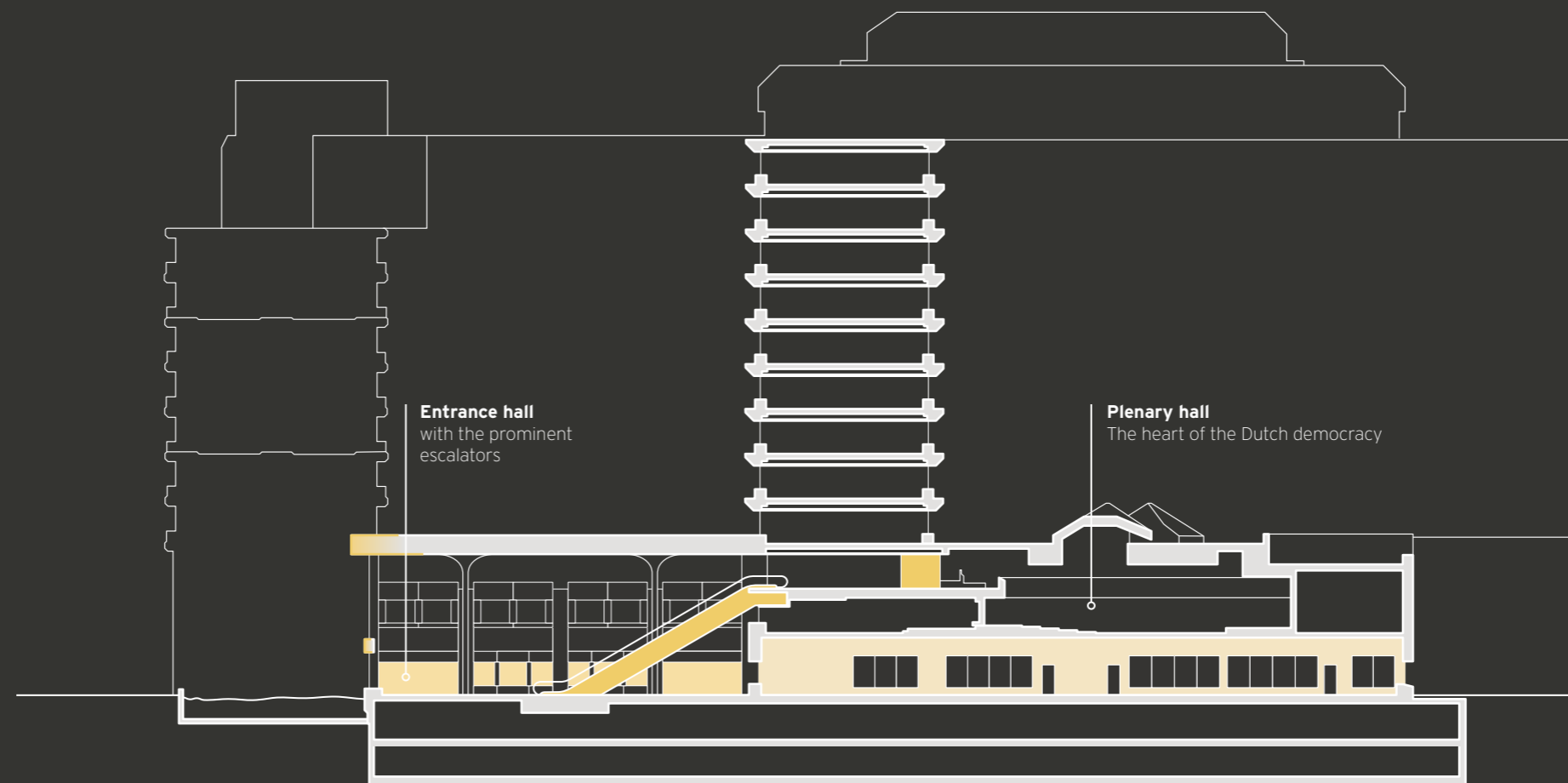
The plenary hall is the heart of this building. The design of the public spaces also leads, as it were, towards this plenary hall. From outside, one is drawn in by the brass-colored band of the canopy, where brass also plays the leading role inside. The brass-colored escalator leads upwards, to the plenary hall.

Highly abstracted, the building can be divided into two parts: a public part, characterized by the brass-colored design, and the private part for politicians and administrative support, which is much more in neutral colors and therefore does not attract extra attention, but makes the work environment much lighter.

The cross-section with the color distribution of the interior also shows how the functions in the building are divided. Public functions and private functions are separated. The faction rooms are located high in the



Figure 62 / Core of the building at the time of being the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.



building, tucked away in the arms. Transparent partitions have been placed in the corridors where meeting rooms are positioned for a light effect, in line with the architect's goals (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2).

From the core of the building, everyone can go to their own part of the building. The dynamics between parties are hardly noticeable. Everyone has their own dead-end street. And in some cases, a party shares its corridor with another. The only advantage of this arm structure is that everyone is close to the core of the building and can therefore quickly move to their destination.

Which corridor you take from the core is sometimes a wild guess. The core with six elevator cores and stairwells is a disorientation point. There is no daylight, no landmark. Thus, despite the clear separation of functions, the division between private and public, the practice shows that the human aspect has been lost in this aspect of the building. Member of Parliament Anita Pijpelink from GroenLinks-PvdA writes after being a Member of Parliament for 100 days on X: "I'm not really a numbers person, but now for a moment: got lost in the building 28 times..." (Pijpelink, 2024).

Figure 63 / The brass color in the exterior and interior draws visitors to the plenary hall, as it were Own image, 2024.

3. THE FUNCTIONALITY IN ITS ROLE

This third chapter delves into the functionality of the building for its role. The sub-question addressed in this chapter is: What is 'its functionality' in 'its role'? From the analyses of the architectural qualities, several points have already emerged that indicate the functionality in relation to the role of the building.

This chapter also addresses the functionality of the building per role. It reflects on one hand, something about the building in relation to the role of a ministry and on the other hand, about the building in relation to the role of the Parliament. The latter will be extensively examined because, as revealed in interviews with architect Van Kooij, an attempt was made to literally replicate the Binnenhof, the original residence of the Parliament, to B67.



Figure 64 / Binnenhof and Hofvijver. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2015.



Figure 65 / Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Unknown, n.d.

3.1 MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

One must understand that the design was specifically tailored for use as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Therefore, one could argue that the building was constructed around the functional spaces, inherently serving the purpose it was intended for. From that perspective, one can analyze and conclude that the building is functional. However, from a historical standpoint, one must realize that the transition to a building where all departments are consolidated was a monumental undertaking. Spokesperson for the ministry, Bert Wildenburg, associates another concept with the term 'functional': efficiency. (Nanninga, 1984)

The design indeed proves this. The ministry adopts a strictly hierarchical layout, not only Foreign Affairs, but also other ministries. Marlinde Kaptein experienced this during her internship at the Ministry of the Interior. She says, "There are so many supervisors, and you are just do something on your own. Everyone always has something to say about your work because there are many people above you." (Megaiz, 2023) A direct hit, as it is no different at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The design also facilitates this. On the higher floors, the further from the core, the closer to the dead end, the lower in the hierarchy. This building facilitates and embodies hierarchy (figure 66a).

Certainly, the office floors were battery farms for civil servants, with individual cubicles (figure 66b) for two or three officials. It is fair to mention that these were initiated by the officials themselves, actually (NRC Handelsblad, 1976). Modern ideas about a pleasant working environment later led to a redesign of the building. The small rooms were replaced by open-plan offices, made possible by the building's open structural design.

The strict framework and the rough structural support also introduce a new form of businesslike atmosphere, something that modernism and all its extravagances aim to achieve. No excess ornamentation. Less is more. It aligns with the character of the ministry, the legislative factory.

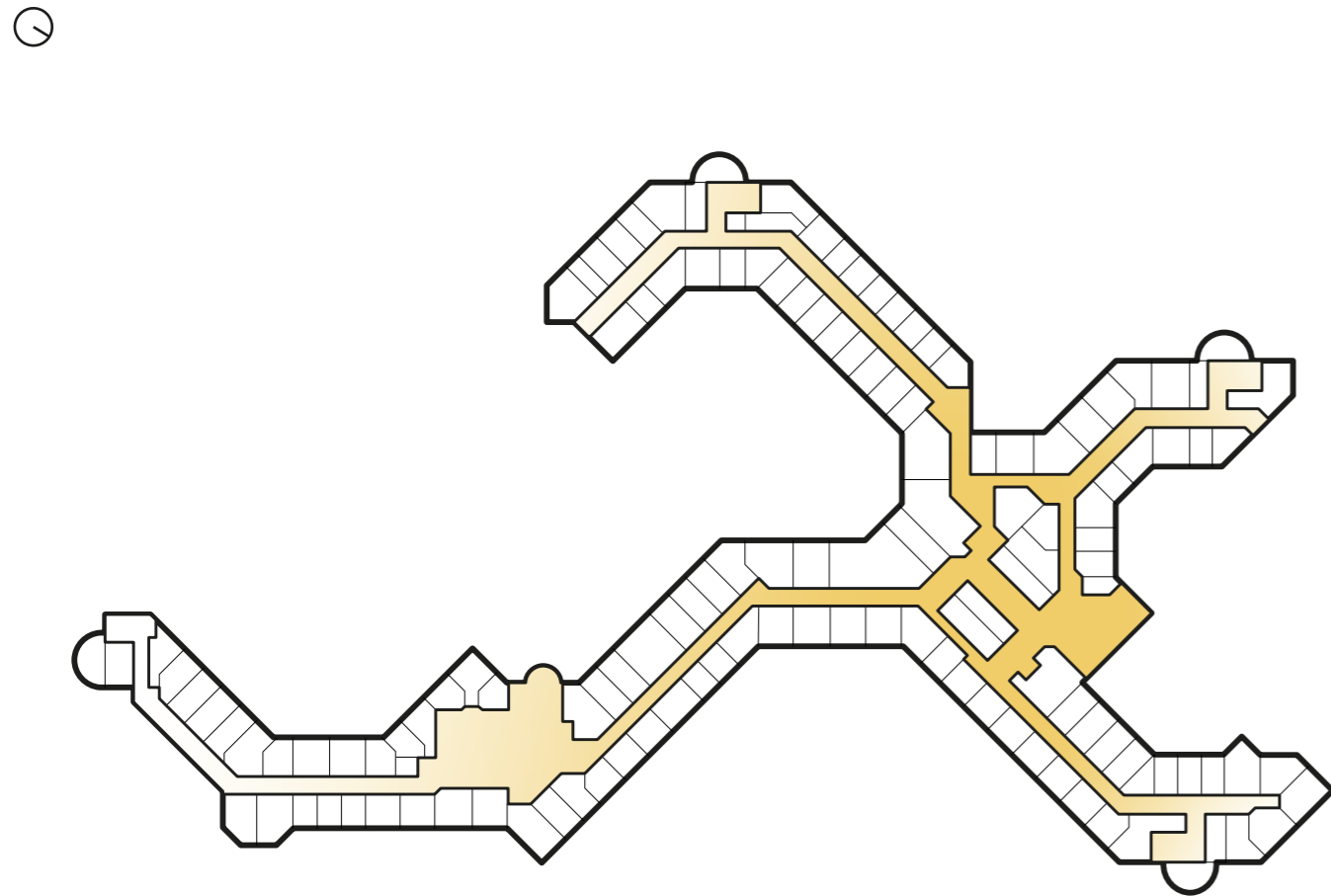


Figure 66a / Diagram of the dead-end corridors on the seventh floor. Own image, 2024.

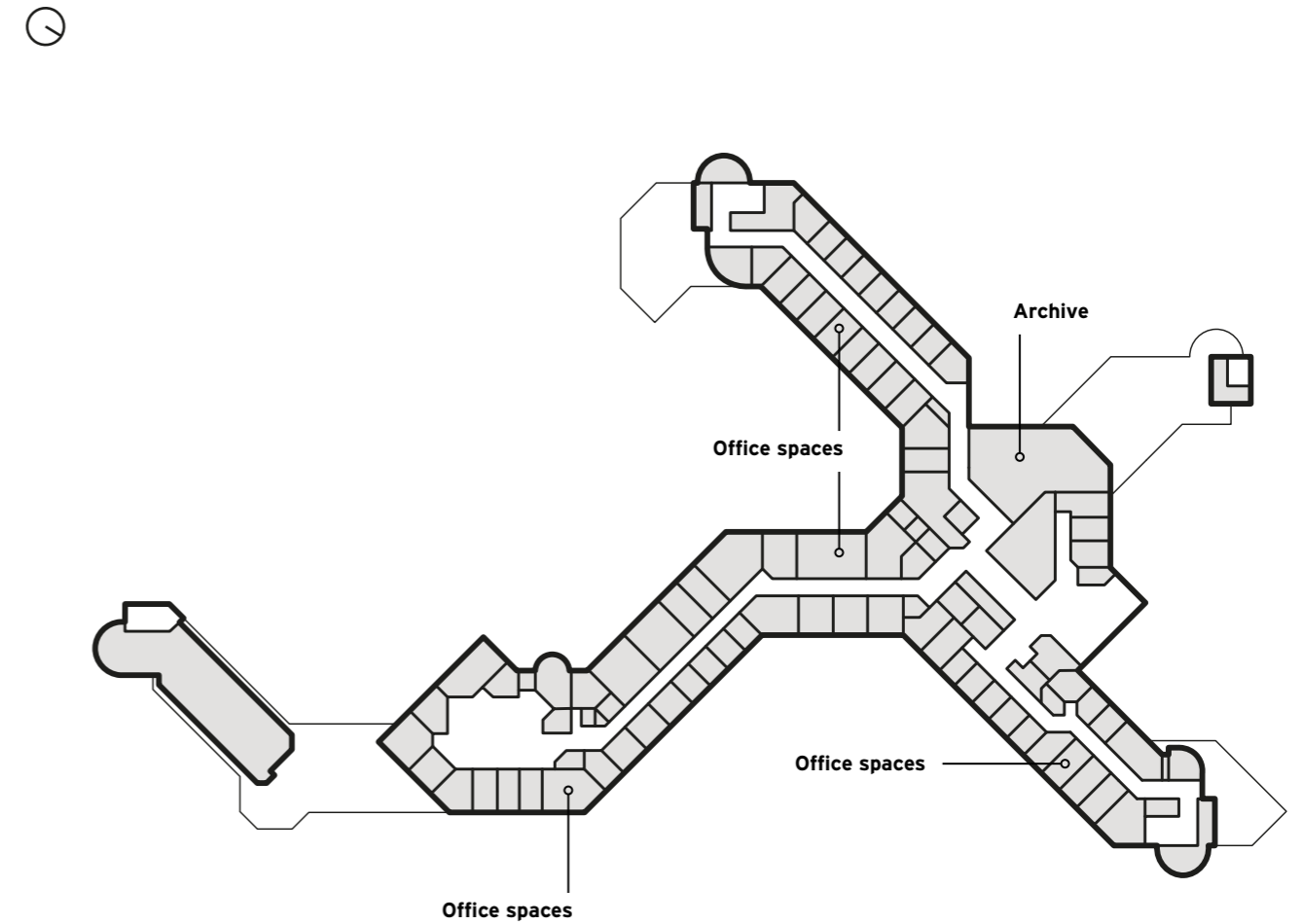


Figure 66b / Diagram of the individual cubicles for two, three or four officials. Own image, 2024.

3.2 HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

The introduced businesslike atmosphere of the building is not something that has a positive effect on every function. The functionality of the building as the temporary home of the Parliament is therefore much less pronounced. Remarkably, because the types of spaces that the ministry contained and that the Parliament needs are no different.

And this is the crux; democracy cannot be encapsulated within a heavily structured, businesslike building. This fortress may be a safe haven for politicians, but democracy is at risk. In the book *Wantrouwen in de Wandelgangen* (English: *Distrust in the Corridors*) (Tromp et al., 2023), it is explained thoroughly why this building does not have a positive impact on democracy.

The two-part book discusses the relationship between politicians and the press in the Binnenhof and compares it to the situation at B67. Two elements play a significant role in strengthening this relationship between the press and politicians: the typology of the building and the labyrinthine routes within it. The authors of the highly

insightful book *Wantrouwen in de Wandelgangen* (2023, p.18) reflect on the vast maze of corridors, corners and alcoves where everyone could just run into each other by chance. Chance encounters were precisely the strength of the relationship between politicians and the press. The corridors, the traffic spaces connecting important halls and offices in the Binnenhof, also served as "a bench, a nook [...] a place to whisper" (p.30). Additionally, the typology of the building resembles that of a castle with a vast courtyard. Infinite circles can be walked in the building, and the relationship to the square, where the people gather, is short, connected, and powerful.

Incidentally, the architects of Zec architects did make an attempt to reintroduce those corridors. The space behind the plenary chamber, one could call it backstage, is a traffic area designed that is of great value for democracy. Agreements are made here, plans are hatched and the debate is observed. That space resembles the corridors as they were known in the Binnenhof.



Figure 68 / Corridor in use by Jetten and Klaver. Crone, 2021.



Figure 67 / Corridors in the Binnenhof. Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2021.



Figure 69 / Negotiating in the corridor. Van Lonkhuijsen, 2023.



Figure 70 / Menno de Bruyne. Bleijenberg-van Leeuwen, 2023.

By neglecting other factors, which will not be discussed in this thesis, the relationship between the press and politicians cooled over the years, but especially so when the house of democracy moved to the Aponrots. The same two factors that spatially contributed to the strong bond between the press and politicians were now the axe at the root. The typology of the building prevents politicians from casually encountering the press. The "swarming" described by Van de Ven in Tromp et al (2023, p.134) can be crossed out. Venturing as a journalist into a dead-end corridor arouses suspicion: do I need to conceal something? What are you doing here? Parties manage to control this by having spokespersons and press officers intercept the press at the beginning in their room: signs saying "report here" above the door metaphorically kill all dynamics.

Then the second factor, spontaneity in design. Present in the Binnenhof, completely absent in B67. Businesslike efficiency dominates this design. Esther Ouwehand of the Party for the Animals (PvdD) said at the time of the move that she was afraid all creativity would be crushed. She argues that efficiency and purposefulness ooze from the pores of these buildings (Tromp et al, 2023, p.133). Then Speaker of the House Vera Bergkamp felt that everyone should give the building a chance: "It's a building you really have to get to know" (Willemsen, 2021). Not everyone is willing to give it that chance. Menno de Bruyne, SGP spokesperson and almost part of the interior, is annoyed by the interchangeability of the design: all grandeur is gone (p.165). And it never really was there. Former 50Plus MP Liane den Haan used the metaphor of a hospital for the building's accommodation.

The assignment of the team of the Chief Government Architect can therefore be considered impossible: not only is it technically impossible to project the Binnenhof onto B67, but the building also does not lend itself to the grandeur and tradition in which the Parliament operates.



Figure 71 / Esther Ouwehand. ANP, 2023.



Figure 72 / Patatbalie. Poelstra, 2021.

PART III

COMPARISON AND CONCLUSION

"I will be a Speaker with homesickness for you. The new members might think this is our real abode, but it's not. This parking garage is merely our temporary domicile. The scout and the faction leaders are now facing the drafty revolving doors, addressing the press, thus illustrating the absence of all grandeur, but this is not our natural habitat. We are fish out of water. I yearn for our return, and I will truly kick it into high gear to expedite our redemption from exile." (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2023)

Once again, the words of the now-elected Speaker Bosma. Where did these words come from? What was the basis for this bold statement? The preceding chapters have shed some light on that.

The main question that was central to this thesis was: In what way do the distinctive architectural qualities of the former Ministry of Foreign Affairs contribute to the building's functionality in its role? The words 'in its role' in the question have proven to be of great importance in understanding why the building functions much better in one situation than in another role.

The answer to the main question is certainly not straightforward, but rather twofold. Depending on the function of the building, the answer to this question is entirely different. The following retrospective, comparison and conclusion provide a nuanced answer to the main question.

Firstly, the building as the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. From the reconstruction of its history, the analysis of the ministry's functioning and the analysis of its design, it is evident that the building can rightfully be called functional for this purpose. The design is entirely tailored to accommodate this function. It is shaped by its function.

The ministry is characterized by its introverted structure. The facade image encourages this, with the division of the facade with frames; the recessed frames create an inward-oriented whole, but the subdivision of the facade maintains human scale. This subdivision of the facade into a lower introverted

part and an upper extroverted part also clearly illustrates how the building is functionally divided: public functions downstairs, which are not accessible to any random individual but to a specific target group, and office spaces above, the private areas. The design, with its maximum facade area and the open yet fragmented layout of the facades in the upper half of the building, indicates that a solution has been sought here to create a healthy working environment for civil servants in this densely populated area. There is plenty of natural light.

It can rightly be said that the architectural qualities of the 'Aponrots' have made an enormous positive contribution to the working conditions of civil servants. Thus, the building is highly suitable as a ministry. "I will really miss it when I leave here," said technician Hans Captein (Tweede Kamer der Staten-Generaal, 2017), who has worked in this building for 35 years. Not surprising.



Figure 73 / Martin Bosma after being elected as chairman. Utrecht, 2023.

It is to be expected that Martin Bosma will not express these sentiments upon leaving this building. B67 as the residence of the Parliament is met with much resistance. And that is not surprising at all. When the Binnenhof moved to this concrete colossus, Zecc architects attempted to lighten the building and open it up to its surroundings in the renovation design. The building has been internally adapted, expanded with a new entrance hall, but otherwise contains the same types of spaces as the ministry. The idea that because the ministry functioned here, and therefore after adjustment the Parliament would also function here, is far too simplistic. There are two fundamental differences, namely the functioning of the organization and the architectural requirements for that functioning.

Firstly, the functioning of the organization. The Second Chamber is the heart of democracy and benefits from complete transparency, accountability, and trust. There is therefore a dynamic between outside and inside. This is not only digital, with watching debates, but also an extroverted orientation. The ministry could withdraw from the outside. What

happens inside is confidential, safe, shielded. The debate about what was discussed and decided inside was conducted in the public halls at the Binnenhof. Now that the Binnenhof is located where work could be done behind closed doors, there is a mismatch between architecture and function.

So secondly, the architecture that serves the function of the building does not serve the function of the building. The first point focused on the relationship between outside and inside. The architectural qualities of the design, the structure of the building, and the facade imbued with human scale, as well as the integration into the urban fabric with tight, narrow passages, are not conducive to the extroverted function of the Parliament. The second reason also focuses on the dynamics within the building. In the building, there is dynamism between politicians and between politicians and the press. Due to the businesslike design with dead-end arms, the dynamism that benefits from spontaneity has been completely stifled. The typology of the building does not meet the unwritten architectural requirements of Dutch democracy.

In short, the desire to quickly end this exile from the Binnenhof to B67 seems, with regard to the functioning of democracy, not superfluous. The move back to the Binnenhof is still pending; the Binnenhof is under construction until at least the end of 2028 (Binnenhof renovation, 2023).

What the building will be used for after the move back to the Binnenhof is still uncertain. Demolition is a possible option, not entirely illogical given the contested decision to demolish the former Ministry of Social Affairs (Weessies, 2023). A large number of office buildings and therefore ministries have become redundant since hybrid working has become popular.

Back to the Aponrots. Van Kooij has ideas if the building becomes vacant. Many renovations are pending at ministries: it seems like a good idea to Van Kooij to use this building as a temporary building. This is a considerable short-term solution. In the long term, the building could be transformed: it has enormous load-bearing capacity and could therefore easily be expanded or topped up. Many residential buildings are being built in the area, and according to Van Kooij, this building could also be used for housing (Van Kooij, personal communication, March 06, 2024 - appendix 2).

The last option is a relocation back to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. It has already been mentioned that civil servants nostalgically remember their time in B67, but also the dissatisfaction with the current housing of that ministry. The outcomes of the analyses also support this idea. Therefore, this thesis ends with a call to the government real estate agency: restore the Binnenhof quickly to its former glory; house the ministry back in this 'parking garage'!



Figure 74 / Interior former ministry of Social Affairs. Jaeger, G., Van der Vlugt, G., Oerlemans, R., Van Reeken, J., Vermaas, K., n.d.



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Figure 75 / Office space fourth floor. Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, 2014.

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OWN IMAGERY

Pictures 2., 5., 22., 23., 24., 34., 36., 38., 40., 43., 44., 49., 50., 63., 66a., 66b. and the picture at page 113 are privately owned pictures or own drawings. For most of the self-made drawings a drawing set of Zecc Architects has been used, which is not allowed to be published under any circumstances. Therefore these drawings are not part of the appendix either.

APPENDIX

APPENDIX 1 - QUOTE MARTIN BOSMA DURING ELECTION FOR POSITION OF CHAIRPERSON

Dutch: “Ik zal voor u een Kamervoorzitter met heimwee zijn. De nieuwe leden denken misschien dat dit ons echte onderkomen is, maar dat is niet zo. Deze parkeergarage is slechts ons tijdelijke domicile. De verkenner en de fractieleiders staan nu voor de tochtige draaideuren de pers te woord en illustreren zo de afwezigheid van alle grandeur, maar dat is niet onze natuurlijke habitat. We zijn vissen op het droge. Ik hunker naar onze terugkeer en ik ga echt de turbo erop zetten om onze verlossing uit de ballingschap te bespoedigen.”

English: “I will be a Speaker of the House for you with a sense of longing. New members may think that this is our real abode, but it is not so. This parking garage is merely our temporary domicile. The explorer [1] and the party leaders are now facing the drafty revolving doors, addressing the press, thus illustrating the absence of all grandeur, but that is not our natural habitat. We are fish out of water. I long for our return, and I will truly accelerate efforts to expedite our liberation from exile.”

APPENDIX 2 - TRANSCRIPTION OF INTERVIEW WITH MARIO VAN KOOIJ, ZECC ARCHITECTEN

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “Yes, what are you studying now?”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “I’m currently a first-year master’s student at TU Delft, and we’re currently working on a history thesis, so it can really be anything.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “I know, I also did my master’s at TU Delft.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Okay, and I wanted to research something related to brutalism. And then my teacher said, ‘Well, that’s quite a complicated subject because it doesn’t really have a framework.’”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “It’s also a movement.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “So it’s a movement and there’s actually no fixed definition. And I find democracy and politics very interesting, democracy and architecture, how they intertwine. Very interesting. So I thought I would analyze the temporary Second Chamber building, do research on that.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “Especially focusing on the building, how it is now and how it came about?”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Yes, I actually set up the research with the main question of what are the architectural qualities of this building. Yes, I dare say that the building, in terms of its appearance compared to what happens inside, is one of the most hated buildings in the Netherlands. When I was young, we used to drive over the Utrechtse Baan. And then we would say to each other, ‘It looked like a prison.’ So I actually wanted to know what the qualities of the building are and why and how the building functions, and especially now that its role has

changed, how it is functional now? Because it used to be the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and now the parliament is in it. Can such a building really be suitable for that change in function? And if the Second Chamber eventually moves, can we still redevelop it? So that’s a bit the setup of the research. And that was actually the initial idea of the research. I have become more interested in how democracy is shaped by architecture. I read the book ‘Wantrouwen in de wandelgangen’ (Distrust in the corridors). It’s from 2023 and it’s about the relationship between politicians and the press. It discusses the influence the building has on that. Yes, very interesting. And in it, the authors also write about the Binnenhof and also about B67. How the Binnenhof functions well. And how B67 is less suitable as a political arena and to ensure the relationship between press and politicians. Because according to the authors, the relationship is severely disturbed.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Interesting? Yes, I’ll read this book. Let me react to a few things. You said that this is one of the most hated buildings, but I can think of a few other examples. Due to brutalism, the building becomes very robust, very heavy, and actually unfriendly. There are definitely qualities in it, it’s very refined how this building is constructed so there are certainly qualities in it. I don’t know this book, and it’s very interesting how that works together, politics and architecture. And it goes beyond just architecture because it also involves the interior and the layout. I read books about that back then too. Ultimately, and after many proposals, but it didn’t work out, so to speak. They just wanted an one-to-one copy of the current layout [from the Binnenhof]. And it also has to do with a certain strategy, of course, because otherwise you’re going into a completely different process and you have to involve everyone and test layouts and things. It’s obviously a very long process that you have to go through and there just wasn’t time for that. No, so. They just had to act quickly and they chose to go as one-to-one as possible.

And that was also the flaw of our program of requirements. It basically said that a functional copy of the Binnenhof was the task. Well, that just can’t be. You’re dealing with an existing building. That caused a lot of discussion. And in terms of expectations, that’s of course very difficult.

Yes, also towards the press. Indeed, also towards politicians, also towards employees. Yes, you don’t get a copy of the Binnenhof, because that’s not possible. The Binnenhof, that’s been around for hundreds of years. There’s obviously a lot of character in that building. And you don’t have that here, it’s just an office colossus. And of course, we did look at the Binnenhof. We also analyzed, for example, the arrangement of certain spaces and the spaces themselves: the proportions, the appearances. So we definitely looked at that. But in some aspects, it’s just not possible.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“The whole typology of the building is totally different from the Binnenhof.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, and then you also have to deal with, as I mentioned earlier, the planning for the execution (and there is really pressure on that) and costs. Yes, so from the beginning, that has been a hot topic, but that’s just how it is. It was a

project that wasn't budgeted for. The budget was politically framed, so that was quite complicated. There's only so much available for the renovation of the Binnenhof, and a part of that is for temporary housing, but that was for the temporary housing of the Second Chamber and the First Chamber and General Affairs, because there are three occupants in the Binnenhof. But in the Binnenhof, there's also Nieuwspoort. They all had to get temporary new accommodations for that budget. That wasn't enough. No, and that obviously caused a lot of discussion at the time. Ministers and state secretaries who have to come back with the story that it doesn't fit."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Following up on that planning, you were given the assignment, awarded. How did that work? Because normally that's not how it works with a tender for a government building."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Normally, that's done through a tender. Normally, a government has a certain threshold amount, from which the government can award contracts. Yes, it has to do with construction fraud. That you have friends and that you can easily give away contracts. So rules have been set up for that. But because this fell under confidentiality, there's a lot of security involved, of course. And to put out a good tender on the market, you have to make all documents public. And that just couldn't be done because it was too confidential and too many security components are intertwined. Because of that, an exception was actually made and it was allowed to be awarded one-on-one. State Real Estate Agency, actually the State Architect Floris Alkemade, he compiled a list of architectural firms. They were looking for young firms, but with experience. So it's kind of a tricky mix, of course. Yes, qualitatively good firms. But yeah, you really need some experience to take on such a task. You don't just want to pick any young firm. And then they came up with the idea that this would be a nice assignment for Zecc because they also just sit very pragmatically and openly at the table. That's also our approach."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"What does that pragmatism entail then?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Well, we're not a firm like OMA that says: Well, this, this is what we want and [...] it all, this just has to come. Yes, that produces very beautiful conceptual and strong architecture. But not always the architecture that the end user is super happy with. That fits within budget and within planning. That's often very outspoken. Also in often materials and interventions. We have an approach where we always look at the quality of the building, especially with transformations. What's in it, what's not good in it, what are we going to improve? And of course, we add an extra layer. And that's how we tackled it with the Second Chamber as well. But that approach appealed to the State Architect and actually, we just got a phone call. That was in early 2017 or late 2016, with the question: 'can you come for an interview' and then we got this. That was all under confidentiality and first some documents had to be signed. And then the question was actually: yes, do you want to do that? And we couldn't even submit a quote or anything like that. There was just a amount that said this is it and this is what you have to do for it, do you want that or not? Yes, this was of course an offer you cannot refuse! Of course, a huge opportunity. Yes, and yes, of course, it was exciting how we were going to approach that internally as well. Yes, whether we could live up to that? Of course, there are certain expectations you express and your name is at stake. Internally, they also looked at who would work on that and who would be the project leader? Because if it's a partner, yes, then they're full-time on a project and you can't run the firm anymore; No, there's no more time for that. Yes, they also thought about bringing in an external project manager. But other firms also advised them to first look at your own internal organization, because if you bring someone else externally who isn't connected to the firm, who doesn't have the working method, the skills, the connection with the employees. Then it was: 'yes, you have to do that.' I was a project leader on smaller projects and I also expressed that I have the ambition to scale up.

So that came at just the right time. And then I got the chance. So I've been doing that since 2017 and I'm still working on it, as an architect and project manager."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"So you got a phone call. You've already mentioned a bit about that. I'll just go to the piece in Trouw."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"I've quickly read the interview, of course. But when you mentioned it [during the preparation of this interview], I quickly read through it again."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes! And then the phone rang and it was like 'wow!'"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, it's a building of 100,000 square meters, that's quite something."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes, because after that phone call, you agreed to the project, what was your plan? I assume you then set out a certain plan?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"The plan was already laid out. It was very tight. It was very strange that there was no sketch design phase. Normally with such a task, well, as I said, you have a tender, then you already have a kind of vision laid out and then you start a sketch design afterwards. Or if the vision is already at a certain level, you can start on a preliminary design.

And that wasn't the case here. A sort of preliminary study had been done by the State Real Estate Agency. Yes, that was really a spatial study or exploration. And then the idea was to start a preliminary design right away. But that's of course very strange, because there's no plan yet. But all the advisors, they were all at the table. So fire safety, installation, sustainability, the structural engineer, you name it. And they say: 'yes architect, what are we going to do?' Yes, we don't know the whole building. We had to make that building our own in a very short time by going there very intensively. It was still in use by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs back then. And then look up drawings, have them drawn up. In AutoCAD, we only had floor plans. For the rest, nothing at all."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"I also found some drawings at Het Nieuwe Instituut of the original design. Yes, but I don't think you can work with those."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Well, those are hand-drawn drawings indeed. I found those myself in the archives. And of course, I extracted the necessary information from them. We also involved JHK, which is now Sweco, to serve as a sort of backup. We were then a team of about sixteen or so I think. And in the beginning period, really three, four people were full-time on this. Yes, and if you then have to scale up further, that can really come at the expense of other projects. And if we actually made an agreement with JHK who is larger in size and has more experience and that when it's really necessary they can step in. And that wasn't necessary during that design phase on some sparse sessions, we pulled it off ourselves and during the detailing phase, we involved JHK more. And ultimately, JHK was hired by the contractor to transfer that knowledge into later phases."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes, you just mentioned about the sketch design phase, that there actually wasn't one. I see that phase as a moment when you can still experiment a bit. You often have the time to put versions on paper."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, especially studies, yes. You just need that to make a good design. Yes, only that all had to happen in an accelerated way now in the preliminary design phase and also involving the user there. Users at the Second Chamber, they call them the services, you have a lot of different services there and everyone has to say something about it. If you're going to make a committee room different from the Binnenhof, because that had to, because the dimensions of the committee room in the Binnenhof simply didn't fit here. And so such

a steering column structure, which you probably know, that the committee rooms themselves also couldn't be positioned everywhere, but only in a few places. So yes, they became different in dimensions, so different in setup. Yes, then everyone has to have their say: the committee members themselves, the reporting service, the messenger services. The security, the cameras with technology. Yes, there are so many services that have to be involved in that. And ultimately, together with Van Dijk as advisor and project manager, who was actually responsible for the integration or coordination with different parties. The integration in the coordination, we also took on a major role because we are of course much more involved in content. Yes, and then we decided to organize theme sessions and then really about such a committee room and then just all parties at the table also in a committee room in the Binnenhof in such a crescent-shaped setup. And yes, then you can just make the best choices."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Did politicians also have a say?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"The supervisory committee was set up and MPs could sign up for that. That was a committee of seven MPs and they were involved in major decisions. Not involved in all the little things and such. But in the big picture, they are involved and at the end of each phase, a presentation was also given to that committee. It's also a way to ensure that all layers in the organization are represented. As far as possible."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes, and let's talk a bit more about the design. Back to that sketch design phase, which actually wasn't there. I think you also made analyses of the building. In Trouw I read: the building had to be lighter and softer, and visibility from the station had to increase. What analyses did you make of the design or what were the main analyses?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"But an important one is indeed that in that preliminary study that the State Real Estate Agency did. The entrance was planned where the central hall is now located, where the former pond of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs was also located. That's in the crook of the building as you know. Yes, then we quickly realized what all had to come there, also in terms of security, technology, and handling.

You see how much space is needed there with scanning lanes, reception, the entrance desk. Before you've gone all the way through there, that's really an enormous area, yes, if you project all of that where the hall is now, then you don't have a hall. And we realized pretty quickly that it had to be moved, otherwise, you wouldn't have a point of orientation which you really need. And ultimately, we also made the access point to the public gallery with the escalators there."

[Meanwhile, Mario shows various presentations about the building with analyses.]

"It's also bizarre how close the Royal Library is to this design."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"And the Royal Library also became smaller during construction because there had to be a passage."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, yes, yes. It's bizarre how close it's built to each other. How could that have been the idea?"

[Mario shows other drawings of the Binnenhof]

The Binnenhof actually has three different entrances. And here, of course, you have the Bezuidenhoutseweg with the original entrance. Well, it was pretty clear that that entrance couldn't handle a visitor flow of 300,000 people per

year. So it was really necessary to add that second entrance.

And this was actually the only thing they did in the study: we make the entrance here, the committee rooms. There are only a few places where there's really free space. That's for example the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' dispatch so there's a large space there that was completely free and we projected the three committee rooms onto that.

The other large space without columns is the Van Kleffenzaal, where the plenary room has now come. So that's why those choices were made for the major programs and those positions. But here you also see that if you had used all that space, then you wouldn't have had a hall.

[Mario van Kooij shows another photo]

Yes, the allure of the Binnenhof versus the small shape. Here you also see again the urgency of that entrance. Here you see what that means when you project that into that hall: Not only that security, but you also see that those scanning lanes, things and cloakrooms, escalators. You just really don't have a hall anymore. No, that became clear pretty quickly that it had to be somewhere else. And another side effect was that from the central station, if you walk, this side of the building is also not visible. And if you shift the entrance to that wing and then create an entrance portal there. Then it's also much more visible from the Royal Library and from the station. Actually not from the station itself, but the walking route. From the station it suddenly becomes visible and you can completely clear the central hall and that's really been a big gain for programming too. You've probably seen the closing debate of the national elections. Because that also took place entirely in the hall. But that was just completely cleared out and that can be done because it's not fixedly programmed, so that's been a really good move and you really have to study a bit for that. You have to get into that program of what the question really is. And also just look closely at the building and the qualities that are there."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"I visit it regularly. I really think that hall is great, but it's a very large empty space. But it does function. Yes, on Tuesdays you have petition presentations. Yes, that's completely full of people."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"And they had indeed looked at cost issues, just smart designing. We built the whole thing on the foundation of the parking garage. The curtain wall, it's on the basement wall. There was quite a bit of excess capacity in terms of weight, in terms of bearing capacity actually. And we picked that up. And also the columns and the positions that land exactly on the columns in the parking garage. And that way no foundation work was needed on an existing building. Very desirable, but also in terms of costs and time, that's of course desirable. And the canopy of the entrance is actually on a piece of the emergency seat. That's at level minus 2 which we did have to raise with a structure, but we didn't have to make a new foundation there. And that canopy, it completely sought out the gearing of the building.

The building has a directionlessness. You have two grids, one of which is rotated 45 degrees. And that's actually interwoven throughout the building and we picked up that structure with the gearing of that canopy to actually give it a particularity, but one that also fits with the rest of the building."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes, because that was my next question. And what, according to you, was really the quality of the current building and how did you build on that or did you rather create contrasts?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Well, there are a few characteristics of the building of course that are very well known. The human scale of Apon of course. It's of course an enormously

stepped building with actually a quite low floor height after the ground floor. So, that also has to do with the construction. He also used that to the maximum there.

So, the column structure is very present and it has a lot of excess capacity, so we could hang a lot of things on the columns. Or yeah, as I said, build on, top up. While the floors are very thin: 21 centimeters of concrete. That's quite little. So, if you had to make large openings and such in the floors, then you needed beams every time that went to those columns.

But the result is that you have quite low floor heights and that such an enormous large building with thirteen floors also appears less heavy at ground level. Yes, and so in one place that's more than the other of course. But on this side at the entrance, you really see indeed a stepping. The other wings also step down as you go higher in the building so that you indeed have a lot of rooftop terraces."

Steven van Haافتen - Interviewer

"Yes, indeed. And on this side, you have many stairs and on the old entrance side but on the back of this wing, on the Prins Clauslaan, that's one big wall."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, that's right."

Steven van Haافتen - Interviewer

"And in this photo, you also see that I find very nice, so building on that staircase actually. So yeah, an extra canopy and the new entrance. So actually, a new step. A new tread."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"And that was also a problem at Greenpeace right away. We wanted to open up that building, which was very closed to its surroundings, on parts and we made many more proposals to open it up. But unfortunately, that wasn't possible everywhere. But we certainly wanted this entrance hall to be transparent and we wanted to open it up.

"We picked up a lot of elements. I just explained with the grids how this was picked up, also in terms of construction. We also picked up the facade bands, as you can see with the canopy. But also the ones above, those come from the size of the existing building. And also the distribution of curtain wall, that's all based on the tripartition that's in the existing facade elements. We actually tried to pick all that up and build on it. We did think that in terms of materialization it had to be lighter and warmer. That's why we indeed chose not to use a prefab concrete cornice.

We also presented proposals to completely roll out reused steel and such. But you do have to meet quite a few requirements. And of course, some parts were also shot down. Well, in that temporariness you think yeah, we can come up with some innovative and more creative solutions there. But on the other hand, it had to meet the highest standards and requirements in terms of fire safety, security, technically."

Steven van Haافتen - Interviewer

"Yes, I can imagine that this glass wall, for example, is extremely secure. I have no idea what type it is?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"There's a peeling principle between spaces in the building when it comes to security. That means that the public spaces then need a less heavy peel because they're accessible anyway. And yeah, as you get further into the secure areas of the building, there are heavier peels there. So, it's actually divided into different zones. So yeah, one part is heavily secured."

Steven van Haافتen - Interviewer

"You said, 'We are quite bound to the program from the State Real Estate Agency.' For example, the offices as they have become now, Dick Apon made all these cubicles back then, and they were for four or two people. Those spaces were quite flexible, or that's how he envisioned it. How did you see

those spaces for yourselves?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Well, we have a certain budget, of course. We thought then: we can spread that money over the entire building. A building of 100,000 square meters, if you're going to divide that, you'll have almost nothing left, let's say. We chose the strategy to favor the iconic spaces, and those are the public spaces and the spaces that are most important for the political process. They were given the highest priority. In the design but also in the attention to the quality of the materials that go there. And the offices were not part of that. And in itself, it's quite a good building for offices. It has four wings with a lot of daylight. It just has a good size for offices, a fairly efficient layout in that respect. Orientation is sometimes a bit of an issue, especially for people who are coming into the building for the first time. They quickly get lost. But yeah, you just have a core with four wings, and in each wing, you also have certain facilities like toilets and access.

"So that structure is very clear on the upper floors. As you go down, the lower, but certainly the lower three layers, it becomes more blurred. Yeah, and with that structure of those four wing fingers, you lose that, but if you sit high up, that's very much there. And those offices, yeah, I also thought yeah, we can do a lot there.

And of course, the first thing you want to do is actually to tackle the interior well. But yeah, there was just a fine drop ceiling in it, lighting that all works well. And now they want more LED lighting because that's a certain standard they're setting, of course, and the energy saving. Entirely logical.

At the time, certain choices were made, and we actually only did the carpeting and painting. And a little repair work. We didn't do much more. We proposed to pull out a lot of walls, not to create one big open-plan office, but to make more distinction. So with some closed and some open office spaces, to make more distinction.

But yeah, you're also dependent on how an organization functions. And they're used to it at the Binnenhof, yeah, it's quite a bit old-fashioned how it's set up. People found it very difficult to let go of that. So there are factions like for example from GroenLinks who have been progressive there and who have a slightly more open plan. But there are also factions and other staff who just wanted nice little cubicles. Then it's not about one person, but yeah, those are just office spaces for two to four people."

Steven van Haافتen - Interviewer

"How does that work then, because with the elections, of course, the whole distribution of spaces shifts, the number of spaces per faction. We saw that with the elections of 2023."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"We found a clever little thing for that because in the Binnenhof there was another component of 'yeah, we always sat in colonies'. So we want to stay in a colony, and then it shrinks, and then another faction has to come in, and you start puzzling that way. But such a party always wants to stay in its colony because that represents the history of that faction, so to speak. Yeah, and that's not possible here, of course. The wings, yeah, you have a different view, but they're equivalent in terms of the rest, and that's why it's much easier to possibly move in there, to come up with a smart system in any case. What we came up with is that the administrative organization sits around the core. Here you see the lower layers with administrative meeting rooms and empty floors at the top, in between the factions and the civil servants, and ultimately we chose to position the civil servants around the core. So you have short walking lines with other colleagues from other services, and the factions then sit at the ends of the wing. The advantage is that you don't have to walk through a faction, which is sometimes sensitive for other factions. And they are less bothered by civil servants and also for the press, they are less likely

to walk into the faction.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “That’s what this whole book is about.” [Steven van Haaften points to the book ‘Wantrouwen in de wandelgangen’]

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “At the moment when that faction gets bigger or smaller, then there are only a number of places for civil servants that will be positioned elsewhere. And then you shouldn’t completely rearrange a faction from wing or from floor. If suddenly a faction like the PVV becomes so much bigger, then you still have to move some things around. But yeah, because of this, you have a lot fewer shifts than was the case in the Binnenhof.

So here we have thought along well. Architecturally, of course, that is indeed limited. So yeah, mainly just thinking along organizationally and sitting smartly at the table secretly and helping the user and client with the issue. It was mainly about choosing a color or a carpet.

We also just want to keep it very clean and ensure that unity in those offices because otherwise you’ll get that friction again. Because that’s also the quality of the building.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “No, certainly. Have you heard any stories afterwards, what users think about how you’ve set up those spaces?”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “I regularly hear stories from the first time politicians come there, those first experiences actually, that it’s negative: ‘Why do I have to sit here again?’ Yeah, that was quite a long discussion whether they would go along with it because we were really opponents. Yeah, but the moment you sit there. It’s just very nice working. Those office spaces with daylight are really very positively received. I’ve even spoken to employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs who actually just want to go back to B67.

They said: ‘We were just in love with it again, with the quality of the building and how it is set up. And now they are of course in a super new wing there from OMA and not everyone is happy.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “I read that too. That was not a very big success.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “So that does indicate, despite the drawbacks of this building, that its primary use as a ministry was very suitable. And that was of course really as an office building back then and it’s extremely suitable for that.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Yeah, because I find it interesting that you’ve basically centered the civil service workplaces around the core and the factions are all the way at the ends of the wings. In the Binnenhof, it was the case that you could walk in a circle, endlessly. Yeah, and there a dynamic arose between factions and also between press and politicians. That’s not facilitated in B67?”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “Here you have that naturally in the core: Everyone has the same basis, the same starting point. So then you have, just like with another office building where you encounter different people from different departments and so on. That’s in the elevator or in those staircases in the core of the building indeed, and on the lower floors of course.

On the third floor, there is a very large meeting wing with also a real coffee point with good coffee and other facilities. So those are of course the places, the restaurants, the lower floors where you have the mingling with the press. Those are places and indeed, that takes place less in the corridors of the office wings.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Because the authors complain about that the relationship between politicians

and press has become very businesslike. So what factions do now, they put a spokesperson here [at the beginning of the dead-end corridor] with a sign ‘report here’ above the door. That interaction has become very businesslike, so they complain about that.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “And I think the difficulty has also been that MPs want this to be like this, yes. They also want to use the press, speak to them, but only at the moments they want and where the press actually wants to seek that freedom to always pick that up. And the press hasn’t always been at the table in the process.

We did Nieuwspoord later. They also got a place in the building. But they haven’t always been at the table. So they have to be looked after by some other services of the Second Chamber. Yeah yeah, and I think that makes it quite difficult.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “They might feel a bit sidelined perhaps.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “Yes, I can imagine that if you compare it to the Binnenhof, by the way, I haven’t read the book, but on the upper floors there, the layout is also just different. You see the floor plan, you can’t walk in circles here.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “I wouldn’t say that walking in circles necessarily improves democracy.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “But that interaction and engagement, yeah, that’s definitely missing.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “It’s almost becoming a philosophical story. But do you think the building is really suitable to house the House of Democracy? If you had made the choice yourself?”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “I think there are quite a few quirky things in it, also in terms of office building, I think yeah this is a good setup to do something with wings and a main core and to allow a lot of daylight entry there. And especially those lower floors also give a lot of limitations and that’s mainly also due to the construction layout. With such an extremely dominant grid with columns of one meter by one meter.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Those are huge elements.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “That is of course limiting also in the layout yeah, and especially with those spaces and committee rooms. We had to puzzle a lot ourselves. I don’t mind seeing those columns, but for some committee rooms, you would ideally just want them to be a bit wider so that you get a slightly better arrangement of the committee table. That can positively influence the conversation.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “Yes, but they are also intimate spaces so to speak. I visit them regularly. The atmosphere is not...”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “No, the atmosphere is not perceived as negative by those participating in the discussion.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer “But even as an audience, it’s quite a homely setting or something. So approachable. Close to the people, so to speak. Also, the distance from the public gallery to the meeting room in the plenary hall is small. The gallery is quite low.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects “And that couldn’t be otherwise. Here you see a bit, but why is that? We also suggested removing a roof and mirroring it and then just putting the building on the peaks here. Yes, that’s a huge intervention. You can imagine that. It was decided to present this actually in the Van Kleffenszaal program. Ultimately, the only thing preserved there is the daylight. Yes, the light and the old wooden cladding we reused in counters and other room cladding. But

it had to be much bigger. And we have a nice anecdote that we encountered two columns during construction, they were in the old notes in the wrong layer and that's the first thing you lay out. They were also different in shape compared to the other columns. And then we made a whole setup of the plenary hall of course with a one-to-one copy from the Binnenhof. Then it turned out that there would still be two columns that would land exactly in the plenary hall and that there would be some Members of Parliament who would simply not have a view of the intervention microphones and the speakers. A total no-go. And well then we suggested a lot of things. Other locations for the plenary hall, but also a different setup. A setup like in the House of Commons. A different distribution of the pie slices. A more intimate setting. But as I said, those are such long processes, yeah, that couldn't be for this temporary accommodation. And ultimately, the engineer who also acts as an advisor said: 'Why make it difficult? Just two large truss girders on the roof and then you can support those columns. Yeah, then just run a saw blade through it and that's how it happened.'

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Well, if we were to change that layout, it might unnoticedly have a lot of influence on how democracy also functions I think. If, for example, in extreme cases, you were to apply the layout of the House of Commons?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"That is indeed an extreme yes. We're not quite black and white like that."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"I also had an interesting case. I watched the debate on the election of the Speaker [of the House of Representatives]. Martin Bosma, who ultimately became it. Upon his election, he said: 'I will be a Speaker with homesickness for you. The new members may think this is our real abode, but it's not. This parking garage is only our temporary domicile. We're fish out of water. I yearn for our return, and I will really put the turbo on to expedite our deliverance from this exile.' So despite the fact that many people are quite positive about the use of the building and this gentleman has a very different opinion. Is this sentiment common?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"This is quite extreme. Maybe it has to do with the security concerns of the PVV? Yes, or if it relates to that, I don't know. Yes, as I said, there are indeed parts and spaces in the building that feel very heavy and very robust. I think that doesn't apply to the most important spaces where we really emphasized that. You have been there yourself, of course, and the plenary hall, the central hall, and the offices are just very neutral. You don't really have the allure of a stretched ceiling or a monumental decoration that you have at the Binnenhof. That's true, and it would also be quite 'artsy' to do that here."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"This man [Martin Bosma] has been in the Chamber for so long. He figuratively almost belongs to the interior, I would say. Perhaps that's why he feels extra connected to that old building?"

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"There are quite a few Members of Parliament who have never been on the Binnenhof from the beginning. No, you're also going to get employees from the House of Representatives who have never been to the Binnenhof and will never go back. Yes, that's just the phase we're in now. Originally, the idea was to use this building for 5.5 years, and formally it's now postponed to 7.5 years. That also has to do with the design process of the Binnenhof. How that didn't go smoothly and all the discoveries they make of course. But those 7.5 years, everyone actually knows that it's not going to be met? So yeah.

We have been able to stick to that schedule with the temporary housing of the House of Representatives. Yes, we really had to pull out all the stops, of course. But we have at least moved [to B67] when it was desired. So it wasn't up to us. But that was quite a thing of course. You can't just move the House of Representatives, that can only be done during a summer recess. Arib, for example, was really opposed to the move. And not only she, but together with

another group of Members of Parliament, she really tried to stop this, until the last moment."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"Yes, they blamed it on the COVID measures back then."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, that's right, but then the building was almost ready. The investment had already been made. So yeah, it's really bizarre that it's still being discussed not to move, because beforehand, of course, whole analyses were made of the pros and cons, and I think General Affairs still hasn't moved."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"No, they're almost going to move."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"That does indicate again, there's so much to do. That's going to be very intense."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"I see beautiful images of materials further on the screen."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Yes, these are mainly images of the Binnenhof [specifically the plenary hall]. Yes, the Binnenhof naturally had a very nice symbolic story of green landscapes and tulips and the starry sky above. Yes, there's a lot of symbolism in that hall, but visually it was also a bit busy. We had various proposals, but we decided to take as much furniture as possible and especially the iconic furniture. What does that entail? That concerns the seats and the desks to take them one-on-one. That's a whole process. We did a point cloud measurement. There are also electronic installations in those desks, but also the air supply goes through the desk. That meant that a new setup had to be made with a step, so to speak. And that had to be ready so that in one summer recess, in a few weeks' time, everything could be transferred and functional. We chose to retain the iconic image by putting it in a very neutral basis. Yes, when you start using a lot of pear wood again as was actually done at the Binnenhof in many other colors and materials, then that takes away the iconic image. So we actually put the tulip and the desk on a neutral basis and there we looked much more into graphic work and design and the nuance in texture, in the materials to add quality, in terms of the experience of the hall. And not just in colors and in busyness."

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

"The focus is now very much on what happens in that plenary hall."

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

"Exactly, the focus is on that iconic event. On the lectern, on the intervention microphone, on the desk, and so on, and we want to keep the rest as neutral as possible, actually. We also managed to give the Reporting and Editing Service a different place in the hall.

They were here in the middle of the hall, that had to do with the fact that we didn't have special techniques for reporting back then and that you were in the middle of the debate and could follow everything well. And even later if microphones would fail, you could still follow it well. But now with current technology, that's much less necessary. There are a few very small exceptions compared to the Binnenhof. And one of those exceptions is that the Members of Parliament sit just a bit closer to the lectern and Vak K [the place where the cabinet sits in the hall]. And because the hall was a bit more crowded [read: tighter], it made it even less desirable to have the Reporting and Editing Service in the middle of a debate.

So we made various proposals for that, and ultimately they got a place behind Box K. A bit on the side of the hall so they can also switch more easily. Those people are there for a maximum of about 10 minutes. That's the time they're allowed to take notes, and then they have to switch with each other to stay sharp. That's less disruptive for the camera work: they're less visible. And we're very happy that we managed to get a calm image and that the focus really is on the debate and that triangle between Vak K, the lectern, and the

intervention microphones.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, it’s a very calm whole. And the space behind the House of Representatives, behind the plenary hall, is also very interesting.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“The walkway or the circulation, as it’s called, is a very important space politically. While in terms of its actual function, well, it actually has no official function. It’s kind of a residual space. Just a traffic area. But especially because of the design of those benches, it has become more of a lounge area; it’s a very important space for backroom discussions as they call it, for informal briefings and coordination. Strategic political choices are indeed made there, and there are occasionally images of that. Yes, it’s very interesting to see how that works indeed, how that functions.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“And it’s also nice as an architect to see ultimately how people use the building?”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, definitely, even down to that level of detail, down to that bench, how you designed it and how it actually works.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, I think it’s very beautiful! I also sit here regularly on the public gallery. [Steven points to a spot on the photo on the screen]”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Well, it’s quite a letterbox in terms of image now. We’ve tried to position as much of the audience as smartly as possible, also with a kind of sit-stand furniture. We couldn’t go up because there are still eight floors above that. That couldn’t be broken open. Yes, because, as I said, we made various proposals for mirroring and different approaches with other interventions. Ultimately, we chose to make a sort of skybox and a multimedia space so that those ProDemos classes can also just look into the hall without being disruptive when there’s a big debate for the Members of Parliament.

And as for the ceiling, we also looked at it with 3D glasses to see what works best. Should it be sloped? If you had to carry out this, you wouldn’t be too happy about it, but that has resulted in the best possible image actually, because that’s just very important that the ceiling slopes away and so yes, as unobtrusively as possible and as high as possible so that you can follow as much as possible of the process [of what happens in the hall]. It’s definitely been an exercise, but one that was necessary and very useful. And those lowest points, why are they so low? That’s where the columns were. It’s a sort of footing for the suspension, which is caught above deck by the truss. And that foot had to be finished, that’s actually the lowest part of the ceiling and it actually slopes away entirely into the ceiling to get the maximum effect.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, nicely concealed.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, well, some things were just left visible, like the concrete structure.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Well, I really love those columns.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“The columns were actually bush-hammered back then. When you pour concrete, you use a formwork and then it’s just smooth concrete. But Apon wanted to emphasize the brutalist design even more, so he had the columns bush-hammered. Now you have to imagine that guys were just working for years just processing concrete with an electric machine that vibrates really hard. It’s vibrating the top layer so you see more aggregate and the structure of the concrete.

That must have been terrible to have to do. Yes, just look at how much concrete is visible in this building, and all those columns had to be bush-hammered. And these [Mario shows photos on the screen] are two columns that were actually

completely covered in the Van Kleffenszaal. So they were hidden there, so they weren’t bush-hammered. Only they came forward in this part of the room and are also super visible. And then we said: yes, those are the only two columns that we think should be bush-hammered, to go in the same style, so to speak.

But that also just fits the building, to show that and also just the damage and that also tells the story: the history that that structure tells you also try to make visible that doesn’t have to be smoothed out behind a jacket.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, I really find it very beautiful that you can see the old story here, what actually happened here. Just the history of the building still comes forward when you’re sitting here.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, that’s also to camouflage it a bit, but that would also have been a huge task. Yes, we actually used that as quality. And especially when you use new materials that are more graphic and smoother and glossier, then that actually gives more contrast.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, also a nice transition. You used a new material, shiny brass I believe, for the facade? And I read that it was actually the only color you could choose now because it was politically neutral. I don’t know if that was a sales pitch? I was curious about that.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Colors are just politically sensitive, yes. That was one of the reasons why we also just used more neutral shades as a base. The king also wore a matching tie during the opening. Actually, the color is based on the signing of the building. [Mario shows a photo] The signing of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. And that contrasts very nicely with the brickwork and the concrete. The heaviness and solidity, that’s what the building actually stood for and stands for. And this was a kind of gracefulness, a kind of illumination, so to speak, in the design. And then we thought that that is just a beautiful contrast.

So that inspired us to look in that direction. We also looked at, for example, taking over the white color of the existing facade bands and so on. We thought it should get a different allure in that addition and that you could still see that it came from the building, but that it was something else. And that’s how that brass color came about. We used that brass color throughout all the interiors. Actually, as a kind of guideline throughout the building. And here you can see very well that all the main elements from the reception desk to the cloakroom to the committee rooms to the plenary hall, they have received that accent color, so to speak. The escalators, of course, and so you are actually guided through the building, actually as an aid, to find even more orientation. That color accent is an important addition for that orientation because that orientation just didn’t exist on those lower levels. And at the central hall, suddenly you see: well, there’s the plenary hall and then you can get coffee there.

That’s actually the only place in the building where you have a bit of an overview and those accent colors, that’s another way to provide more navigation for the visitor and the resident. Yes.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“When you see it in cross-section, those gold-colored elements, which you already have in the facade bands, they draw you towards the plenary hall, the heart of the building.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, not only the plenary hall, but all the representative spaces. Important spaces indeed, because I mean the cloakroom, that’s not in proportion to the plenary hall, but it’s a very important space for the visitor. You see reference images here. Instead of beautiful bronze plates, we chose wallpaper because that’s a cheap way to give texture. That cloakroom is completely executed as a kind of pocket. Also in floors, walls, and ceilings. It’s actually a bite out of the

neutral base. And that gives the pocket color. As you can see, that creates a nice contrast with that old facade. This was the old facade [Mario van Kooij shows a photo of the interior].”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yeah, cool! I’m about at the end of my questions. I’m heading towards a conclusion. I was wondering, at some point the Second Chamber will move out again. Then it will be vacant again, what would your advice be, what should happen to the building?”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“That was the first question we asked Floris when we were in discussion: what will happen afterwards, after those 5.5 years. Of course, design something for the task at hand, but we’re really concerned with the long lifespan of architecture indeed. You could have set up a tent as the central hall, but well, on the one hand, that doesn’t meet the fire and security requirements. But on the other hand, indeed, at the moment you’re going to add something, let it be good. And with the aim that it will be usable again afterwards.

Yes, but there was no answer to that. There were visions of The Hague CS East, that’s what this area is called, whereby a part of the building would be demolished to create a better connection between Central Station District and Bezuidenhout. And this building, at least a part of it, is in the way there.

They also wanted to remove the Royal Library with that and it seems that something is going to happen. But then the building would be partly gone. There are other variants: you keep the parking garage and then just build a new building on it. A kind of New Babylon with a cluster of shops and facilities, office floors, and above that, residences.

Yes, yes, that’s of course something that can work very well in a place like The Hague Central. But the idea now is that this building will remain in the portfolio of the Central Government Real Estate Agency for the time being. That has to do with the fact that there are quite a few renovations planned for ministries and that B67 will be used as a kind of exchange building. That’s the idea for the coming years after the Second Chamber moves out. But yeah, I don’t know how the development will be, but you can see now with corona and all; there’s really less demand for office space. So maybe Foreign Affairs will come back someday.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“I was just about to say!”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“I do see opportunities, yes, with the column structure and the foundation underneath, you have a lot of bearing capacity, so I wouldn’t remove that quickly. No, but you can certainly add another volume or add to it and also remove building parts. You could also turn it into residences? I see it more as opportunities indeed. But how it lies in the ground and the connection to Bezuidenhout, that’s not ideal. So something needs to happen.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“I would be quite disappointed if it were to be demolished.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, it’s not a monument, but it does have a certain oeuvre and certainly icon value, now also in use and historical value.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“They should give it a monument status.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Well, I’m not saying that. That also has its limitations of course.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Okay, great, I have everything. Yes, I have all the information. Thank you very much!”

[The interview was actually over, but later something else came up about the columns designed in front of the new entrance. This part was also recorded in the audio recording.]

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“Yes, the canopy is entirely 3D printed by Aectual from recycled plastic. And we collaborated with Aectual. It consists of different structures that are actually built up from three layers. They have the software for that, of course, and we really thought along about how we wanted it.

And ultimately, the bottom of the columns is not 3D printed because in terms of, vandal-proof and in terms of fire safety, I have to meet a certain class up to a certain height and that such an innovative product does not yet have all the certifications, so to speak. Ultimately, we made a mold with the 3D printer and then poured the concrete into it so that it has exactly the same structure. So that’s prefabricated concrete and that then transitions to that head.

In the central hall, we actually used the same shape, but with plasterwork on a base. Also because of fire safety. If a fire occurs, it meets the requirements, but then you can get droplet formation in the plastic and that is of course unacceptable. So we also had to look for other materials there but we still wanted the same design language.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Yes, they also create a nice contrast with the structuralist shapes of Apon’s building.”

Mario van Kooij - Zecc Architects

“We wanted very thin columns to precisely show that contrast; so exactly the same positions in terms of grids, but a lot less bulky and a lot more elegant. And that’s what we try to do with a lot of things indeed. So building a lot on the current situation, but then making choices in materials or adding accents in design language.”

Steven van Haaften - Interviewer

“Well, it seems to me like a design you can be really proud of.”



Figure 76 / Overview of the building from Prins Clauslaan at eye level. Unknown, n.d.



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