Architecture always has and always will communicate. A house that gives the impression of a palace or a castle emits signs of wealth, well-being and power. A house that looks like a prison signals the inhabitants’ equality and poverty. Open doors are a clear sign that entry is welcome, whilst a closed door immediately separates the inside from the outside and communicates at least the resident’s wish for privacy. »Everything that can be seen or thought about takes a meaning, or position within a signifying system, even the recurrent attempts to escape from this omnipresent signification.«¹ The question thus is not if architecture communicates, but how architecture communicates and what it tells to the spectator. Architecture is like a mirror – reflecting our society.

In this article the public sphere as part of our society is the focus of interest. More specifically, the façade as the most important part of the building to communicate, will be researched. The facade separates two conditions: the outside and the inside, the public and the private. It is a very sensitive element of the house: a functional skin, the representational element and a boundary, protecting the inner and negotiating with the outer world. Directed towards the public sphere, the facade enters into a relationship, which may be physical, spatial or visual. This relationship means that interventions into the public sphere, or indeed new ideas about the public space, can result in changes of the architecture of the façade and the public space, which can provide a platform for the public sphere. The changes of the public sphere during the last century definitively influenced the architecture of the façade and the public space.

During the last 20 years, for example, the internet as a mass media expanded towards an unforeseeable new public sphere called social media taking over a great part of the functions of the former physical public spaces. It had a revolutionary impact on worldwide communication.

We can state that social media is everywhere and all the time, it obscures the border between public and private blurring also the relation between the public space and the façade.²

The traditional public space like the square, the street, or the market seems to be unnecessary for daily communication, but this does not mean that public space is unnecessary. The rise of social media has expanded the notion of the public sphere, has attracted new attention to existing public spaces (places for mass-events, organized and communicated by social media), and has initiated a demand for different public spaces, like the upcoming internet cafés for daily digital communication.

Inherited from the beginning of the 20th century the façade seems no longer to be required to represent the public sphere as it did in the past, eventually leading to a crisis of representation. At the same time, signs for negotiation between the inner and the outer world seem to be less present in the façade, leading to more isolated dwellings.

To clarify the changes the façade underwent, in the following, a critical analysis of the façade as a core element for communication in architecture will be made in relation to the public space of Dutch collective residential building, a building type which resulted in the mass housing of the 20th century.³ By focusing directly on dwellings (without any commercial plinth, for example) this essay will illuminate the models that were developed according to the public sphere and their reflection on residential housing and their façades.

Given that collective dwelling developed in an urban context, where housing shortages were the greatest, the city holds the central place in this study. The city, with its density of construction, its diversity (both social and functional), and the constant coming and going of people, makes living there a phenomenon very different from residing in the countryside. The social and functional diversity of urban buildings is reflected in their façades.

We will follow the ideas of the public sphere, the changes to the public space and the façade throughout almost one century, starting at the Housing Act of 1902 (with a short retrospective on the 19th century) when the Dutch government started to support new housing projects up to the moment when the support was stopped in 1995.⁴

According to Jürgen Habermas, the word public implies accessibility for everybody⁵ and the public sphere presents »a domain of our social life, in which public opinion is expressed by means of rational public discourse and debate.«⁶ Public sphere is »a sphere which mediates between society and state, in which the public organizes itself as a bearer of public opinion, accords with the principle of the public sphere – that principle of public

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² McQuail (1979): The influence and effects of mass media. In: Curran James, Gurevitch Michael, Woolacott Janet (1979): From Mass Communication and Society. 70–93. University of California, Sage publications. McQuail argues that the effects of mass media need to be studied on different levels: the level of the individual, the group, the institution, the society or the culture. Here the level of society is meant, as the public sphere is related to society. According to McQuail, the changes in society are the slowest to occur.

³ By collective residential building, I mean a building containing multiple residential units under one roof.

⁴ Due to a shortage of housing in cities, architects in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were faced with the challenge of stacking and linking homes into this new type of the collective dwellings. In the Netherlands, by comparison with surrounding nations, where it had been commonplace for some time, this type of structure was a relatively new phenomenon. In Germany, there have been ›Mietskasernen‹ since the sixteenth century. (Reulecke J. (1997): Die Geschichte des Wohnens Band 3, 350. Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt)


⁶ Chadwick Andrew and Howard Phillip (Eds.), Taylor and Francis. Handbook of Internet Politics (2009). Zizi Papacharissi: The Virtual Sphere 2.0. The Internet, the Public Sphere and beyond. 232.
information which once had to be fought for against the arcane politics of monarchies and which since that time has made possible the democratic control of state activities. The public sphere is related to society and thus its transformations are as well. Public sphere is not the same as public space. Public space can provide the conditions for the public sphere but does not necessarily guarantee it. In the past, the forum, the square or the marketplace served as the public space for debate.

Until the 18th century the idea about public sphere was connected with traditional forms of the representative public sphere, the monarchy and aristocracy, and the people were not involved in it, but rather were subject to it. This changed during the 18th century as citizens’ participation grew in the public sphere, representing themselves by what they did or traded.

Men worked under the same roof where they lived, and the street was one of the key public spaces in the living environment. This was reflected in the façade. The narrow street front façade was the occupant’s personal signboard. It was here that he showed who he was and what he did. Houses were not numbered, so it was essential that the façade represented the citizen living there. Paintings and photographs of the nineteenth century show the life on the street and the individual facades. It was precisely because of all these differences that such a variety of façades could be seen in the street, with each householder standing out by the decoration of his home. The border between street and dwelling was built up by a system of thresholds people were able to recognize. The sidewalk was a clear threshold between paved street and the hall (first room of the house). The two parts of a front door helped to regulate openness towards the sidewalk, and shutters could be closed from inside. (fig. 1)

In the 19th century and in the beginning of the 20th century, the time of industrialization, technical inventions and a break with tradition, the street transformed into a functional and often anonymous area and the deeply imbedded relationship between the street and the individual house changed radically. The most important factor for this change was obviously the mass existence at the beginning of the twentieth century. Industrialization, urbanization and explosive population growth were the three processes responsible for the emergence of that mass. In a time of mass production, mass population, different social classes and habits, the public sphere was taken over step by step by the upcoming mass media. Actually this was the only way to reach the mass, as it was impossible to communicate with them in the street, thus the public sphere became more anonymous and disconnected from traditional public spaces. Modernity, a phenomenon of permanent changes, transformed society into mass society. The city started to develop to a place of anonymity, hosting the mass.

Comparing the 19th century street (see fig. 1) with the today’s street in the city, urban dwellers presumably perceive the street in front of their home.
as a non-place, a mono-functional area not to be identified with. Collective dwellings in the city lack any connection with the street. In fact, they turned away from it.

There has been a tendency over the last three decades to protect collective residential houses with screens and shields against the enemy called the »street«. Along with these shields, standardization turned the buildings themselves into structures with which residents could not identify, resulting in an extremely anonymous perception. The relation between the public space and façade seems to have been destroyed. As a consequence of mass society today, the question of representation seems more difficult to answer. (fig. 2 a+b)

By looking at the commercialization of the public space for example, residential houses which did have direct contact to the street in the past, now often have commercialized plinths that enlarge the distance between the place of dwelling and the public space. Dutch residential houses of the last two decades, especially the collective ones, show a clear turning point in representation: developers try to match consumer wishes. The façade often reflects unreal pictures and experiences that fit to our increasingly individualized consumer society.

The collective residential ensemble of the Haverleij shows an image of a fortified building suggesting communality, safety and protection. This trend can be found in suburbia as well as in the urban areas. (fig. 3 a+b)

As a face of the building, the architectural expression of the façade suggests a freedom that Loos described in 1908, however this freedom is different, because it is caught up in commerce. To understand how changing ideas about the public sphere have influenced the relation between façade and public space, we will look back to focus on the changes of the physical social public space, following step by step its transformations throughout the 20th century.

The necessity of collective housing and the creation of mono-functionality

Whereas changes in the city of the 19th century helped usher in modernity, the city of the 20th was much more a city of functions, masses, and anonymity. At the end of the nineteenth century, society was dominated by the upcoming mass. The unacceptably (social) unhygienic conditions of the dense cities and the disastrous housing situation of the working class caused changes of the city and the public spaces. The eventual flight to countryside by the upper classes, who were essential to the economy of the city, and the threat of diseases led to the engagement of the middle class.
In the Netherlands from 1850 onwards, city governments tried to rein in uncontrolled urban construction by issuing ordinances regulating building heights, building lines, and façade materials. Streets were tied in to these regulations with the installation of underground pipelines. Next to that it was obvious that the hosting of the working class had to be solved in a proper way. After 1875 and 1900, city populations grew so fast (as much as doubling) that cheap homes had to be developed quickly for the massive influx of new people.

Living in the city at those times meant being part of an expanding, anonymous mass. There was hardly any contact with public life, the street had been institutionalised and disappeared as a public space used by those living along it. By looking at the speculative housing in the Netherlands, they consisted of stacked dwellings offering hardly any contact with the street or the sidewalk and were aesthetically not managed at all. The work place had moved to the factory or workshop, the living space to an upstairs flat. Various sources indicate that the intimate sphere of this form of living isolated it from the public space; Boomkens refers to the »autonomous coo-coon« (fig. 4).

The reconstruction of the »Goudbloemsgracht« in Amsterdam in 1863 is a clear example of these changes to the street and its facade. It was transformed into a paved street with blocks of flats lining the pavement. This created greater distance between the home and the public space. The facade kept neatly to the building line and, rather than individual sections, now consisted of one collective frontage containing a string of stacked dwellings. As a result, the homes no longer expressed any individuality. Nobody yet had thought about the representation of these collective blocks and the working class who lived there. The question that arose by architects thus was how to design dwellings for the anonymous mass. (fig. 5)

The first mass housing and the power of simplicity

A clear signal that things were going to change radically came with the enactment of the Housing Act in 1902. This provided for intensive government intervention to tackle the housing problem and expand the cities. Urban expansion plans were needed and so the Netherlands, with little experience of town planning, looked for inspiration to neighbouring countries, where the first books on this theme were being published at about this time. The period around 1900 was a time of searching for the old aesthetics of the Dutch city; meanwhile the break with tradition was already being felt. The Dutch architect Berlage (1856–1934) was one of those who heavily criticised the unsightliness of Dutch cities. Large public squares, he said, now serve only to provide air and light. The market still existed, to be sure, but it was gradually relocating to covered halls. In its time, the ancient forum had been a kind of theatre. Berlage called it »the well-
equipped and richly furnished main auditorium – he saw the city as a building with different rooms in which people used to be able to meet. But confronted with the new masses, Berlage knew he had to come up with a different solution. He viewed a square as an urban space for the people. For him the façade was important to its spatial functioning, and as a divide separating the urban rooms. In this regard, he was in agreement with the urban planner Camillo Sitte who had an aesthetically formed vision of town planning. Sitte’s idea was that public sphere should be imbedded in urban rooms with an adequate aesthetical coulisse. For economic reasons, a distinction would have to be drawn between every day wear for residential streets and a Sunday best for the primary streets and squares. It did not escape him that the function of squares had become different, namely to bring ventilation and light to an otherwise densely filled urban fabric, what he called the sea of houses. The public sphere was under pressure from mass production, as well as the urban fabric and the different social classes emerging in the city. Sitte wanted to create two classes of public spaces. Berlage disagreed with such a solution. Instead, he aspired to a manner of design that would apply to all buildings and to all people.

At the Housing Congress in February 1918 in Amsterdam, Berlage managed to discuss a new language for the architecture of the mass housing towards the public space.

In his presentation on standardisation in construction, he tried to convince both workers and architects that iteration of a dwelling type need not result in ugliness. Berlage saw the rhythm of stringing as the germ of every style; the goal of grouping and stacking should be to create urban space. He was seeking an aesthetic equilibrium between standardization and its associated repetition, on the one hand and, on the other, spatial function and a language for mass housing and the representation of the working class. Repetition created rhythm in volume construction, and, as far as he was concerned, was an aesthetic technique that had been used time and again throughout history. He was well able to illustrate this by citing various examples during his speech: mediaeval houses, warehouses in Amsterdam, town houses in Paris and Karlsruhe. That iteration and rhythmic repetition did not have to be ugly was the evident message of his presentation and choice of photographs. (fig. 6, 7, 8)

In the early years of the twentieth century, Berlage’s ideas resulted in a number of housing plans that were innovative despite the frequently minimal economic resources available. It is interesting how Berlage succeeded in presenting this new type of dwelling, the collective dwelling. Berlage searched for a representation people could identify with.

In the Indische Buurt housing blocks in Amsterdam, Berlage used the motif of the bay-window to accentuate the section with the use of a communal staircase and doorway. The bay-window itself is an iconic sign, a
reminder of a known architectonic element; in the neo-renaissance it was included in more expensive houses in the form of a wooden overhang. Berlage here used this familiar form as a sign indicating the location of the doorway and the communal staircase (which was quite new for the Dutch who were used to their own front door at the sidewalk) and offering a representational element of wealth for the working class. In that capacity, the bay-window had no long tradition. The architects of the so-called ›Amsterdam School‹ later would include the same element as a rhythmic component of its enormous long street façades. Here we already can see how architects tried to deal with mass housing aesthetically. (fig. 9)

Expression and negotiation with the street

With the enactment of the Housing Act and the growing number of housing corporations, mass construction of homes became increasingly widespread. Its pioneers included architects like Van der Pek, Walenkamp, Berlage and those counted amongst the group called ›Amsterdam School‹. In his journal Wendingen, the architect H. T. Wijdeveld (1885–1987) became the mouthpiece for this group. For Wijdeveld it was clear that the outward appearance of a building had cultural meaning. In his view, it contributed towards human improvement and hence to a better society. Wijdeveld’s monumental housing development on Hoofdweg in Amsterdam was completed in 1927. On the ground floor, the street façade is rhythmically subdivided by projecting piers, which symbolise arcades on a city street. The traditional street had become a thing of the past, but in this design Wijdeveld creates a pedestrian zone with an urbane atmosphere alongside the roadway. Between façade and sidewalk, a strip of vegetation is introduced to provide a transitional zone between the home and the sidewalk. (fig. 10)

From 1910 onwards, the monumental and picturesque designs produced by the ›Amsterdam School‹ enjoyed the general favour of that city’s local government. To a great extent, the façades themselves were conditioned by the outdoor spaces they addressed. A square invited to design monumental façades that simultaneously made the square a public space. The architectonic language was more expressive than Berlage’s, but the intention – to create residential districts consistent in appearance – was the same. The collective dwelling was elevated to become communal art and to demonstrate pride in its working class inhabitants. The refined design of the doorways is often particularly attractive. They are very slightly elevated and have their own loggia-style entrance zone. The upper floors, by contrast, feature regular projections in the form of bay windows, balconies or walkways.

In Wendingen in 1927, this approach was described as a means to achieve a more continuous street view than the plans allowed. Herein lays a clear difference between Berlage’s designs and those of the Amsterdam School.

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20 Egbert Hoogenberk 1980: Het idee van de Hollandse stad 30,31; Berlage was quoted here from ›Studies over Bouwkunst, Stijl en samenleving‹, Rotterdam 1910 p. 48–49.


24 Camillo Sitte (1889): Der Städtebau. 4
Berlage used the bay window as an icon, a familiar sign through which to introduce the previously unknown enclosed communal staircase in a way that emits wealth. The architects of the Amsterdam School deployed architectonic elements to bring rhythm into the street façade or to break up the strict building line. As a result, the street profile underwent constriction above the pedestrian zone. (fig. 11, 12)

The modern movement: a turning point for the street and the façade

In the years between 1920 and 1930, the number of studies devoted to the orientation, layout, and hygiene of homes and buildings increased. Ideas about public space were driven by ideas about a hygienic living environment, daylight, and greenery, abstract concepts indeed. These studies introduced a change in the morphology, breaking open the block and glorifying the rows of slabs (German: Zeilenbau). International projects brought their influence to the Netherlands, like the Weissenhof Estate in Stuttgart and major new residential districts in Berlin and Frankfurt, displaying an open use of space. The focus on mass production, on function and on obscuring the social class of the inhabitants led to a loss of the representative function of the façade.

The urban planner Cornelius van Eesteren (1897–1988) regarded this period as further development towards a functionalist architecture and town planning. His greatest criticism was the absence of systematic specifications in Berlage’s plans, which meant that they lacked hygienic standards, properly distributed urban green space, and adequate ingress of daylight. The well-being of the working class as part of the public sphere acquired importance, while urban green space was a new quality requirement for housing, which was far easier to achieve by building slabs than in a »Berlagian« block. For the façades, this meant reorientation towards a very different public space. Van Eesteren did not want people to live on busy streets, but in open areas overlooking green space. This would benefit »the welfare and also the happiness of the Dutch people«. Van Eesteren called this »scientific urban planning«. He was most concerned with views and ventilation when it came to contact between the interior and exterior (fig. 13).

During the Second World War, the body of ideas concerning the standardization of housing and the quality of domestic architecture developed further. The ›Core Group for Home Architecture‹ initiated by the architect Van Tijen, organized debates and issued reports and publications. In 1943 the Core Group finally succeeded in producing a report. Entitled ›The Guidelines for Home Architecture‹, this report was an extensive and comprehensive tome that would be refined after the war. Its ›guidelines‹ cover the residential estate, the home as a whole, its exterior, its interior, and the outdoor space around it. The public space in this vision was green space,
After the war, these guidelines were indeed the core of most developments in mass housing. Openness and green became key terms, blurring all well-known references to front sides, representation, back sides, and private gardens. The façade reflects mass production. It is built up by the organization of the floor plans and the circulation. The articulation of the façade by architectonic elements that Berlage fought for had disappeared. (fig. 14)

During the second half of the twentieth century, it was noticed both nationally and internationally that the public sphere had changed. There was a rapid development of society toward a welfare society dismissing traditional values. Public spaces had been stripped of their old functions. René Boomkens uses the term «sphere» and explains: »The problem with these diagnoses was and is that the public sphere is not a spatial issue in the first instance – or, to put it better, not only a spatial issue – but that spatial dimensions just about always play a role.«41 The public sphere was characterized by the mass and anonymity. The changes to the public sphere were described by sociologists, philosophers and architectural critics. Hannah Arendt addressed them as did Richard Sennett and Jürgen Habermas.

The 1960s and 70s were marked by economic growth. From 1963, the annual production of new residential houses was increased to 100,000 units by the Minister of Housing, Pieter Bogaers. The effects of this increase would eventually become clear in the Bijlmer district of Amsterdam and would bring the Dutch housing production to a turning point. (fig. 15)
The façade and the »in-between realm« and the residential street

Two phenomena were important for the change:

— A more confident society that participated in the politics of their community resulting in non-violent demonstrations against established structures (PROVO movement 1965).

— The end of CIAM and the new beginning made by Team X, with Aldo van Eyck as its leading light. Team X claimed modesty of scale within a larger whole, which was based upon the wish to return people to centre stage that fit perfectly to the changes in society. Within a predefined structure, the user or occupant had to be given the freedom to make the building their own.

The 1970s were a time of »democratization and socialization of virtually everything associated with the creation of architecture and urban planning.« Whereas size had been all that mattered in 1960s – the Bijlmer with its seemingly endless blocks of flats was completed in 1968 – people now slowly began to realise its disadvantages. There was hardly one neighbourhood with its own identity, with the ability to persuade its residents to identify with it. There was hardly one public space that invited people to claim it. Little attention had been paid to the user: the building had become too vast in scale for that.

What became particularly popular in the 1970s were the residential street (Dutch: ›woonerf‹) and mixed use – phenomena which were definitely not propagated under the CIAM »regime«. People became the benchmark for the scale of streets, squares, meeting places and design elements. It was in this way that the architects of the 1970s, like Aldo van Eyck, Piet Blom, Theo Bosch, Herman Hertzberger, John Habraken and others, responded to the demand for public space as a living domain. The residential street appeared simultaneously in new residential districts and re-profiled streets. (fig. 16)

For newly developed neighbourhoods, the residential street and small-scale housing estates meant an open environment in which notions of a home’s front and rear blurred into living on a public or collective side: a public entry side and a communal garden side. Access was frequently open to the public. The façades responded to this openness; balconies were large and overlooked both the residential street and the communal garden. (fig. 17)

The designers were interested in transitions: the gradations separating public and private space. ›Soft‹ transitions would encourage more interaction immediately outside the home, in a grey area between the public and the private. The public space would undoubtedly experience this, too, per-
haps even merging with the ›realm in-between‹ as was often already the case on residential streets. The new architectonic requirements imposed by residential streets needed a different kind of façade, one providing different signs. Whilst urban public space is freely accessible and anyone is entitled to be there, the ›realm in-between‹ is an area reliant upon rules of behaviour. It is dependent upon the mores and customs of the culture. An ›insider‹ understands the rules and behaves accordingly.

Hertzberger’s ›Haarlemmer Houttuinen‹ project in Amsterdam displays a clear difference in the façade between the north side, the traffic side, and the side of the residential street on the south. With the exception of the bay windows, the north-facing façade emits from the main road and the railway viaduct.

Approaching the south-facing façade, one’s eye is caught by the arcade-like columns supporting the flat entrances on the first floor and the balconies on the second; they are reminiscent of an Italian city with its shopping arcades. Here, though, they are not public zones. Instead, they form the intermediate area between the street and the home. The border between the public and the private is rather vague on the south side. The ground-floor flats have their own narrow private outdoor spaces, and between them and the street a strip about 120 centimetres wide has very deliberately been left as an undefined zone. It was not made clear who was responsible for that strip; the planning authorities felt compelled to pave it, whilst at the same time the residents began to annex it (see photographs). (fig. 18, 19)

Hertzberger here created both a residential street and a ›realm in-between‹ in front of the home. The architectonic elements deployed here challenged (and challenge) the residents to make use of the strip. The transition is important as a privacy buffer. The façade with its spatial design reflects a public sphere of participation and self-reliance.

Rationality, non-places and new identities

Concepts like the residential street, resident participation, modesty of scale and identification with the neighbourhood and the building were dismissed already in the 80s. The criticism was not confined to architectural form, but also addressed such factors as lack of safety and chaotic noise. But the main reason presumably was the increasing individualization and wish of freedom from any social control. Anonymity was something preferred to collectivity. The residential street became empty and unattractive and with the varied density of construction, narrow alleyways and overgrown squares that were often perceived as unsafe.

In the 1980s the Dutch architect Carel Weeber (born 1937) made a statement by designing collective dwellings that broke radically with the TEAM
X architecture. De ›Black Madonna‹ in The Hague city centre (1982) is a large, enclosed residential block. Once again, as at the beginning of the century, the collective dwelling had clear front and rear sides. Only now the street was much busier and the block bigger. As well as communal entrances for the residents, there now had to be access to a car park and, in many cases, to a bicycle park as well. The façade on the street side clearly indicated non-involvement with this public space, a clear reaction of the societal changes. The architectural means that underline this distance are minimalistic. The elevated ground floor took created a distance between the housing and the street. (fig. 20)

Architecturally, the 80s were years of few innovations, that were followed by the regeneration of the big cities (Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague), providing examples in which the large scale of the block or slab brought more activity to the public area through the introduction of shops or workplaces at street level, mostly however commercial activity. The façade responded with large openings in the plinth.

When the government ended subsidies for housing, the focus shifted towards a commercially-bounded search for a new identity that would sell the product ›home‹. The residential house became more than ever dependent on branding, and separated from the public space.

Conclusion

Public sphere and its changes are related to society. A public space can provide a platform for the public sphere, but history has shown that the ideas about the public sphere and the forms of representation changed. As the façade is related to the public space, changes of the public sphere that often resulted in changes to public space have influenced the appearance of the façade.

Looking back at the socio-cultural development of the Netherlands in the 20th century, it is characterized by a development towards individuality, freedom, and self-development. Traditional patterns of value made way for alternatives and individual choices. As Felling states, the Dutch nowadays are able to combine values in one person that were not previously possible, such as career, security, familiarity and social criticism.

At the beginning of the 20th century, modernity had already produced a mass society. The relationship between the street and the house changed from an individual sphere to the sphere of the mass. The street as the public space became mono-functionalized. Mass and mono-functionality was reflected in the façades. The design of residential buildings in the city posed challenges for architects: how to deal with the mass in an aesthetic way, how to communicate with this changed public sphere, while archi-
tectural references and well-known signs in architecture remained traditional, referring to a former public sphere? We have seen that Berlage and the architects of the ›Amsterdam School‹ solved this question differently than the Modernists, as well as having different ideas about public space.

After World War 2, the Dutch population managed within less than 20 years to establish stability and continuity, both economically and socially, creating a foundation for welfare.47

Residential projects like Pendrecht, and later the famous mass production of ›Bijlmermeer‹ or lesser-known projects, offered the hard-working population dwellings to enjoy greenery as though they possessed their own park next to their homes. Again the façade reflected the ideals of those times, ideals of light, air, and equality. Special articulation within the façade disappeared, blurring front- and back-side.

The cultural revolution of the 60s and 70s broke the chain of this corset-like organized socio-cultural system, introducing profound changes in lifestyle and life values. Now, individual development started to become important, resulting in a higher level of education, welfare, and a critical approach towards traditional institutions (like church and family). The reaction of architecture to collective dwellings and the façade can be noticed in the radical break with high-rise and mass production and the introduction of the human scale for residential buildings, their façades and the environment, as shown in the projects of Verhoeven, van der Werff and Hertzberger.

With the end of the 70s, during the recession, the striving for individual freedom, emancipation, and self-development started to accelerate. This process is still present nowadays. Whereas traditional society took care for people in defined groups and practiced at the same time a certain control, the 80s showed a tendency towards anonymity that worked against the small scale. The projects of Carel Weeber designed in those days show this change clearly. The façade communicates this anonymity.

People living in the city nowadays are released from this control, which leads to individual choices and eventually to de-integration or confusion. Freedom also means taking responsibility for the choices that are made. This development is reflected in the public sphere. Public life is fragmented, can be everywhere and can assume different forms. The rise of the digital public sphere in the last twenty years reinforces this development. The shift towards commercially bounded collective residential buildings without any subsidies emphasizes this fragmentation.

In the article ›The Public Sphere and the New Mass Media‹48 the authors analysed the important role of mass media in the development of a public atmosphere. Dialogue is no longer led outside, but everywhere and digitally. They conclude that two phenomena restrict the public atmosphere: 1.

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44 Vletter Martien de (2004): De kritische jaren zeventig, Architectuur en stedenbouw in Nederland 1968–1982; Rotterdam NAI Publisher. 17
45 Martien de Vletter 2004: De kritieke jaren zeventig, Architectuur en stedenbouw in Nederland 1968–1982; Rotterdam NAI Publisher.
47 Society was based on traditional cultural pattern (often family and church) and religious, social or cultural defined groups formed neighbourhoods.
the diversity of the public sphere (which is inherent to the individualistic society) and 2. the ownership of public space by the private, like commerce, highly criminal zones, the red-light districts or ›gated communities‹ for the rich. Both phenomena eventually lead to fragmentation. In the latter, an illusion of safety is sold by fortress-like buildings (see fig. 3).

As stated in the beginning of this article, social media is indeed everywhere and always available. The border between public and private life is blurring as is the relation between the public space and the façade. The fragmentation of the society and, as stated, the rise of the social media, have expanded the public sphere.

The façade as a media for communication is in a state of total freedom – communicating the freedom to live in the anonymity of the city, the freedom to choose an urban enclave or a different marketing product. Eventually the façade is not able to communicate and more in a state of confusion.

At the beginning of the 20th century the clear question for the residential mass housing was how to represent the new type of mass-housing where a new social class was accommodated and how to present the extremely large scale of these residential houses. We have seen how the representation and filter between public and private changed during the last century.

In the 21st century, the time of an extremely individualistic and anonymous society, especially in the urban field, the façade of residential collective houses can reflect an innumerable diversity of public spheres, leading to confusion or even emptiness. The façade is lost in a public sphere of non-traditional structures. There is no cohesion of values of the communal-ity. Ideas about value are individualized, rapidly changing, and everyone makes their own choices. The façade of the residential collective building in the city reflects these superficial choices. Often protection and what is communal (often, anonymity) is reflected in impenetrable façades.

**Fig. 20** 1982 – The ›Black Madonna‹ in Den Haag by architect Carel Weeber, a residential building for more than 300 rental dwellings and some shops at the ground floor, now demolished. The visible prefab assembly grid underlined the impartiality and objectivity. Only the loggias indicated the residential use and gave a minimal rhythm to the façade. The choice of material, the black ceramic tile, pulled the housing building out of the well-known frame of reference which in the Netherlands consisted more out of brick, stucco, and concrete.

Biographical Notes

Birgit M. Jürgenhake, born 1961 in Lippstadt, Germany, graduated as architect at the faculty of architecture at the Karlsruhe Institute of Technology in 1988. She moved to the Netherlands in 1990, today she lives in Rotterdam. After a period of 15 years working in various architectural offices (Mecanoo architects, Erick van Egeraat, KCAP architects, 3TO architects) she started her work as Assistant Professor at the Department of Architecture, chair of architecture-dwelling at the Technical University of Delft, The Netherlands. She is PhD candidate at the Technical University of Delft, The Netherlands. www.dwelling.nl.

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Figure credits

Fig. 1 Laanstra W. 1994: Cornelis Springer, Geschilderde Steden 77

Fig. 2 Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 3 Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 4 City Archive Amsterdam, Uitgave H. W. Nije, Borneostraat, Amsterdam

Fig. 5 City Archive Amsterdam. www.oneindignoordholland.nl/nl-NL/verhaal/718/de-amsterdamse-willemstraat-als-oranjebolwerk; 04032013

Fig. 6 Berlage 1918: Over normalisatie in de uitvoering van den woningbouw 29

Fig. 7 Berlage 1918: Over normalisatie in de uitvoering van den woningbouw 30
Fig. 8  Berlage 1918: Over normalisatie in de uitvoering van den woning-bouw 33

Fig. 9  Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 10 Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake.

Fig. 11 Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake,

Fig. 12  Photograph: ›Historische Topografische Atlas‹, City Archive Amsterdam. www.historischarchiefdebaarsjes.nl/straten/ortelius.html

Fig. 13  Ernst May: Das Neue Frankfurt; February/March 1930

Fig. 14  City Archive Rotterdam

Fig. 15  City Archive Rotterdam

Fig. 16  Photograph: Helen Zhang, TU Delft

Fig. 17  Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 18  Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 19  Photographs: Birgit Jürgenhake

Fig. 20  www.flickr.com/photos/rienkmebius/492854404, www.flickr.com/photos/rienkmebius/492873039 and www.flickr.com/photos/rienkmebius/04032013

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