Willemijn Wilms Floet
The social missions of Dutch 'hofjes' in architecture

The Dutch 'Hofje van liefdadigheid' [little charity courtyard] as a building type has a number of qualities which attracted the attention of social committed builders up until today: the form of the 'hofje' - a central outdoor space enclosed by dwellings - holds the natural expression of 'community': small individual single room houses being a part of a bigger collective whole oriented to a garden. Hofjes are a green and quiet enclave, often associated romantically with oases in the middle of hectic urban rush. Density and seriality are other causes why the hofje was studied and reinterpreted more than once.

This contribution to the European Almshouses-conference 2011 is addressed to the question about the relationship between the social and architectural representation of hofjes in the Dutch City.
What is the role of architecture concerning socio-cultural and urban dimensions of hofjes? Which social ideas about community and founders are represented in architecture? How and why this is done?

The paper will focus on the 'hofje van liefdadigheid', but will also look into its adaptions by the 19th century speculative developers, 20th century social mass housing corporations and 21st century private developers.

Little charitable hof 1395-2007
The social ideas expressed in architecture, or, the capacity of architecture to express social ideas of 'hofjes van liefdadigheid' here is not studied as a topic of history, but as a typology: a series of buildings dealing formal and functional analogies, as 'schemes'.

The community of a hofje is defined as a homogeneous group of people in a specific stage of life (elderlies, students) living individually, controlled by strict procedures and rules for admission and living.

The smallest hofje in existence comprises four houses (Sionshofje in Leiden, 1641). Large hofjes van liefdadigheid in existence consist of 60 houses (Hofje van Nieuwkoop in The Hague, 1661, Hofje van Gerrit de Koker Rotterdam 70 dwellings). The Proveniershof built by the municipal government of Haarlem numbered 69 houses, the municipal Karthuyzerhof Amsterdam numbered 80 dwellings. A small hof accomodated 4-12 people, a medium size hof 20-30, a large hof 60-100.

The double agenda of charity and memorial - almshousing and the reputation of the founder living on in the city - is a main reason why the hofje developed as a specific and special element within the Dutch city. Because principals of hofjes often were part of the urban elite and the town council, who involved leading architects and city master builders for prestigious public buildings and their own stately residences, the hofje became an assignment as Architecture. Contemporary views on Architecture were projected on the vernacular hofje that came into being without architects.

Evidently, the appearance of the hofje in the city and the architectural lay-out of the buildings and courtyard is an expression of social ideas about community and founder. And, other architectural means are available to influence the representation: the location in the city, the position within the system of public space, the urban block, the access scenery.

2 Phd dissertation ir. W.Wilms Floet, the Little courtyard in the Dutch City, an architectural approach. Venice 2011. This architectural research maps and analyses the little courtyard in eight Dutch cities studied in the TUDelft research programme Mapping the Randstad Holland: Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, Gouda, Den Haag, Delft, Rotterdam, Dordrecht. The research contributes to 'knowing the Dutch city' and studies its themes related to topical architectural assignments: enclosed dwelling environments, silent city space, the architecture of the intermediate space.
The representation of the inhabitants is about community: which are the qualities of the individual dwellings, and, how is the individual a part of the whole? Collectivity and privacy are key words here, next to safety and control.

The representation of the founders concerns status, leaving a mark in the city. It concerns the appearance in the townscape, either inconspicuous unnoticeable, either monumental and present.

Two basic concepts are used: the first brings to the fore the community via ‘equality’; the second puts forward the founder represented by ‘hierarchy’.

**EQUALITY**

The traditional hofjes are founded in the name of Christian principles according to which modesty, simplicity and equality were leading principles.³

The architecture is addressed to ‘equality’ and ‘community’. The vernacular type is created without (leading) architects and is from all times (±1360-1900). The traditional hofjes are communities withdrawn from the world. There is an analogy with Jezus and his apostles by 11-13 dwellings, numbers which reoccur in several early hofjes.⁴ Later on architects used this unity as a cultural reference.⁵

The traditional hofjes are additive structures rather than prescribed formal geometrical structures. Of course the size and form depend on the possibilities of the site, the capital sum available and ideological arguments. Circumstances for the foundations of hofjes count many variables, but patterns can be noticed. For instance, concentrations of hofjes can be found in specific districts, like Jordaan in Amsterdam; on former cloister areas like in Leiden and Haarlem, but not in Amsterdam; a pattern is hofjes near other institutions like in the vicinity of the Bagijnhof in Haarlem, Dordrecht and Delft.

**Seriality**

Dwellings on a hofje are alike single room houses that do not differ from common simple worker’s accommodation.⁶ The facades are built up of rhythmic repeated doors, windows, chimneys and dormers, united by a saddle roof. Houses are in pairs (which relates to the economy of sharing a flue too) and rows. Unity is established by the nature of seriality. To create equal circumstances for every inhabitant living on the courtyard the back of the dwellings is closed, even when this wall borders on the street. Dwellings facing the street were often used for inn-keepers, regent rooms or rented out to create an income for the hofje. In case the hofje is hidden within the block this problem does not exist.

**Collective elements**

The atmosphere on the courtyard is rather informal. The garden serves as a centre, a uniting middle. Collective elements like the regent’s room or a chapel are integrated without pretending.⁷

**Hide and withdrawal**

The expression of equality in the city is manifest in two ways. The first is unpretending: an inconspicuous gate amidst buildings behind which the hofje is completely hidden within the block (exemplary is Hofje van Samuel de Zee Leiden 1724). The second is behind a closed brick wall, literally expressing the idea of withdrawal from the world (exemplary is Arend Maartenshofje Dordrecht 1625). The appearance as a closed wall was common too for cloisters and hospitals, other averted gated communities in the

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³ Turck 1989, Leermakers Donkersloot 2007
⁵ For instance the longitudinal facades of Hofje van Nieuwkoop are built up of 12 + 1 + 12 dwellings; the longitudinal façade of hofje Meermansburg exists of 12 dwellings.
⁷ Jeruzalemshofje Leiden had a ‘Jeruzalemkapel’ in memory of an accomplished crusade; St. Annahofje Leiden, St. Andrieshofje Amsterdam, Zevenkeurvorstenhofje Amsterdam.
Dutch city. The expression of aversion is not restricted to hiding or a closed façade, other means are available too. Aversion is emphasized by locating a hofje near the city wall, the back of the city. Locating the entrance out of sight on an alley is another mean to express the ideology of withdrawal from the world. (exemplary Bakenesserhofje Haarlem). Again here is the argument of availability and the price of lots too. The lay-out of the access scenery is important to set the border between the public world and the hofje. In case the hofje is located within a block this is a long sequence of spaces, a 'route architecturale'. In case the connection is just a hall, a public or private character, and an atmosphere of 'alley', 'hall', 'private property' or 'backside' welcome or hold back visitors naturally, influence the accessibility.

Anonimity
The hofjes on an inner street (exemplary is Grill's hofje Amsterdam 1727), or radiating a park like atmosphere (exemplary is Proveniershof Haarlem 1707) are in the category hofjes expressing 'equality' because of a more public atmosphere. Besides the form, size and the materialization the repetition of elements is a determining factor: the repetition
of elements creates anonymity. Anonymity increases with the number of repeated
 dwellings and building elements, until the number is uncountable and individuality

merges into a whole. It is hard to establish this transition objectively. This is illustrated
for instance by the many front doors at the hofjes in Amsterdam, which usually are built
up of two levels. (exemplary is St. Andrieshofje Amsterdam). Another interesting
example is the labyrinth like Lengen- and Regentenhof Dordrecht, which consists of four connected courtyards. Anonymity serves privacy for the inhabitants. The collective garden serves the same goal: the garden is intended primary to look at in order to create calmness, to create distance between dwellings. Planting prevents from looking in. In general the use of the garden is discouraged. The use of the garden was restricted to bleaching linen only within time limits. The orchard in the Arend Maarentenhofje was replaced halfway the 19th century because of neighbour-quarrels.

HIERARCHY
The hofje van liefdadigheid gets a stately appearance since architecture developed and was involved by founders and their representatives. For the prosperous elite since the golden age Architecture was a popular way to distinguish oneself. In the golden age hofjes were founded by several kinds of founders with a different professional background.

Since the period of decay 1670-1800 the contrast between poor and rich increased. Hofjes were founded by the very rich, driven by the Calvinist duty to fulfil charity, which was controlled by parish communities.

Geometry
The architectural formalization of the hofje initially concerns the façade on the street outside. The renaissance gate of the Frans Loenenhofje in Haarlem by city architect Lieven de Key is an early example in existence. The gate was added later (1625) than the year of foundation (1607).

The total design for Van Brouckhovenhofje in Leiden (1639) by the Dutch Classicist city architect Arent van 's-Gravesande, acknowledged as the first hofje the prototype of the combined gate and regent room, is a hierarchical composition where the representation of the founder by a monumental façade overshadows the very sober hofje itself. In this particular case the community is subordinated to the representation of the founder.

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1607 Frans Loenenhofje Haarlem, architect Lieven de Key

1639 Van Brouckhovenhofje Leiden, architect Arent van 's-Gravesande

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Turck
Afterwards Architecture covers the integral whole, the street façade plus the courtyard, although the street façade and the hofje could be two different commissions. Inhabitants participate in the luxury representing the status of the founder.

Hofjes displaying the founder were located on grandstand view-spots instead of the back of the city. A remarkable example is Van der Speckhofje Leiden 1645 of which the entrance gate is located opposite to the St. Pieterskerk, and a long alley has to be gone to reach the hofje.

Original and contemporary typologies
The architects working in the tradition of classicism take up the typological characteristics of the vernacular hofje: the closed brick façade is monumentalized (hofje van Nieuwkoop The Hague 1658, Hofje van Brienen Amsterdam 1804), the gate was developed into a gate-building in which the regent’s room was integrated (van Brouckhovenhofje Leiden, followed by seven other hofjes in the city of Leiden and several other over the Netherlands). The seriality of the dwellings is tuned up into a monumental stately (overwhelming) complex (hofje van Nieuwkoop The Hague).

9 In hofje Meermansburg Leiden 1681 the front façade was designed by state court and city architect Jacob Roman, the hofje by the city master builder Anthony Breitveld.
The architects working in other traditions project fashionable contemporary building types on the hofje. According to the Louis styles the appearance does not betray the existence of a hofje. The hofje is located unnoticeably amidst the luxury city palaces as where the founders lived in. Those hofjes act like peers, are disguised. Van Brants Rus hofje Amsterdam 1734, designed by the French state court architect Daniel Marot, follows the scheme of the Paris Hotel exactly: a paved court and a garden in the back for the representative functions, here the regents room.

Visual diversion; disguise
Interesting 'tricks' are brought into action to upgrade the visual presentation. In Deutzenhofje Amsterdam 1694 the number of windows is very large compared to the size of the dwellings. The scheme of a larger hofje (Meermansburg Leiden 1681) is shrunk to a smaller scale. Literally amplifying is another solution to increase the appearance by monumentality, as can be noticed at Teylershofje Haarlem 1789). The tromp l'oeil can be noticed in the sham door at the hofje van Noblet Haarlem. Another smart solution to achieve more ostentation is to merge front doors, (hofje van Oorschot 1768 and Teylers hofje Haarlem). The fore-court structure of Hofje van Oorschot Haarlem relates to a city palace like Paleis Noordeinde The Hague. The fence is opened at funerals only. One of four small doors next to the fence gives access to the hofje. None of those doors presents itself as the entrance, so visitors are kept out naturally.
City jewels
A very interesting third category of representation is the connection of the hofje to the city. The garden which is opened to the street (hofje van Oorschot Haarlem) or the fore garden (hofje van Noblet Haarlem 1761). In Teylers’ hofje sublimates an relationship between the hofje and the city interactively: the colossal open gate (closed off by a beautiful fence) on the meandering river Spaarne links the hofje and the city literally and figuratively by framing a view on the heart of the city. The visually open courtyard shows off to the city.

1789, Teylershofje Haarlem, architect Leendert Viervant

Collective elements
As already mentioned collective elements were used to stress décor. The regent’s room now takes a central position in the composition. In the hierarchical compositions the garden is a midpoint. A tree or the water pump is at the crossing of the axes. Decorative Elements like a clock, a sundial or a dome are integrated in the enclosing buildings by which the stress shifts from the dwellings into the hof. Additive facilities formalized as well: a mortuary is added to hofje van Brouckhoven Leiden and Van Oorschot Haarlem, storage for garden equipment is located in the four dark inner corners of Hofje van Noblet Haarlem.

In the 19th century, influenced by social developments, industrialization and political modernization the scope of charity changes. Hofjes were founded until 1926 (Wilhelminastichting Dordrecht), especially in the city of Amsterdam, but the structure of the buildings changes. The hofje no longer turns its back to the city. Windows on the street are no longer taboo, and front doors facing the hofje is not a golden rule anymore. By the end of this century, when economy is picking up after a long period of decay, about 30% hofjes that survived were able to renew buildings and many facades changed. By then, hofjes were rebuilt in fashionable neo-styles. This architecture was related to contemporary urban types and style as such, so, the manifestation as a hofje is not a topic. Often the 19th century hofjes hold a more institutional character following a universal scheme consisting of an emphasized midsection, wings and moderately stressed corners (exemplary are Rozenhofje and Venetiahofje Amsterdam).
A number of hofjes in the city of Amsterdam moved from the historical centre to new urban extensions. Those initiatives were initiated by institutional organizations which ruled multiple hofjes and were looking for efficiency. Moreover, hofjes moved because of urban developments like extension or the fitting in of new infrastructure (Groenvelt's Liefdesgesticht Rotterdam moved twice, for both reasons).

1611-1688/1968 Hofje Codde en van Berensteijn Haarlem, architect J.H. van der Laan

2000 Gravinnehofje Haarlem, architect D. Floors

2007, Johan Enschedé hofje Haarlem, architect Dollab and Joost Swarte

Luthersehofje= Zwaardvegershofje + Konijnenhofje, Catharinahofje, Hamer en Bouwershofje, Fontainehofje Amsterdam; Cathrijn Maartenshofje Leiden, Vrouw Groenevelt's Liefdesgesticht, Hofje Lifde uit Voorzorg, Kuyl's fundatie.
In the city of Haarlem the historical Hofje is translated into a contemporary version until recently.

Hofje Codde en van Berensteijn moved because of city-reconstruction to the foot of the New St. Bavo Church in 1968. The Hofje is a detached project and its lay-out is more loosely consisting of several entrances, short rows of small dwellings and a large garden with footpaths. Dwellings are equipped with a veranda. Collective elements are facilities (laundry service, meeting room, inn-keepers dwellings attached to the Hofje) and a huge effort and care is made to historical building fragments and memorial tablets.

Gravinnehofje 2000, arch. D. Floors, the winning plan of a competition, is a modern gallery flat positioned perpendicular to the street line. References are made to the form characteristics of the historical Hofje. The galleries are in a terraced position, connecting floors visually open. But, because the relationship is not physically and the atmosphere of enclosing lacks and the ground floor is not green, this Hofje is missing the essential quality of intimacy.

Johan Enschedé Hofje in Haarlem 2007 arch. Döll Lab, related to the neighbouring Bakenesserhofje 1395 is a project that closely follows the original. The wooden façades in the Hofje refer to common inner-block architecture. Because of the flat and austere style of the building details an idea of 'front' comes to mind, but the overall impression is of informality.

Speculative hof 1850-1900

Speculative Hofjes are commercial housing for the working class, close to employment. Because of the arising industrialization the number of people inhabiting the city exploded since the second half of the nineteenth century. Some are inhabited by servants, employed in the block, some are built for special purpose like the lodging of soldiers (Alexanders Hofje Den Haag 1874).

Spatial organization in the urban context:
Speculative Hofjes are built in the deep middle of a building block. The density of houses is increased to a maximum, of which the attached example in Scheveningen is an interesting example of a block intended for harbour workers. Because the little dwellings can be combined within a Hofje, but also combining two Hofjes, the project is a successful community up until today.

Speculative Hofjes exist of alleys (with a narrow strip for green) or a tissue of courts (8 x 10 meter) enclosing back-to-back houses, or parallel rows of houses in one or two storeys provided with a saddle- or flat roof. The entrance to the Hof exists of nondescript gates.

Many of these Hofjes are constructed in the quarters between the historic centre and the railway (laid out in the west of Holland between 1839 and 1875). Only in 'hofstad' The Hague they were built all over the city.

Architectural performance:
In speculative Hofjes a representative appearance is up to the market. In general they exist of the most basic small houses: a door, a window, a dormer. They are painted white, for the benefit of the reflection of daylight.

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11 In The Hague the word 'hof' has a special meaning. The Hague is the governmental capital of the Netherlands since 1580. The governmental organization is accommodated in the Binnenhof, which since 1230 used to be a gated community for nobility. The development of the Binnenhof and village (The Hague never acquainted city rights) are connected inextricable.
Detailing and decoration is plainer than in the hofjes van liefdadigheid. Nevertheless, because of the repetition of similar houses unintentional a special architectural unity has come into being.

Because of the density sunlight, air and space exceed healthy conditions. Many of these hofjes are demolished because of governmental direction to get rid of poor dwelling circumstances. Around 1880 The Hague counted 700 speculative hofjes containing 9,500 dwellings, of which 90 hofjes are still present.\(^\text{12}\)

Mass Housing hof 1900-1990
The Dutch Housing Act in 1901 introduces a new scale in the city: planned new neighbourhoods replace the premises-wise filling-in as was usual in the historical city. The spatial design of a housing-environment is a field of experimental design research by architects and planners. Several professionals announced a future for the hofje, nationally and internationally. The German Rudolf Eberstadt, studying the upcoming assignment on social mass housing by making up an inventory on the neighbouring countries foresees a future for the friendly-looking hofjes in a city that has to be densified.\(^\text{13}\) The Dutch historical hofje plays a major part as illustrations. The spacious Dutch hofje is opposed to the speculative version. However, in the conclusions the ‘built form’ is not discussed. These are about hard figures concerning finance, regulations and real estate management. Mels Meijers, architect and inspector of the Amsterdamse Woningdienst [Amsterdam Housing Service] in his series in the Bouwkundig Weekblad of 1916 states the hofje to be the one and only example in the Dutch City of ‘block-building’ in the field of housing in the Netherlands. The housing research-group of the Dutch Association of Architects BNA, made up of prominent architects, formulating the post second world war housing agenda pays attention to a need for hofjes as a part of new neighbourhoods, although housing for elderly at that time was provided by old people’s homes.\(^\text{14}\)

The motive to introduce a hof origins from the wish to include a central element (single or plural) expressing collectivity. Social housing and charity have a common ground to

\(^{13}\) Prof. Dr. Rudolf Eberstadt, Neue Studiën über Stadtebau und Wohnungwesen, Zweiter Band. Jena 1914.
take care of poor people. The target group for the hoven is not unequivocal: ground level family dwellings (for rent) and apartments. In the case of stacked apartments a hof offers collective green for all living downstairs and upstairs.

The principals of hoven in the twentieth century are housing corporations, building for the social and middle class.

Spotional organization in the urban context:
The mass housing hof is part of a new urban composition. Most of those hoven are detached and dwellings face both street and hof. The hof is enclosed but public, and accessible for cars (a way through, often not a way round). The idea of seclusion is evoked by positioning the entrance to the hof indirectly from a side street.

The twentieth century hof took more liberties than the historical hofje. The outcome of the development is not always a real hof, like for example the case in Kerckebosch Zeist: this mega-hof is amplified to the size of 1000 x 350 meters. The enclosed space is a wood protected by the buildings.

Architects and urban designers define the hof as a part of an urban whole:
1. A block within a block, to be considered as an evolution of the historical hof:
   - as an enclave for a religious community (Linnaeushof Amsterdam)
   - as a centre of a residential quarter, alternating with a dull structure of streets and blocks (Papaverhof Den Haag, Zaanhof Amsterdam).
2. Part of a composition of public, semi-public and private outer spaces:
   - as a part of a picturesque garden city (Oostzaan Amsterdam)
   - as a part of a modernist stamp (Frankendael Amsterdam, Landlust Amsterdam, Western garden city extensions Amsterdam)
   - as a part of a structurallistic tissue (Castor & Pollux Berkel en Rodenrijs 1973)
3. A monumental free standing hof (a number of projects by Evers & Sarlemijn, Marlot The Hague, Kerckebosch Zeist)
4. As the adaption of a traditional closed building block (Vroeselaan Rotterdam)

Architectural performance:
A mass housing hof is an amalgamation of multi-room dwellings around a central green outer space, two storeys up to a height of six.

In the twentieth century mass housing-architecture the expression of an individual dwelling as a subordinate part of a whole is an important design question. The mass housing hof is designed in the various vocabularies of the co-existing contemporary approaches and styles: modernism and traditionalism. The ideal of flowing light, air and space - not obvious for the enclosed hof - was the assignment for the Papaverhof The Hague. The expression of repeated individual dwellings enclosing a green centre was a motive in the above mentioned modernist urban stamps.

The English garden city hof 'close' found its way to the Netherlands. The formal monumentality inspired traditionalist architects that were looking for alternatives to the anonymous modern projects.


Private property hof 1990-future

Programme:
The historical hof historical is rediscovered by developers, architects and urban designers lately. Since 1990 the task of housing in the Netherlands is no longer directed by the government, but by the market. Real estate developers evolve the concept of trendy 'thematic living'. Hofjes are a category, to be associated with romanticism, shelter, collectivity and a majestic appearance. Another programme in which hoven do play a role concerns the revitalization of arrears quarters and carry a new social mission, as will be explained further.

Spational organization in the urban context:
Hoven in new expansion neighbourhoods manifest as gated communities for the upper class, complexes averted from the world. They are positioned on the edge of the urbanized area, or even in the country side, in the middle of a golf resort (Haverley Den Bosch). The Grote Hof in Ypenburg, a new extension of the city of The Hague promoted as 'country estate', is referring to representation of the majestic appearance of the historical hofje. 'Dwelling courteously is living royally' is the message of the sales brochure. The architecture of this hof borrows composition principles from the historical hofje and expresses 'silence'.

In the postwar social housing neighbourhood Paddepoel (city of Groningen) a hof equipped with a harbour serves multiple goals: firstly a proven element from the historical city expressing collectivity is introduced to change the atmosphere of anonymity in the neighbourhood; secondly, this combination of collectivity and luxury convinces wealthier people to buy a house in this 'vulnerable area'. At the same time, the harbour is as a new meaningful public place serving the neighbourhood where people walk their dog and children swim.

In the 19th century city district of Rotterdam-Mathenesse a hof called Le Medi is positioned in the centre of a completely renewed building block. The aim was to build private properties for the upcoming non-western immigrants middleclass here. The hof is conceived as a place related to the background of the inhabitants within the Dutch city: houses and little courtyards are suffused with a spirit of exotics by vivid coloured stucco and decorative details in a south Mediterranean style. But, now the project is inhabited by white native Dutch people, who are a minority in the neighbourhood these days.

The recently built hoven exist of dwellings around a green outer public space, like in the mass housing tradition. A new spatial lay out for a hofje is a sequence of small courts enclosed by different housing types (urban renewal in the historic city centre, Mariaplaats Utrecht).

Hoven are a solution for a car free housing environment: under a hof cars are completely out of sight Ypenburg Den Haag. In Veerse poort Middelburg street/urbanity and garden / inner block are reversed by which a series of hof-complexes is set in a park; streets can be narrowed to a car domain, through which space within the block is created for a collective green space (Vinex extension district Wateringseveld The Hague).

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15 Selling-folder for the 'Grote hof Ypenburg Den Haag'.
Architectural performance:
In the recent hof projects two tendencies are to be noticed:
1. The expression of the formal, monumental unity of the quiet whole, as literally in the historical hofjes;
2. The expression of an informal dense city tissue.

The expression of calmness and monumentality is achieved by:
limited access for pedestrians (and cyclists occasionally);
The minimal solution uniting different houses is the sticking-out-roof, or brise soleil (Veersche Poort Middelburg, Le Medi Rotterdam). A building-high colonnade pictures one image of the whole, and creates privacy at the same time (Paddepoel Groningen, Grote Hof Ypenburg). On a smaller scale this is achieved by the composition of the façade, built up of repeated architectural elements like columns, balusters, bands (Kromboog The Hague). Different from the historical hofje, the additive decorations are related to the dwellings, the inhabitants and the collective of inhabitants. The colonnade is composed of standardized elements, instead of custom made like in the historical cases. They are marking territory for the use of private space, filter looking in, create unity. The design of the intermediate space, the access scenery is underestimated, especially standard fences do not satisfy.
The centre of the hof is emphasized by form (the oval in the Kromboog The Hague) or a special programme (the harbour in Paddepoel Groningen).

The expression of informality is achieved by:
A carefully designed unity in materialization of the buildings and pavement;
The windows on the ground level are detailed so open that guests experience the hof as private space. (Mariaplaats Utrecht)
Conclusions
The little charity courtyard, the speculative hofje, the mass housing hofje and the contemporary private property hofje share that living in a hofje primary is a matter of individuality. Collectivity is an idea rather than a physical commune. Variables are polarity pairs: anonymity – personally (principal-inhabitants, and, inhabitants mutually); public-private; equality-hierarchy. The Dutch hof tradition shows exemplary how the scales of the project, block and city cooperate at aiming expressions for social ideas. The hof traditions show that different kind of principals lead to different kinds of court yard projects.
The little charity courtyard developed from a row of alike houses on and enclosing a centre, into a luxurious hierarchical subdivided entirety structured by points. The relationship with the city is a third determining assignment.

The notion of a community withdrawn from the world changes influenced by stature enhanced principals. They were served by elitist international orientated architecture, monumentalizing the original characteristics, or projecting building types for well-to-do on the hofje. In the worst case inhabitants are subordinated to outward show, and, at best feel like a king themselves.

The speculative hofje is to be characterized by packed together dwellings inhabited by large families. The structure of those hofjes is linear. Only in a rare case a special intimacy or the rhythm of houses leads to beauty.

The mass housing hofje is not a closed enclave within an urban block, but an urban, public element hidden within a planned composition.

The combination of collectivity and individuality triggers modernist architects to elaborate the aesthetics of anonymity and seriality. Characteristics of monumentality and formal unity opened ways to reinterpret the hofje by traditionalist architects. An important change concerns the scale of the hofje, which was 'free'. Collective elements – if available - concern the public.

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The contemporary private property hoven ward off or turn to the public sphere like the case in historical hofjes. They are located on the edge of the city or even outside the city and in the middle of a city centre. The reference to the original historical hofje is more obviously. Collective elements serve the idea of collectivity combined with ruling privacy, like in the historical hofje. But here collective elements are standardized building products, expressing 'aloof', while the elements representing the founder were 'custom made'.

A future for the hof might be in forms of sheltered housing, in which individuality and collectivity could vary. Besides hofjes are a great example for green quiet city space in urban centres. They could be a counter balance for commercialization, a relief. The key for future hof is in the design of collective elements and the access scenery, the intermediate space, which nowadays is not a priority to spend budget on. Buyers are not aware, architects are responsible to place collectivity on the agenda. The Dutch hof tradition shows a metier to reactivate this agenda.

Bibliography little charity courtyard

This research has been done primary by comparative analysis of the hofjes in 8 cities in the Dutch City: Amsterdam, Haarlem, Leiden, Gouda, Den Haag, Delft, Rotterdam, Dordrecht, mapped on the basis of the Kadastral Map 1830 and literature.

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Main overviews:

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