

Change in perception
Modernistic Buitenveldert



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1 Introduction

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Visiting my grandparents in the Amsterdam neighbourhood of Buitenveldert, has always sparked my interest since I was a little child. This modernist area from the 1960s, containing freestanding housing blocks in between open spaces filled with greenery, has an appearance quite dissimilar to that of Amsterdam's city centre's closed street blocks. Seeing the neighbourhood from the grand orthogonal roads, the abundance of mid-rise homogeneous looking flats could give first time visitors an overwhelming yet repetitive impression. Buitenveldert's radical layout already caught my attention before I started studying architecture and now I am even more curious about its history and evolution after almost 65 years. More than anything though, I want to investigate how Buitenveldert was perceived in its early days and how this perception has changed until now. The main research question is as follows: 'How did the general perception of Buitenveldert change over time?'

Although I have visited the area countless times over the last 20 years, I would still position myself as an outsider. Living in a particular place rather than popping in and out, creates a whole other perception since you're confronted with this place more often or longer. Personally, I used to visit Buitenveldert monthly to see my grandparents that have lived there since 1974. My family and I would drive to their apartment in one of the many stacked housing blocks and stayed generally for a few hours. The destination was already set and the timeframe was relatively short. I got to experience the neighbourhood on a more surface level that left me feeling I had a connection with the area because of my family rather than because of Buitenveldert itself. Therefore, my own knowledge wouldn't be sufficient to give insight into how the perception of Buitenveldert has changed over the years.

Fortunately, my grandfather and mother do have a deeper relation with the area and can be considered as insiders. My grandfather moved from Amsterdam's city centre to Buitenveldert together with my grandmother and my 6 year old mother. A greener and less busy neighbourhood would be better for my mother to grow up in, they thought. Until this day, my grandfather still lives here. He has experienced Buitenveldert for almost 50 years and therefore his perception and knowledge would be quite valuable. Moreover, my mother has spent most of her childhood in Buitenveldert and moved out when she was 21 to live with my father in Ouderkerk aan de Amstel, a small village nearby. Her perception of the area as an insider then and somehow an outsider now, offers precious information for this research. Combining their knowledge and experiences, gives this thesis an intergenerational approach. Besides interviews with my family, methods such as literature studies, newspapers studies and visual analysis (photographs) research the area's shift of perception.

The first chapter introduces Buitenveldert by exploring its origin and discovering the ideology and intentions for the neighbourhood. Buitenveldert was designed by modernist architect and urban planner Cornelis van Eesteren as part of the Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan [General Extension Plan]. The book *Het ontwerp van de stadsplattegrond* (Heeling et al., 2002) and the report *Het ontstaan van Buitenveldert* (Van Eesteren-museum, 2014a), both elaborate Van Eesteren's urban planning ideas for Buitenveldert by firstly discussing the themes of the English garden city movement and the German new city block before linking this to the modern Dutch urban development ideas during



the second half of the 20th century. Plans and images of Buitenveldert's radically new open layout in the report *Cultuurhistorische verkenning en advies* (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012), showcases the architect's initial urban plan and what has been built from that plan. The neighbourhood's public green spaces are discussed in the report *Openbare ruimte: het naoorlogs groen in Buitenveldert* (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014b). The aim of this chapter is to explain the objective architectural historical context of Buitenveldert before exploring the more subjective perceptions in the other two parts of this research.

In the second chapter, the perception of Buitenveldert in its early days will be covered. The *Stadsarchief Amsterdam* provides multiple photographs from that time which will serve as visual support for the information that is told during the interviews with my grandfather and mother about the perception back then. The newspaper articles *Buitenveldert, bah!* (*Het Vrije Volk*, 1969) and *Ballonnen in Buitenveldert* (*De Waarheid*, 1968) include valuable content in which children critique the urban quality of the area and important developments such as the opening of the Gelderlandplein mall. More critique and negative experiences by initial inhabitants are given in the video *Buitenveldert: 1958, 1998, 2008* (*Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam*, 1998). This part of the thesis investigates what it was like living in a radically new neighbourhood through the eyes of its inhabitants and my family.

The third chapter uses a similar approach to that of the second chapter in order to explore the perception of current day Buitenveldert. The monthly newspaper *Wijkkrant Buitenveldert-Zuidas* gives a glimpse into notable infrastructural redevelopments and how the neighbourhood is slowly evolving into a more residence focused district. This evolution is backed up by articles *Q Residences: een buitenbeentje in Buitenveldert dat kronkelt, danst en beweegt* (Huisman, 2022) and *Leren van Buitenveldert: leg nooit al je eieren in een mandje!* (Van den Hoek, 2022). Buitenveldert's statistics in the report *Buitenveldert Zuidas - Gebiedsanalyse 2022* (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022) point out the increasing number of senior inhabitants and how the area scores on various themes compared to the rest of Amsterdam. The article *Expats, jonge gezinnen en vergrijzing: bewoners Buitenveldert met elkaar in gesprek* (Aerts, 2022), gives more insight in the neighbourhood's lacking social cohesion. Besides, it showcases how Buitenveldert is regarded by its residents, concluding the perception that is formed in this chapter. Comparing the two different time perceptions with each other, combined with the context given in the first chapter, forms the conclusion and the answer to the main question: 'How did the general perception of Buitenveldert change over time?'

This research makes a comparison between Buitenveldert's architectural historical context, Cornelis van Eesteren's modernistic ideological plan for the neighbourhood, and first hand experiences from its (former) inhabitants, in order to obtain new knowledge about how the perception has changed over time and the relevance of modernist planning principles over time.



2.1 Buitenveldert's origin Van Eesteren's radical neighbourhood

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At the beginning of the twentieth century, Amsterdam went through a period of growth which asked for a rapid expansion of the city (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). To accommodate the demand for new large-scale housing developments, the Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan (AUP) [General Extension Plan] was established in 1935. This plan, set up by Dutch modernist architect and urban planner Cornelis van Eesteren, envisioned Amsterdam's extension in multiple phases by building on land that was acquired by the municipality in 1921 (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). Firstly, the Westelijke Tuinsteden [western garden cities] (Slotermeer, Geuzenveld, Slotervaart and Osdorp) were realised in the western part of the city, before expanding in southern direction with the neighbourhood of Buitenveldert in 1958 (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012), see figure 1.

Van Eesteren's plan was heavily influenced by the garden city movement, which saw its origin in English cities (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). This urban planning movement made an attempt to regulate the unbridled growth and densification of the cities by a decentralised expansion, creating satellite towns separated by greenbelts from the central city. In his book 'Garden Cities of Tomorrow', the movement's founder Ebenezer Howard described how he envisioned these new cities to be places where humans and nature could harmoniously live together. Besides improving the living conditions of the working class, the garden cities tried to solve problems with traffic and promote physical and intellectual development of individual humans. Although no real garden cities have been built in the Netherlands, many cities have used its ideology for constructing new post-war neighbourhoods. Unlike the English garden cities, the expansion areas from the AUP remained somewhat focused on Amsterdam's centre (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). The plan was intended to create well connected green neighbourhoods at a short distance from the city with dedicated work/recreation areas.

Furthermore, Van Eesteren wanted to get rid of the unhealthy character of the city caused by the closed building blocks of the historic centre. At the end of the nineteenth century, there was a growing criticism of the closed building blocks which resulted in a slow development towards the modernist open allotment (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). German architect and urban planner Ernst May, who Van Eesteren knew through the CIAM (Congrès Internationaux d'Architecture Moderne), proposed a solution for the unhygienic and neglected residential areas of the industrial city with his Siedlungen [settlements] (Heeling et al., 2002). In four phases he transformed the traditional closed building block eventually into slender building strips for the Siedlung Westhausen in Frankfurt, see figure 2. Westhausen is regarded as a model of rationalism due to its lack of variety and abandoning the features of the landscape. The autonomous neighbourhood neglects the traditional existing layout of the city entirely in favour of a rigid yet green grid, see figure 3. However, critics were afraid that inhabitants would lose sentimental value due to the anonymity and questioned the area's sole focus on housing units while abandoning the need for collective facilities (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a).

The English garden city movement and the German evolution of the building block together formed the foundation of Van Eesteren's design for Amsterdam's expansion.



Figure 1 Amsterdam's Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan with the Westelijke Tuinsteden and Buitenveldert indicated in bright red. Buitenveldert is the area south of the darker red city centre (Van Eesteren, 1935).

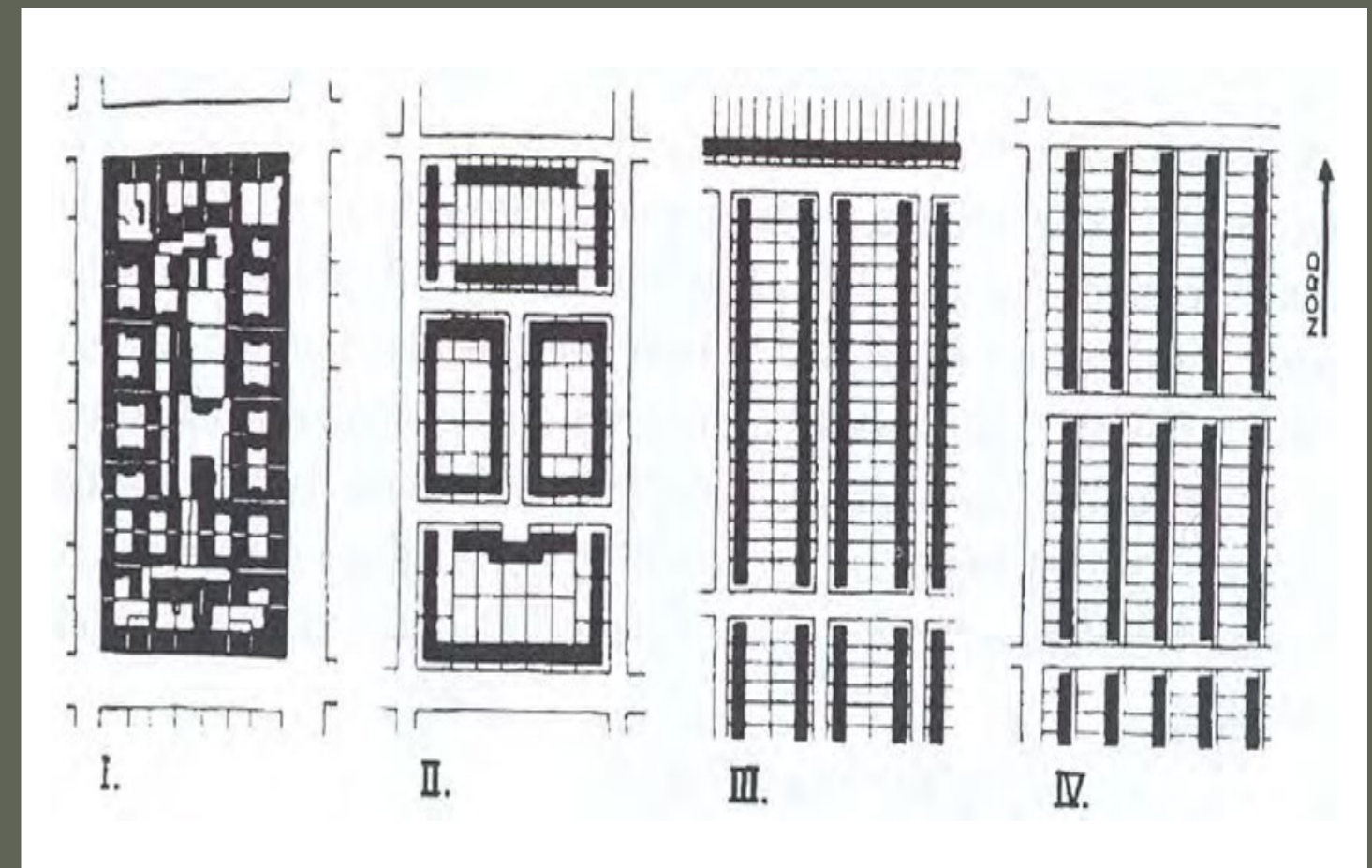


Figure 2 Development from traditional closed building block (I) towards slender building strips in four phases (IV) (May, 1930).

The newly constructed areas are characterised by their open urban layout, emphasising a strict separation of functions and offering an abundance of public green spaces (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). He stated that the new neighbourhoods with their prominent degree of repetition and rhythm in the buildings, would result in a motif of peace and harmony (Heeling et al., 2002), see figure 4. What differs between the Westelijke Tuinsteden and Buitenveldert, is that Buitenveldert was intended for the housing of the wealthier citizens that increasingly moved out of Amsterdam in favour of Het Gooi, a wealthy area further away from the city. The Westelijke Tuinsteden mainly provided a significant amount of relatively cheap and compact houses to meet the post-war housing shortage (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). This type of housing was largely stimulated by the government, giving hardly any room for private development (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). In Buitenveldert however, the local authority commissioned private builders with two-thirds of the houses in Buitenveldert, which led to architects designing better floor plans and a higher and more varied share of high-rise buildings.

Another important change in the design for Buitenveldert compared to the early AUP areas, is the changed allotment principle (Heeling et al., 2002). Whereas the Westelijke Tuinsteden relied mostly on the building strips that were seen in Siedlung Westhausen, large parts of Buitenveldert contained a more unique semi-open building block concept, see figure 5. These new blocks, actually two L-shaped flats enclosing a courtyard, were regarded as an alternative to the traditional closed blocks whose corners struggled with floor plans and sunlight infiltration. Van Eesteren oriented the blocks north-south to allow optimum sunlight around the courtyards' green spaces that often contained small playgrounds intended for the neighbourhood's children. Throughout Buitenveldert, offices and compact shopping centres were assigned in the plinth of square-shaped housing blocks, creating small shopping plazas with several local shops (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2012). The Rooswijck mall and the Gelderlandplein mall, opened later in 1968, form on the other hand the largest concentrations of commercial functions in the area. In between the semi-open building blocks next to the Van Boshuizenstraat, three distinct churches were located. Besides, the neighbourhood features multiple primary and secondary schools alongside the campus of the Vrije Universiteit [Free University]. Even though Buitenveldert's functions were quite separated from one another, like Van Eesteren had envisioned, the area offers sufficient facilities for its inhabitants to live, work, and relax within the neighbourhood's borders (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a).

Not only the built environment was important in creating Buitenveldert's radical homogenous appearance, attention for public space and especially greenery were just as important for this modernist urban plan. The Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark, a broad 2 kilometre long green strip, was constructed to connect the existing green structures in the west (Amsterdamse Bos) with the east (banks of the river Amstel, later the Amstelpark), see figure 6. The park's layout, designed by Wim Boer and finished in 1968, consists of a meeting island in the middle, a kiosk, a playground and a flower garden (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014b). Besides this open public green space, greenery throughout the entire neighbourhood was intended to complement the sober and repetitive architecture of the building blocks. The street side of these blocks for example, contained less relief in the facade and unwelcoming closed plinths which are compensated by rows of plane trees. Within the courtyards of the semi-open building blocks, more variation in plants and trees can be found. Free stranding monumental trees were placed as counterpoints in between planes of grass and other plantations. Moreover, landscape architects used contrasting coloured planting in relation to the buildings' colours, like



Figure 3 Siedlung Westhausen's modernist open allotment created by the rigid yet green grid that has nothing to do with the city's traditional layout (Aero-Lux Büsscher & Co. KG, 1932).



Figure 4 Physical model of Van Eesteren's radically modern layout for Buitenveldert, seen towards the south (Ons Amsterdam, 1961).

darker trees being placed in front of rather pale facades and vice versa to create more depth in the otherwise monotonous looking architecture of the neighbourhood.

Finally, Buitenveldert's plan played into the image of cars becoming a more prominent part of the streetscape by realising many drive-in houses and a high number of compulsory parking spaces at the ground level of the housing blocks (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). Large prominent car roads, like the Van Boshuizenstraat and the Van Nijenrodeweg, divide the area into sub-neighbourhoods. Smaller roads intended for destination traffic, connect the housing blocks with the grand road structure, making Buitenveldert a car-focused area in its early days. However, separate cycling paths and transit options were added shortly after as more sustainable transport options in and around the neighbourhood.

With his design for Buitenveldert, Van Eesteren intended a place with lots of greenery as well as his three key principles: light, air and space (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2022). According to him, residents should live in houses with sufficient natural light by creating open space between the housing blocks. Parks, playgrounds and sports fields would allow the inhabitants to enjoy the fresh air and outdoors as much as possible. In that way he imagined a pleasant life being lived in a spacious and green area. Van Eesteren himself regarded his design for Buitenveldert as the most successful plan for Amsterdam's post-war expansion. He stated that 'if you really want to know how the AUP was intended, go see Buitenveldert' (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014a). The ideas of the garden city and a new open allotment, in combination with offering sufficient facilities and better housing, have made Buitenveldert a wealthy modernist neighbourhood. This stands in stark contrast with Amsterdam's historical centre, just how Van Eesteren had envisioned.



Figure 5 The semi-open building blocks, created by two L-shaped flats, form a unique open allotment principle that can be found throughout Buitenveldert (VLUGP, 2001).



Figure 6 Aerial view of the Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark, Buitenveldert's main public green space, seen towards the east (Gemeente Amsterdam, 1968).

2.2 Early day's perception

Controversial housing and facilities

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After the first stone was laid for the Buitenveldert plan in 1958, a year later in 1959, the first residents began to inhabit their houses (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1998). My grandfather and grandmother together with my 7 year old mother moved from the Van Kinsbergenstraat, in Amsterdam's centre, to Buitenveldert in 1974. A calmer and greener environment would be better for children to grow up in compared to the busy city centre, they thought. Therefore, when one of their friends, a real estate agent from Blaricum, offered them a new house in Buitenveldert, they immediately said yes and moved in soon after. Even though they rented the flat, multiple changes to the layout were made because they knew the owner of the building. This way, the rental apartment really felt like their own place and made them more attached to Buitenveldert since they didn't think of leaving the house or the neighbourhood.

The new apartment, situated in one of the semi-open building blocks, wasn't that radically different in terms of size and layout compared to their previous apartment in the centre, my grandfather explained. One of the most noticeable changes to him however was the building itself, the four storey gallery flat, see figure 7. 'It was nice that you stayed dry when it rained and you still had a bit of a view over the courtyards here', he remembered, describing the gallery access to their house. The glass entrance functioned as a place where the flat's residents had interactions with each other. On the other side of the flat, the private south side facing balconies were located. My grandfather explained that they used their balcony quite a lot but 'in the summer you almost burned away, even in the house itself, so our awning had to be put out all the time'. Van Eesteren's idea of optimum sunlight for the housing blocks' southern facades worked as envisioned, but wasn't always ideal for its inhabitants. Besides, residents weren't allowed to dry their laundry outside on the balconies, since this created a messy image of the modern flats (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1998). Human livability was in some cases regarded as less important than the modern, clean and homogeneous appearance of the neighbourhood.

The enclosed greenery between the flats, the courtyards, offered people of the neighbourhood a place where they could relax outside of their homes. Especially children made use of this space since various playgrounds were placed between the green spaces, see figure 8. My mother remarks: 'What was nice about growing up in Buitenveldert, was that you could always play safely outside in the courtyards until late at night. In the centre of Amsterdam that was more difficult and I was actually not allowed to do that. In the part of Buitenveldert where I lived, many children went to school with me, with whom I played outside in the afternoons and evenings in the playgrounds between the flats. That was fun.' The semi-open building blocks therefore created a lively and safe street environment by enabling children to play outside while residents could keep an eye on them. For other inhabitants, like for my grandfather, this green space however was less appealing (Aerts, 2022). A sufficient amount of bushes and trees were to be found on the grass areas but benches and tables were mostly missing. It didn't really function as a meeting place, like for example some community gardens do, since it wasn't designed that way. The green along the roads furthermore also didn't provide the inhabitants anything more than their green visual appearance. This can be



Figure 7 The access galleries and the glass entrance of my family's beloved flat (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1962).



Figure 8 The courtyard of my family's beloved flat with a glimpse of the playground, located just behind the right building (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1962).

considered as a missed opportunity since various (landscape) architects have discussed a lot about how collective green could play a role in building post-war areas (Van Eesterenmuseum, 2014b)

Besides the mixed opinions of Buitenveldert's green space, there were also some initial critical notes about the neighbourhood's modernist layout. My grandfather and mother both described Buitenveldert quite positively as 'calm', 'modern' and 'spacious' in comparison to the crowded city centre where they previously lived. Having the houses stacked on top of one another created more space in between the flats for the public and traffic than Amsterdam's traditional closed building blocks. However, some of Buitenveldert's children expressed their dissatisfaction when asked about what they thought of the neighbourhood (Het Vrije Volk, 1969). 'A bad part of Amsterdam' due to the 'nasty apartment buildings' were some of the responses. One child went further and commented: 'I find the flats plainly horrible. They look like a set of building blocks'. My mother somewhat agreed by stating that she disliked the monotonous look of the flats and preferred more spacious houses with a private garden. She got a feeling that people were just crammed in the building blocks with their small apartments and balconies, even though the prices weren't relatively cheap. My grandfather mentioned that he favoured the neighbourhood's overall layout and appearance over that of for example Geuzenveld, one of the Westelijke Tuinsteden's neighbourhoods, because of the 'nicer flats, the green courtyards and the nearby Amstel river'. This echoes Van Eesteren's personal opinion on Buitenveldert being his most successful design for the AUP.

The plan's idea for a strict separation of functions resulted in various clustered spaces like shopping centres and parks. The most prominent and biggest shopping centre, the Gelderlandplein mall opened its doors in 1968 and was intended to attract people from Buitenveldert and the inner city, that now fled to Amstelveen's Stadshart mall in order to go shopping (De Waarheid, 1968). My mother loved the open character that the mall had, with its central open squares surrounded by arcades where children would sell their goods during Koninginnedag (a Dutch public holiday), see figure 9. My grandfather however adds that 'when the wind sometimes picked up, it stormed past the arches in front of the shops. I actually thought it was terrible'. He disliked the original mall before it was firstly renovated and fully covered, and preferred the smaller Rooswijk mall closer to his house. Van Eesteren's intended small shopping plazas between the housing blocks, wasn't fully embraced by the neighbourhood, see figure 10. 'Since the range of shops in the malls were better, these were unnecessary', my grandfather remarked. When he did visit Gelderlandplein, he always crossed the Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark, one of the two main clustered parks. On the park's central island there was a kiosk that my mother can still clearly recall from her childhood memory, see figure 11. 'I often ate chips and cheap sweets here with my neighbours and classmates. There were plenty of benches and there was a playground where we could play. That was my favourite part of Buitenveldert: the kiosk and the park', she elaborated. The other clustered green space, the Amstelpark, was used less often by my family due to its slow decay after the Floriade of 1972 was over. The free-roaming chickens and the seals in a pond at the entrance were soon removed, which my mother thought of as a pity.

Since Buitenveldert contained most of the facilities that Amsterdam's centre also offered, the neighbourhood functioned quite autonomously, in line with the garden city concept that Van Eesteren had envisioned for the area. My grandfather only left Buitenveldert to go to the inner city for some specific shops that the neighbourhood didn't



Figure 9 The arcades surrounding Gelderlandplein mall's original open squares where visitors stayed dry when it rained during their shoppings (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1970).



Figure 10 One of the many small shopping plazas located between Buitenveldert's buildings blocks (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1966).

have at the time. My mother together with my grandmother, only went there for late night shopping on Thursdays. At first, the infrastructural connection between Buitenveldert and the city's centre wasn't well thought of (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1998). One of the few transit options, bus 23, didn't drive consistently and wasn't really reliable, inhabitants complained. My grandfather stated: 'I wouldn't say Buitenveldert was very isolated, but it was definitely not so easy to get to Amsterdam's centre'. This perception slowly changed when tram line 5 was extended south towards Amstelveen, and now also stopping in Buitenveldert (Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam, 1998). For my grandfather, the downsides were that his beloved strip of green in the middle of the Buitenveldertselaan had to make way for the tram and that it got busier on the otherwise quite calm streets, see figure 12. Simultaneously, more people moved to the area due to the better connection with the surrounding areas, like wealthy Japanese businessmen that worked in offices in the city, my grandfather explained. Quite soon after its completion Buitenveldert, functioned already less as a garden city and more like a typical suburban neighbourhood that's dependent on the city.



Figure 11 Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark's central island with the kiosk 'Consumptie-tent' at the time when the last trees were planted (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1965).



Figure 12 Buitenveldertselaan before tram 5 was extended with in the middle the strip of green and bus 23 in the foreground (Stadsarchief Amsterdam, 1966).

2.3 Current day's perception Redevelopments and diversification

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This year, on June 2nd 2023, Buitenveldert will celebrate its 65th year of existence (Wijkkrant Buitenveldert-Zuidas, 2023). In this timeframe, the area developed itself from a post-war extension neighbourhood on the edge of Amsterdam, into an integral part of the city. With Amstelveen's current housing construction boom and the countless new on-going projects in the Zuidas, Amsterdam's most ambitious and largest new development area, Buitenveldert's surrounding environment is dramatically transforming. Van Eesteren's intended level of autonomy for the neighbourhood has been challenged by these new external developments, new circumstances which he couldn't be aware of when designing the AUP. What happened to Buitenveldert's built environment and its inhabitants in the past 65 years?

Firstly, when asking my grandfather and mother about Buitenveldert's most noticeable changes they've experienced throughout the years, they both mentioned that in their eyes not really anything radically different has happened to the neighbourhood. 'There aren't really any significant changes, because everything has actually remained mostly the same. The same flats, streets and greenery.', my mother elaborated, see figures 13 and 14. The typical restructuring developments that happen in a lot of Dutch post-war areas, have passed Buitenveldert (Van den Hoek, 2022). This can be explained by a combination of conditions in the area. Since there's relatively small housing association ownership (21%) and a relatively high amount of the houses are occupied by the owners (36%), little large-scale changes to the housing blocks were made (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). In the Westelijke Tuinsteden however, 61% of the houses are cooperative rental and 25% owner-occupier, which means that developments like restructuring and renovating are done by the housing corporations and not the private owner-occupiers like in the case with Buitenveldert. Moreover, Van Eesteren's radical layout for the neighbourhood has proved to provide its inhabitants a spatial quality that can be hardly found in other parts of the city (Van den Hoek, 2022). The spacious green courtyards and nature-inclusive streets, offer a pleasant streetscape without the feeling of a lack of social security that's often associated with post-war areas like the Westelijke Tuinsteden. There, inhabitants are less attached to the place due to the high cooperative rental number which means that inhabitants move faster in and out of the neighbourhood and therefore the social security lacks. The inclusion of various functions in Buitenveldert like living, working and facilities, although spatially separated, made the area interesting for a broad range of people. Almost 30 percent of the neighbourhood's floor area has a non-residential function, which is significantly more than for instance in the Westelijke Tuinsteden.

Although the designed layout for Buitenveldert remains mostly unchanged, the neighbourhood does have experienced some smaller redevelopments over time. One of which are the Q Residences, my mother pointed out. The Quartz Tower designed by Studio Gang, with its glass facade and prominent wavy balconies, rises dramatically above the neighbourhood (Huisman, 2022), see figure 15. This recently completed project gives Buitenveldert a landmark which breaks with Van Eesteren's envisioned uniform streetscape that has been created by the homogenous looking flats. Interestingly, tenants aren't allowed to place plastic chairs and other cheap-looking mess on



Figure 13 My family's flat has hardly changed over time, the access galleries and glass entrance have remained exactly the same (OOZO, 2022).



Figure 14 No big changes were made to the courtyards, other than replacing the original playground equipment and the addition of some benches and tables (OOZO, 2023).

their balconies in order for the building to remain a clean appearance, quite similar to when residents of the first Buitenveldert flats weren't allowed to dry their laundry on the balconies. A desired strong futuristic image to the outside is what these different projects have in common, even though they were completed almost 65 years apart. Getting renowned architect Jeanne Gang to build her first European project in Buitenveldert, shows the neighbourhood's shift towards wanting to build new striking projects (Van den Hoek, 2022). Sometimes this means that older historical structures, like one of the three iconic churches, the pilgrims church, had to make way for new developments (Wijkkrant Buitenveldert-Zuidas, 2022). Most of these new projects are residential, partly due to the nationwide housing shortage. The Q Residences illustrate that Buitenveldert is still in demand, especially with the wealthier people and expats. For example, my grandfather explained that the smaller Qube Tower was fully rented out right from the start. He has nothing against the new developments since he thinks these are in most of the cases improvements for the area.

Another noticeable change happened to one of the most prominent facility in the neighbourhood, the upgraded Gelderlandplein mall. After the shopping centre was fully covered in the early 1990s, Gelderlandplein recently got its second transformation which focused on creating a more luxurious appearance and attracting more high-end retailers and restaurants (Kroonenberg Groep, 2016), see figure 16. This was in order to better serve the wealthy people from Buitenveldert and the Zuidas. My grandfather really likes this new fancier image but my mother on the contrary preferred the older Gelderlandplein and stated that 'it's all luxurious and new now, but also therefore very expensive'. She also explained that since Gelderlandplein became more popular and expanded with larger stores, several local shops across the neighbourhood have disappeared. This can be seen for instance when looking at Van Eesteren's planned small shopping plazas between the semi-open building blocks. Offices and other businesses have now occupied the former retail spaces. Besides, my mother's beloved kiosk in the middle of the Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark, which was one of her favourite places in her childhood, has disappeared because of Gelderlandplein's increasing popularity.

The planned concentrations of functions, like the shopping centres, became more important for its inhabitants to meet each other and caused other smaller meeting places to slowly disappear. The BOC (Buitenveldert Ontmoetings Centrum), a community centre where people in the neighbourhood gathered for various activities like workshops, was eventually demolished, my mother sadly described. These meeting places are important for the neighbourhood, since many inhabitants miss more social cohesion in Buitenveldert (Aerts, 2022), see figure 16. To illustrate, Fleur (25) points out that in her flat, the residents are constantly changing and therefore she has no connection with her neighbours. Hans (82), who has lived in the area for almost 60 years, agrees: 'I do notice that there is less social cohesion. Everyone used to know each other, you said hello. That's different now'. He has taken the initiative to place thirty benches in the neighbourhood, so the elderly can sit down and chat on their way to the mall or the park from their homes. Although this initiative is pleasantly received, some of the inhabitants, such as Omer (45), would suggest a meeting place for every age category. He finds the vegetation of Buitenveldert's greenery boring and would like to initiate a collective garden that would be maintained by the neighbourhood, something Van Eesteren's plan didn't include. Rashmi (47) suggests also a community centre, like the ones in Singapore where she comes from: 'Places where you can meet people can make the neighbourhood livelier. Such as cafes, terraces and local shops. Now people



Figure 15 Quartz Tower's expressive facade rises high above Buitenveldert's flats and greenery, which breaks with the otherwise uniform built environment (Lucker, 2022).



Figure 16 Gelderlandplein mall's current luxurious appearance, created by its roof and larger/more expensive stores (Kroonenberg Groep, 2016).

go to a large-scale and anonymous shopping mall'. At night for example when the mall is closed, there's even less to do in the area since there are almost no bars to be found, Omer complains. For the elderly this isn't really a problem but for the youth it is. Some of the older inhabitants, like Peer (84) and his friends, still keep in touch with each other on the terraces of the smaller Rooswijck mall, but that's again during the day.

Furthermore, a lot of older people can be found in Buitenveldert. Around 25% of its inhabitants are older than 65 years, the highest percentage of all Amsterdam's areas (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). This can be explained by the fact that a significant number of the earliest residents haven't left the neighbourhood ever since they moved there, like my grandfather. The streetscape has even been adapted to the wishes of these now older inhabitants because the elderly in Buitenveldert talk with the municipality, in contrast to most other neighbourhoods in Amsterdam (Rijkers, 2020). Initiatives like Hans' benches and making the route to the Gelderlandplein mall from senior housing complexes cleaner and safer, have led to more social encounters between the elderly. The overall social cohesion however is fairly similar to the rest of Amsterdam and has room for improvement, like some of the residents mentioned (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022). After the arrival of the Japanese in Buitenveldert due to the better connectivity with the city, new waves of expats came to inhabit the neighbourhood as well (Aerts, 2022). These foreigners mostly live in the neighbourhood and work at international offices in and around Amsterdam. In 2022, 57% of Buitenveldert's population are immigrants from which 27% has a non-Western background (AlleCijfers, 2022). This increasing diversity is quite visible on the streets. At the Rooswijck mall for example, multiple restaurant stands are situated serving food originating from Japan, Suriname and various Middle Eastern countries. Buitenveldert's large Jewish community is noticeable by some men wearing orthodox Jewish clothing outside, my mother described. Moreover, 50% of the neighbourhood's new population over the past five years, earn twice as much as the average income of 38.000 euro (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2021). This doesn't change much however to Buitenveldert's income structure that already includes many high earners.

Looking at how Buitenveldert is regarded by its residents, hardly any large complaints can be discovered. There's little criminality in the area and the quality of the public space and greenery is highly ranked. The neighbourhood is seen as a child friendly place, partly due to the many playgrounds (in the courtyards), and scores high on aspects like street cleanliness and the amount of parking space, see figure 18. The overall satisfaction among inhabitants was a 7,9 out of 10 in 2021, making Buitenveldert on average a good neighbourhood to live in. Van Eesteren's radical design for a mixed function and green neighbourhood, provides a quite liveable environment for its inhabitants, even after almost 65 years. 'I find it very comfortable here in Buitenveldert. You have everything here', my grandfather proudly states.



Figure 17 A more diverse group of residents can be seen during interviews where they discussed topics like meeting places and the lack of social cohesion (Coppejans & Stichting Open Mind, 2022).

Buitenveldert, Zuidas ten opzichte van het stedelijk gemiddelde, februari 2022

Veel beter dan Amsterdam gemiddeld	Beter	Gemiddeld voor Amsterdam	Slechter	Veel slechter dan Amsterdam gemiddeld
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schoon straat (1-10) Parkeren auto (1-10) % Minimahuishoudens Advies Havo/WVO (%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Kindvriendelijk (1-10) Sportgelegenheden (1-10) SES (gemiddeld) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Eigen buurt (1-10) Buurtontwikkeling (1-10) Wel eens onveilig voelen buurt (%) Boodschappen (1-10) Meest kwetsbaar (% 66+) (zeer) gezond (%) A/B (%) Sociale cohesie (1-10) 		

	2013	2017	2021
tevredenheid met buurt (1-10)	8,0	7,9	7,9

Figure 18 Buitenveldert's scores on various themes compared to Amsterdam's average scores (Gemeente Amsterdam, 2022).

3 Conclusion

Now that Buitenveldert's architectural historical context has been analysed and the perceptions from then and now have become clear, the main research can be answered. Since there's no simple short answer to this question, due to the various aspects the neighbourhood includes, comparisons between the two different time perceptions will be made in this conclusion in order to answer the main research question: 'How did the general perception of Buitenveldert change over time?'. Before these comparisons, a short summary of the architectural historical context is given.

Buitenveldert was designed by Cornelis van Eesteren as part of the Amsterdam's AUP in 1935, envisioning new neighbourhoods on the western (Westelijke Tuinsteden) and southern (Buitenveldert) edges of the city. He combined key principles of the English garden city movement and the German new city block into his modernistic designs for these new areas. This resulted in newly constructed neighbourhoods that are characterised by their open urban layout, emphasising a strict separation of functions and offering an abundance of public green space. Buitenveldert focused more on housing the wealthier citizens that increasingly moved out of Amsterdam by providing better designed houses and a more unique arrangement of buildings compared to the Westelijke Tuinsteden. The semi-open building block concept, formed by two L-shaped flats enclosing a courtyard created better sunlight infiltration and playgrounds for the neighbourhood's children. Moreover, two bigger shopping centres were planned as the largest concentrations of commercial functions, accompanied by smaller shopping plazas throughout the area. Alongside the Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark that functioned Buitenveldert's main public green space, the green throughout the entire neighbourhood was intended to complement the sober and repetitive architecture of the building blocks. This all led to a neighbourhood which Van Eesteren regarded as his most successful plan for Amsterdam's post war expansion.

My family moved from Amsterdam's centre to Buitenveldert in 1974 since they thought a calmer and greener environment would be better for children to grow up in compared to the busy inner city. Although their new house was comparable in size and layout to their previous city apartment, they benefited from having a southern facing balcony, a more socially interactive gallery access and the green courtyards. For children, like my mother at the time, the courtyards offered them a playground where they could play safely until late at night. Other inhabitants however didn't use this space that much since it wasn't really designed like a meeting place and didn't provide anything more than a pleasant green visual appearance. Now, after almost 65 years, little has changed in these building blocks. The courtyards have retained practically the same and the flats themselves haven't also changed since there was no need for large-scale renovations, partly due to the large number of owner-occupier houses.

Similar to these housing blocks, the general layout of Van Eesteren's design hasn't seen any significant changes either. At first, this radical and modern appearing neighbourhood was received with mixed opinions. Some thought of it as 'a bad part of Amsterdam' with the 'monotonous' flats looking like a 'set of building blocks', others described it as rather 'calm', 'modern' and 'spacious'. The latter for example favoured Buitenveldert's layout and appearance over that of the Westelijke Tuinsteden, in line with Van Eesteren's thoughts. The neighbourhood's open allotment provides inhabitants with a



spatial quality that can be hardly found in other parts of the city. The inclusion of nature in the public spaces offers a pleasant streetscape without the feeling of a lack of social security that's often associated with post-war areas. Redevelopments like the Q Residences' striking tower however, slowly break away with the homogenous looking appearance of the area, even if historical structures have to make way for it. A desired futuristic clean image is what this new project has in common with Buitenveldert's first completed gallery flats. These mostly residential developments illustrate that the neighbourhood is currently still in demand, especially with the wealthy people.

Nonetheless, the social cohesion in Buitenveldert could improve according to many residents. Since residents are constantly changing and people now have less connection with their neighbours compared to Buitenveldert's early days, there's a need for more meeting places. The existing ones however, have slowly vanished due to the Gelderlandplein mall's increasing dominance in Buitenveldert. The original mixed received open shopping centre has become more popular because of its added roof, fancier look and more high-end facilities. Places like the BOC, the kiosk in the Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark and the local shops in the shopping plazas have since then become redundant and disappeared, to the disappointment of several inhabitants. At night, when the mall is closed, there're even less meeting places in the area, which especially affects the youth. A community centre, more cafés/bars and a collective garden are some suggestions from residents that could boost Buitenveldert's now lacking social cohesion. On other aspects like elderly and child friendliness, quality of public space and greenery, cleanliness and parking space, the neighbourhood scores higher than most of Amsterdam's other areas. Overall, inhabitants are still quite satisfied with the liveability in the Buitenveldert, even though nothing drastic has changed in almost 65 years.

In the early days, Buitenveldert functioned fairly autonomously as Van Eesteren had envisioned. Residents, like my grandfather and mother, only left the area occasionally in favour of the inner city since the neighbourhood contained most facilities that Amsterdam's centre also offered. The fact that the infrastructural connection between these two areas wasn't well thought of, gave some inhabitants a bit of an isolated feeling. This changed when tram line 5 was extended southwards from the city's centre and now stopping in Buitenveldert. The otherwise calm streets became busier and a broader variety of people, like expats, moved to the neighbourhood due to this better connectivity. Quite soon after its completion, Buitenveldert functioned less as a garden city and more like a typical neighbourhood that's dependent on the city. Since then, the neighbourhood has slowly become a more integral part of the city. It's quickly changing and developing surrounding urban areas, Amstelveen and the Zuidas, challenges Buitenveldert's autonomy now and in the future even more.

Van Eesteren's plan for Buitenveldert focused on providing its residents with light, air and space, since he and other modernist urban planners thought that that's what people needed to live pleasantly in a space. Over time, their theory actually proved to be right and the perception hasn't changed much. The (former) inhabitants, like my grandfather and mother, described how well they liked the green and spacious environment, especially compared to Amsterdam's cramped city centre. It can be said that modernistic Buitenveldert stood the test of time in its past 65 years. What exactly will happen to Van Eesteren's designed neighbourhood over the next 65 years, remains to be seen.



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Dijkstra, D. (2023, March 15). My grandfather about Buitenveldert.

Van Schaik, C. (2023, March 13). My mother about Buitenveldert.

Figures

Impression shots

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Figure B (p.3): Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1962). *Van Boshuizenstraat 700, blok rechts Dever 12-38*.

Figure C (p. 5): Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1970, April 23). *Buitenveldert*.

Figure D (p. 7): Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1970, June). *Buitenveldert*.

Figure E (p. 27): Topview Luchtfotografie (2020, October 15). *Construction of the Q Residences*.

Figure F (p. 29): Topview Luchtfotografie (2020, October 15). *Construction of the Q Residences*.

2.1 Buitenveldert's origin

Figure 1: Van Eesteren, C. (1935). *Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan (AUP)*.

Figure 2: May, E. (1930). *Algemeen Uitbreidingsplan (AUP). Development of the urban building block*.

Figure 3: Aero-Lux Büscher & Co. KG (1932). *Siedlung Westhausen*.

Figure 4: Ons Amsterdam (1961). *Physical model of the Buitenveldert plan*.

Figure 5: VLUGP. (2001). *Kastelenstrook*.

Figure 6: Gemeente Amsterdam (1968). *Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark*.

2.2 Early day's perception

Figure 7: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1962, February). *Teilingen. Buurt: Buitenveldert B*.

Figure 8: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1962, February). *Teilingen. Buurt: Buitenveldert B*.

Figure 9: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1970, May 25). *Gelderlandplein*.

Figure 10: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1966, April 28). *Kastelenstraat 170*.

Figure 11: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1965, August). *Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark*.

Figure 12: Stadsarchief Amsterdam. (1966, April 28). *Buitenveldertselaan*.

2.3 Current day's perception

Figure 13: OOZO (2022). *Dever 28, 1082BJ Amsterdam*.

Figure 14: OOZO (2023). *Dever 43-1, 1082BK Amsterdam*.

Figure 15: Lucker, D. (2022). *Q Residences*.

Figure 16: Kroonenberg Groep (2016). *Gelderlandplein renovatie*.

Figure 17a: Coppejans, E. & Stichting Open Mind. (2022). *Peer en Danielle*.

Figure 17b: Coppejans, E. & Stichting Open Mind. (2022). *Fon en Hans*.

Figure 17c: Coppejans, E. & Stichting Open Mind. (2022). *Susan en Rashmi*.

Figure 18: Gemeente Amsterdam (2022, February). *Buitenveldert t.o.v. het stedelijke gemiddelde*.

Van Schaik, C. (2023, March 13). My mother about Buitenveldert.

Hoe zou je het opgroeien in Buitenveldert kunnen omschrijven?

Veilig, schoon en rustig. Ik kwam uit de binnenstad van Amsterdam en het was daar altijd druk en vol met mensen. Deze wijk was veilig, rustig en weids bebouwd. Wat fijn was aan het opgroeien in Buitenveldert, was dat je altijd veilig buiten kon spelen in de hofjes tot 's avonds laat. In Amsterdam centrum was dat veel moeilijker en mocht ik dat dan eigenlijk ook niet. In het gedeelte in Buitenveldert waar ik woonde, zaten heel veel kinderen bij mij ook op school waarmee ik 's middags en 's avonds mee buiten speelde in de speeltuinen tussen de flats. Dat was erg leuk.

Wat waren de plekken in de wijk die je het meest bezocht?

Winkels, voornamelijk op het Gelderlandplein. Daarnaast BOC (Buitenvelderts Ontmoeting Centrum), daar kon je onder andere workshops doen voor jongeren en waren er ook wel eens disco 's. Als ik van huis liep naar het Gelderlandplein, lag er middenin in het Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark een kiosk waar ik samen met buur- en klasgenootjes zakjes chips en goedkope snoepjes ging eten. Er waren genoeg bankjes en speeltoestellen waar we konden spelen. Dat vond ik eigenlijk het leukste, het park met dat kioskje, daar gingen we altijd hangen. Ook kwam ik weleens in het Amstelpark wat ik wel prima vond. Vroeger liepen daar buiten de kippen rond en hadden ze zeehondje bij de ingang van het park. De hoeveelheid kippen werd helaas te groot en het bassin van de zeehondjes was te klein dus dat mocht ook niet meer. Verder is het nog steeds wel een mooi park met de ligging aan de Amstel en grote speeltuin waar we vroeger ook met de kinderen heen gingen.

Wat zijn de verschillen tussen het leven in Buitenveldert en Ouderkerk?

Ouderkerk is een dorp waar je ook meer buiten woont. Wij wonen nog aan het water ook, dus dat is natuurlijk een groot verschil met Buitenveldert. Dat hoort wat meer bij de stad, want het is een buitenwijk van Amsterdam. In Ouderkerk heb je veel laagbouw in vergelijking met Buitenveldert, waar er heel veel flats en woningen zijn, maar wel dichtbij de stad en voorzieningen.

Hoe vaak en waarom kom je nu in Buitenveldert?

Een à twee keer in de maand. Ik kom in Buitenveldert omdat mijn vader daar nog steeds woont. Die woont er inmiddels al ruim 50 jaar. Wanneer ik hem bezoek doe ik soms daar ook nog wel eens boodschappen bij het winkelcentrum, maar voornamelijk rijd ik na het bezoek weer naar huis in Ouderkerk.

Hoe zou je het bezoeken van de wijk nu kunnen omschrijven?

De buurten in Buitenveldert zijn exact hetzelfde gebleven, dus bij het bezoeken is er niet veel veranderd. Nog dezelfde straten, dezelfde flats, dezelfde begroeiing. Er zijn wel twee grotere flats bijgekomen, die erg in het oog springen, maar verder is eigenlijk vrijwel alles hetzelfde gebleven. Zelfs een heleboel van de winkels zitten er nog steeds.

Wat zijn de grootste veranderingen die je in de wijk hebt meegemaakt?

Er zijn niet echt grote veranderingen in de wijk want alles is eigenlijk vrijwel hetzelfde gebleven. Dezelfde flats, straten en groen. Alleen voor sommige winkels zijn er ande-

re winkels in de plaats gekomen. Bijvoorbeeld een grote lokale bloemenwinkel heeft plaatsgemaakt voor een Kruidvat en waar de Spar vroeger zat, zit nu een Jumbo. Dat soort kleine dingen. Gelderlandplein waar ik vroeger dan altijd naartoe ging, was toen open en is nu helemaal overdekt met luxe winkels. Een grote verandering was wel de komst van de tram, die van Amstelveen naar Amsterdam loopt. In het begin, toen ik op de middelbare school zat, moest iedereen er enorm aan wennen aan die tram. Er zijn toen heel veel ongelukken ook gebeurd, waarbij veel mensen zijn aangereden.

Wat vind/vond je leuk aan de wijk?

Wat ik leuk vind aan de wijk, is dat waar ik woonde, het best ruim was opgezet. De flats waren in een vierkant gebouwd waar middenin een speeltuin zat. Dat was als je jong was erg leuk om daar op te groeien. Na het avondeten en na schooltijd gingen alle kinderen in de buurt buiten spelen, dat kon daar heel goed in de hofjes. Dat was altijd heel erg leuk en dat zie ik niet zo snel gebeuren in de binnenstad waar ik eerst woonde. Ook stond mijn lagere school middenin de wijk tussen de hofjes en lag mijn middelbare school ook in Buitenveldert, op de grens met Amstelveen. Omdat de wijk vrijwel alles heeft, kwam ik niet meer heel vaak in Amsterdam centrum. Dat was dan vooral met koopavond op de donderdag met mijn moeder. Toch was ik altijd wel weer blij als we terug naar Buitenveldert gingen, daar was het veel rustiger.

Wat vind/vond je niet leuk aan de wijk?

Ik hou niet zo van flats, ze lijken allemaal erg op elkaar. Er worden een heleboel mensen in een gebouw gestopt en de woningen hebben geen eigen tuin, maar een klein balkonnetje. De oppervlakte van zo'n woning is over het algemeen ook wat klein en het kan er soms gehorig zijn. Het enige voordeel is dat het gelijkvloers is. De woningen daarentegen zijn wel heel duur geworden. Buitenveldert ligt aan de rand van Amsterdam waar je nog steeds goed kan parkeren, nu overigens betaald, en met de tram ben je zo in de binnenstad. Door deze verbinding en de fijne locatie zijn de huurprijzen onder andere flink gestegen. Voor het aantal vierkante meter wat je krijgt, zijn de prijzen behoorlijk hoog geworden. Maar aan de andere kant is dit overal in Amsterdam het geval.

Wat kan er aan de wijk worden verbeterd?

In principe hoeft er niet veel verbeterd te worden. Er is genoeg groen en er zijn speeltuinen voor de kinderen. De flats zijn wat minder maar wel nodig want zo kunnen er meer mensen op een kleinere oppervlakte wonen. Veel van de originele bewoners wonen nog steeds in de wijk waardoor Buitenveldert behoorlijk aan het vergrijzen is. Wat meer variatie in leeftijd zou wel welkom zijn. Daarnaast zie je nu wel meer verschillende bevolkingsgroepen op straat zoals bijvoorbeeld Joodse mannen in orthodox kleding.

Wat mis je aan de wijk vergeleken met vroeger?

Wat ik het meest jammer vind, is dat het kioskje in het Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark is weggehaald. Dat vond ik eigenlijk het allerleukste toen ik daar woonde. Daarnaast zijn de lokale winkels tussen de woonblokken, zoals een bakker en drogisterij, grotendeels verdwenen. Deze waren van particuliere ondernemers en hebben plaatsgemaakt voor bedrijven in de winkelpanden. De winkels vroeger waren wat leuker naar mijn mening. Wat ik ook wel mis, is het oude Gelderlandplein. Nu is het allemaal luxe en nieuw, maar dus ook heel duur. Ik vond het fijner toen het een open karakter. In het midden was het open met daaromheen bogen waar onderdoor naar de winkel toe kon lopen. Wat ook leuk toen was, was dat met Koninginnedag alle kinderen hun spulletjes onder de bogen aan het verkopen waren. Nu is dat allemaal niet meer zo, alles is keurig en netjes.

Dijkstra, D. (2023, March 15). My grandfather about Buitenveldert.

Waarom zijn u en oma naar Buitenveldert verhuisd?

We kregen een woning in Buitenveldert aangeboden door een bevriende makelaar uit Blaricum en zijn toen meteen gaan kijken. Vrijwel meteen hebben we ja gezegd en zijn in 1974 in de wijk komen wonen in een huurhuis. Oma vond het hier ook fantastisch. Het wonen aan de Van Kinsbergenstraat in de binnenstad was erg druk, zeker met een gezin. Buitenveldert was juist modern en rustig, wat voor ruim 50 jaar geleden vrij uniek was. Ook waren er hier betere scholen dan in Amsterdam centrum voor je moeder waardoor we hier ook naartoe zijn verhuisd.

Hoe zou u het wonen in Buitenveldert kunnen omschrijven?

Heel comfortabel vind ik wel. Je hebt hier van alles, zoals een het kleine Rooswijck winkelcentrum en het grote Gelderlandplein winkelcentrum. Het parkeren daarnaast is hier nog altijd beter dan in de binnenstad. Hier in Buitenveldert heb je sowieso meer ruimte dan in Amsterdam centrum. Eigenlijk is hier alles net wat ruimer en moderner opgezet. Ook in vergelijking met bijvoorbeeld Geuzenveld, één van de Westelijke Tuinsteden, is de wijk beter gelukt naar mijn mening. Hier zijn mooiere flats, groene hofjes en zitten we dichterbij de Amstel. Over het algemeen zijn de mensen hier wat minder ordinar. Dit komt mede doordat er vanaf het begin al veel rijkere Japanners in de wijk zijn komen wonen. Zij werkten in de kantoren hier niet ver vandaan en verdiende genoeg om hier een woning te kunnen krijgen. Voor veel Amsterdammers was het namelijk hier te duur om te komen wonen.

Wat zijn/waren de plekken in de wijk die u het meest bezocht?

Het kleine winkelcentrum hier om de hoek met de verschillende kraampjes en winkels buiten. Hier eet ik vaak wat en doe ik mijn boodschappen. Dit is ook wel mooi opgeknapt want vroeger was het hier niet om aan te zien. Ook ging ik vaak naar het Gelderlandplein maar dat is nu wat verder van mijn woning. Dan liep ik weleens door het Gijsbrecht van Aemstelpark, wat toen al erg mooi begroeid was, wat ik erg leuk vond. Daarnaast kwam ik weleens in het winkelcentrum van Amstelveen, dat vergelijkbaar is met het Gelderlandplein in grote, uitstraling en winkels. Daarentegen maakte ik vrijwel geen gebruik van de winkels tussen de woonblokken. Deze waren overbodig omdat het aanbod van winkels in de twee winkelcentra beter was.

Wat zijn de verschillen tussen het leven in Buitenveldert en Amsterdam?

De ruimere opzet van de wijk en de modernere flats en huizen. Onze woning in de binnenstad was een oude en gehorige etage woning en mijn vorige woning in Buitenveldert was nieuwer. Alhoewel niet veel ruimer en de indeling verschilde niet heel erg. Allebei bevonden ze zich op de eerste verdieping. We kenden de eigenaar van de nieuwe woning die ons toestond wijziging aan de indeling aan te brengen waardoor het huurhuis echt als onze eigen plek aanvoelden en we niet meer weg wilden uit de flat of uit Buitenveldert. Er was een heerlijk balkon op het zuiden uitkijkend over de drukke Van Boshuizenstraat, waar we veel gebruik van hebben gemaakt. In de zomer brandde je bijna weg, ook in de woning zelf, dus moest het zonnenscherm dan altijd wel uit. We hadden veel planten, vogels en bijen op ons balkon. Ook vond ik de galerijen van de flat fijn en bijzonder voor die tijd. Het scheelde dat je droog bleef als het regende en je had hier nog een beetje uitzicht op de hofjes. Elk hofje had mooie begroeiing en een speeltuin met minstens een zandbak en een klimrek voor de kinderen in de buurt. Verder dan dat gebruikte ikzelf ons hofje verder niet echt.

Wat zijn de grootste veranderingen die u in de wijk hebt meegemaakt?

Het zijn er eigenlijk niet zoveel. Er zijn wat winkels weggegaan en bijgekomen maar vooral het Gelderlandplein is erg verbeterd. Vroeger, toen het groots geopend werd, vond ik het niet zo. Je had er winkels met daarboven op allerlei woningen, maar het was nog niet overdekt. Als het dan een keertje harder waaide, dan stormde het langs de bogen en galerijen voor de winkels. Ik vond het er eigenlijk verschrikkelijk. De overkapping heeft veel goeds gedaan. Ook is het niet lang geleden nog een keer verbouwd en vind ik het erg mooi geworden. Daarnaast heeft de vroegere groenstrook in het midden van de Buitenveldertselaan plaats gemaakt voor de komst van de tram. Ik weet nog heel goed dat ze die aan het bouwen waren aan het einde van de jaren 80. Door de komst van de lijn werd de binnenstad beter bereikbaar vanuit de wijk en werd het ook wel wat drukker met expats en meer mensen op straat.

Wat vindt/vond u leuk aan de wijk?

Het is voornamelijk een rustige wijk. Er gebeuren hier minder rottige dingen dan laten we zeggen in de binnenstad. Veel mensen vinden het daarom ook een veilige wijk en dat is al eigenlijk vanaf het begin het geval geweest. Wat ik vooral vroeger ook leuk vond, waren de vliegtuigen van Schiphol die over de wijk vlogen. Zo'n groot vliegend ding boven je hoofd vonden wij allemaal erg bijzonder. Soms stonden we dan wel even stil om dit te aanschouwen. Nu zijn het er veel meer en is het niet meer speciaal.

Wat vindt/vond u niet leuk aan de wijk?

Ik wil niet zeggen dat Buitenveldert erg geïsoleerd lag, maar toch ging je niet zo gemakkelijk naar Amsterdam centrum. Vroeger kwam ik nog wel eens in de binnenstad voor bepaalde winkels zoals de C&A, maar die heb je nu ook hier zitten. Vrijwel alle faciliteiten die eerst alleen in de stad zaten, zitten hier nu ook in de wijk. Er is niet echt meer een reden voor mij om de wijk te verlaten. Daarnaast is het parkeren in Amsterdam centrum onbeschoft duur geworden. Het Amstelpark vond ik trouwens ook niet heel bijzonder. Nadat de Floriade van 1972 over was, liep het allemaal vrij gauw terug. Het Amsterdams Bos net buiten de wijk vond ik wel altijd nog leuk om te bezoeken.

Wat kan er aan de wijk worden verbeterd?

Eigenlijk kan ik niet zo snel iets bedenken. De bereikbaarheid met het openbaar vervoer is hier goed, je zit zo met de tram in de ondergrondse. De snelweg ligt hier vlakbij, je hoeft hier maar de straat uit te rijden en linksaf te slaan en je zit er al op. Qua indeling van de wijk hoeft er van mij ook niet echt iets te worden veranderd want het groen bijvoorbeeld is al prachtig. Wel wordt er al veel gerenoveerd en nieuw gebouwd in de wijk. Zo zijn onlangs twee nieuwe hoge woontorens opgeleverd waar vroeger de BCC winkel zat. Het geeft ook aan dat de wijk nog steeds in trek is bij de mensen, vooral de mensen die wat meer te besteden hebben. De kleinere toren was vanaf het eerste moment bijvoorbeeld al volledig verhuurd. Ik heb niks tegen de nieuwbouw, het wordt er bijna altijd beter op in plaats van slechter. De Zuidas hier net verderop vind ik ook een spannend gebied maar het heeft wel veel mooie kantoorgebouwen.

Wat mis je aan de wijk vergeleken met vroeger?

Ik denk dan toch de mooie strook groen tussen de twee banen van de Buitenveldertselaan die heeft plaats gemaakt voor de tram. Het groen heeft plaatsgemaakt voor het verkeer, wat begrijpelijk maar zonde is. Verder mis ik eigenlijk niet zoveel, doordat er veel hetzelfde nog is gebleven. Alles wat er veranderd is, is juist meestal nodig geweest.