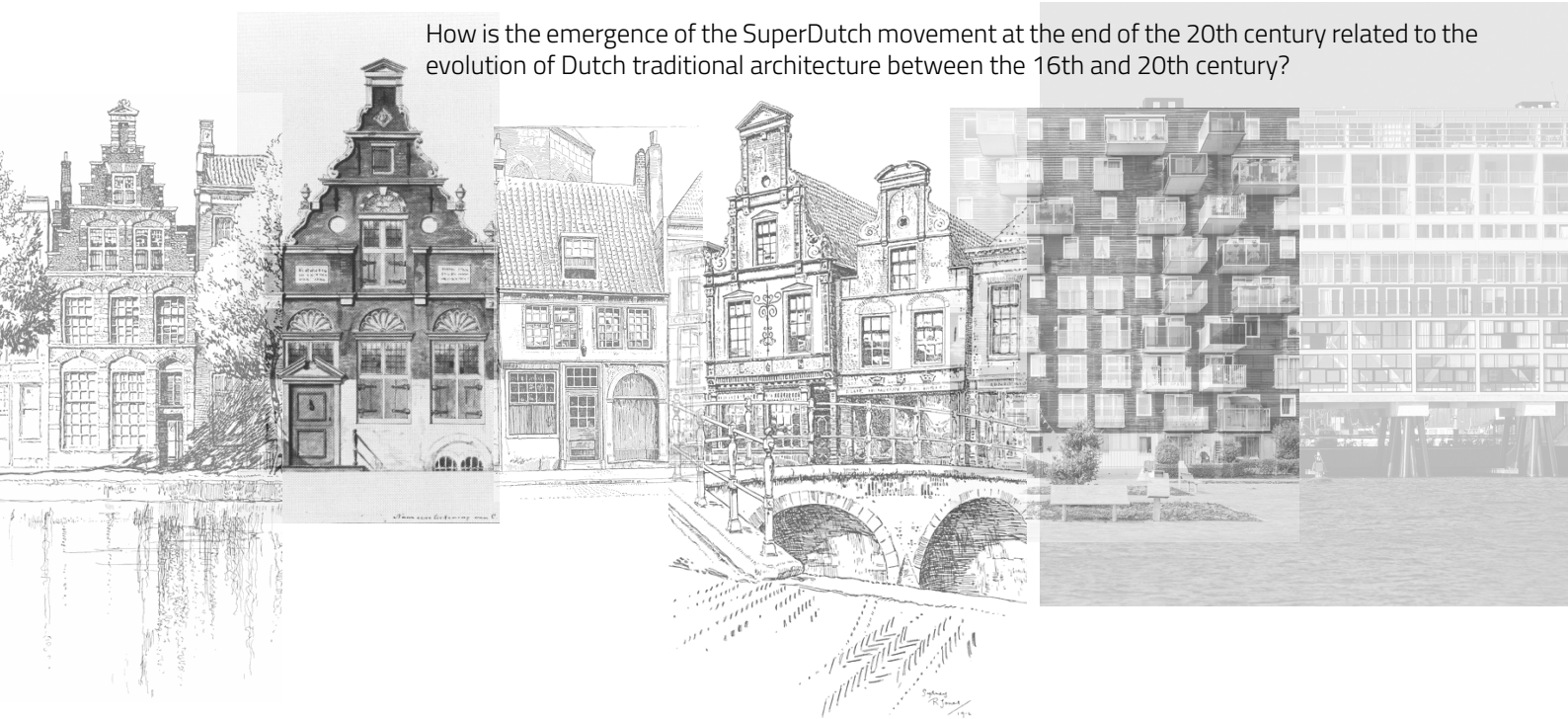# Super'Dutch':
An Independent Result of Globalization
or the Product of the Organic Evolution of
Dutch Traditional Architecture?

How is the emergence of the SuperDutch movement at the end of the 20th century related to the evolution of Dutch traditional architecture between the 16th and 20th century?

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SuperDutch is a movement defined in the 1980's in the Netherlands as the means through which the country was placed back into internatioal discourses, being marked by architectural innovations and the rediscovery of Dutch national identity. At first sight, the buildings of this period appear to be formed upon the foundation of globalization and Neomodernism and not on the organic evolution of Dutch traditional architecture, in contrast to the suggestion that the name Super"Dutch" gives. Hence, this paper investigates the physical and ideological relationship between the Dutch historical architecture and the new development of the SuperDutch to find their common essence. The goal is to find which of the elements of the architecture of the past are still identifiable in the buildings and concepts of the SuperDutch by presenting an overview of the evolution of Dutch traditional architecture from the 16th until the 20th century and its relation to the movement through literature research and a critical analysis on visual media from the period mentioned.

0 Contents

1 Introduction

Context and Focus

Walking through the contemporary Dutch city reveals the assemblage of styles, cultures and historical layers that form it. Its urban landscape is constantly evolving, significant differences being seen in its development from the 16th century and until the early 2000's. Even though the architecture materialized in the 1980's, referred to as SuperDutch, is considered to be innovative and the voice through which the Netherlands is placed back into the international scene[1], there are doubts concerning the methods employed at that time. It is criticized that those new building typologies are driven by "typological inventions and reference to historical examples" which rather create false innovations and diversity than veridic progress as mentioned in Dirk van den Heuvel's *After-Images of an Avant-Garde*[2]. At first sight, the buildings of this period appear to be formed upon the foundation of globalization and Neomodernism and not on the organic evolution of Dutch traditional architecture, in contrast to the suggestion that the name Super"Dutch" gives. Hence, this paper aims to investigate the physical and ideological relationship between the Dutch historical architecture and the new development of the SuperDutch to find their common essence. The goal is to find which of the elements of the "human architecture"[3] of the past are still identifiable in the buildings and concepts of the SuperDutch, if any, by presenting an overview of the evolution of Dutch traditional architecture from the 16th until the 20th century and its relation to the movement.

Bart Lootsma argues that the Dutch in the 80's are trying to rediscover their character and to become more internationally relevant which, the young architects of the time, managed to achieve through an architecture of self-criticism and rejection of aesthetics and decorative details[4]. Thus, together with Sidney Robert Jones' affirmation that "Side by side with the external conditions imposed by Nature, conditions that, if accepted, might well be expected to have produced an attitude of extreme lack of initiative in those living amongst them, the Dutch have ever been an enterprising people."[5] referring to the beginnings of the Dutch land, the progressive nature of Dutch people is proved to be a constant in history with their high interest of being prosperous and efficient. The Dutch society has been actively showing an interest in being internationally recognized which became the drive for innovating architectural typologies and constantly reflecting upon foreign developments in their own built environment, discourses and policies while still maintaining their values and caution in the process[6] [7] [8]. Therefore, it seems that the Dutch character is perpetuated over time, but are there more correlations between the evolution of Dutch historical architecture and the SuperDutch one or is the latter a result of globalization and Neomodernism alone?

Furthermore, Lootsma[9] maps in his book the most relevant offices and architects of the SuperDutch movement with their main views and projects supporting them. This reveals the rejection of the modernist Dutch architecture of the 1960's and 1970's and the concern with theoretical and conceptual issues of the architecture field of the time by creating buildings as statements[10]. More than that, the book aims to portray how the SuperDutch architecture carefully kept the essential aspects of Dutch tradition into account while creating very diverse and completely new (housing) typologies[11]. By analysing the physical aspects of the SuperDutch projects with relation to the old Dutch architecture this theoretical basis can be upgraded and a more complete view on the subject will be outlined to see if really "[m]arketing and design subsequently replaced typological invention as the directional force"[12] in the late developments.

Methodology

The subject of this thesis is investigated by first studying literature on the stylistic evolution of the traditional

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1   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
2   (van den Heuvel 2011, p.26)
3   (Jones 1913, p.3)
4   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)

5   (Jones 1913, p.3)
6   (Schreurs 2019)
7   (Vera 1989)
8   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
9   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
10   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
11   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
12   (van den Heuvel 2011, p.3)

Dutch architecture. Several books and articles are critically analysed, forming the theoretical background of the research and the basis for its next step. This completes the research through visual comparative exploration of drawings and pictures presenting the formal evolution of the Dutch traditional architecture and the SuperDutch, unveiling the differences and similarities that occur. The images are extracted from the books and articles mentioned above, the Amsterdam municipality archive and other internet resources.

Organization

This paper is chronologically presenting the historical development of Dutch traditional architecture from the 16th and until the 20th century. It starts with a brief introduction into the early emergence of Dutch architecture after the 13th century and continues with a section about the Gothic and Classicist architecture of the 16th, 17th and 18th centuries with their main architectural elements and typologies. Then the evolution of these aspects will be described in the context of the academic architecture of the 19th century and Modern 20th century. Finally, the SuperDutch movement will be contextualized and related to the evolution of historical Dutch architecture. The findings will be presented and the hypothesis of the SuperDutch being merely superficially related to the development of traditional Dutch architecture will be checked against them. The limitations and bias of the research will be discussed and, in the end, a conclusion which summarizes the paper will frame the process of this research and place it in a broader context.

5

Super'Dutch': An Independent Result of Globalization or the Product of the Organic Evolution of Dutch Traditional Architecture?

2 Early Traditional Dutch Architecture

In this section, the emergence of Dutch architecture and character is discussed as a short background for the rest of the architectural historical developments in the Netherlands. It presents the constraints that landscape put on the settlement of the civilization there and the national character which got constructed as a consequence of that and the political sectors.

Water and land

The towns of the Netherlands have evolved at first as a consequence of the landscape in which they came to existence, from the boundary conditions, restrictions and opportunities given by the land. Water has always been a significant factor for the Dutch, though the view towards it is not constant, nor unilateral, but a changing bivalent attitude. First of all, the lands of the Dutch are below sea level so much of those had to be claimed from the water, building up a constant tension between the civilization and the unpredictability of nature. Therefore, water, as their "ancient enemy"[1], made the flooding danger commonplace in their subconscious, generating a cautious and organized Dutch lifestyle in this "fight against the water"[2]. At the same time, water is, of course, the element that attracts the growth of towns, accumulating settlements around it thanks to the opportunities that it gives in all kinds of developments. For the Dutch society it served as a base for commerce which, according to Sidney Robert Jones, "was to them the great business of life"[3].

Figure 1.   Drawing of a Dutch Waterscape, *Winter Landscape with Skaters and Fishermen*, by Jan van Goyen

Furthermore, their artificial laborious flat lands have

given the Dutch society a sense of rationality and (almost mathematic) preciseness[4] that strongly influenced their character until the present day.

Ingenious identity

The first records of Dutch towns are dated back to the 12th century[5][6]. At the time, the society already seemed to have a strong "enterprising"[7] character using all their efforts and means to fight against the dangers that the water posed and to use it for their own good through trade, industry, and colonization. This "mater-of-factness"[8][9] of the Dutch is also noticed in their architecture which was not based on theoretical principles but on human wellness, needs and ambitions, on the events of the civic domestic life. Dutch people proved to manipulate their situation and trade business well, leading to a rapid growth of Dutch cities. However, at the peak of this achievement, the Dutch were succumbed by the House of Burgundy which degenerated into a period of decline and tyranny, eventually starting the Eighty Years War in the 16th century. After this dark period for the Low

Figure 2.   Drawing of a Dutch fight in 1535, by Jan Luyken

Lands they have instituted the Dutch Republic which slowly entered a new period of prosperity, with great focus on improving the welfare of the civilization and its environment. Thus, they gradually became the masters of the sea, leading its commercial activities and they were proudly proving their status through the architecture they were building at the time. The

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1   (Jones 1913, p.3)
2   (Mostert 2020)
3   (Jones 1913, p.3)

4   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
5   (Jones 1913)
6   (Ottenheym 2018)
7   (Jones 1913, p.3)
8   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p. 201)
9   (Jones 1913, p.3)

6

Super'Dutch': An Independent Result of Globalization or the Product of the Organic Evolution of Dutch Traditional Architecture?

Figure 3.   Water fight on hardstone from
the 16th century

intricate detailing, sculptures, turrets, and towers of the
Gothic style were employed to show off their wealth
and prosperity, an identifiable characteristic that can
be traced throughout the whole history of the Dutch
society[10].

Essence

Figure 4.   Drawing of a castle in
the 16th century, by Jan Sadeler
and Hans Bol

Further developments in
the Netherlands are based
on this character that they
acquired in their early years
of formation. Their "most
extraordinary invention" of
the 16th century, Schama[11]
says, was their own culture
keeping their values alive
and growing through the
next few hundreds of
years.

10   Vera (1989)
11   (Schama 1988, p. 67)

3 Dutch Traditional Architecture between the 15th-18th Century

This chapter will build upon the development of Dutch traditional architecture as a consequence of the character and evolution of the Dutch society formerly discussed. It is a journey which starts in the 15th-16th century with the early Gothic style and then moves towards Classicism through a long Transitional period in the 17th and 18th century.

Construction and materials as basis for ornaments

As mentioned before, the prosper Low Lands were using Gothic architecture and a pragmatic approach to physically construct their homes and civic buildings as representations of their principles. They were creating sober buildings by employing ornaments, sculptures, turrets, towers, sunk panels which were all derived from structural requirements and practicalities of the construction and were meant to express welfare and trade achievements into constructed statements[1]. The limitations in their construction opportunities were given by the main materials used. Brick was widely available since it could be locally sourced in the Dutch Republic as made from its own soil. Wood was also used for structural elements and, sometimes for detailing, while stone was rarer because of its higher price and achievement difficulty, being implemented primarily for decorations. However, the latter gave the craftsmen more flexibility in terms of detailing as opposed to brick which was harder to maneuver[2] and, thus, was resulting in a more modest outcome of detailing and expression. Hence, the simple picturesque image of a Dutch urban landscape was born through a balance between rich, pragmatic detailing and the boundary conditions posed by the material predominance of brick.

External boundaries generating layout and appearance

The materials and the construction methods practiced together with the context restrictions created the general appearance of Dutch traditional houses. The land reclaimed from water which formed the polders produced narrow and deep building lots, determining the position of the houses with relation to the street and each other at the same time as the external boundaries of the buildings (Figure 7). Even more, this

created a corridor (Figure 5), on one side of the building, that connected the street front to the rooms at the back of the ground floor, and to the staircase which reached the upper floors; an efficient organization.

When the street front was wider the entrance could be placed centrally, and the side-passage would not be needed anymore[3] (Figure 6).

Figure 5. Drawing of side passage, Haarlem, Netherlands, by Sydney R. Jones

By looking at paintings or drawings of domestic buildings in the Golden Age (16th-17th century), it is noted that the buildings were mainly having more than one floor level to use their plots to the fullest and the space created was efficiently arranged and filled. The staircase becomes, thus, a relevant element in this composition and circulation, and its positioning and form are characteristic for this

Narrow front
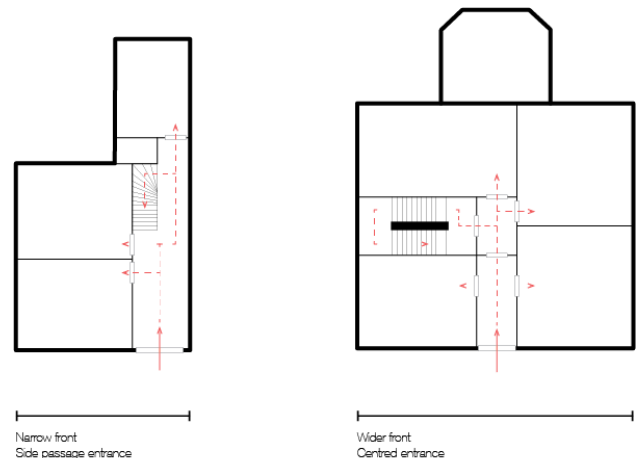Side passage entrance

Wider front
Centred entrance

Figure 6. Diagram representing the different housing entrance typologies

efficiency of space that the Dutch engaged with at the time, being condensed to a small area of the floor, having, generally, a steep slope and turned shape.

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1   (Jones 1913)
2   (Jones 1913)

3   (Jones 1913)

The narrow elevation facing the street became the generally known Dutch façade with its stepped gable-ends and steep pitched roofs placed perpen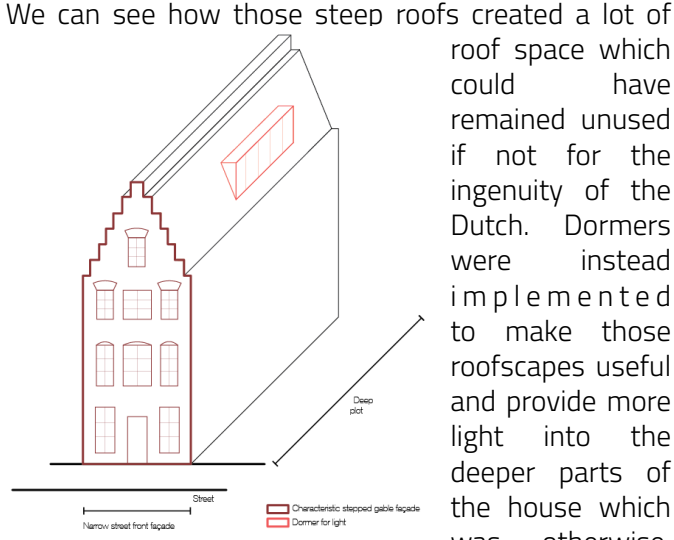dicularly towards the front street (Figure 7). We can see how those steep roofs created a lot of roof space which could have remained unused if not for the ingenuity of the Dutch. Dormers were instead implemented to make those roofscapes useful and provide more light into the deeper parts of the house which was, otherwise, insufficient[4].

Figure 7.   Diagrams of narrow house typology and consequential characteristic aspects

The stepped nature of the gables and the recognizable arches of the window and door openings were all resulting from building with brick. However, generally, the window frames and the glass were not arched, showing again the efficiency and economical caution of the Dutch society. Instead, they were rectangular, the space above them, and below the brick arch, the window-heads, being designed as a decorative element (Figure 8), a mosaic of brick or stone arranged in patterns, different from house to house or from window to window, giving freedom of expression to the craftsmen to put character into their *art*.
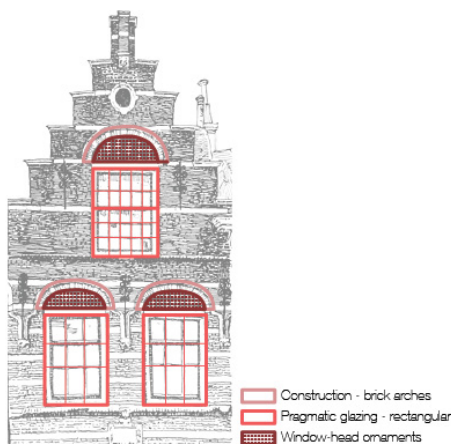
Figure 8.   Diagram of ornaments and their pragmatism
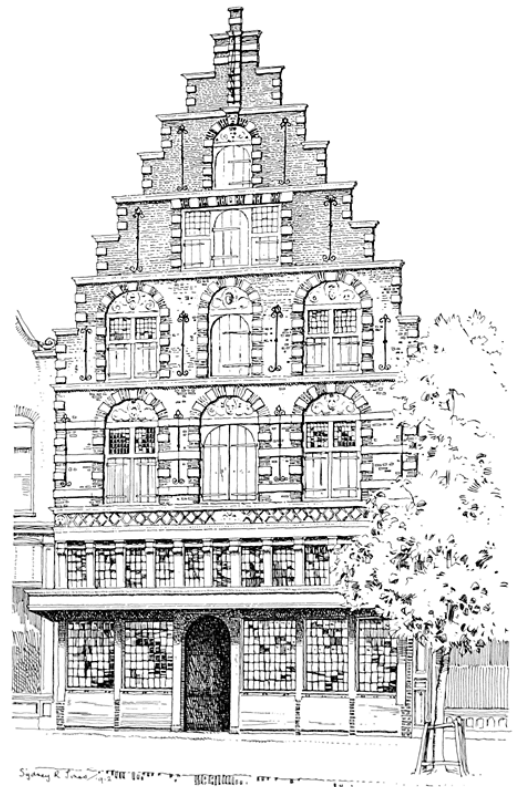
Figure 9.   Drawing of a 16th century richly decorated Gothic house, Aalkmaar, North Holland (1609), by Sydney R. Jones

In Figure 9, the details just discussed are distinguished. The ground floor shows what we would call nowadays almost a *glass façade* with many windows providing a large glass surface at the bottom of the building, allowing for as much light as possible to reach the indoor environment. The importance given to windows in terms of detailing and ornamentation is emphasized by the reliefed decorated arches, the stained glass window tops which were probably employed for filtering the light, and the openable bottoms for ventilation, but also by adding shading in the form of decorated wooden shutters to make the transparency controllable by the inhabitants of the building. Moreover, those were keeping the houses safe from unwanted guests, being closeable only from the inside and making the heat dissipation slower during cold days.

Internal features

Curiously, the internal organization of the houses was, at the time, not the one that defined the exterior elevation, but the other way around[5]. Despite that, the different aspects forming the house such as access

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4   (Jones 1913)

5   (Jones 1913)

points, "lofty rooms"[6], routing elements and the different floor levels can all be read via the building envelope. The ground floor had a very generous high ceiling, while this height decreased going up the levels of the house, obvious from the size of the windows on the main façade and from the floor lines represented in the brickwork. Those set a clear hierarchy in the Dutch façades and a structured organization of external features. However, the function of the room behind each window is not completely divulged, leaving some mystery for the observer to imagine the internal disposition of spaces, and allowing the designer or user the freedom to choose how to distribute the inner rooms.

Furthermore, the interiors were all designed with a *duurzamheid*[7] in mind and with a rather captivating aesthetic, more joyful and warmer than the sober exterior appearances. Fireplaces were one of the predominant elements of Dutch houses which shaped the use of the rest of the place, activities gravitating around it as can be seen in many old Dutch paintings reflecting household lives (Figure 10).

Figure 10. Oil painting *Interior with Woman Peeling Apples* by Pieter De Hooch, found in the Wallace Collection, London

Another constitutive feature of a house was the use of tiles as decoration for the interior walls and for fireplaces[8]. Those were easy to clean, so hygiene played an important role into this aesthetical choice[9],

but they were also expressive of the beliefs and values of the inhabitants via painted motives, such as natural, biblical, nautical, rural, historical and so on[10]. Consequently, we can see how there is a common theme in Dutch society to connect their designs, especially through decorations, to their principles or convictions, aspect sustained up to and including the contemporary situation.

Figure 11. Glazed tile with military motive of a soldier, 1625-1650

The furniture of the household was mainly utilitarian and then aestheticized to create a cheerful presence in the internal setting of the houses, while the home space is not wasted, as the painting below exemplifies (Figure 12) through a moveable built-in bed, reachable by a small staircase and concealed behind curtains[11]. Hence, it is obvious that living tiny and practical was habitual for the Dutch society historically, lasting throughout the centuries as part of their *zakelijkheid*, Dutch for "matter-of-factness"[12].

Figure 12. Oil painting *Interior with a Mother Delousing Her Child*. by Pieter De Hooch, found in the Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam

Transitional period

Towards the end of the 16th century the Renaissance began to exert influence on the Dutch architecture of the time. This started the transition from the Medieval

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6   (Jones 1913, p.36)
7   Dutch for sustainability/ durability
8   (van Lookeren Campagne-Nuttall 2022)
9   ("History of the Dutch Tile" n.d.)

10   (van Lookeren Campagne-Nuttall 2022)
11   (Jones 1913)
12   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.201)

to the Classical period in the Netherlands. However, this transition was very slow, the Dutch society preferring the security of using old proven methods instead of trying out new ways of doing architecture. The Dutch built environment started its transition by the master builders introducing new ornaments to their traditional old forms of building[13] which was seen both as a harmonious blend of Gothic and Classical and as a tension of society's will to change to new ways of living while being stuck in the status-quo of its past routines.
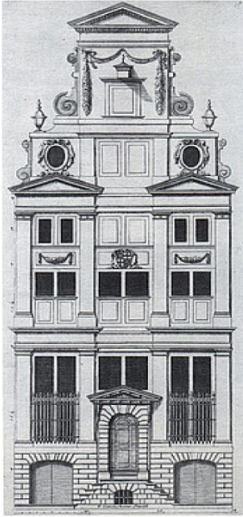
Figure 13. A canal house on Keizersgracht 319, Amsterdam, designed by Philips Vingboons (1639) representing the Transitional period from Gothic to Classicistic architecture

During the 17th century, the Gothic was less prominent in Dutch construction while Classical features gained more ground, curving the straight shapes of the characteristic gables' (Figure 14), decreasing their number of steps until the point of "one enormous step"[14] (Figure 13) topped by a pediment and flanked by curvilinear shapes, decorating pilasters and employing nature inspired forms into the ornamental features of buildings. Although an increase in the decorative elements of the buildings was clear in the architectural development of this period, it led sometimes to an overwhelming result,

Figure 14. House Kruisbroedershof 2, Bois Ze Duc, Brabant (1619) showing curved gable sides

against Classicism principles of simplicity or limitation, but creating a rampant embellished construction.

The interesting thing is that, after this Transition period, originality knew no restraints anymore. The flourishing creativity seems to have been evolving into a sprawl of ideas that no longer followed almost any rules which made it clear that a certain break with the pragmatism tradition was made. Thus, the Rococo of the 18th century has developed in Dutch construction

as beautifully portrayed in the drawing of Figure 15. More than that, the stepped gables were slowly disappearing in this era, marking the discontinuation of the historical character of Dutch architecture in the new society[15]. Despite this, it was not the Classical architecture that replaced Gothic in Dutch housing construction, but rather simplistic, "commonplace"[16] building methods. The Classical architecture was mainly focused on public buildings, churches, monumental constructions in the next period, leaving the domestic sector in a transformative state[17].
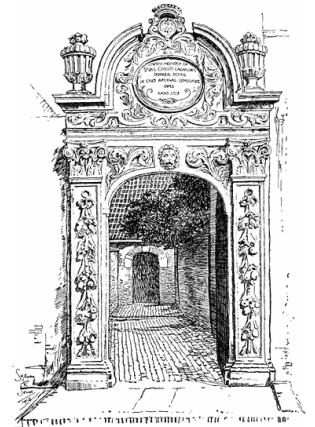
Figure 15. Drawing of a gateway in Marssum, Friesland (1713), by Sydney R. Jones

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13   (Jones 1913)
14   (Kuyper 1980, p.5)

15   (Jones 1913)
16   (Jones 1913, p.72)
17   (Kuyper 1980)

4 Ideological Architecture of the 19th Century

The 19th century was a turbulent period for Dutch architecture, being the subject of a multitude of debates, commonly encountered in the European realm at the time. Theoretical discourses and ideologies in architecture have become more significant in this period, raising awareness and controversies on aspects such as truth, character, aesthetics, imitation, ornaments, all related to the rediscovery of the Dutch identity by, either working with historical forms and styles, or rejecting them and starting anew.

Rediscovering Dutch national identity

The 19th century architecture was marked worldwide by the rise of industrialization after the Industrial Revolution (1760 - 1830)[1]. New building techniques, materials and production methods were influencing the building industry at the time, alongside the growth of ports which strengthened and generated international connections in the Netherlands. This innovative ground also created a state of discomfort and confusion in the Dutch architectural world, raising interest in the (re-) discovery of what national Dutch architecture should look like. It was, however, not clear who had the power to determine what is national and what not. Therefore, a quest for a national style and character has started halfway through the century among architectural circles[2].

There were contradictory discourses on how to build after the 1850's. Isaac Gosschalk was adhering to the fact that there was no Dutch national architecture in the past, or at least none that can be suited for the modern times of the 19th century[3]. A new architectural style should have emerged, according to W.N. Rose, Zemel and, to some extent, Penn, which would reflect contemporary society and context. Despite those views, there was a clear duality at the time for representing the Dutch nation between using the architecture of the Middle Ages, the picturesque Gothic, or the monumental Renaissance architecture which employed Classical forms and a simpler style, expressing power and authority. This argument between the picturesque and the monumental (Figure 16) has gone back and forth throughout the last 60 years of the 19th century. Imitation prevailed over the quest for a new architecture to suit the modern society and, consequently, the main body of architecture realized at the time was deeply grounded in and analogous to the Dutch architecture of the 16th and 17th centuries.

Figure 16. Contrast between a Gothic style building on the left and a Classical one on the right illustrating the Dutch 1800's tensions (1850- 1870)

Therefore, the wish to rediscover and define the Dutch national identity after the 1840's was characterized by lingering to the Dutch Golden Age in architecture and the shy initiatives of creating a new style.

Nevertheless, the difference was that those historical forms were created by Modern means of production and building techniques. The materials employed historically were locally sourced and used in construction as a consequence of their availability and proximity, which was a pragmatic and efficient way of building. However, in the 19th century this was also not really the case anymore, as, for instance, even bricks were imported from foreign countries[4]. The choice of using those materials was, thus, determined by the wish to evoke what was considered to be Dutch national architecture historically. Therefore, truth was no longer respected as an aesthetical concept in the view of some of the architects and critics of the period[5].

Truth, character, style and aesthetics

Simultaneously, architects of the era aimed to define

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1   (Ashton 1997)
2   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
3   (Gosschalk 1864)

4   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
5   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)

an objective way of looking at the built environment. They were considering beauty, or aesthetics, to be an ideal of architecture, hence, it was, in their views, a "necessary component of a building"[6] that one can design by following certain rules. Only at the end of the century was this more questioned by the initiators of the Modern movement who thought that assessing a building on its beauty is a matter of feeling and it is intrinsic for each individual, instead of it being a generally agreed-upon factor[7]. Thus, subjectivism paved its way into the Dutch architecture which, we can see nowadays as well, never stopped growing in relevance.

Seeing beauty as an inherent feature of a building dominated for the most part of the period discussed. It was *achieved* when a building would truthfully represent its character - its function and construction - through its appearance. Later, a more subjective definition of character appeared which described it as being the psychological effect that a building has on someone's feelings.

The concept of style has a similar tumultuous history in the 19th century. In short, the overall picture of what style was for the architects back then is drawn by it being a universal system of design which expressed both the spirit of the time and the national character. In the 1880's it also got associated with the definition we know today of a category of art-history[8]. So, the search for the Dutch identity was actually the search for a Dutch national style through several trials in the architecture domain.

Ornaments

Ornaments have previously been representative for Dutch (domestic) architecture. Until the 1890's it was generally accepted that decorative elements are "the essential means whereby the bare, structural, functional elements of a building could become art and the source of artistic enjoyment"[9]. Aligning with historical approaches, ornaments were only employed as a consequence of construction and structure, creating beauty as an extending aspect of the construction of the building, never separate from it (Figure 17). A radical switch was made in the last years of the century when decorations suddenly became increasingly simplified,

not following any rules or historical styles, but being applied according to the feelings of the architect. This

Figure 17. Drawing *Huis met de Hoofden*, Keizersgracht 123, by Willem Hekking Jr, portraying a picturesque facade with red brickwork and white stone details around the base constructional features

"austere ornamentation"[10] was not expressing an idea anymore so it was not supposed to be related to the architecture of the accompanied building[11]. It was an "empty image"[12] that should have just naturally followed the characteristics of its constituent material. For example, Hendrik Berlage explains in Architecture and Impressionism[13] that it was unnatural to make curved or bent

Figure 18. Drawing of Vlaamse Linnenfabriek, Vijzelstraat 17, Amsterdam, illustrating the Modern arbitrary decorations

wooden ornaments since trees grow straight up and, thus, it would go against the character of the wood to do such a thing.

Picturesque versus monumental

As previously mentioned, the Dutch architecture was stuck with building according to historical styles by practicing new techniques. But old Dutch architecture is divided into two influential periods: the Gothic with

6   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.88)
7   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
8   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
9   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.186)

10   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.192)
11   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
12   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.196)
13   (Berlage and Boyd Whyte 1996)

its picturesque townscapes, a recognizable charming aesthetic (Figure 19), and Classicism which was distinguished by the creation of monumental, imposing buildings in the Netherlands, usually having public, civic functions (Figure 20).

Figure 19. 19th century picturesque urbanscape

In an attempt to combine the two into a unified entity, increasing height was used as the means to achieve a "picturesque monumentality"[14], method later becoming more relevant into densifying cities on less area of land. Besides this binary, an important influence was exerted

Figure 20. 1853 Classicist monumental public building

on the architecture of the time by J.H.W. Leliman's eclecticism, born separate from both Gothic and Classicist revivals, but as a free, individual style.

Eclecticism was claimed to be ahistorical, using elements from past styles and periods by freely adapting them to form a final product which never aspired to be a whole, but only an assembly of different parts. It was against defining a collective style but letting the architects' creativity free into producing an architecture of "pluriformity"[15]. Started in the 1850's, Eclecticism has had a major impact on the movement newly developed at the end of the century and rapidly growing in the 20th century, the Dutch Modernity[16].

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14   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.130)
15   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.38)
16   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)

Start of Modernism - subjectivism and originality

The artificial way in which traditions were kept and the continuity between past and present was tried to be restored by forcing historical thinking processes on the fast-changing societies of the time led to a lot of tension in the Dutch civilization in the last decades of the 19th century. This has peaked in the 1890's, finally closing the era of past Dutch architecture and starting something completely new to fit the modern society. It was influenced by the decline of theory as basis for architecture, being replaced by "construction [as] the quintessence of the art of building"[17]. Thus, 18th century architectural concepts of beauty and decorations transitioned into what we know today as the 20th century one, the structure being the main and defining element of the building[18].

Figure 21. Eclectic building, Nieuweheren 101 (1858), Leliman

So, in the 1890's the views on architecture changed, from observing the reality around, to the observer. Architecture became more a matter of opinion and subjective approaches which would produce original results that, according to Berlage and the new generation of architects of the time, would disconnect from the past and freshly start a new period of development in the practice. This new generation of architects was remarkably questioning everything, not taking anything for granted, but trying to redefine the design of architecture. They thought that drawing on historical rules was plagiarism and that their own personal inspirations and reflections should have been the only driving forces of their designs[19]. Though originality and freedom of expression were dominating and opposing the old forms and aesthetics of buildings, Berlage, considered to be the father of the Modern movement, argued that the new Modernity was still imitating, though its contemporary building styles, not historical ones[20]. Nevertheless, this rebellious movement presented a wide variety of expressions in constructions (see the clear differences in Figure

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17   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.73)
18   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
19   (De Opmerker 1895)
20   (Berlage and Boyd Whyte 1996)

22 and Figure 23, showing the broad range of stylistic approaches employed at the time), reflecting the individual diversity of its practicians and their lack of interest into creating a new style. Their goal was to express themselves, which founded a new principle of beauty, but made it increasingly difficult to find a form suitable for their ideals[21][22].

Figure 22. Drawing of a Modern building, 1886
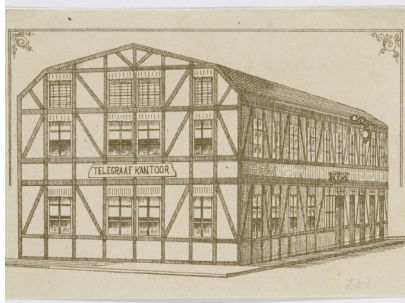
Figure 23. Modern office building, 1893-1898

Simplicity and functionality

Simplicity was one of the main features of this architecture, outlining the rejection of history. Ornaments and forms were reduced and simplified, having no relation to historical styles. Façades were flattened and austere, adhering to a bare primitive sense of architectural practice which did not intend to charm anymore as the Dutch Renaissance, but to show the serious nature of the Dutch society. Façades became a "profoundly flat"[23] (Figure 24) blank page on which architects could employ their preferred simple ornaments that were no longer connected to the architecture of the building, but as stand-alone decorations (Figure 18). This simplicity was also embraced due to the "lack of money and time in the building industry"[24],

Figure 24. Iron Foundry show-room, Denneweg 56 (1898), by Jan Willem Bosboom

determining the character of the building by restricting the means towards a luxurious, richer architecture. Hence, architecture became more accessible, inclusive, modest, illustrating the additional focus that the Modern movement had on the working class and on poorly paid, uncultured, or previously neglected societies. Therefore, aspects such as hygiene, functionality, space, air, installations, comfort and light prevailed over aesthetical and conceptual principles[25]. This again related to the *zakelijkheid* of Dutch architecture. It has been shown before how efficiency and pragmatism were prevailing over beauty principles in the Dutch character of the Golden Age. This reoccurs in the emergence of the Modern Dutch architectural practice, but taken to the extreme, with functionality being essential in any construction, and beauty secondary, determined by it. However, this whole movement has led to the decline of Dutch architects in the era. People preferred economical and functional solutions over aesthetics so building contractors were referred to instead of architects for designs[26].

Also, the architecture of the 20th century has marked a shift from the cathedrals and palaces exemplifying the highest values of the Dutch society to factories and commercial buildings (Figure 25) as their replacement, showing the growing interest in industrialization and economic growth rather than more spiritual matters.

Figure 25. 19th century view on factories in Amsterdam

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21   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
22   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
23   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.184)
24   (van der Woud [2001] 1997, p.192)

25   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
26   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)

5 Modern Dutch Architecture in the 20th Century

As has been introduced in the previous chapter, the foundation of the Modern architecture era has been already set at the end of the 19th century. Berlage, considered to be the father of this movement, influenced the emergence of several different styles which were all born in the early 20th century and continued throughout the following decades in a tensioned Dutch stylistic climate. The following chapter will discuss the internationally recognized Dutch architectural developments of the era which contributed to the evolution of Modern architecture worldwide, right before the SuperDutch movement was defined.

Expressionist architecture of the Amsterdam School

The first half of the century was marked by tensions between Amsterdam Expressionism, called "Amsterdam School" by Jan Gratama in 1916[1], and Rotterdam Functionalism (De Stijl and Nieuwe Bouwen), both originating from Berlage's Modernist principles, but in different ways.

The Amsterdam School was opposing the rational, community-driven principles of Berlage, trying to set itself apart from political views and ideological principles. The aim was to set an open experimentation ground on which the architects could express their own emotions and views in a free manner determined by only their character and capabilities, not limited by historical styles, forms and aesthetics. Consequently, it became a dynamic style, malleable to different situations and needs. Although expressionists employed traditional elements and spatial distributions in their architecture, they were adapting them to modern times. The predominant aspects of the Amsterdam School architecture are denoted by expressive, colorful, ornamental, non-functional, and sculptural play of brickwork construction xtogether with a rejection of rational orthogonal grids and systems of organization. The resulting designs were strikingly diverse since individual expression was sought.[2] [3]

For example, Figure 26 shows a housing project by Michel de Klerk in which the excessively decorated monumentality of the exterior façades of the complex contrasted the pragmatic, uniform interior dwellings and access areas. Those were adhering to an idealistic vision satisfying the architect's personal utility values instead of the common norm and, hence, detaching from the real user of a dwelling[4]. The organic forms and the lack of façade ornaments are obvious in the project, while the building remarkably stands in its environment like a decorative element, mysterious and proud.

Figure 26. Het Schip, Oostzaanstraat 45, Amsterdam (1919) by Michel de Klerk

A different approach in Dutch Expressionism is marked by Willem Marinus Dudok with his Bijenkorf Department Store in Rotterdam (Figure 27) as an example in which we can read a more simplistic and abstract architecture dominated by glass and only secondarily "decorated" by the use of bricks/ stone[5]. This has set the tone for a more rigid appearance of Expressionist architecture in the Netherlands, employing composition and rationality towards its achievement. The growing importance of rationality leads us to the principles of Aldo van

Figure 27. De Bijenkorf Department Store, Rotterdam (1930), by Willem Dudok

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1   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
2   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
3   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
4   (Luthmann 1932)
5   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

Eyck's architecture, detached from both economical-functionalist attitudes and notions of hierarchy, ornaments and symmetry. He was interested in the poetics of architecture and used rational dimensioning and proportions to set a uniform grid as common basis for houses which would, thus, allow the users the freedom of defining their living environment suited to their personal views. For instance, in his Amsterdam Municipal Orphanage (Figure 28), he created a continuous, neutral grid according to which all the spaces were designed, instead of their function, and a similarly defined structure which was not regular so that various spatial distributions could be implemented[6].

This neutral grid had become an important influence in the 1960's and 1970's architecture, eventually degenerating into a repetitive impersonal climate in that era.
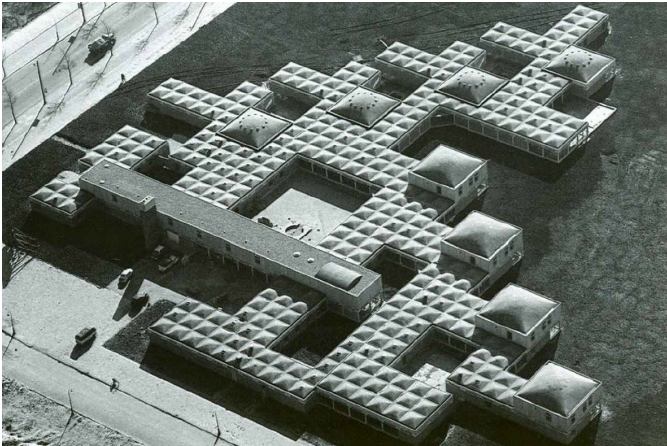
Figure 28. Amsterdam Municipal Orphanage (1960), designed by Aldo van Eyck

Functionalism and Rationalism

On the other side of the spectrum, Functionalism and Rationalism were making their presence known in the Dutch architectural climate of the 20th century. Those were mainly promoted by Rotterdam based architects and they were rejecting both tradition and adherence to historical styles and forms.

The opposition of tradition has already started at the end of the 19th century, but it only grew stronger in the following periods. During the First World War, the Netherlands remained neutral, separated from the cultural foreign world, and internally decentralized. So, several developments in art and culture have occurred all around the country and were finally brought together

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6   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

by Theo van Doesburg into a magazine which he called "De Stijl", referencing to the concept of style defined by Berlage. The goal was to find a new beauty and a universal unification of all arts which would dominate life in every way possible, while separating from traditional dogmas and individualism[7]. Deconstructivism was the main architectural and artistic language employed at the time, obvious from examples such as the Schroder House (Figure 29). Though its typology is of a row house, and the materials used are traditionally recognizable (wood, brick, steel), its constitutive elements were brought to life in innovative ways: outer walls were becoming free standing planes and linear elements, the ground plan was subdivided in various rooms by flexible partitions, giving freedom of adaptability to the users and, finally, plastered walls were flattening and neutralizing the aspect of the building, merging it with abstract art through the use of primary colors[8] [9].

Figure 29. The Schroder House, Utrecht (1925), by Gerrit Rietveld

Even though De Stijl is known nowadays as a remarkable influence on international abstract art[10], it only marked the dawn of, what was later identified as, the extreme Functionalist style in the Netherlands. The latter was expressing function as the dominant shaping element of a building. However, this approach saw difficulties in adaptations to other purposes since the initial function was so specifically designed for. Even the urban context was neglected in functional design processes, the solitary overarching driving force being flat, programmatic divisions. The Nieuwe Bouwen movement, Dutch Functionalism, was represented by Opbouw and De 8, both seeking to reach social consumer goals of equal accessibility for

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7   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
8   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
9   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
10   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)

all social classes (with increasing interest in working class) through structural and functional efficiency and by pretending to reject any principles of form or appearance, while they still seemed secretly interested in those matters[11]. They were relying on creating austere, unaesthetic, geometrical buildings as pure results of their functional and structural focus, contrasting the decorative craftsmanship of the Amsterdam School, visibly present and exemplified in Figure 30. This led to a plain catalogue of buildings resembling the one illustrated which all shared several characteristics, while presenting little to no distinction among each other. So, although Functionalists were claiming that their buildings were recognizable for their function from the outside, that is arguable as most of them looked, essentially, the same. This was strengthened
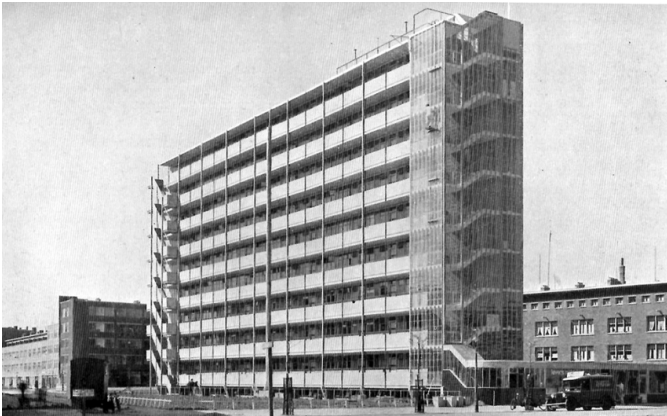
Figure 30. Bergpolderflat, Rotterdam (1932-1934), by Willem van Tijen, Brinkmann and Van der Vlugt, as a representation of the plain Dutch Functionalism

by the anchoring of Functional architecture uniquely in economic and political considerations, and by the promotion of industrial building processes for a fast paced mass-production of non-profit driven, affordable housing. The aim was to create hygienic, comfortable, ventilated, transparent and cheap architecture through modern building techniques and materials (concrete frames, large steel framed glass,..) which would suit the rapidly changing Modern society.

Similarly, Rationalism was focusing on using space efficiently, standardizing building elements and spaces to create mass housing blocks for quick urban restructuring, as well as employing new materials, building techniques and geometric volumes. However, in Rational architecture, instead of function, the logic of scale, proportion, size, use and symbolism prevail into determining the formal structure. The geometric form

is the absolute goal, involving new geometrical grids instead of classical rules of composition (Figure 31).
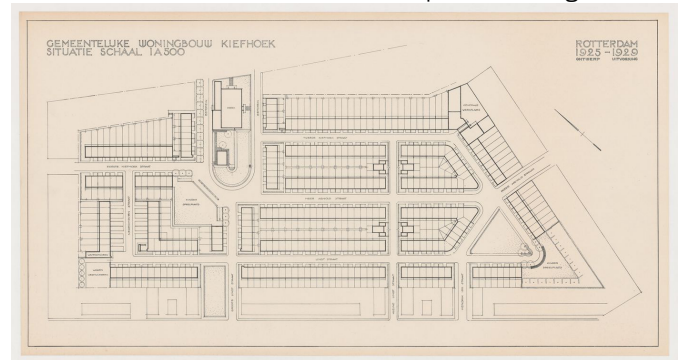
Figure 31. Groundplan of De Kiefhoek housing estate, Rotterdam (1925-1929), by J.J.P. Oud

Thus, simplicity and repetition become main features of this movement through geometrical arrangement and configuration of elevations which then creates the internal organization of program and structure. Opposed to Functionalism, Rationalism is concerned with durability though, the function is secondary, trying to find a balance between all elements. Thus, more abstract, neutral forms are used, and they are set in advance to loosen the ties with the underlying function of the building (Figure 32), giving some room for change in the longer run[12].

Figure 32. Outside picture of De Kiefhoek housing estate, Rotterdam (1925-1929), by J.J.P. Oud

Both Functionalism and Rationalism are styles of building that match the constructed identity of the Dutch society. They have been concerned historically, as was outlined in the previous chapters, with efficiency and pragmatism, ration and economy since the early stages of their development. Therefore, the strong influence they posed on the evolution of Modern architecture can almost be considered a natural consequence of their built-up way of being.

11   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

12   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

Traditionalism

Separate from the binary of Expressionism and Functionalism, in the 1920's, Traditionalist approaches to architecture have gained ground again in the Netherlands as oppositions to the free, subjective, and equalizing Modern movement of the time. In a fight against internationalization, the architects advocating it were giving attention to the Golden Age designs, Classicism, but especially to rural, simple, natural, and bare architecture with Scandinavian influences[13] as represented in Figure 33. Since the trend at the time was

Figure 33. Vreewijk garden village, Rotterdam (1916), by Granpre Moliere

to let go of historical styles and principles, this renewed interest in the tradition of building was remarkable in the way it was received. On one hand, it was criticized for not fitting the Dutch Modern lifestyles and needs, already a subject of 19th century polemics. On the other hand, though, there were positive views towards it, appreciating its account for the basic norms on form, construction and function as essential in building an architecture of shelter, enclosure and space delimitation (the primitive notion of building architecture)[14].

Granpre Moliere, one of the main representatives of Dutch Traditionalism in the 20th century, tried to balance the two highlighted opinions by giving a new, own aesthetic to Traditionalism[15] which would be driven by historical values while not imitating old forms. Hence, it was not all about conserving methods and appearances of the past, but about the promotion of unpretentious craftsmanship in buildings rather than academic theoretical notions. More than that, compositional and rational matters were disconsidered, giving place to the achievement of harmonious designs through unifying the human with nature, balancing tectonics, and clear geometric simple forms in architecture[16].

In the second half of the 20th century Traditionalists became less and less dogmatic, drawing freely on functional structures as basis for their designs and disguising these with Traditional forms[17]. Therefore, Traditionalism lost its purity, giving rise to a hybrid approach employing Modern production techniques hidden by a costume of Traditional aesthetics.

Postwar reconstructions

The Second World War has marked a destructive period in the history of the Netherlands when, in 1940, it was subdued by Nazi Germany. The traumatic bombings and assaults of the war have left the Dutch with shattered cities, houses, infrastructure, and industries whose pieces they had to pick up and reassemble, while also filling in the gaps with new developments[18]. Although the Dutch authorities prioritized saving their economy by rebuilding their industry and (water-) infrastructure, the "public enemy number one"[19] was considered to be housing shortage in the period which, strikingly, was not tackled until the 1950's. But the housing shortage became more and more pressing since, other than just the war destructions, it was built up by the stagnant housing production and the booming numbers of families being formed after the war[20]. Therefore, it is astonishing that this matter was secondary to the restoration of the Dutch economy instead of vice-versa, conferring a capitalist orientation rather than social interest from the authorities' perspective. I would argue that it even relates to the "matter-of-factness"[21], efficiency or, maybe even better, the "enterprising"[22] character that the Dutch society has been identified with for centuries. Even more, when finally the focus seemed to have shifted towards fixing the housing problem, authorities were financing and subsidizing most of the process instead of private parties[23], making sure that everything is under their control, setting low rents, and, thus, low wages for workers as well as encouraging industrial building techniques so that the rest of the resources would go into restoring, to put

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13   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
14   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
15   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)

16   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
17   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
18   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
19   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006, p.31)
20   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
21   (Jones 1913, p.3)
22   (Jones 1913, p.3)
23   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)

it bluntly, the country's financial security. As a result, residential districts became monotonous repetitive mazes through which the housing shortage could be solved fast, but homogenizing urban space in the process.

The main architectural discourses of the time criticized these practices and tried to fight against them.
Though the Functionalist/ Rationalist - Traditionalist binary of the previous decades was still paramount, finally a fresh kick was given to Dutch Modern architecture by Jaap Bakema and Aldo van Eyck, both having priorly been active members in the Functionalist movement in the Netherlands. Nevertheless, they were trying to go beyond it, putting social matters back into the dehumanizing industrialization process and reconnecting humans to their environment (Figure 34).
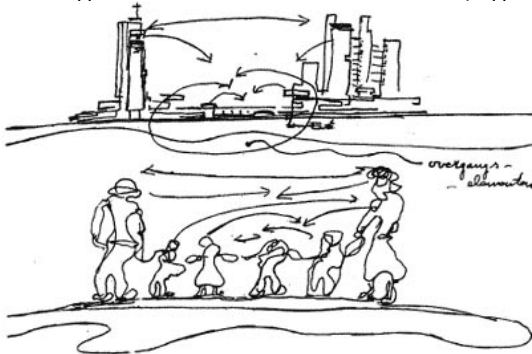
Figure 34. Sketch for Lijnbaan, Rotterdam (1961) by Jaap Bakema representing the interest in merging architectural and urban design in a human-centred manner

What resulted was a Brutalist architecture that would both stimulate and express human behavior, and a desire for merging urban and architectural design to achieve their above-mentioned aims. Together they started the Forum magazine in 1959 proclaiming their human-centered ideals expressed, for example, through a "configurative concept"[24] of juxtaposed dwelling types forming patterns that could be repeated and multiplied (stamps) in which different people could live together as a consolidated community and which allows them to each appropriate it in their
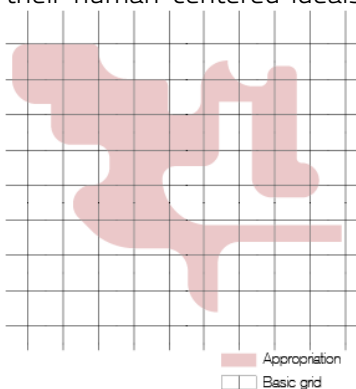
Figure 35. Neighbourhood concept diagram

24   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006, p.36)

own ways (neighborhood concept)[25] (Figure 35). A great example of this integrated approach is represented in the plan for Pendrecht district by Lotte Stam-Beese in collaboration with Opbouw (Jaap Bakema) (Figure 36). This was interpreted further as a plain geometric

Figure 36. Pendrecht district, Rotterdam (1949-1953), by Lotte Stam-Beese and Jaap Bakema (Opbouw)

repetitive organization in architecture; all conceptual humanistic ideals were reduced to pragmatic, cheap solutions in practice in that period[26].

New period of growth and Postmodernism

The 1960's showed an outstandingly successful development in welfare in the Netherlands. This meant higher incomes, stronger social security and individual identities dominated by consumerism. Hence, the Dutch society became more outspoken and self-aware, demanding to be more influential over decision making processes. Simultaneously, the rise in prosperity led to shrinking families, young people living independently at an earlier stage and increased flows of immigrants which, consequently, started a new housing crisis in the country[27]. This, together with the agglomeration of industries and offices in inner cities, has led to the need of pushing housing districts towards city peripheries or new "growth municipalities"[28]. Those were all built following the municipalities' principles of constructing fast, cheap, and repetitive for quickly solving the emerged crisis, producing large scale impersonal neighborhoods.
Further, in the 1970's old residential neighborhood groups have acted against the homogenizing designs of the 1960's, shifting the housing district construction towards more human, diverse, smaller-scale single-family houses (Figure 37). However, these wishes still

25   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
26   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
27   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
28   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006, p.40)

Figure 37. Hoptille, Amsterdam (1975-1982), by K. Rijnboutt, E. Meisner, E. Sjoeters, showing a smaller scale housing block but still repetitive and plain

mostly materialized in monotonously organized public space and utterly simple gridded block layouts. It can be concluded that, in this postwar era, Dutch housing was marked by a strict focus on quantity, standardization and financial drive which powered through in the Netherlands for a long time[29].

Further, a newborn style was getting acknowledged internationally in the late 1970's under the name of Postmodernism. Interestingly though, it was rejected by the Technical University of Delft's docents as well as Aldo van Eyck, so it was barely present in the Dutch architecture, if at all[30] [31]. Conversely, the University in Eindhoven was embracing it, so, arguably, there were some projects adhering to this trend in the 1980's in the Netherlands, though it is not clear to what extent since the Dutch building industry and its visual harmony was already being highly controlled (so the new aesthetic was hardly fitting this harmony as we can see in Figure 38). Postmodern projects mainly expressed an extreme

Figure 38. Java Eiland, Amsterdam (1989-1996), by J.M.J. Coenen

minimalism in the material use, bare and clear (exposed concrete, steel grids, glass blocks and frosted glass)

with still purely geometric interior divisions and external volumes, creating order and serenity, surprisingly, through inserting irregularities in windows and doors for instance (Figure 38 and Figure 39). Care for detail

Figure 39. Weesperstraat housing block, Amsterdam (1980-1994), designed by Rudy Uytenhaak (picture taken by RUPA)

became again relevant in the field, similar to the pre-war Modernist styles, but this time more focused on buildings with an approachable monumentality. Those were built as communication tools with the public, drawing upon old styles and visual materials and criticizing them by slight shifts in their design approach. So, Postmodernism is basically taking a stand towards previous architectural approaches by exposing them in order to spark conversations about differences and meanings[32].

29   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
30   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006)
31   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

32   (Barbieri et al. 2003)

6 SuperDutch Movement (1980's - 2003) and Its Relationship to Dutch Architecture's Historical Evolution

The following paragraphs introduce the SuperDutch movement as conceptualized by the critic Bart Lootsma in his book, *SuperDutch: New Architecture in the Netherlands*[1] and by looking at the projects and architects that were featured as taking part in the movement. The context of its emergence will be outlined together with the ideological principles that stand as its basis. Further, a critical analysis on the architectural elements and typologies of the time will be discussed and related to the old historical development of Dutch architecture.

Context

In the 1980's there was a shift in policies in the Netherlands, putting architecture in a more dominant position in society and in its development. Thus, architectural offices were encouraged into their practice. During the same period, consultancy with many different parties was also a trend, leading to too many opinions on project developments which made it difficult for them to advance, creating a halt in construction and a stagnation period at the end of the 1980's. Even more, there was a rising interest in the Dutch context to rediscover their national identity, and to keep up with international trends, making them more relevant in worldwide discourses. This need for external affirmation is a tradition that the Dutch can be identified with ever since they founded their nation and up until the present day. The architectural discipline became a central medium through which the Netherlands could achieve this valued goal by designing and building a more innovative built environment, thus getting media attention. So, the young Dutch architects were encouraged by the authorities to be free in their design processes, giving them funds and many opportunities which proved fruitful for their creativity[2], but also for their self-promotion in mass-media[3].

More than that, the architects of the late 1980's were rejecting the repetitive mass-produced architecture of the 1960's and 1970's which "drew freely on historical models despite the same industrial production methods being used"[4] and they were looking to introduce a new vision in the field, more appropriate for their times. In

this global trend of rediscovering their identity, they found a path of "self-criticism" as Rem Koolhaas refers to it in an interview transcript in *Architecture at Remdom; The Blinkers that Make the Visionary, A conversation with Rem Koolhaas*[5] together with intertwining architectural theory with the world of real estate.

To sum up, the global trend of internationalization which impulsed the Netherlands to engage in a search for its national identity and to set itself back on the international scene, the criticism of the late Modern repetitive architecture along with the stagnation of the building industry in the 1980's have all led to a shift in focus in Dutch architecture towards the creation of new typologies by employing new approaches and technologies which were supported by the contemporary technological rise.

Ideological principles

Lootsma claims that the Dutch culture of the 90's was keeping the essence of its tradition, but in a healthy way for national development, critically questioning it and pushing its limits[6]. The efficiency and cleverness of the Dutch society, common in its historical evolution, and peaking in the 20th century, remained the leading principles for new Dutch designs. The Modern trends of simplicity and minimalism were still replacing the historical richness of decorations though, opposing the practices that Dutch architecture was engaging with historically.

So, it is noticed that those new designs are disconnected from history, in physical terms at least (Figure 40). The forms and shapes of the past were left behind in favor of basic geometric volumes and a dryness in design[7]. The ornaments transformed into constructional details, and the monumentality/ picturesqueness binary was not prevailing anymore as it was in the past centuries, especially the 19th[8], a much more pragmatic functionality and extreme minimalism took over. Aesthetics as a predominant aspect in architectural discourses was criticized as a shallow approach in the discipline when architecture should have been, according to the SuperDutch architects, the main mean

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1   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
2   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
3   (Barbieri et al. 2003)
4   (Lootsma [2000] 2000, p.12)

5   (Koolhaas n.d.)
6   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
7   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)
8   (van der Woud [2001] 1997)
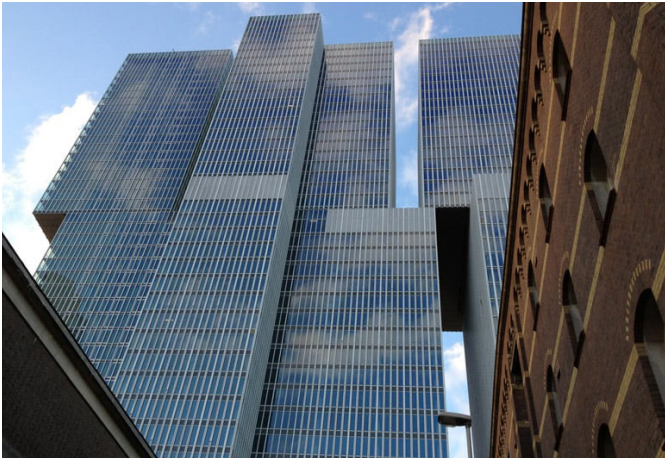
Figure 40. De Rotterdam building, Rotterdam (2009), by OMA, as example of tensions between old and new architecture

of embodying abstract ideologies and pressing socio-political matters in a physical domain. Consequently, the focus has changed from the Modern Dutch designs to a more conceptual approach to architecture: using buildings as bold statements, and as conversation starters with the transition society of the time[9], alluding to Postmodern principles of approachability.

Digital media, technology and architecture were flowing together in the construction field, the computer increasingly being used in the design processes as a new tool for designers. This made it possible to create new sculptural forms (Figure 41), more fluidity and organic shapes and employ new analysis techniques for a project site.

Figure 41. Markthal, Rotterdam (2014), by MVRDV

Another very relevant concept that led the designers' thinking processes was the growth of individualization. Thus, architectural designs were focused on giving the users freedom of involvement in the final products by creating more open floor plans, free living areas or open spaces for the people to inhabit and change according to their needs. Also, more diverse dwelling typologies were created and merged in the same housing complex to allow for a diversity of future users to live there and

to seek their desired setting. At the same time, places for people to gather back together were provided, allowing their individuality while still stimulating a collective setting[10] in a similar way as Jaap Bakema and Aldo van Eyck meant to create a community focused architecture in the previous decades.

Finally, a literal expression of function or its complete concealment, an obvious material and formal divergence from the surrounding context (Figure 40) and the symbiosis of various materialities uniquely employed are all aspects noticed in many of the SuperDutch projects.

Transparency and windows

Transparency is one of the features of the SuperDutch buildings. Large windows, curtain walls, a play of what you can see and cannot see from inside or outside are all aspects explored in these new buildings. Compared to Golden Age examples in which the interior division of space is given by the arrangement of the openings in the façade, SuperDutch designs follow a Functional focus of creating the building shell as a consequence of its interior arrangement. Thus, hierarchy, symmetry and proportions, alignment are not as prominent (Figure 42) as they previously were in the historical development of Dutch architecture, dominated by the rational, mathematical national identity.

Figure 42. WoZoCo, Amsterdam (1997), by MVRDV, exemplifying irregularity, arbitrary masses, assymetry

It is interesting to see how windows and transparency kept their special position in the Dutch realm of construction. They were heavily ornamented before, being main features surrounded by decorations in the Golden Age and, consequently, in the period

9   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)

10   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)

23

Super'Dutch': An Independent Result of Globalization or the Product of the Organic Evolution of Dutch Traditional Architecture?

until the 20th century. In the new developments, the detailing of the windows is intricately taken care of, in a similar fashion as the old styles were doing with their ornaments. The choice of how this building element is set into the whole seems to raise extensive discussions and it changes according to the sought appearance or function.

Rejection of ornaments and aesthetic ideals

The SuperDutch architecture is remarkably rejecting any kind of ornamentation and the focus on aesthetics that was precedently determining the construction sector[11]. Similar to Modernity, efficiency and simplicity prevailed in the industry. An extreme minimal approach

was applied by the architects in their designs, but differently than the simplicity and bareness of the 20th century Traditionalism. Clear lines, bold, provocative volumetric gestures and materialization, bare and abstract expressions in the physical building are some of the predominant features of the

Figure 43. Möbius House, Het Gooi (1998), by UN Studio showing clear bold lines, intricate angles, exposed materials

architecture that achieved international recognition in the closing years of the 20th century (Figure 43).

Although ornaments were essentially avoided in this period, there was a new interest in using materials in a decorative way (Figure 44), but still utterly plain. However, the old pragmatic way of applying decorations
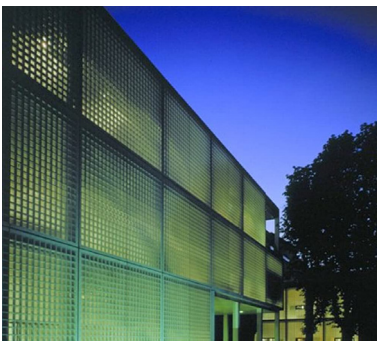
Figure 44. Academy of Art & Architecture, Maastricht (1993), by Wiel Arets

as a consequence of construction relates to the Functional principle of "Form follows function"[12] in a way, in this case the form following structure. It is not the same, but it does portray the deep connection that the Dutch character always had to practicality, which only became more explored on a global level during the 20th century. Thus, it makes sense that the Dutch were so influential in the Modernist movement, and, even more, that the SuperDutch was still strongly dependent on Modern designs.

Context analysis as basis for designs

The disconnection from historical forms was already an established practice in the Modern movement, and it constantly evolved in the period, leading, in the 1990's, to an architecture that strived to contrast old Dutch national styles in any aspect, from shape to materiality, typologies and organization (Figure 45). Thus, new

Figure 45. Double House, Utrecht (1997), by MVRDV

intricate material synthesis and strikingly different exterior features were used to disconnect from the surrounding historical physical context. Nonetheless, the architects were focusing on starting the design of their future addition with a thorough analysis of its existing context, but with no prior assumption; a tabula rasa approach. The claim made was that design "should arise almost of its own accord from the boundary conditions"[13] which is intriguing because, theoretically, this relates to how the Dutch nation traditionally built their houses in the 16th-17th century. However, this approach has given profoundly different built forms at the end of the 20th century compared to the previous period. This is normal as the civilization evolved radically in the course of the centuries and the technological innovations have substantially changed the building industry, its production methods, construction techniques and materials. However, it is also relevant

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11   (Lootsma [2000] 2000)

12   (Sullivan 1896, p.408)
13   (Lootsma [2000] 2000, p.16)

what the architects chose as boundary conditions for their designs. Personal biases and opinions play a role into this process as well, so the physical transduction of the context analysis is never a fully objective organic creation.

Minimal geometrical volumes and sculptural clothing

The building volumes were employing rather simplistic shapes, but producing extravagantly complex structures based on movement, access, or other abstract conceptual principles. The outer shape is usually given in these times by the internal organization of the buildings which led to sober minimalistic geometries. At the same time, sculptural shells (Figure 46) were created as outer clothing for the buildings to outline the bold statements that they were striving

Figure 46. Agora Theater, Lelystad (2007), by UN Studio

to express and stir brief, impulsive visual satisfaction, fulfilling the need of what Leen van Duin calls "media junkie culture"[14]. Hence, SuperDutch architecture is recognizable as a sort of façade architecture, curiously relating to how the Amsterdam School was referred to in the early 20th century and to the Gothic townscapes of the 16th and 17th centuries. The old styles mainly used façades as a ground for personal expression of the craftsmen who constructed the buildings and to display the socio-economic status of the dwellers. The Amsterdam School was similarly showing the character of the designer (architect this time) through expressive façades, but this was done mostly by simple decorations, while the attention was given to detailing and special methods of applying the available materials. Finally, the latter characteristics can be identified in the SuperDutch façades as well, while those also sometimes employ direct, evident elements to allude to the purpose of the buildings (Figure 49).

Moreover, program was also often expressed in

the creation of different building volumes, or in the application of different materials for separate functions of the building parts (Figure 47). Different dwelling

Figure 47. Silodam, Amsterdam (2002), by MVRDV

types were, for instance, recognized through the window openings grouping and sizes in some projects, or through the change in façade rhythms. The main difference that becomes obvious here in comparison with older architecture is the space that those volumes take horizontally and vertically. The new houses are mostly dwelling complexes or free-standing villas, not being restricted as they previously were to a narrow plot of land. So, there was a lot less limitation in design and, in combination with the wide range of possibilities in production, the freedom of Neomodern architects was avidly expanding in the 1990's; the buildings could take almost any form and image (Figure 48). They seem to really be defined specifically by showing off those new possibilities that the world of architecture was opened towards, becoming a sort of trophy of welfare and evolution.

Figure 48. Outside view of Möbius House, Het Gooi (1998), by UN Studio

Focus on monumentality

Therefore, SuperDutch buildings were evoking a certain kind of monumentality by their size and expression. Their memorable exploratory shapes, bare façades, and surprising material manipulation (Figure 49) eventually got media attention and international recognition as being original and innovative, though the designs were drawing similarities with the architecture of the Modern 20th century, but with a tendency towards a luxurious appearance[15]. While Modernism's last concern was

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14   (Barbieri et al. 2003, p. 72)

15   (Vollaard and Groenendijk 2006, p. 72)

extravagance, the SuperDutch experiments have proved to be aiming for a charming eye-catching cityscape, against Dutch older principles. The Golden Age, the architecture of the 19th century and the Amsterdam School were all concerned with the aesthetics of the designs, but, generally, seriousness was preferred over luxury.
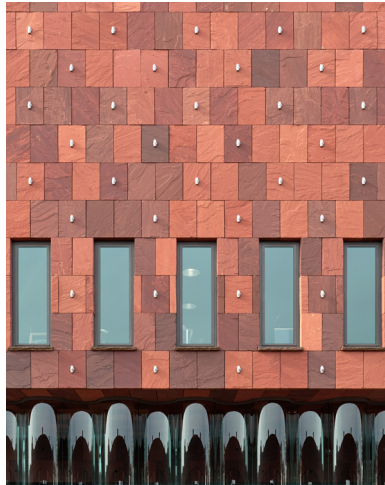
Figure 49. Museum aan de Stroom (MAS) façade, Antwerp (2011), by Neutelings Riedijk Architects

Even the housing realm was given a monumental envelope (Figure 48) to adhere to the same kind of ideals as the rest of the public buildings designed at the time. Thus, the façade was used as a coat for the building, concealing its insides in an abstract veil which shows transparency on one side, but does not give an honest representation of the function of the building. Hence, it becomes harder to distinguish different roles that buildings fulfil, everything becomes a homogenized urban scape of glass, concrete, steel, stone, and wood (Figure 50).
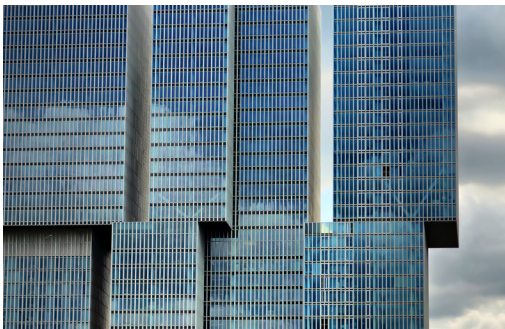
Figure 50. De Rotterdam, Rotterdam (2009), by OMA

Internal characteristics and elements

The internal dwelling organizations seem to not be driven by an efficient use of space in this period anymore. Ideologies and innovations prevail, often creating impractical divisions of space and luxurious dwellings (Figure 51), targeting exclusively a small portion of society, contrasting both the narrow typical houses of the Golden Age, as well as the social equality sought by Modern designs. The furniture and indoor
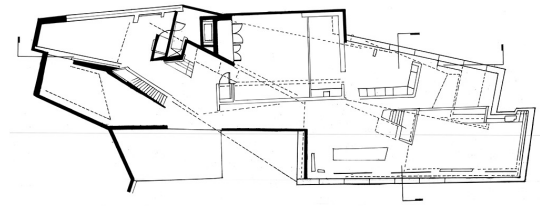
Figure 51. Möbius House plan, Het Gooi (1998), by UN Studio

space were plain and simple in the SuperDutch designs (Figure 52), but hygiene and utility do not have their previous value in households, experiments in planning the interior divisions seem to have precedence instead.

Figure 52. Villa Bordeaux interior, Bordeaux (1998), by OMA

Although it looks like the internal aspects of houses are totally different than the historic situations, there are elements such as staircases with their significant value and the incoming light shaping household activities which powered through the centuries, still being present in contemporary designs.

Figure 53. Houben House, Rotterdam (1990), by Mecanoo showing staircase and light

Relation between historical models and SuperDutch

By looking at projects developed at the time, featured as SuperDutch, the relation between ideological, conceptual, and physical aspects is less obvious. They seem to be indeed disconnected by historical examples, but the relation to Dutch tradition is still thinly expressed. Of course, the materials used are

mostly derived from Modernity and the Industrial Revolution that eventually made widely available steel, concrete and glass worldwide, while brick seems to have been forgotten. This makes the SuperDutch directly related to Modern Dutch architecture when these new methods and construction materials were increasingly applied, allowing for greater scales in buildings, making them higher, wider, longer. Thus, small-scale construction barely emerged in the period since bold, monumental buildings were sought for efficiently placing the Netherlands again in global discussions. This brings another pressing matter to light which is the fact that the SuperDutch movement seems to have been more of a marketing intervention than an architectural innovation[16]. The forms can be related to both Modernism and Postmodernism, while the ideologies are standing as the last pillar which tries to keep SuperDutch as a movement separate from any of the two. Of course, we have seen that the Dutch society is claimed to have been an enterprising, clever and efficient one for centuries and the innovative aspect of the SuperDutch which brought media attention to the Low Lands once again can be argued to fall under the same qualities and values. But innovating the architectural discipline and setting new trends, developing new typologies was not a purely Dutch initiative. The Dutch architects have had a great influence. However, can it be considered to be separate from Neomodernism which was developing around the world at the same time? I would argue that, even though the SuperDutch seems to build upon a long history of capitalism and productivity in the Dutch society, it is mostly nurtured by globalization. Coincidentally, Modernism was internationally characterized by simplicity, functionality, and rationality, but those are principles that the Dutch have been constantly involved with historically, hence becoming pioneers in Modern architecture. Once internationalization began to influence worldwide architectural developments, the Dutch followed, together with their long-valued principles, but the forms they produced were merely related to their lands or traditions, more to global trends.

So, I would say that the SuperDutch does relate to the traditions of the Dutch society ever since they started to found their nation, but this is an artificial,

constructed identity. Therefore, this statement is thin, not necessarily expressing a clear characteristic as much as it shows the capacity of the people to stick to century old principles they set for themselves.

Somehow the SuperDutch seems to be just a continuation of Modernism in its basic principles, but commercially and politically oriented, and hidden behind a global aesthetic envelope (Figure 54).

Political and economical matters
Modernism principles
Global visual appearance
Dutch efficient, enterprising identity
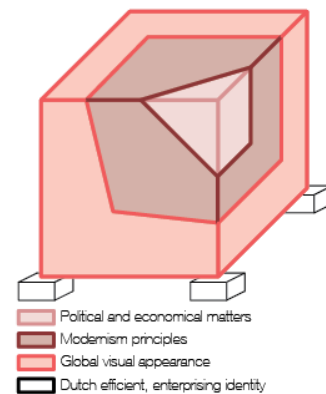
Figure 54. Diagrams of the composition of SuperDutch architecture

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16   A "branding exercise" as Dirk van den Heuvel put it in the conversation that we had about the topic

8 Discussion

Limitations

This paper has been written on the basis of a limited number of books and papers on the historical development of architecture from the perspective of artists, critics, architects, historians and sociologists. Thus, their subjective views are accepted more or less as facts, while some criticism is being brought to the discourse. But history is a sensitive subject as we can only know as much about it as the historians write. Therefore, we can only know their perspectives and the elements that they found relevant, never the entire picture and the relational things happening at the time. Moreover, time was a major factor that restricted the possibilities of reading more literature and finding a wider variety of perspectives on the researched subject.

Bias statement

Furthermore, the thesis in subject has a critical dimension to it, assessing the words of the authors from the read literature and the physical characteristics found in drawings and pictures of architectural elements. Hence, personal biases derived from my cultural background, personal interpretations and opinions could not be avoided in the analysis performed.

Further research

Since all these subjects addressed are subjective and the criticism can always be different depending on who is the person to write it, it would be good to have other perspectives on this same topic. To complete the view given by this paper, I think that reading other criticism from different authors and perspectives coming from international sources more than the Dutch ones would be proper steps to proceed.

9 Conclusion

To conclude, after having analyzed literature on the evolution of Dutch Architecture from the Golden Age (16th century) until the late 20th century SuperDutch developments, and having visually explored photography, drawings and paintings of the same period, the relationship between the SuperDutch and the historical Dutch architecture and character has taken shape. It is proclaiming efficiency, utility and a market-dominant attitude, a need for international affirmation of status and welfare which are, interestingly, characteristics identified in all the architectural and political discussions ever since the emergence of the Dutch nation and until the proof of the reconstruction period after the Second World War in which authorities placed economy as primary instead of social matters. So, the way that Dutch architects treat architecture as a financial-political mean in the SuperDutch movement relates all the way back to how they historically chose to define their character. Moreover, though the new developments have distanced from basic traditional principles because of their extravagant luxury, they seem to have set a new trend in Dutch architecture, one that continues until the present day. It seems to have become inherent to their media attention desire, consequently developing into one of their values. Therefore, ideologically, the SuperDutch is deeply connected to the Dutch constructed identity, but physically it is profoundly distancing itself from any kind of evolution of form from the past. It does have a geometric simple volumetric basis, drawing upon Modern shapes, but the preceding efficient use of space is lost in experiments of complex, bold, sculptural buildings. Further, the bare, exposed materials and façades (Figure 55) which have a slight resonance with early 20th century Traditionalism, disconnect from ornamental architecture (dominant until the 19th century) to create a strikingly

Figure 55. Pension Fund Building, Heerlen (1995), by Wiel Arets

minimal and irregular appearance focused on innovative, decorative material employment through detailing. Finally, some elements maintain their importance in the new developments, such as staircases, windows, expressing designer's personality through façade details or transparency for instance, but all adapted to new global architectural forms.

Conceptually, SuperDutch is presented as an opposition to the repetition and monotony of the Modern architecture of the 1960's and 1970's, to the lack of theory that prevailed at the time. Therefore, since the Modern movement has emerged as a consequence of the evolution of Dutch historical architecture in the 19th century, it can be concluded that the SuperDutch has an organic growth from it as well. However, I would argue that the way that Modernism has come into existence is mostly driven by a wish to break the bonds with tradition. Consequently, ever since early 20th century a line was drawn between the historical models existent until then and the new developments in the Netherlands in order to separate the two. To sum up, the SuperDutch, resulting from my analysis, bonds to the centuries-old Dutch enterprising identity and Modern simple functional principles, remaining a product of globalization which introduces new values as national traditions in the Netherlands.

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