Living with History, 1914-1964

Verpoest, Luc, Bullock, Nicholas

Published by Leuven University Press


For additional information about this book
https://muse.jhu.edu/book/82164

For content related to this chapter
https://muse.jhu.edu/related_content?type=book&id=2808289
Regeneration of the Dutch Residence

Representation of State and Post-war Reconstruction at The Hague

Marieke Kuipers

By an age-old tradition, the city of The Hague functions as the court capital of the Netherlands, although Amsterdam is the national capital. Since the counts of Holland built their medieval halls at the present Binnenhof (Inner Court), this historic site has been, almost uninterruptedly, the heart of the 'residence' - up to today. Thanks to a strict policy of neutrality (and sheer luck) the Netherlands had managed to remain outside the military battles of the First World War. The Second World War, however, could not be avoided and it caused a deep trauma affecting both the population and historic cities. In contrast to other major towns, The Hague lost only a few recognised historic buildings; however, due to the large number of lost houses (over 8,000), it ranked high on the list of devastated towns. Luckily, the Binnenhof ensemble had escaped the war damage, whereas the coastal zone, the Bezuidenhout district and a small historical area at the Korte Voorhout were almost completely destroyed.

The aim of the post-war reconstruction was neither to rebuild the old situation, nor to reconstruct entirely vanished monuments, but to revive the city and to demonstrate that life goes on. The term 'regeneration' hints at the dual purpose of the whole process of restoration - repair and renewal - of the damaged south-eastern area of The Hague that took place during the post-war period. In particular, the reconstruction of the areas in and near the ancient city centre raised heated debates about future urban development, the value of historic structures and the allocation of space to the rapidly expanding national government. The only issue generally agreed upon was the continuing function of the Binnenhof ensemble as the national government seat. The disagreement concerned the expansion of government offices and its effects on the historic site. Another issue was the intensity of transformation in the adjacent urban fabric, in particular that of the damaged Korte Voorhout and the neglected Spui quarter. This seventeenth-century district had already been slated for improvement in 1910, after previous fillings of canals and harbours, but due to all kinds of financial and legal complications, no progress had been made in more than forty years.

In contrast to most European countries, the Netherlands lacked a national Historic Buildings and Monuments Act to enable legal protection of its built heritage, although various municipalities - including The Hague - had, on paper, a local regulation to preserve historic buildings. A 'Provisional List of Dutch Monuments of History and Art' had also been drawn up by the State Commission on Monuments between 1908 and 1933, numbering about 12,000 items. Moreover, a gradually growing State Bureau for Conservation had been active since 1918.

Sadly enough, it took the destruction of war to prompt the first serious attempts at Dutch monument legislation at a national governmental level. A few days after the bombings of Rotterdam and Middelburg and the subsequent capitulation, General H.G. Winkelman, commander-in-chief of...
the Dutch troops, who was also entrusted with the main civil power since the queen and ministers had gone into exile in London, had issued two decrees on reconstruction. These included instructions that the provisionally listed monuments were protected from then on (21-24 May 1940) and that the State Commission’s permission was required for any demolition or alteration. During the next five years of occupation, the Dutch and German authorities had tried to draft a Monuments Act but they ultimately failed because of fundamental disagreement about the suggested central role of the pro-German Kultuurraad (Council on Culture).1

After the war, the Reconstruction Decrees were reconfirmed and in 1946 the Voorlopige Monumentenraad (Provisional Council on Monuments) was installed, as an advisory board on historic buildings and monuments to the Minister of Education, Arts and Sciences, and especially to draft an act. In his installation speech, Minister J.J. Gielen (1898-1981) stated that the government, despite its great material needs, also had the “task to promote all that could contribute to the spiritual and cultural enrichment of our people”; it was precisely “in the dark years of German occupation the awareness increased of how very close we have become to the characteristic historic beauty of the country”.2 In 1950 the decrees were replaced by a Temporary Monuments Act and the third Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict was signed into effect, in 1954, before a national Monuments Act came into force in the Netherlands. This convention introduced the blue/white shield to signify the cultural property to be saved, similar to the use of the Red Cross emblem to identify a hospital.

At long last, the first Dutch Historic Buildings and Monuments Act was approved in 1961. This act provided legal protection not only of individual buildings but also of historic townscape or conservation areas. Initially, the interest in ‘city beauty’ was mainly related to a particular dominant building or a small historic ensemble but the war damage had opened people’s eyes to larger historic structures. However, a rather brash programme of slum clearance had been instigated by the Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing in the 1950s, resulting in a greater amount of ‘peacetime’ demolition than all the war-time destruction put together.

A map collage made by the Public Works Department in 1952 to show the situation desired in 2000 called The Hague “the largest construction site in Europe”? The exaggeration expressed not only the immense scope of construction activities but also the great ambitions to transform the stately royal residence into a vibrant modern metropolis with skyscrapers and highways. Rather than to live with history, and thus to preserve the built heritage, most post-war architects wanted - and still prefer - to orient towards the future by creating new buildings, often at the expense of the ‘old’. Regeneration became linked with radical renovation, promoted by a new generation of architects, who were inspired by the visionary local projects of the previous generation and the CIAM models of the Functional City. Their proposals to rebuild the city were intended to reinforce and complete previous attempts at urban renewal.

During the interwar period, according to Hendrik Petrus Berlage’s urban plans, various interventions had been made in the urban fabric of the inner city: main traffic avenues (Hofweg, Grote Markt, Kalvermarkt, Torenstraat), large-scale department stores and offices and limited slum clearance. The economic decline of the 1930s had given the broken city large vacant lots. Exacerbated by the war damage, it all seemed to be waiting for new buildings.4 Like a blessing in
disguise, this situation provided great opportunities for the post-war reconstruction effort to realise its old dreams of modernising the court capital. The magic year of 2000, now already behind us, shone like a beacon in the aspirations of long-term planning.

In the past sixty years, the views on urban conservation and urban renewal, as well as of the representation of State, have dramatically changed. These are reflected by the successive interventions in the ever-changing cityscape. The recent Resident project, based on the master plan of Rob Krier, can be regarded both as a radical reversal and the ultimate fulfilment of Willem Marinus Dudok’s first ideas for rebuilding the Bezuidenhout-Spui quarter. After a brief sketch of The Hague’s evolution as the national seat of government, this article will address three issues of this complicated transformation process: the skyline, the replacement of the early post-war ministries and the role of conservation of monuments and historic buildings.

**Historical Residence and Government Seat**

The Hague, named after the count’s hedge (’s-Gravenhage) near the castle and its ornamental pond (Hofvijver), has always been the little sister to Amsterdam and Rotterdam. Well situated on the North Sea between these two competing cities, and provided with stately buildings and green promenades, the country’s third-largest town is often characterised as the ‘most beautiful village in Europe’. The contradiction of provincialism and international aspirations is rooted in the past; the settlement had never managed to obtain the historical privileges of a city and therefore had never been walled or fortified. Although it hosted the representatives of the Seven United Provinces and the eighteen voting cities of Holland in and around the Binnenhof, The Hague had never had a vote of its own, either in the regional assembly (Staten van Holland) or in the federal assembly (Staten-Generaal), during the long period of the Dutch Republic. Not until the French occupation was its administrative status upgraded to a ‘stad’ (town), in 1811, under Napoleonic rule.5

Before that, in 1795, the Batavian Revolution had introduced the first ‘democratically’ elected parliament and centralised administration to rule the Netherlands as one nation instead of a regional federation.

---

5 Van Gelder, De historische schoonheid van ’s-Gravenhage, 105.
Since the viceroy was forced to leave and the voting cities had to give up their permanent accommodations, the historic buildings at the Binnenhof and environs were assigned to house the parliament and government offices. The Second Chamber of Parliament had occupied the former eighteenth-century Ballroom of the Viceroy’s Quarter, while the First Chamber had settled in the former seventeenth-century Assembly Hall (*Statenzaal*) of the Province of Holland. Both the historic traditions and the availability of these old Republican monuments were attractive for the fresh Batavian Republic, which sought to legitimise its power and had not yet found self-expression. On the contrary, several regime changes followed, with increasing French state power and, ultimately, annexation. Despite King Louis Napoleon’s decision to move the Dutch administration out of The Hague and to create a more impressive representation of State - for which purpose he had confiscated the Amsterdam town hall - the traditional seat of government was immediately reoccupied when the Netherlands finally became independent in 1813.

Thanks to the long tradition of divided power in the ‘country of cities’, the Dutch had hardly ever contested The Hague’s firm position as the court capital. The Binnenhof became the symbol of the new state. This was more an acquiescence in the historical pride of the Dutch Republic and the Golden Age than the upshot of any search for new architectural forms to represent the Kingdom of the Netherlands and the nation-state’s upcoming position in the Age of Industrialisation. Its maintenance, if not outright neglect, had been as economical as possible. According to the architectural standards at the time, the historical ensemble was literally low-profiled. In fact, its locus was more important than the historic substance and architecture of the buildings, which had sometimes been adapted to new needs or tastes without changing the essence of the Binnenhof as a whole. Yet the location alongside the large Hofvijver, in which the historic patchwork of the northern buildings was beautifully reflected, lent a sort of prestige to the entire ensemble of government buildings. Gradually, the adjacent *Plein* (Square) developed as an extended government seat, since the Ministry of Warfare had settled in the eighteenth-century *Logement van Rotterdam* (no 4), the Ministry of Justice in the nearby Hotel of Brunswick and the Ministry of Colonies in the former Huygens house (1634-1637, Pieter Post).

About 1860 an overall process of modernisation started up in The Hague, which went hand in hand with town extensions, industrialisation and infrastructural works. However much the State’s involvement with society increased, the accommodation of its offices remained restrained. Both budgets and affordable sites for new buildings were scarce. Moreover, the municipality had become the first authority responsible for town planning; roles were reversed compared to Republican times. Consequently, new office space for the expanding State departments could only be realised by replacing or relocating the old premises at the Binnenhof. Both options were adopted, over time, resulting in new ministries at the nearby Plein, for Colonies (1859-1861, W.N. Rose) and Justice (1876-1883, C.H. Peters). The seventeenth-century houses of the Duke of Brunswick and Constantijn Huygens had to make way for this purpose, though not without civic protests.

At the Binnenhof, some historic walls and the ancient Court Chapel were almost completely demolished in order to build new premises for *Waterstaat* (Hydraulic Works, 1881-1883, F.J. Nieuwenhuis) and the Department for the Interior (1913, D.E.C.
that the expansion of the State had again become a ceremonial place. Meanwhile, the court’s character as a public space had gained significance since 1904, the restored Great Hall, renamed as the Ridderzaal (Knight’s Hall), had again become a ceremonial place. It served not only as the solemn venue for the annual opening of the parliamentary year by the queen - and the associated tour of the city in the Golden Carriage and other barouches by the royal family - but also for international events, such as the Second International Peace Conference, held in 1907, which led to the international Hague Convention on Land Warfare.

The new ministries had been built under the critical eye of Victor de Stuers (1843-1916), the first Dutch conservationist in State service, who had become a member of the First Chamber of Parliament after his retirement in 1901. Regarding the Binnenhof as the Dutch Capitol, a true monument of ancient history and national glory, de Stuers had tried, in vain, to advance a coherent plan for the maintenance of the historic buildings and the extension of the national government seat with new ministry buildings for the expanding government administration. This could, in his opinion, best be accompanied by the relocation of some larger departments to places outside the ancient core.

Berlage (1856-1934), who was commissioned by the municipality to draft a town extension plan and would be more involved in various interventions at the Buitenhof (Exterior Court) and Hofweg, had also proposed the idea of relocating the government offices in 1909. By then, it was obvious that the expansion of the State’s administration would continue, while on the other hand the realisation of new, large-scale interventions at or near the Binnenhof was very complicated because of the conflicting interests of conservation and modern needs. Aside from the parliament’s constant desire to cut back on administrative expenses, it was not easy to find affordable building sites in or nearby the historic centre, where large government buildings could be erected without disturbing the historic townscape. A few incidental extensions and many rented houses had to provide the urgently needed administrative offices.

Although de Stuers had aimed to move the Ministry of Waterstaat, it was the new Ministry of Agriculture, Industry and Trade that - partly thanks to his mediation in another controversy about costs and architectural style - was the first ministry to be built outside the city canals, at the Bezuidenhoutseweg. The vicinity of the Staatspoor railway station was mentioned as a justification to the protesting civil servants, who did not want to work at such a great distance from the Binnenhof. Financially more important was the advantage that the lots were already owned by the State and that there were no objections to pulling down five eclectic houses. What caused more difficulties was the outbreak of the First World War, because construction costs increased and the natural stone required for the plinth and allegorical sculptures had to be imported from occupied France. Inaugurated in 1917, it was the largest government building of its time, numbering 115 office rooms, two meeting halls, a library and a concrete shelter in the basement.

Meanwhile, the parliament had more interest in the improvement of its own accommodations than in that of the ministries, which already were demanding huge budgets to fulfil their expanding tasks. Having learned from the critical response to Knuttel’s creations, a closed competition had been held in 1919-1920 to design a new House of Parliament at the Buitenhof. A lack of public interest in the outcome of the competition was blamed for the final decision taken on 21 October 1920 to use a design made by the committee as a basis for a new competition. The committee had proposed the idea of relocating the government administration to Bezuidenhout, the former royal hunting ground.

In 1861, W.N. Rose had replaced the wooden beams of the neglected medieval hall with iron arches in neo-Gothic style and the building was put back into use as a depot of the State’s archives. These measures had been sharply criticised by Victor de Stuers and were undone about 1900 by C.H. Peters. See for the building history of the ministries and the restoration of the Ridderzaal: van der Peet and Steenmeijer, Het Binnenhof.
of finances and conflicts between municipality and State about expropriation and investments in infrastructural works caused delays and eventually cancellation of the parliament’s building plans at the west side.11

In his reaction to the competition projects, for which he was not invited, J.J.P. Oud (1890-1963) concluded that the architects had to deal with an impossible task: no harmonious connection could be made with the ancient buildings, while at the same time achieving a monumental solution by means of a new, freestanding building.12

Instead, a low-lying temporary office building was built at the Buitenhof in 1919, initially to house the new Ministry of Labour but soon serving the expanding Ministry of Warfare.13 While the menace of war increased during the 1930s, the national government anxiously tried to keep its policy of strict neutrality. Nonetheless, some precautions had been taken to provide the population and major monuments in the court capital with a minimum of shelter against air raids, for which the former director of the Dutch Bureau for Conservation, Jan Kalf (1873-1954), had been a driving force in his new role as the Chief-Director of Art Inspection.14 One hundred specially designated buildings were given technical protection against fire risks, including the Binnenhof and the adjacent Mauritshuis.

When the German troops invaded the Netherlands by surprise in the early morning of 10 May 1940, it was clear that all attempts at international peace-keeping had failed. The government abandoned its policy of neutrality and the Dutch joined the Allies. In what was known as the Battle of the Residence, much resistance had been offered and the city of The Hague had survived the attacks in a more or less good condition.
Residence in Wartime

Three days after the enemy offensive, Queen Wilhelmina and the ministers had sought exile in London, determined to keep a free Dutch government active against Nazi Germany, while most Dutch civil servants tried to continue their administrative work under German occupation. On 17 May 1940, General Winkelman had appointed Waterstaat engineer J.A. Ringers (1885-1965) the General Deputy of all reconstruction works in the Netherlands, ranging from the distribution of building materials to the rebuilding of destroyed bridges and towns and the restoration of provisionally listed monuments. Ringers was a good organiser who managed not only to establish a high degree of centralisation in the complicated and regionally diverse construction industry but also, secretly, to support underground activities against the Germans.15

According to the international rules of the Land Warfare Regulation, the Dutch authorities had to provide accommodations for the occupation forces, which claimed various Dutch government buildings for this purpose. Among these were some royal palaces and abandoned ministry buildings, all important historic monuments which were supposed to be respected. The Dutch Department of Government Buildings (RGD) had managed to save the empty parliament buildings from hostile occupation, as an act of cultural preservation and national pride. Nonetheless, the inauguration of Arthur Seyss-Inquart as Hitler’s Reichskommissar in the Netherlands took place, symbolically, in the ancient Knight’s Hall, the heart of the Binnenhof if not of the Dutch nation.16 Apart from this forced event, the department was able to keep some parts of the Binnenhof ensemble ‘free’ of unwanted intrusion by using them, among other purposes, for storing photographs and documentation of Dutch monuments. But it could not prevent some other parts having to house the German police and Seyss-Inquart and his staff moving into the stately Logement van Amsterdam, for which purpose he kicked out the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Because the Nazi regime was in favour of the so-called Greater German Culture, the heritage of the Dutch was considered a principal part of it, and deserved careful treatment. As an awkward side effect, restorations of Dutch monuments were welcomed by the German authorities and arguments for preservation were more or less accepted. Moreover, in 1941 the long-desired founding of the Dutch National Physical Planning Department was allowed to take place, with a Dutch staff, and settle in a historic monument along the Lange Voorhout between German neighbours. Yet, in the course of 1942 the German military powers decided to radically transform The Hague into a fortress against possible maritime attacks by the Allied Forces. Tens of thousands of inhabitants in the western districts near the North Sea were forced to move and their homes pulled down to make place for the Atlantic Wall. The seventeenth-century Boorhuis (where gun pipes were drilled) in The Hague Wood was removed for strategic reasons; the site for launching V1 and V2 rockets at England was built hidden in the park, and the whole green area was declared a Sperrgebiet. Finally, almost all public servants of the ministries were forced to leave The Hague and to continue their work at eight different ‘safer’ towns in the middle of the country, while being separated from their families and the other ministries. Only the new Ministry of National Information Service and Arts, which was forcibly installed to support Nazi propaganda, remained completely at The Hague, located in the so-called ‘White Palace’ of Wassenaer-Obdam, where the prime minister and his long

15 Yet, in 1943, he was arrested and finally brought to the prison camp St Michielsgestel, where he still could be consulted; see Siraa, Een miljoen woningen, 11-14 and 24-31; Bosma and Wagenaar, Een geruisloze doorbraak, 91-99.

16 Knippenberg and Ham, Een bron van aanhoudende zorg, 199.
small staff had been working for three years.

In 1944, the Allied Forces had begun their counterattacks on Dutch soil, tragically causing immense war damage, especially their air raids (Arnhem, Nijmegen, Groningen). On 3 March 1945, due to a fatal navigational error, a bombardment by the RAF did not hit the intended target, the strategic installations in The Hague Wood, but a large part of the adjacent Bezuidenhout district and Korte Voorhout. Two months later the war came to an end.

Even before the last disaster took place, architect Willem M. Dudok (1884-1974) had been approached on behalf of the municipality to draft a new urban plan for The Hague. In fact, this request was a continuation of his pre-war involvement in town planning for the residence, since Dudok, though living and working in Hilversum, had become Berlage’s successor after he had died in 1934.

The devastations by the ‘error bombing’ increased the urgency of developing a quick but coherent reconstruction programme, which also offered opportunities to solve the old problems of traffic jams and the dispersed, underdeveloped State offices.

**Dudok’s Dream of a New Government Centre**

After the liberation in May 1945, the Dutch government and the public servants wished to return to the historical residence immediately, even if it was amidst ruins and in provisional accommodation. Everyone wanted to forget the painful years of war, occupation and exile and to rebuild the devastated country for a better future - in freedom. Although The Hague had always had an ambiguous attitude towards power, history and modernity, all agreed that the
parliament should resume its seat at the Binnenhof and that the post-war reconstruction would require central co-ordination and speed. Never before, except under the French and German occupations, had there been such a high degree of centralised policy and concentration of state power in the long history of the Netherlands. Although the ministries were quickly expanding in terms of tasks and personnel (about a five-fold increase), not much money or space was available for representative state buildings. Temporary solutions, like rented spaces in former ‘living hotels’ or hutted camps, had to suffice. The first priority was to restore the infrastructure and industry and to overcome the shortage of building materials and housing for the rapidly growing population. The second priority was to compensate the deprived owners of the devastated buildings and to stimulate the execution of existing urban renewal plans. Restoration of historic monuments was also financially supported by the State, but to a very small extent, not to speak of the slow progress in the legislation of protection.

The municipalities remained the parties primarily responsible for the urban reconstruction and development plans, controlled by the provinces and financially aided by the Ministry of Reconstruction. The Hague’s re-appointed Mayor S.J.R. de Monchy (1880-1961) engaged Dudok to draft both the general schemes for the entire town and the detailed reconstruction plans for its devastated areas. In the municipal brochure Twee herbouwplannen voor 's-Gravenhage (1946) [20.2], he proclaimed Dudok an architect and urban planner of European ‘stature’, whose task was not only to draft a plan for proper rebuilding, but also to make a full extension plan. Moreover, interventions were allowed in the already existing areas. One of Dudok’s ideas was to create a new ‘Government Centre’ in the run-down Spui district and to insert a totally new infrastructure for motorised traffic and rail transport with a subterranean railway station.17 [20.5] Dudok may have been familiar with the wartime study designs by the local architect A.H. Wegerif (1888-1963) for a radical urban renewal in the Spui district, but these were primarily meant to allocate business offices, department stores and the headquarters of the police.18 The idea of a new, or rather extended, Government Centre came up with the support of Ringers, then Minister of Reconstruction, and the government architects J.C.E. van Lynden (1887-1946) and G.C. Bremer (1880-1949), who gave exact figures of the required office space. The first sketches, meant as suggestions, were already completed in November 1945. They revealed five monumental ministries - some with a ‘gate’ underneath the higher levels - grouped around an impressive ‘turbine’ square, with a prominent position for the Ministry of


17 Dudok, Twee Herbouwplannen voor 's-Gravenhage, 1, 6-17.
18 Drawings of this private project, made for the Stichting Saneering Binnenstad (Foundation Redevelopment Inner City) in 1941, are in Wegerif’s archives at the Nederlands Architectuurn Instituut, Rotterdam. Some drawings had been exhibited, together with the audacious urban renewal project by H. Rosse and J. Wils (Den Haag bouwt op, op. 42). A map is published in Van Gelder, 's-Gravenhage, 91.
Education, Arts and Culture. As Dudok saw it, the new centre had to fit in harmoniously with the ‘good fragments’ (sic) of the old Hague, specifically with the Plein and Binnenhof. Drawings and explanatory texts indicated, though implicitly, that the new ministries should not be built too high in order not to overshadow the historic government centre. Yet they should have a certain allure, brought about by plasticity and sculptural decorations. Such contemporary monumentality in architecture was in line with Bremer’s previous creations, the restyled Supreme Court at the Plein and the Limburg provincial government’s building at Maastricht of the late 1930s, and also with the vision of G.W. Friedhoff (1892-1970), who was already involved in the extension of the Ministry of Warfare at the Kalvermarkt and would be appointed as the Chief Government Architect in 1946.

Dudok had chosen a location between Spui and Zwarteweg for the new ‘Plein 1945’ because of the vicinity of the Staatspoor station and the neo-Classicist building of Arts and Sciences, which he regarded as a stimulating starting point for the long-awaited urban renewal. On top of that he mentioned the economic advantage that the estimated costs of expropriation were rather low; the old buildings that had to be removed were, in accordance with the pre-war assignment, only ‘slums’, although inhabited and picturesque. According to the standards of the time, only the New Church and the Arts and Sciences building deserved to be preserved, and Dudok had carefully planned their restorations.

Besides this brochure, the morale-boosting exhibition ‘The Hague Rebuilds’, held in the Municipal Museum during December 1946 and January 1947, was perhaps one of the first initiatives to inform the people about the urban reconstruction plans and to make the rebuilding a more ‘democratic’ affair. This occasion provided a platform for public architectural debates about Dudok’s ideas, which were soon extended to the professional and mass media. His plans for a new government centre received approval from the local authorities. But the project was seriously criticised by the prime minister, the social democrat Willem Drees (1886-1988), who was not in favour of high investments for housing the government and, just like preservationist Jan Kalf, opposed to any monumental competition between old and new seats of government. Both wanted to conserve the historic, rather modest cityscape of the Binnenhof and its surroundings. Instead, Kalf suggested spreading any new government buildings around in order to preserve the Binnenhof as the principal government seat and to concentrate new cultural facilities in the same monumental way around Dudok’s new square.

---

19 Dudok, “Herbouwplan Bezuidenhout en Spui-plan”.
20 Although Dudok’s plans had been displayed in the largest room, the initiative for the exhibition came from the young, modernist architect W.S. van den Erve. After a historic overview of the urban development, the exhibition was organised according to the functional model of ‘Traffic-Working-Recreation and Living’. All visitors were requested to give their opinion by completing questionnaires (Den Haag bouwt op, 7-43).
houses, only a certain scepticism about its feasibility, because of the administrative, financial and social implications of re-accommodating the local inhabitants. In those days the members of the Provisional Council on Monuments, including Bremer, Friedhoff and Oud, were mainly concerned about the restoration of the major monuments, which was already complicated enough.

Dudok received public support from his Rotterdam colleagues Oud and H.M. Kraayvanger (1903-1981), who criticised the imputed antagonism between survey and creative vision. He had serious doubts about the predictability of the long-term future and, mentioning that not a single planner in Rotterdam had anticipated the baby boom, asked who could foresee the influence of the situation in Germany and Indonesia on the nation’s prosperity. He considered “the almost idolatrous veneration of statistical material and the pretensions of economic planners who mean […] with exact figures to force our daily life in the year 2000 into certain forms” as dubious. “A city can just be a ‘beautiful’ city if it reflects the appropriate hierarchy of values of human life. Buildings for the public and the government - representing spiritual and secular authority - come in the first place, next buildings for cultural and social purposes and finally those buildings where economic life takes place. Such an ‘aristocratic’ view of our culture implies neither an overestimation of the spiritual life nor a disdain of the great social significance of a neighbourhood.” Kraayvanger gave Dudok full credit for demonstrating the ‘third’ dimension in his urban plans, which, to his regret, was lacking in the functionalist basis plan for the rebuilding of Rotterdam. He concluded with a plea for a better collaboration between architects and urban planners in order to achieve “the city as a totality, a work of art”.

Rather than to strive for a beautiful city, most architects and urban planners preferred a totally different functionalist approach to the general regeneration of The Hague. Their criticism of Dudok’s plans concentrated on four aspects: the spatial separation of the ‘Government Centre’ and a new ‘Cultural Centre’ (near the museum), the lack of detailed survey material, the infrastructural works proposed, and the kind of architecture recommended. Dudok, still respected for his previous work, was not one of the angry young men from The Hague (or Rotterdam) and he was convinced of his holistic approach. But his opponents continued to express their objections and to come up with ‘counter-plans’ for his overall city plan. Even during the war, five of them had developed the visionary ‘Plan 2000’ and exhibited it as an ideal scenario for future urban development in the next half of the century, responding to the forecast of an explosive growth in population, motorised

20.7 Overview of the filled in Ammunitiehaven, between Spui and Zwarteweg, in June 1931.
[Amersfoort, Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed / Photograph: J.P.A. Antonietti]

22 For the original quotes: Oud, “Vorm en vrijheid”, 5; Kraayvanger, “De wederopbouwplannen voor ’s-Gravenhage".
Remarkably, this plan was promoted under the subtitle ‘The growth of a harmoniously built up town’. The adoption of the term ‘harmonious’ was rather confusing, for it was related to the open-ended urban planning type of Cor van Eesteren’s General Extension Plan for Amsterdam and not to Dudok’s idea of an aesthetically coherent cityscape. What was proposed, a dense network of new traffic routes and the rebuilding and building ‘upwards’ of most living quarters, was too radical and too costly to be accepted (especially because of all the expropriation and new investments necessary for filling in canals and infrastructure) but it exerted a great influence on the conceptualisation of future urban developments, in particular on the young staff of the municipal Department for Urban Development.23

Despite a consensus that the Dutch national administration deserved a ‘dignified’ architecture, the interpretation of the consequences differed and led to fundamental controversies about the primacy of form or function and the separation or integration of urbanism and architecture. In an open letter to the local authorities, five local architects used the same argument of waardigheid (dignity) to oppose the Government Centre proposed by Dudok and Friedhoff in favour of their new ministry buildings. In their opinion, the planned Government Square should not constitute a link in a principal traffic route; it would be overcrowded if 10,000 civil servants were streaming in and out the ministries four times a day. Dudok’s idea of providing the ministries on the first floor with shops, restaurants and travel agencies, in order to keep the area ‘lively’ during and after office hours, would not be in keeping with the dignity to be looked for in the Residence.24

Modern architects seldom showed any concern about dignity. Why did they in this case? To beat Dudok with his own arguments? Because the proposed multifunctional use of public space did not comply with the CIAM city model of separated functions? In any case, it is remarkable that both parties were in favour of a new government centre and that they both mentioned ‘dignity’ as a standard for the representation of State in this context. They did not specify what this notion - also often used with regard to historic buildings and monuments - precisely meant to them. Apparently it was not the same; presumably they had different models in mind as a point of reference. Dudok and

---


---


24 Raad van Vijf, “Open brief”.

The Raad van Vijf (Council of Five) consisted of The Hague architects C. Abspoeel, M.J. Luthmann, D. Roosenburg, R.R. de Vries and A.H. Wegerif (Van der Sluijs, Haagse stedebouw, 65).
Friedhoff regarded the State as a public body ‘standing high’ above the people, as the Dutch term overheid literally means. They associated dignity with authority and solemnity, to be expressed in each government building. Thinking primarily along aesthetic lines, they were focusing mostly on forms, materials and applied arts, though not without interest in practical aspects such as maintenance and circulation. Moreover, they strove for a contemporary, and not at all neo-Classical, architecture. Their opponents preferred a rather technocratic and analytical approach, stressing the importance of functionality, traffic and statistical data. They were mainly interested in the urban setting, especially how to facilitate accessibility for large numbers of cars, and in a typical modernist architectural vocabulary.

While the debates and negotiations went on, suddenly the government intervened in January 1949. Led by the new Minister of Reconstruction and Housing, a delegation had inspected Dudok’s model for the rebuilding of the Bezuidenhout-Spui district and concluded that Kalf’s idea of dispersing the expected new ministries would be more ‘attractive’, even if Dudok had initially been commissioned to make a design for an extended government centre. From then on, the new square would be reserved for cultural purposes and the projected street and setback lines would be continued as the ‘blueprint’ for urban renewal. Meanwhile, Dudok encountered more and more difficulties with various authorities, as well as the local architects, about his ideas. Remarkably, it was on the annual Monuments Day held on 25 May 1951 at ’s-Hertogenbosch that he expressed his anger in a lecture about the rationality of the monumental in town planning. He sharply criticised the “ellendige vervlakking” (awful superficiality) which had intruded into the regions of government and the shortcomings of the ever-more-complicated bureaucracy and democracy in relation to cultural and artistic judgement. Bitterly disappointed, he asked the local authorities’ permission to resign his commission, which was done the next summer. Nevertheless, at the municipality’s request, he kept an advisory role on principal urban planning matters in The Hague.

Ministries as Manifestations of Cultural Education

Friedhoff, the new Government Architect-in-Chief and Director of the Rijksgebouwendienst (RGD), could not wait until the negotiations between municipality, province, State and railway company yielded decisions about Dudok’s reconstruction plan. The state administration, swelled to bursting and by then dispersed over more than 500 buildings, urgently needed improvement and space. The provisional accommodation was, in his opinion, unworthy of the restored democracy. He foresaw, rightly, that the national governmental tasks would be much larger and much more permanent than had been the case before the war. Pragmatically, he searched for available sites within Dudok’s urban framework.

One was the state-owned empty lot that remained from the Cannon Foundry at the Nieuwe Uitleg/Kanonstraat, destroyed in the bombing of 3 March 1945. This robust Dutch Classicist building, most recently in use as the Military Academy and Navy Academy, was originally designed by Pieter Post in 1665-1668 and was a provisionally listed monument. The back of the foundry site proper, however, had been replaced in 1916 by a new six-storey building facing the Prinsessegracht to accommodate the Topographical Department (TD) and its damage could be repaired quite easily. Too little was left of Post’s main building to
justify a complete reconstruction. That would have been against the principles of restoration, reconstruction and repair, as issued in 1917 by Kalf on behalf of the Nederlandsche Oudheidkundige Bond. These principles, containing the old adage “conservation before renovation” and stating that contemporary (modern) additions were preferable to reconstructions of the historic forms, were reaffirmed by the Provisional State Council on Monuments after fierce internal debates.28

So, as Friedhoff commented, his task of designing a new ministry as an extension of the rational TD block was even more unattractive from a ‘liberal arts’ point of view, because the site was bounded on all sides by a very fragmented environment: an intimate small canal, a narrow street with historic buildings, a cleared district of the town and the wide field of the Malieveld. Typical of the post-war priorities, the new ministry was meant for Education, Arts and Sciences (OKW) and thus formed an excellent showcase for Friedhoff’s outspoken ideas about the representation of State and its role as a promoter of arts: “if the government is the representative of the people, it certainly has to make use of the knowledge and skill of this people. And not only at technical, industrial or commercial level, but certainly also including the arts, whose endowments and talents should not wither like seed scattered on rocky soil.”29

Each government building could act as a model of ‘good patronage’ for architecture and applied arts, as a Gesamtkunstwerk of contemporary culture. Nonetheless, he planned to integrate the two surviving pieces that had decorated Post’s foundry, the sculptured gate frame at the Kanonstraat and the impressive coat of arms with the motto vigilate deo confidentes at the main façade of the former office building, in the new ministry as a reminder of the vanished monument. Such a re-application of authentic fragments was a rather common practice in the Netherlands and not in conflict with restoration principles. Friedhoff had

28 Kalf, Grondbeginselen en voor-schriften; Tillema, Schetsen uit de geschiedenis van de monumentenzorg, 474-475.
29 The RGD had already received the commission in February 1946. For the original quote: Friedhoff, “Uitbreiding Departement van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen”, 404 and 406.
preferred to keep the fragments at their historical site, albeit mounted on a new building, but the Ministry of Warfare claimed them as its own heritage property and wanted these typical military decorations to be part of its own extension at the Kalvermarkt. Since Friedhoff was also involved in that project, he was able to adapt his design to this special condition and to use the resubmission as a pretext for claiming a substantial budget for new 'decorative furnishing' of the government buildings (see below).

Meanwhile, Friedhoff made great efforts, together with his assistant Mart Bolten, to create a government building worthy of the Arts. They sought to realise the 'maximum content acceptable with regard to the given urban context' and a coherent ensemble with the existing building. The result was a four-storeyed front block under a rather low hipped roof on the Nieuwe Uitleg [20.11], linked with the TD block by two passages around an inner court, to which a new entrance was added at the Prinsesgracht and new decorations inside the hall. With its sturdy block form and chimneys on the roof corners, the representative volume recalled Post's lost front building by association, not as a replica. As a reference to the relocated coat of arms, the sculptor Albert Termote had made an impressive relief of a lion, fruit-bearing tree, storks and crown together with the building date MCMLIII, placed high in the central axis above the minister's room - with a small balcony - and the main arched entrance.

The double-height hall, almost a 'hall of state', was the major public space of the interior, well lit by the long window facing the court. [20.12] From top to bottom the decorations were intended to express human creativity and knowledge. Jaap Bouhuys (1902-1983) and Nel Klaassen (1906-1989) had designed the golden mosaic around the entrance door to the minister’s room, devoted to the main tasks of the ministry. Their iconography was very traditional:
the personification of the Arts centrally situated in the highest position, to the left Science, represented by a male professor in toga with book and bull, and to the right Education, symbolised by a female figure pointing to a child and carrying a candle. The ceiling in the minister’s room, painted by Eppo Doeve (1907-1981), had a Pegasus motif. Andries Copier (1901-1991), the glass artist of the Leerdam factory, made the conspicuous, fern-like chandeliers. These also hung in the adjacent assembly room (where, among others, the Provisional Council on Monuments used to have its meetings). The list of artists engaged, all Dutch, is rather long; most were well known and several had already been engaged by Bremer to redecorate Rose’s Supreme Court building at the Plein.³⁰ Thus, there was a kind of continuity in the artistic programme of State representation just before and after the war, in pursuit of a modern monumentality and high culture.

The State museums had also contributed to the ‘decorative furnishing’ by giving seventeenth- and eighteenth-century tapestries, clocks and paintings from their collections in loan. Friedhoff, however, hoped that these “valuable cultural manifestations from the past would gradually be replaced by contemporary works of art”.³¹ He preferred contemporary creativity based on a ‘high culture’ tradition but he was apparently not aware that his views on arts, architecture and State authority would soon become outdated. On the contrary, he was so convinced by the result that he promoted illustrated publications from the OKW and even had some photographs printed in colour, which was a technical novelty in 1953 and all the more remarkable if one realises that scarcity of paper and low budgets were a serious problem in those days. With all his stress on up-to-date values and sustainability for the future, Friedhoff failed to understand the radical spirit of renewal that had spread with the pre-war Modern Movement, wartime artists’ underground resistance and the upcoming new generation of artists, such as Karel Appel (1921-2006) and the COBRA group. They chose freedom and future, brightness and lightness as their main themes instead of dignity and authority, education and tradition.
The sturdy symmetrical volume of Friedhoff’s OKW ministry deliberately featured massive brick walls because they were typically Dutch and durable. But they formed a closed face like the historic town halls and palazzi. The gated entrance was situated at street level without a flight of steps, and gave access to the central hall, from where interested visitors could go upstairs to the library on the second floor. Although it was open for public viewing, it did not really make a welcoming gesture. In his well-considered review the critic J.P. Mieras (1888-1956), opening with a reference to Johan Huizinga’s *Waning of the Middle Ages* and the ‘false judgement’ in times of crisis, praised Friedhoff for his devotion and sincerity, trying to navigate between the loudly quarrelling camps of the traditionalists and modernists, although he was critical about the obtrusive space of the central hall and the ‘tapestry-like’ patterns of the brickwork. Mieras regarded the location of the mosaic as rather unpractical, because “everyone could pass it by over the gallery without noticing […] and the cleaning woman could dust the professor’s shoes”. He could hardly imagine a minister, who “entering his room in the morning, would greet, jovially and democratically, the mosaic figures with ‘Goeie mòge, lui’ (Mornin’ folks).” In his opinion, Byzantine wall mosaics inhibited people from looking at things comfortably, in contrast to wall paintings, which evoked sympathetic appreciation. He knew exactly how difficult it was to find the right balance between banality and frivolity for a ‘representative’ interior decoration in his time and he was positive about Friedhoff’s fine taste concerning the furniture. Finally he compared him with the astronomer Kapteyn, who worked throughout his life without a telescope: Friedhoff had made something rhapsodic out of the fragments, a nice composition of fine melodies.”

The Minister of Reconstruction and Housing at the time, the Roman Catholic H.B.J. Witte (1909-1973), referred in his ‘transfer’ speech to his colleague in Education, Arts and Sciences, J.L.M.Th. Cals (1914-1971), to contemporary architectural debates, stressing that there is ‘more than bread alone’, that the utility of an action cannot be the only norm for judgement, certainly not merely in the material sense. To the “prophets of usefulness and efficiency” he said that, in the end, “all benefit served to human happiness”. And Witte was happy with the new ministry building, for it was the first representative post-war government building and it had beauty and charm. It demonstrated “a self-conscious democracy of the Dutch people”. He hoped that “our children and grandchildren would not look down on the new government’s buildings which should last for centuries and they would not conclude that the creative powers of the Dutch people were miserable in the 20th century”. He too quoted Huizinga, hoping that “this heritage of ages, called Western culture, is entrusted to us to transfer it from our mortal hands to the next generations, saved, preserved, if possible enlarged and improved, if necessary diminished, but at any rate as completely as we can to our best capacity.”

Such solemn language and such high ideals for government and cultural heritage did not appeal to the next generations, as we will see. The only element that would endure was the so-called ‘percentage regulation’ for applied arts, which was introduced in 1951 after long debates within the government. This rule stipulated that about 1.5% of the total cost of an ‘important representative government building’ would be spent in engaging artists for the ‘decorative furnishing’ of it. From the start of post-war reconstruction, the government had the intention to give the - reinstalled - Department of


32 Mieras, “Uitbreiding Departement van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen”.

33 For the original quote: Witte, “Uitbreiding Departement van Onderwijs, Kunsten en Wetenschappen”, 409, 413.
Education, Arts and Sciences a central role in public education in order to overcome the moral crisis and to provide a common ideal for society. It is ironic that such an active and moralistic policy of cultural education was set on foot after the war, while during the German occupation the term Volksopvoeding, meaning the very same thing, had been applied to the remaining department of Education. But the goals were essentially different, not only with regard to the previous attempts of nazification but also concerning the use of the works of art. In fact, three aims were merged: to accentuate the representative character of the public building, to improve the economic position of the (poor) artists and their contacts with society and, last but not least, to prove to the future generations that "our generation, despite its material concerns, did not neglect the protection of cultural values". In the late 1940s and early 1950s such noble but rather paternalistic ideals were broadly supported by the authorities; 'spreading culture' for the sake of artistic enjoyment and cultural education was a typical ideal of the early reconstruction period.

The reality was, however, that budget and building sites remained scarce for new ministries. Even the necessary extension of the Ministry of Warfare raised financial problems, especially since the Netherlands had joined NATO in 1949. The first major extension at the Kalvermarkt, designed by naval architect Hayo Hoekstra (1881-1960) in 1939, has a peculiar story of its own, because the construction work continued during the war - even while the German commander-in-chief General Friedrich Christiansen and his staff had settled in the main building at the Plein - and was stopped when it was half finished, with a blind wall, in 1941. Hoekstra had projected a large building, for which previous minor buildings of unremarkable architecture were to be pulled down. After the war, the Minister of Finances did not agree to demolition as long as there were useable buildings in the devastated city. Moreover, Hoekstra’s projection no longer complied with Dudok’s street lines. Finally, Friedhoff had received permission to construct a new formal extension on both sides of Hoekstra’s part, in two phases (1950, 1953). He designed a monumental entrance, centrally located in the long, slightly curved façade, where for the first time he made use of the ‘percentage regulation’. The fronts of the different blocks were richly decorated with symbolic figures representing the glorious military past and reviving present.

The high concrete figures symbolise Vigilance, Peace, War and Protection, typical themes of the Royal Army. However much Friedhoff had disliked the transplantation of the salvaged historic fragments of Post’s Cannon Foundry, he incorporated them in a very delicate manner. The seventeenth-century coat of arms proudly crowns
the central axis, where on the top frieze
a well-known verse of the national hymn
Wilhelmus is chiselled in gilded letters: MIJN
SCHILT ENDE BETROUWEN SIJT GHIJ O GOTT
MIJN HEER (my shield and trust art Thou, my
Lord). Why precisely this verse was chosen
is not known; it was possibly to remind the
people of the national unity of ‘God, father-
land and the House of Orange’ but perhaps
simply because of the associative relation-
ship between ‘shield’ and the coat of arms
above. For the sculptured gateway from the
Kanonstraat he created a side-entrance at the
Bagijnestraat, where it still functions and per-
haps is best conserved. [20.14] To Friedhoff’s
regret, the intended minister’s room, care-
fully situated and designed in the new central
axis, was never used as such. In 1953, when
the extensions were complet-ed, the Minister
of Warfare, C. Staf (1905-1973), decided to
stay in his eighteenth-century working room
at the Plein as it was closer to the Binnenhof
and grander because of its long history and
authenticity dating back to the period of the
Logement of Rotterdam.35

Filling Gaps, Meeting Limits

Also in 1953, Friedhoff published a
‘suggestion for an extension of the govern-
ment buildings’ in the new magazine Forum
[20.15], hoping to realise his ambitious
building programme for the government
administration in a coherent manner, and as
a way out of the planning deadlock since the
rejection of Dudok’s plan for a government
centre. He proposed filling in the gaps at the
Korte and Lange Voorhout and half of the
Koekamp green. He defended this plan as a
good option for a harmonious development
from ‘inside’ to ‘outside’, from Binnenhof to
The Hague Wood, while opining that the
location of the Staatspoor station could be
made even more attractive by a ‘direct visual
link’. An alternative to Dudok’s proposal
was now on offer. Moreover, he suggested
making a grandiose entry to The Hague
by widening the 1st Van den Boschstraat,
where he had projected various state office
blocks. Although by then the Koekamp was
badly damaged, it did not stop the local
citizens raising opposition and successfully
defending the beautiful heart of The Hague
against building operations.36 Friedhoff’s
suggestion received support from the land-
scape architect J.T.P. Bijhouwer (1898-1974)
and it sparked another alternative plan,
designed by J.G.E. Luyt (1914-2000), one of
the makers of the Plan 2000. Luyt suggested
building five uniform ministry blocks, as a
‘pergola’ between the Malieveld-Koekamp
and the Wood. [20.16] Dudok, invited by the
local alderman to give his comments on the
two plans, pleaded once more to keep the
“mild atmosphere” so typical of The Hague.
He criticised “those parallelepipeds” which
were “indistinguishable from flat blocks” and

20.14 Relocaced gate of the former
Cannon Foundry at the Bagijnestraat
side of the Ministry of Warfare.
[Photograph by the author, 2004]
would harm the scale of the cityscape in the old city, while being, in his opinion, “too dull to be representative of government buildings”.

If Dudok had known just what kind of state office buildings Friedhoff was describing, he might have changed his opinion about the ‘representative’ character. Between 1952 and 1962 a large complex was built opposite the Ministry of Economic Affairs, as a massive cornerstone in the rebuilding of the Bezuidenhout quarter and another attempt to realise a concentration of government buildings. The idea was to provide administrative spaces for the ministries, irrespective of their functions (which was very much in accordance with the frequent organisational changes). During the construction work it was decided that two parts would be used by the Staff of the Air Force and one part would serve the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food Supply, for which purpose a tall ‘representative’ block was added.

It was Friedhoff’s last chance to create a grand ministry (for he had to retire as the Government Architect in 1957). Again he invited many artists for the decorations. Some of them were the same as for the other ministries, so some of the elements look familiar. This time the applied arts were also used for circulation in the immense complex of nine almost identical routes, to which the ‘national poet’ Adriaan Roland Holst (1888-1976) gave the names Confidence, Perseverance and Concord and wrote three special quatrains. The result is a remarkable exhibition of the typical figurative art of the 1950s related to the main tasks of defending the country by air, and feeding it from the earth. The best known of these is the ceiling painted by Maurits Escher with birds and fishes in black and white, but there are many more decorations which deserve attention.

The way in which Friedhoff managed the junction with the surviving eclectic houses at the Bezuidenhoutseweg is so subtle that it is hardly noticeable.

This first state office building, originally intended for 3500 public servants, made it clear that the post-war ministries really needed space and that, consequently, their scale would be disproportionate in the historic city, just as Dudok had noted. The huge size caused difficulties when designs were made to fill the gaps at the Korte Voorhout. Just as an exercise, the architectural department of the Haagse
Kunstkring (Arts Circle of The Hague) organised a kind of workshop. The sketches and models, none of which would be executed, show how different the opinions were about integrating old and new and showing respect for the historic skyline.39

Long before the area around the Binnenhof ensemble was officially designated as a protected cityscape (in 1971) with a very tightly drawn boundary line, the local authorities had already decided that all new buildings in the vicinity of this ancient ensemble should be limited in height in order not to disturb the historic skyline. This restriction had not been an obstacle for high-rise buildings of six to eight storeys, but it proved so when Friedhoff delivered a design for a new Ministry of Finance with a fourteen-story central volume on the sites of the ruined Boskant church and Bethlehem hospital, which had been too heavily damaged to be restored. The intention was to have a new Ministry of Justice to replace the destroyed Palace of Justice and prison, but the programme was too large to ‘fit’ given that the deprived owners of the adjacent sites were exercising their rights to erect new buildings or obtain compensation for their lost properties.40

In the final upshot, Friedhoff’s successor Jo Vegter (1906-1982), with his assistant Frank Sevenhuijsen (1916-1987), realised a large-scale five-storey Ministry of Finance on the other side (1965-1974), right next to the Royal Theatre. With its brutal concrete architecture and horizontal façades it deviated sharply from the surviving historic buildings as well as from Friedhoff’s government buildings. This ministry, the last to be designed by the Government Architect, expressed a basic change in the representation of the State: no longer solemn but businesslike, with no more references to the past, but radically modern. Building for the government was no longer limited exclusively to government architects. The practice of involving private architects and renting office spaces in private buildings, originating in an emergency situation, was then turned into a general policy. As a consequence, the representation of State by specific architecture was hardly an issue at all in the late 1960s. Together with the increasing state administration, the building of government offices had become mass production, for which modern building methods like the jack-block system were eagerly adopted.

The role of the Government Architect became primarily to select good architects and artists and to manage the RGD as a ‘broker’s, building and design office’ and as a partner in conservation when historic government buildings were concerned; moreover, the position became a rotating job lasting four years.41 At the same time the traditional stress on being representative and on dignity received serious criticism.

39 "Herbouw van het Haagsche Korte Voorhout". These projects had also been exhibited in the Municipal Museum (Den Haag bouwt op, 40-42).
41 For instance, the new office building for the Ministry of Navy had been commissioned by the RGD and was built by a private company at the corner of Torenstraat/Noordwal (1950-1955) and designed by A.N. Schippers and Co Brandes. See for the changing role of the RGD: Van der Peet and Steenmeijer, De Rijksbouwmeesters, 575-586.
The government was no longer to be an authority situated high above its citizens, housed in closed ‘public servants’ castles’ but would become more accessible to the public, more ‘democratic’. Transparency and service would become the new parameters for the ministries, along with efficiency and flexibility. The rectangular tower block in concrete and glass was the dominant model for all: modern and future-oriented. After the first post-war cabinet had started under the motto ‘recovery and renewal’, later policymakers only had interest in renewal, which promised a better future than the past. However, the projected radical interventions in the existing neighbourhoods to replace old houses with modern highways and tower blocks caused serious reactions from pressure groups advocating a new appreciation of the simple historic urban fabric as the heritage of ordinary people, also worth to be preserved.

While the gaps at the Korte Voorhout were gradually filled in by modernist architecture, the urban renewal in the Spui quarter stagnated. A private company had invited Pier Luigi Nervi (1891-1979) for an audacious plan to reconstruct the Houtmarkt and Turfmarkt area, but his proposal for a 140-metre-high tower was objected by local pressure groups because it would ‘dwarf’ the major monuments (Grote Kerk, Nieuwe Kerk, Binnenhof). In 1970, when the court set a new height limit for tower blocks of 70 m (half the height of Nervi’s tower), the project was finally cancelled. It was not the sky that was the limit; a limit was fixed to the skyline. Only that would prevent visual overshadowing of the historic Binnenhof ensemble, which was still in use by the Parliament and the Ministry for the Interior, despite strong pleas to modernise the government and its accommodation.

To summarize one of two long stories: it took seven years before an architectural competition was held, which was a fiasco because none of the 111 entries satisfied the jury’s judgement. The cartoon by J.F. de Knoop, published in the Haagsche Courant in 1970 at the beginning of the debates, imagined either the preservationist’s nightmare or the modern architect’s or consumer’s dreams. By then, the legislative protection of listed buildings and the historic cityscape of the Binnenhof as a conservation area had just begun. The adjacent Spui quarter was deliberately excluded from this protection; only the New Church was protected. The problem was that protection was regarded as defensive, while most investors wanted to create skyscrapers because they were modern and metropolitan and, hopefully, profitable.
From Post-war Reconstruction to Post-Modern Resident

Since the government had decided to spread the new ministries in 1949, the allocation of the expanding administration moved further away from the Binnenhof, step by step and in a very haphazard way. The planning process was hindered by stagnating negotiations about territories, land use, annexation, infrastructural works and finances. While the adjacent municipalities could offer new building sites for offices, industries and commuters, The Hague became involved in a process of decline and exodus. What had previously been inconceivable was going to happen: some ministries left the Residence. Symptomatically, the new Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Welfare was the first, in 1966; it moved into one of several identical tower blocks at Rijswijk. Meanwhile, the State managed to obtain some building sites in the Spui quarter and start the erection of three 70-m-high towers designed by Nervi’s ex-partners Lucas & Niemeyer.

The first was the so-called Transitorium (1967) on Muzenstraat, as a replacement for the municipal Arts and Sciences building that had been lost to fire. In both name and form the ‘transit office’ expressed the fundamental changes that had taken place in the accommodation of state administration; instead of catering to the needs of particular ministries, these offices were for unspecified departments that needed temporary office space. After the Transitorium came the almost identical ‘twins’ for the Ministries of the Interior and Justice (1974-78). At the same time the Ministry of Education and Sciences left Friedhoff’s creation and moved to a new complex in Zoetermeer.43

The decay of the Residence was countered in the 1980s, when some active young left-wing politicians, among them Adri Duivesteijn (*1950), were elected to the municipal board. One of their initiatives was to make a fresh start with the reconstruction of the Spui quarter, which hitherto had been a complete failure, beginning with a new town hall and a new cluster of cultural facilities and then advancing a coherent plan for the allocation of new ministry buildings. They understood that the city needed new élan and the return of the state administration to provide employment. Carel Weeber was commissioned to draft a plan for a new city forum and a block of social housing (which acquired the nickname of the ‘Black Madonna’). After an international competition, Richard Meier (*1934) received the commission to design the new town hall/library at the corner of Spui and Kalvermarkt (built 1985-1995). Both the replacement of recent buildings for ambitious large-scale projects and Meier’s involvement are characteristic of the cultural turn of the time: foreign architects of fame were welcomed by the local authorities because they would bring a highly visible international presence.44[20.20]

Just before this, the Government Architect Wim Quist (*1930) had organised a closed competition among three Dutch architects to overcome the fiasco of the open competition for the extension of the Houses of Parliament. The challenge was to design a suitable insertion in the historic Binnenhof ensemble without disturbing its sensitive scale or imitating historic architecture. Pi de Bruijn’s (*1942) ingenious solution was finally chosen, although his initial proposal for a high tower at the Buitenhof did not receive approval because it would have harmed the historic skyline. As a compromise, the press tower was lowered to 40 m, but to create more space and a transparent entry volume at the Plein, the Supreme Court had to be removed. Hardly any objection was made to this decision; since

---

43 The Ministry at Zoetermeer was designed by Philip Rossdorff: Van der Peet and Steenmeijer, De Rijksbouwmeesters, 594-599. Since 1965 the Arts Department had become part of the Ministry of Culture, Recreation and Social Welfare.

44 For the complicated building history: Freijser, Stad in Vorm; Van Rossem, Stadsbouwkunst.
previous criticisms of first Rose’s design (especially by Victor de Stuers) and then Bremer’s complete restyling (especially by the modernists) had prevented people from coming to a more objective re-evaluation of the building, it had been pulled down. Nonetheless, the principal works of art were relocated. Their totally different setting is illustrative of the changed attitudes to authority and cultural heritage. Rik Roland Holst’s figures of the greatest historic lawyers, with Hugo de Groot’s proverb UBI DEFICIUNT IUDICIA INCIPIT BELLUM, became located in Pi de Bruijn’s Schepel hall in a new arrangement by Lex Wechgelaar (°1936), while the six sculptures of Dutch lawyers have been displaced and put on lower pedestals in pairs facing each other in front of P.K.A. Penning’s modern extension for the Supreme Court at the Kazernestraat, behind the Huguetan House.45

Both Bremer’s architecture and Friedhoff’s ministries underwent the fashionable disapproval of their austere and ‘authoritarian’ character; they were not transparent, not open. In the ‘prevailing mood’ of urban renewal, therefore, there was a proposal to have the Ministry of Agriculture replaced, but this was blocked by the parliament for financial reasons (in 1987). It was the newly appointed Government Architect Kees Rijnboutt (°1939), formerly town architect of The Hague, who came up with the idea of new collaborations in order to break through the impasse. He introduced the concept of public-private partnership for major projects and also stimulated workshops for studying the allocation or re-allocation of the ministries in The Hague. One of the most conspicuous results is the execution of Rob Krier’s master plan for the Resident project to fill in the so-called LaVi plot (named after the Ministerie van Landbouw en Visserij (Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries)), that had been reserved by the planning office for a new ministry of Agriculture, with very high post-modern towers by selected architects of different nationalities. Krier’s Muzenplein differs fundamentally from

Dudok’s sketched Plein 1945, but it is located at the same spot.

The uninspired Transitorium block has now been transformed by ‘Disneyland’ architect Michael Graves (°1934) into the super Castalia tower (1993–1998) to house the Ministry of Public Health, Welfare and Sports, back from Rijswijk. The brick walls and two high-pitched roofs, inspired by Dutch traditional houses, have made the building immediately popular. The neighbouring Hoftoren, designed by Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates and now the seat of the returned Ministry of Education, Arts and Science, is much closer to the sky (142 m) despite the official height limits, and its carefully designed old headquarters by Friedhoff was mercilessly replaced in 1996. Since the Monuments Act of 1988 took effect, the municipality has a greater say in alterations than before, and moreover conservation has become a more ‘dynamic’ affair, focused on functioning heritage.

The super towers were regarded as acceptable, albeit not unanimously, in this case for their superb shapes, the more so because land prices had increased as an unintended outcome of gentrification and speculation, and most of all because these symbols of modernity could free The Hague from its old frustrations. At the Binnenhof one can play hide and seek with the new towers, which indeed create visual competition. More towers are under construction, for which the Black Madonna had been demolished to make room for them. These towers will be even higher than the Hoftoren. The new skyline reveals the mental shift in the Netherlands in favour of neo-liberal capitalism and radical changes. In retrospect, one can conclude that most objections against Dudok’s reconstruction plans for the Government Centre proved wrong. After sixty years, Dudok’s call for The Hague, as the court capital and international diplomatic centre, to foster higher ambitions, has been taken more literally and less respectfully of the built heritage than he had intended. But the regenerated Residence is proud of its new image.

46 The OKW, expanded in 1962 by an opposite volume at the Kanonstraat has been replaced by the ‘Artillerie’ office which has more ‘efficient’ square metres. Hellenberg Hubar and van Leeuwen, “Luctor et Emergo”; Van der Ploeg, “Friedhoffs ministerie van OKW wordt gesloopt”; Freijser, *Stad in Vorm*, A.28.1. The Hoftoren received the High-Rise Prize 2004 and a monograph: Groenendijk, *De Hoftoren*. 

20.20 Overview of the Kalvermarkt, left the extended Ministry of Warfare, middle the Hoftoren and Zürichtoren and right Richard Meier’s Townhall/Library. [Photograph by the author, 2004]
3.
HERITAGE, RECONSTRUCTION, PAST AND FUTURE /
PATRIMOINE, RECONSTRUCTION, LE PASSÉ ET LE FUTUR