The glorious city: monumentalism and public space in seventeenth-century Amsterdam

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Were the Netherlands a ring you, O city, would be the diamond stone
(Reinier Anslo, in a poem dedicated to the burgomasters of Amsterdam
on the occasion of the laying of the foundation stone in 1648)¹

Cities are concentrations of wealth and power. Fortified walls, fine decorated town halls, spacious squares with bustling markets impressed and still impress the visitor. In order to render the town an attractive residence for the rich and skilled, municipal governments strove to improve urban fronts and façades. This paper considers the attempts to present Amsterdam as a glorious city. Town planning, churches, secular public buildings and house façades are assessed as attempts to create an attractive city for the elite, skilled workers, scholars and artists alike. Following the structure of this volume, comparisons with Antwerp and London in their respective golden ages are to be found throughout the chapter.

Amsterdam had specific reasons to distinguish itself from its numerous urban neighbours. During the sixteenth century, the city was by no means the highest-ranking town of the urban network. Naval blockades checked the metropolis of Antwerp after 1585, but the possibility that it would recuperate lingered on. Dordrecht was still classified first in all urban political representations of the North. Neighbouring Haarlem and Leiden, both quite populous, were far stronger as industrial centres than Amsterdam.² The rising industries of the nearby rural Zaanstreek should not be ignored either. As for the sciences, Leiden gained a monopoly as

We are grateful to Ed Taverne and Charles van den Heuvel for their personal communications to the conferences of the Achievement Project. They were most helpful with suggestions for this paper as well. Further, I would like to thank Marten Jan Bok, Karel Davids, Penelope Gouk, Derek Keene, Piet Lombaerde, Marijke Spies and Herman van der Woude for their constructive comments.

¹ Quoted by Katharine Freamon, The Baroque Town Hall of Amsterdam (Utrecht, 1959), p. 5.

Holland's only university town. During the seventeenth century, moreover, other urban centres were on the rise: The Hague, with its departments of central government, and Rotterdam with its expanding trade. Furthermore, each of the eighteen constituent cities of Holland held an equal vote in the government of Holland. In the States General itself, Holland's vote was equal to that of each of the other six constituent provinces of the Dutch Republic. Amsterdam may have been an important city, but constitutionally the 2,000 inhabitants of nearby Purmerend enjoyed the same power.³

Still, within the setting of the federal republic that rose from the Revolt, Amsterdam's municipal autonomy was substantial. From the earliest beginnings, Amsterdam had always enjoyed more autonomy than most other urban centres. The governing body (numbering four burgomasters annually) was not elected by the city council, nor was it subject to approval by the sovereign as in most other cities, but was chosen by former burgomasters and magistrates. The elitist burgomasters, frequently re-elected, exercised a supreme power over city affairs. Their advisory board, the thirty-six-member city council, was elected by co-optation. As a result, outside interference with local politics was extremely low.⁴

In 1578, the municipality shifted in favour of the Revolt and the House of Orange, a move labelled the Alteration (Alteratie). Taking advantage of the Reformaation, the city government appropriated revenues from church properties. In addition, Amsterdam claimed specific privileges from the wording of the Alteration, which, among other things, allowed Catholic magistrates to remain in office and increased the city's control over church funds.⁵ Thereafter, Amsterdam soon achieved the position of the foremost financial and economic centre of the Northern Netherlands, partly at the expense of Antwerp.⁶

By the end of the sixteenth century, any visitor could tell that concentrated within this city was a significant portion of Europe's most wealthy families. Following the examples in Antwerp, 'the capital of the baroque', the Holland Renaissance style of building had come into full bloom with its leading architect Hendrick de Keyser, the Amsterdam town sculptor and stonemason. The houses were colourful and decorated with many ornaments such as cartouches, garlands and masks. Red brick with stone

⁵ J.F. van Beek Callooa, Onderzoek naar de rechtswaardigheid der geestelijke en kerkelijke goederen in Holland na de reformatie (Amsterdam, 1910), pp. 89–91, 145–6, 262–9.
⁶ See chapter 3 by C.H. Lesger in this volume.
bands and quoins dominated. Foreigners praised the joyous elegance and luxury of merchant houses and archways. Cloisters, chapels and other religious structures abounded.7

Following the Alteration, several Roman Catholic structures were converted for new and public purposes. Convents, monasteries and chapels were transformed into orphanages, almshouses, hospitals, an old men’s home, a customs house and workshops for new industries of immigrant entrepreneurs.8 A comparable change in the use of religious buildings occurred in Antwerp, during its Calvinist period. Moreover, in both Amsterdam and Antwerp some church land was employed to improve connections to the inner city.9

However, Amsterdam’s works and buildings were still modest. Within the fortifications, which partly dated from the 1480s, houses and workshops jostled for space. The town hall was housed in an unassertive building at the Dam, the central but cramped market square. The whole aspect of the town was essentially small in scale. Extensions were deemed necessary, not least because of the rapid increase in the number of inhabitants, following massive immigration in the 1580s.

The Alteration of 1578 allowed for a major enlargement of the city in the direction of the harbour area to the east, the Lastage. The inclusion of this area had long been a subject for debate: the wharves and industries there were unprotected from enemy attack. For a long time the burgomasters were reluctant to include in the city the illegal housing and trading activities of this district. Several of the newly elected councillors in the city government, many of whom had interests in the area, now voted for a solution to this pressing problem.10 In the 1590s, the extension was enlarged, allowing for the application of a strict geometrical plan, inspired by the erudite burgomaster Mr Willem Baerdesen among others. Streets were wider than before and bridges were improved. With these plans, industry, in particular shipbuilding, obtained a secure site in a well-ordered neighbourhood within the city.11

10 Taverne, In ‘t land, p. 130. The reluctance of the City authorities to include this new neighbourhood could be compared to the city of London’s refusal to incorporate its suburbs: T.F. Reidaway, The Rebuilding of London after the Great Fire (London, 1943), p. 44.

In this extension, Amsterdam built on planning innovations already accomplished in Antwerp. In its utilitarian approach the project was comparable to those of the Antwerp entrepreneur Gilbert van Schoonbeke in 1549–52. Similar geometric schemes were employed in Antwerp planning during its Calvinist period in the 1580s.12 During the seventeenth century, the geometrical trend was apparent in other European cities, as in proposals for rebuilding London after the Great Fire.13

Finances and trade, in the meantime, lacked a permanent location. The merchants met at a specific spot in the open air, or in the event of rain in a church or chapel. In 1607, however, when it became clear that Antwerp would remain blockaded and that the leaders of the financial community expected to stay in Amsterdam, the city council decided to erect a bourse next to the central Dam Square. Houses were torn down in order to allow for a worthy entrance on all sides. Hendrick de Keyser modelled the structure on the Royal Exchange of London, which, in turn, had been closely modelled upon Antwerp’s Bourse of 1531–2. The Bourse symbolized the new status of the city as a leading international centre for finance and trade.14

The location was well chosen, as the inner city constituted the social and economic hub.15 Many stores for luxury products, such as booksellers and art dealers, were located there. Within a minute’s walk of the Town Hall (which housed the famous Bank of Exchange) were the Bourse, the Corn Exchange, the Weigh-house, several market-places and a multitude of shipping connections. No more than five or ten minutes away, one could meet renowned painters and other artists in their workshops, get a drink at the Doelen (the inns of the militia with shooting ranges, where performances were staged too), go out shopping for maps or curiosities, visit the (public) theatre or look up some books in the public library. As well as being the centre for information exchange, the Dam was the site for major festivities, including the annual parades of the militia. These colourful processions, accompanied by music and
military shows, presented an idealized image of the past, of urban independence and of internal harmony. In the other cities of Holland these annual processions lasted just one day, but in Amsterdam they extended over several Sundays.  

Even when the Bourse had been completed (1611), Amsterdam remained a city of small scale. New opportunities were created with the comprehensive enlargement of 1613. Basic economic needs were met by the creation of another harbour district, now to the west of the city, and by the construction of living quarters for the middle and lower classes (the Jordaan) to relieve the population pressure in the old town. In addition to these traditional devices for housing and industry, a new exclusive inner area was designated for the elite: the grachtengordel (the canal girdle).

Whether or not the canal girdle was the result of an ambitious plan from the start has become the subject of debate. One point is certain: there was no single concept for the whole city. The new ring of fortifications was designed first and the plan for the land contained within them was considered separately. The new bulwarks showed parallels with the ideal models of Vitruvius and Speckle, and their concentric shape was regarded as highly advantageous. Within, the new street system was laid out in a strict geometric style. In sharp contrast to the Jordaan extension, the area of the canal girdle was evidently intended as something special. First, the three main canals forming the girdle ignored all existing property boundaries. Secondly, the building lots were larger than in the old city and were sold subject to covenants intended to promote the construction of impressive residences. Thirdly, the neighbourhood was planned as a residential area, which constituted something new as hitherto most merchant residences had incorporated warehouses. Fourthly, the area itself displayed a hierarchy: the innermost canal was to house the leaders of the upper class, the second canal was for the upper middle


18 Bakker, 'De stadstuig', p. 88; Casper van der Hoeven and Jos Louwe, Amsterdam als stedelijk bouwwerk (Nijmegen, 1985), p. 56.
class, whereas the third canal was allowed some business or storage. This unique area provided accommodation for the new class of magistrates and directors of trading/banking houses, allowing them to live in a style representative of their status.

The whole extension proved extremely costly, resulting in a first peak in Amsterdam's expenditure on public works after the Lastage project during the 1610s (see figure 6.1). Profiteering in land values added significantly to the expense. Among others, the burgomasters Oetgens and Cromhout had bought parcels needed for the extension, which they then sold to the city, enriching themselves out of public funds. Still, the canal grid represented Amsterdam's first step on its route to a more monumental appearance.

Specific arrangements were made for new churches. Around the Oude Kerk and the Nieuwe Kerk in the centre, six Protestant churches were to emerge in a circle: Zuiderkerk, Oosterkerk, Noorderkerk, Westerkerk, Eliaardskerk and Amstelkerk. The Noorderkerk (1620–3), with a pulpit that could be seen from all corners, was a specific Dutch innovation in the most advanced Calvinist style, and for several decades the Westerkerk (1620–31) was actually the largest Protestant church to have been built in Europe.

A further step is represented by the adoption of a new Palladian style for both public and private building. A fine example of this development is the Coymans House (1625), a double house for the prosperous merchant brothers Balthasar and Johan Coymans (see figure 6.2). Its architect, Jacob van Campen (1596–1657), almost immediately became widely known. In his design, he followed the classicist models of the Italian Renaissance architects Andrea Palladio and Vincenzo Scamozzi.

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19 On the first two canals, moreover, the building lots were not to be subdivided, whereas this was allowed occasionally for the third one. Tavern, In 't land, pp. 152–4. The major canals were lined with trees and were regarded as an embellishment of the town; a disadvantage, however, was the smell, particularly in a warm summer.

20 Public works are defined here as the expenditure of the Fabriek, which entailed the maintenance of public buildings, streets and bridges, fortifications and the like. On the organization and workings of the Fabriek, see the introduction to H.W. Werkmans, Inventaris van het archief van het stadsfabriekambt (Amsterdam, 1991). The figures, in three-year moving averages, are derived from the data of Hubert Nusteling, Wervoer en werkgelegenheid in Amsterdam 1540–1860 (Amsterdam, 1985), p. 260.

21 See the embitterment expressed by Hooft, one of the more virtuous burgomasters: H.A. Enno van Gelder, De levensbeschouwing van Cornelis Pieterszoon Hooft, burgemeester van Amsterdam 1547–1625 (Utrecht, 1982), pp. 13–14. Earlier extensions had not been free from speculation either. Tavern, In 't land, p. 128.

22 W. Kuyper, Dutch Classicist Architecture. Gardens and Anglo-Dutch Architectural Relations from 1625 to 1700 (Delft, 1980), pp. 10, 205; van der Hoeven and Louwe, Amsterdam als stedelijke bouwloc, p. 69.

23 However, another building in Amsterdam could actually claim the position of the first truly Palladian structure in the Netherlands: the Zeerect, a watch-house for soldiers.
The design was symmetric and monochrome and had clear ratios, the length of the façade being twice the height and so on. In its sobriety, the Coymans House was revolutionary. Instead of a traditional gable, the roof was rectilinear.24

The style, in particular concerning the orders of the columns and the frontons above the windows, was remarkably similar to that of the Banqueting House in London (1619–22), designed by Inigo Jones, with which van Campen may have been familiar. Jones constructed several buildings in a Palladian style, far ahead of his time in Britain. His exemplary work, based on ideals of symmetry, harmony and proportion, had to wait until the second half of the century before it was followed on a wide scale by other British architects.25

The impact of the Coymans House upon Dutch architecture, however, was more immediate and widespread. Its characteristics became the new standard for Dutch building. The pace was set for a new architecture which developed rapidly, stimulated by the building booms following the extensions, which were to last until around 1670.26 One of the most famous architects was Philips Vingboons (1607–78), the versatile Amsterdam artist, who had worked probably as a draughtsman for van Campen. Like van Campen, Vingboons was both painter and architect, which was regarded as an ideal combination.27 Vingboons’ books, which entailed adaptations of the Palladian ideal for narrow frontages (columns, for example, require a wide front to be effective), became widely known. Not only did he take care of the exterior, but the interior also received significant enhancement. His replacement of the entrance-hall by a corridor

footnote 23 (cont.)
30 This is Dutch classicism, the Dutch interpretation of antique and Palladian examples. The standard was furthered by the publication of Architecture Moderna (1631) by the painter/architect Salomon de Bray, which was widely used as a pattern book, not only in the Netherlands, but also in England and the German territories. The Coymans House stood therein as the ideal construction. Koen Ottenheim and Quentin Buelot, ‘Historiografie en mythevorming’ in Huusken et al., Jacob van Campen, p. 13.
31 He belonged to a famous family of painters, map-makers and architects, around whom a whole circuit of merchants, publishers, learned men and artists converged, e.g. Blaeu and Hondius. Koen Ottenheim, Philips Vingboons (1607–1678), architect (Zutphen, 1989), p. 16. On the crucial role of publishers, see chapter 12 by Paul Hoftijzer in this volume.
33 Ottenheim, Vingboons, pp. 35–41. Huydecoper was a lover of architecture himself. He also subsidized a variety of painters and poets.
34 H.E. van Gelder, ‘Groenewegen in een natuur’ (Amsterdam, 1937), p. 130. The other elite neighbourhoods of The Hague, around the Voorhout and the Puvelen Burgwal, were interspersed with smaller houses too.
to the public), and the laying out of the Botanical Garden in 1638.33 Last but certainly not least, plans were drafted for new public buildings.

The burgomasters adapted the Palladian style for their schemes. One of the first institutions to be significantly upgraded was the girls’ orphanage (1634), for which van Campen was commissioned. The enlargement included an inner court with a giant Ionic order. The evenly spaced pillars radiated a cool, abstract atmosphere. Van Campen also designed one of the city gates, the Heiligewegpoort, in a monumental classicist style (1636).34

The public theatre, partly a continuation of the Chambers of Rhetoric which had been united in 1632, obtained a new building in 1637, again by van Campen. The new structure promoted further professionalization and the theatre’s repertoire was significantly extended in the following years. Drama especially flourished by comparison with other Dutch cities, and most of the Dutch plays which survive today were written by Amsterdam authors. Attempts in Rotterdam and Delft to establish public theatres faltered; only The Hague was adorned with a schouwburg from 1660.35 In 1664, the Amsterdam theatre was extended with a deep stage, designed by the brothers Philips and Justus Vingboons, so as to allow for a proper presentation of Salomon’s temple, hell, heaven, clouds, dragons, ‘aeroplanes’ or wagons for all sorts of gods, and other attractions.36 By comparison, Antwerp’s drama adhered for much longer to the semi-private tradition of the Chambers of Rhetoric. Yet while Amsterdam was outstanding in the Netherlands for its drama, London was far ahead of the Dutch (and actually of much of Europe) in this respect. London’s first permanent public theatre dated from 1576 and its repertoire was impressive.37

In musical performances London also rose high above Amsterdam. In this respect, Antwerp clearly outstripped its Northern rival too. Musical

33 See chapter 15 by Karel Davids in this volume.
34 Zantkuijl, Burenen in Amsterdam, pp. 267, 274.
35 The Chambers of Rhetoric had been open to the public since 1610 and Samuel Coster’s Academy had performed plays from 1617 to 1622. W.M.H. Hummelen, Amsterdam toneel in het begin van de Gouden Eeuw (The Hague, 1982), pp. 94–5; Mieke B. Smits-Veldt, Het Nederlandse renaissancetoneel (Utrecht, 1991), pp. 17, 22–3. The inauguration of 1638 was accompanied by Vondel’s play Giëbrecht van Amstel, which recalled the glorious past of Amsterdam’s beginnings. The presentation was an enormous success (in fact, it is still performed on a regular basis).
life in Amsterdam was restricted because the Calvinist church banned music during services, apart from chant. Despite the ban, lifted only in 1680, music could be heard in the church at regular times, the organists playing a variety of tunes to divert the people who were walking about. In fact, the organ was one of the city's proudest possessions. After a fire, the organ of the Nieuwe Kerk was rebuilt by van Campen and Quellien (see below). For the Oude Kerk, Amsterdam managed to hire the most famous composer of the Netherlands, Jan Pietersz. Sweelinck (1562–1621) as organist. During the intervals of drama performances, music was staged too. Further, every morning a company of musicians, paid by the city, performed music at the Dam. And although there were few public sites for the performance of art music, a flourishing domestic practice existed. Besides the regular music sessions of the collegia musica in the homes of wealthy merchants, music was to be heard at inns and taverns.36

Drama, poetry and music also found hospitality at the Doelen, the inns of the militia, which were frequented by magistrates and artists as well as by the militia captains. The Doelen were in use for the reception of official guests of the city too, at least up to the early 1650s. In the 1630s, the Kloveniersdoelen, the shooting-range of the arquebusiers, were significantly enlarged. As part of a general policy to improve the neighbourhood around this building, a rectangular structure was added, richly ornamented with columns and containing an immense hall measuring 9 by 18 metres.37 The existence of this new building allowed a new series of enormous portraits of the militia captains to be painted. In fact, no other city in Holland had militia paintings which were so numerous and so large.38 For lodging high-ranking foreign guests, a stately Heerenhuis was constructed in 1697.

In the meantime, the old Town Hall had grown too small for the many tasks of Amsterdam's government. The Gothic building, moreover, was regarded as unworthy of Amsterdam's new status as a leading economic centre. From 1639, several architects were asked to furnish designs for a new Town Hall. Van Campen's submission won.41 Its proportions were immense: in 1648, they were set at 280 by 200 feet, yet in practice the building became even larger. The final plan also involved a change of front. At first, the building had been oriented with the shorter side on the square, but a wide façade was regarded as more imposing.42 Not all burgomasters supported the plans for a new Town Hall. The religious-inspired opposition from the faction of Willem Backer, one of the more orthodox burgomasters, gained support in 1645 after a fire broke out in the Nieuwe Kerk, regarded by some as a 'token against Pompous Worldly Halls'. A compromise was reached: funds were to be provided for the Town Hall as well as for the reconstruction of the Nieuwe Kerk; the organ was to be reconstructed by the then famous duo of Van Campen and Quellien; the entrance of the church was to be directly from the Dam Square which would incorporate a reorientation of the Town Hall; the church would obtain a steeple that would stretch far above the Town Hall (see figure 6.4); and the size of the Town Hall itself was to be restricted. Eventually, however, the Town Hall became larger and the steeple of the church was never completed. Lack of funds in the 1660s, due to the later town extensions, prevented the fulfilment of the Nieuwe Kerk project.43

Work on the pilings began in 1648. The Town Hall that emerged was to be the largest in Europe. The exterior and the interior of the building made an overwhelming impression, as many contemporary descriptions and prints attest. Built up in a strict mathematical order, the hall resembled the Renaissance palaces of Rome and Florence in both style and scale. According to the famous Amsterdam poet Joost van den Vondel, it was 'an undeniable token of majesty and power'.44 The ornaments inside and outside stressed the superiority of Amsterdam over all other towns in Holland, and even over the whole world.45

41 Vingboons' design provided severe competition for van Campen. Both Vingboons and van Campen had excellent contacts with the Amsterdam government. Van Campen's father had been an Amsterdam merchant. Around 1640, van Campen stayed with his friend P.C. Hooft, the poet and son of the famous burgomaster C.P. Hooft; Hooft's brothers-in-law were Pieter Haislaer and Cornelis de Graeff, both the strongest advocates among the burgomasters for the new Town Hall. M.J. Bok, 'Familie, vrienden en opdrachtgevers' in Huisken et al., Jacob van Campen, pp. 28–31, 43–4.
43 J.P.L. de Balbian Venster, Burgemeesters van Amsterdam in de 17de en 18de eeuw (Zutphen, 1932), p. 46.
44 Quoted by Fremaute, The Baroque Town Hall, p. 35. The term palaest was already applied by that time, although it was a real palace only at the beginning of the nineteenth century. Marijke Spies, 'De maatschap van Van Campen: de stem van de literatuur' in Huisken et al., Jacob van Campen, p. 325.
45 Quentin Burelov, 'Ontwerpen voor gescilderde decoratieprogramma's' in Huisken et al., Jacob van Campen, p. 142. In response, The Hague tried to copy the monumentalism
The Dam Square in Amsterdam c.1662 with the Weigh-house in the foreground, the new Town Hall at the back and the Nieuwe Kerk to the right. The projected steeple was never completed. Engraving after Jacob van der Uilt; from Olert Dapper, *Historische beschrijving der stadt Amsterdam*, Amsterdam, 1663.

The correspondence to Antwerp’s Town Hall, built in the 1560s, is striking. Although not as large as Amsterdam’s hall, the wide front of Antwerp’s hall with its classicist pilasters dominated the central square in a similar fashion. In all, it constituted a comparable imposing symbol of urban pride. In contrast, London’s magnificent medieval Guildhall, which was partly destroyed by the Great Fire, was reconstructed rather than totally rebuilt. Although finely decorated it was less overpowering than the halls in Antwerp and Amsterdam, being set well back from the chief public spaces of the city. In Amsterdam, the central location on the Dam Square was preferred above a more spacious situation in one of the extensions. In order to create a setting worthy of the new building, the Dam was to be reconstructed in a classicist *sistemazione*. From 1639 on, houses in the neighbour hood of the old Town Hall were bought and pulled down. This operation involved considerable costs, rising to over 270,000 guilders annually in the 1640s. Wide streets were allowed behind and next to the building, an operation that constituted a considerable achievement indeed.

The Town Hall itself housed the functions of the city government in a well-considered symmetrical and hierarchical system. Most important for the concept of public space were the Citizens’ Hall and the *vierschaar*, the high court of justice where death sentences were pronounced. The latter, visible from the Dam Square, was lavishly decorated with marble sculptures, stressing the solemnity of the proceedings there. In the middle of the building, the immense Citizens’ Hall (36 by 18 metres and about 30 metres in height) was flanked by two inner courts. It was perfectly located as a crossroads for the imposing corridors leading to the separate offices. Such a majestic hall, employed among others for the reception of foreign guests, had been the express wish of the city’s magistrates. Its decorations, virtually all executed in marble, represented the universe, and included a depiction of the terrestrial hemispheres in coloured mosaic lines on the floor. Being open to the public, the hall became an important meeting point. Officials, merchants looking for the Bank of Exchange, and other visitors all strolled across it.

Throughout the building, a wealth of decoration ornamented the simplicity of the structural parts. References to the world of Antiquity and the Old Testament abounded. The most famous artists were hired for the work. The sculptures were created by Artus Quellien, the Antwerp artist (1609–1688), based upon rough outlines by van Campen. Antwerp had remained the outstanding centre for religious and decorative sculpture, and so the influence of Petrus Paulus Rubens, the family of the sculptor Colyns de Nole and François Duquesnoy echoed through Quellien’s work. Large paintings were added by famous Amsterdam artists: Rembrandt, Govaert Flinck and Ferdinand Bol, among others. Their work stressed Amsterdam’s ruling and legal authority, and a dominant theme was the virtue of the Roman magistrates, to whom the Amsterdam burgomasters loved to be compared.

Footnote 45 (cont.)

46 Holm Bevers, *Das Rathaus von Antwerpen (1561–1565)*, Architektur und Figurenprogramm (Hildesheim, 1985), pp. 19, 36; see also chapter 5 by Piet Lombaerde in this volume.

47 Figures from Gemeentearchief Amsterdam, Archief Thesaurieren Ordinarius 5039, Memoriaal. See also J.C. Beens, *Uit Amsterdam’s verbieden* (Amsterdam, 1934), pp. 78–82 for the details of this operation.


49 Eymert-Jan Gro sesso, ‘De rol van de beeldhouwkers’ in Husken et al., *Jacob van Campen*, p. 203. Quellien exerted a decisive impact upon sculpture in Amsterdam in general: Rombout Verhulst and Bartholomeus Eggers, for example, worked in his studio. Ottenheym, ‘Architectuur’, p. 196. See also chapter 5 by Piet Lombaerde in this volume.

official city descriptions of Amsterdam, dating from 1611 by Pontanus and from 1663 by Olphert Dapper.51 The paintings also showed the revolt of the Batavians, who according to Tacitus were the original inhabitants of the Netherlands, signifying the revolt of the Dutch against Spain. This theme was advanced in particular by burgomaster Cornelis de Graeff.52 Other burgomasters, too, showed a keen interest in the execution of the decorations. Many of them were well educated in classics, sciences, architecture and art.53 Poems also contributed to the glory of the Town Hall. They celebrated the intended schemes for the building, its inauguration or simply the coming of a new year for this splendid town. Poets also venerated the mathematical harmony of the Town Hall and the classical impact of Vitruvius upon it. In the building itself, many paintings were accompanied by verses explaining them. 'Architecture and Sculpture now [are] coupled to [the] brush [of painting]', stressed Thomas Asselin, the poet and playwright in 1654.54 The inauguration of the Town Hall in 1655 was grand, with festive dinners and extensive processions, even though the building was still far from complete.55

After the Town Hall was built, it became obvious that Amsterdam needed yet another major extension, and areas were assigned for the new shipyards of the admiralty and private companies. By the early 1660s, the city council had settled on the most appropriate system of fortifications, the completion of the semi-circular line (see figure 6.5). With these plans, the city gained so much territory that no further extensions were necessary until the second half of the nineteenth century. The administration of the new extension was superior to that of 1613. Building-lines were set, industries were allocated to certain areas and landowners were systematically dispossessed according to rules and prices set by the city government so as to prevent profiteering in land.56 The general lay-out of

52 Van de Waal, Drie eeuwen, pp. 219-23.
55 Even the roof had not been finished. In 1708, the last vault was painted. H.J. Koener, Voorlezingen over de geschiedenis der finantien van Amsterdam (Amsterdam, 1853), p. 24.
56 Tavernier, In ‘t land, p. 173.
Amsterdam was by Cornelis Danckaerts. de Jonge (who had cooperated regularly with Vingboons), in association with the city architect Daniël Stalpaert and the engineer Jan Heimansz Coeck. Famous fortification-builders were hired. The canal girdle was continued in the fashion of 1613, with a similar hierarchy. A totally new neighbourhood, the Plantage, was also planned, to be developed in the eighteenth century with fair avenues and gardens.

The plans allowed for new enormous (semi-)public buildings to be constructed. The city architect (also stockbroker) Daniël Stalpaert (1615-1676), formerly the overseer of van Campen's town hall, became famous for his huge edifices in a Dutch Palladian style. His house for the Admiralty of Amsterdam was a vast, imposing, block of 210 by 225 feet, with a regular and harmonious façade. In size, the building was superseded by Stalpaert's storehouse for the Amsterdam Chamber of the Dutch East India Company, which became the largest construction of the whole Republic. Stalpaert also extended the office for the Amsterdam Admiralty and erected some enormous almshouses with an austere appearance. By that time, the old Bourse De Keyser was in need of upgrading: Stalpaert converted it into a regular symmetrical structure of 124 by 250 feet, with giant Ionic orders.

Such large constructions had their precursors in Antwerp. Apart from Antwerp's Town Hall, which must have been impressive in the setting of the sixteenth century, the Antwerp trade centre of the 1560s for Hanse merchants was enormous, in dimensions comparable to Stalpaert's constructions. In London, however, it was not until several generations after the Great Fire that new forms of large-scale public buildings gave a new monumental aspect to the city.

Adding to the monumentality of Amsterdam's public buildings were the private constructions for the elite. Most famous was the double house designed by Justus Vingboons for the wealthy arms-dealers Trip. It recalled one of Palladio's palazzi. Smaller structures added to the monumental image too, as they were increasingly built in rows. At first, these designs were initiated by the municipal offices for poor relief, but private schemes followed. With uniform heights for windows and roofs, sometimes with the same roof cornice for several houses, the new streets and canals became truly impressive. An outstanding example was constituted by the newly built area around the Amstel of 1660-84. By comparison, London also applied stringent regulations in the reconstruction of the City after the Great Fire. With standard designs for housing, some parts of new-built London recalled the sober splendour of Amsterdam.

Late seventeenth-century Amsterdam presented a striking image of modernity and amenity. Mercantile interests were prominent: hundreds of tall ships filled the harbour and the city's trade and bustle remained impressive. Burgomasters and magistrates, some of whom were eminent scientists, promoted scientific, artistic and other improvements. Since the beginning of the century, foreign visitors had praised the number, management and cleanliness of the city's welfare institutions. Street life was notably civilized. Every fifteen minutes various tunes were played by several carillons. According to John Evelyn, 'the harmony and the time ... were the most exact and agreeable.' The clarity of their sound was outstanding, owing to the foundry for pure bells of François and Pierre Hemony. Originally from Lorraine, they had moved via Zutphen to Amsterdam in 1655, making the city famous for an advanced method of bell-casting. During the night, after 1669 the streets and canals were well lit by an unequalled system of street-lighting planned by the painter and engineer Jan van der Heyden (1637-1712). His 2,500 lanterns could be lit within 15 minutes. The lanterns allowed for a welcome extension of the public space for the hours after dusk. And, from the 1670s onwards, an improved drainage system, advanced by burgomaster Hudde, greatly reduced the smell of the canals during the summer.

The costs of the second large extension, however, came to exceed all previous operations. Public works regularly constituted the largest single item in Amsterdam's overall expenses. The new fortifications alone must have amounted to over 21 million guilders. The new Town Hall had been a costly operation as well: in the end, it totalled almost 8 million guilders. Amsterdam's economic progress and population growth had long permitted such excessive spending. Besides, more than Antwerp or London, the city was also in a position to levy and allocate funds without interference by a central government. But, with the contraction of the economy in the last quarter of the seventeenth century, to which costly wars with England and France were added, the ceiling was reached. As figure 6.1 demonstrates, during the 1650s up to the end of the 1670s, there was a

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58 Brene, 'Uit Amsterdam's verleden', p. 67; Zantkuil, Bewoners in Amsterdam, pp. 404, 410, 422.
59 As for monumentalism in London's financial district, realized in a cumulative process in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries; see Keene, 'The financial district', pp. 280, 284, 289.
63 Balsem, Het muziekkassen, p. 30.
64 Joh. C. Brene, 'Jan van der Heyden', Jaarboek Amsterdams 11 (1913), p. 44.
huge surge in expenses, which came to exceed by far any increase in the number of inhabitants. A thorough restructuring of the finances was undertaken in 1662, introducing a new system with double-entry bookkeeping in order to exert better control over the annual expenses. A general reform followed in the later 1670s. In the 1680s, the number of public works contracted, followed by an overall stagnation in building activity during the eighteenth century.

Despite the significant achievements in planning and architecture of the seventeenth century, the external public space was hampered by the absence of large thoroughfares, avenues and squares. As in Antwerp, no plazas were designed for ceremonial purposes, and statues and fountains were not yet part of the plans. The new squares of the extension of 1663 were assigned a strictly economic function as markets. Almost all were irregular in shape, often as left-overs after the house lots had been measured along the canals. The central square of Amsterdam, the Dam, wrestled throughout its history with one severe restriction: it was too small. No beautiful optical vistas were possible. Only the cupola on the roof of the Town Hall was a prominent landmark to be pinpointed by a visitor arriving from any direction. In Antwerp, a particular vista of the Town Hall was possible from the Kaasrui. Moreover, after the fire of 1576, similar façades for the Market Square were ordained by the city council, resulting in a monumental effect. In London after the Great Fire, Christopher Wren's proposals entailed wide streets and large open spaces. John Evelyn and Robert Hooke followed up with schemes for squares and vistas. In the end, because of the pressures of time and finance, London's medieval street-plan surfaced again, although many minor practical improvements and some significant new additions were made.

Yet, overall, Amsterdam had grown more monumental since the 1630s. Several visitors praised the solemnity of the structures: 'The buildings are stately and so uniform without, that a whole street seems but one contin-

65 Koenen, Voorlevingen, pp. 23–7. As for the double-entry system, Amsterdam was the most advanced of all towns in the whole Dutch Republic. W.H. Oltewelt, 'De boekhouding van Amsterdams', Jacob v.d. Banksschriam (1971), p. 18. On the building booms, see Ad Kroeter, 'Bouwgreven in Amsterdam in de 17e eeuw' in F.M.M. Klep et al. (eds.), Wenen in het verleden (Amsterdam, 1987).
66 Fabri, 'Het Vlaamse stadsbeleid', p. 77.
68 Fremanville, The Baroque Town Hall, p. 37.
69 Lombard, 'Overzicht', pp. 47–8. For Amsterdam's Westermarkt, however, standard designs for the houses had been ordered too: Bakker, 'De stadssluising', p. 91.

ued house,' wrote Robert Bargrave, and an anonymous visitor to Amsterdam reported:

The best buildings are on the Keizers or Emperors Gracht and on the Herengracht; several of these are so stately that they may compare with some palaces... the canals are planted on each side with limes, the water is broad and straight for a great way together, the buildings on each side are very noble and regular, besides the pleasure of seeing so many sorts of boats and vessels as are commonly here, so very delightful.

The overall increase in scale had been a conscious policy, and constituted in this regard a significant achievement.73 With the major extensions of 1663, the city was functionally more segregated, more spacious, cleaner, and a better place to live in compared with the earlier seventeenth century.

In hindsight, Antwerp's influence upon Amsterdam building had been strong up to the first decades in the seventeenth century. Yet from the 1630s, Amsterdam definitively went on its own specific monumentalist route, inspired by Roman classicist ideals and spurred on by political rivalries with the central state. No urban government in the Netherlands undertook so many initiatives in architecture and urban planning, even in comparison with Antwerp in the sixteenth century. Antwerp's government had also created the space necessary for urban development, but much had remained in the hands of private entrepreneurs. Extensive migration and economic advantages strengthened Amsterdam's civic pride, which was expressed not only in the monumental buildings, but also in the impressive number of scientific institutions, the frequent processes by the militia, the enormous size and number of the militia paintings, and the outstanding position of the public theatre, to mention just a few of the most striking features. Some of these developments had been instigated by (semi-)private enterprises. Yet, without doubt, one of the most notable achievements of the seventeenth-century burgomasters was to endow Amsterdam with the physical form that expressed its powers.

London differed from Antwerp and Amsterdam because it was the capital of a dynasty which had adopted a self-consciously imperial role within Britain. The drive to improve the appearance of London came from the Stuart monarchs rather than from the city, whereas in Amsterdam the civic authorities took the initiative. The Stuart project was interrupted by the Civil War, but similar ideas, now powerfully informed by the Parisian projects of the French monarchy, were in the air.

71 Quoted by van Strien, British Travellers, p. 86.
72 Quoted in ibid., p. 89n.
74 Fabri, 'Het Vlaamse stadsbeleid', p. 76.
when proposals were made for rebuilding the city after the Great Fire of 1666. Despite the prevailing influence of Dutch classicism in the vocabulary of English architects and builders, Amsterdam's monumentalism was present only in part of the plans.

The architectural panache of Amsterdam had openly expressed the bourgeois and republican roots of its culture. The major architectural impact of London's rebuilding, in the form of the innovative and dominant cathedral and the many parish churches, stood in sharp contrast to the civic architecture of Amsterdam: its message was of an order derived from the king and backed up by the authority of the Anglican church.

7 Architecture and urban space in London

Judi Loach

For the purpose of examining London's achievement within the fields of architecture and urban space it seems sensible to redefine the timespan covered as 1620–1715. In order to appreciate the significance of architecture and planning from the Restoration onwards, one needs to understand the extent to which the Civil War and Commonwealth determined subsequent developments by bringing about so absolute a rupture with previous practice. Without such a contextualization there is a tendency to credit the radical changes which dominate the late seventeenth century wholly to the accident of the Great Fire, rather than to the revolution in thought instigated by those few intellectuals who dominated state policymaking, including urban reconstruction. One must also recognize that the change from Stuart to Whig government wrought such drastic effects in the domains of design for individual buildings and whole pieces of townscape that an entirely different narrative takes over in the 1720s, if not from 1715.

To what extent can this period then be considered one of architectural achievement? Certainly it has left us St Paul's Cathedral, and around it three dozen or so parish churches also by Wren. Furthermore, the Customs House and the Monument (both again by Wren) and virtually all the livery halls were built in the post-Fire reconstruction of the capital so that, even if visually they are overpowered by giant office blocks today, they remain a powerful presence; indeed, the vast majority of the City's extant public monuments were realized during this period.

Moreover, if one trespasses beyond the strict boundaries of the City, to consider London in its wider sense, the prime monuments to be found in the City of Westminster – notably Inigo Jones' Banqueting House in Whitehall and his Covent Garden Piazza (focusing on St Paul's Church) – bear eloquent witness to the high level of artistic achievement already attained prior to the Civil War. Looking slightly further afield, to the new suburbs arising around both cities in the later seventeenth century, we