1. Binnenhof and surroundings from the east in the 1950s (aerial photography service, Soesterberg Airbase, Netherlands Institute of Military History)
A Binnenhof; B Buitenhof; C Hofvijver; D Het Plein; E Lange Poten; F Hofplaats (Hofcingelplein)
1 Ridderzaal; 2 Mauritshuis; 3 Colonial Office; 4 Supreme Court; 5 Ministry of Justice; 6 Hotel Central

LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE LONG ROAD TO NEW PREMISES FOR THE TWEEDE KAMER

PAUL MEURS

The arrival of King Willem I in 1815 marked the beginning of the rebuilding of the Binnenhof into a centre of national government, which saw the stadholder's court transformed into a conglomeration of ministries, meeting rooms and reception halls. At the time there was much discussion about what exactly the national building style was and to what stylistic period it should refer. The choice was neo-Renaissance versus 'Waterstaat' style, the Ministry of the Interior (department of Arts and Sciences) versus the Ministry of Water, Trade and Industry (national buildings) and Catholic versus Protestant.[1] A central figure in this debate was Victor de Stuers (1843-1916), head of the Arts and Sciences department and the founding father of heritage preservation in the Netherlands.

From 1815 onwards parliament met in the former ballroom of the stadholders. The room was redolent of the court and provided a suitably solemn decor for political debate. The location was not ideal, but design competitions for a new parliament building in 1863 and 1920 ran aground.[2] The lack of space became acute in the course of the twentieth century, exacerbated by the increase in the number of parliamentarians (from 100 to 150 in 1956) and the expanding entourage of assistants, advisers and journalists. In 1970 this led to another attempt to put the extension of the House of Representatives on the agenda. Once again it was the subject of endless debate, and it took until 1992 for the new additions to the seven-centuries-old Binnenhof complex to be completed. In 2019, in preparation for the current renovation of the Binnenhof complex, SteenhuisMeurs conducted a cultural-historical study of the 1992 extension.[3] Based on that research, this article describes the design process, the underlying ideas and what was eventually built.

BUILDING IN THE HISTORICAL CITY

In the decades after the Second World War the centres of the Netherlands' biggest cities underwent extensive redevelopment. This was the era of traffic corridors, office behemoths and shopping malls. Opposition to projects like the Maupoleum in Amsterdam (1971) and Hoog Catharijne in Utrecht (1973) gradually gathered momentum and there was a swelling chorus of voices calling on authorities to build for the existing residents of the historical city centres and to retain the human scale. The discontent culminated in the Nieuwmarkt riots of 1975, a violent protest against the demolition of housing for the construction of the Amsterdam metro. Coincidentally, 1975 was also European Architectural Heritage Year. In the Declaration of Amsterdam, the Council of Europe called for the preservation of spatial cohesion and the social structure in historical cities.[4] In the Netherlands this took the form of urban renewal and the designation of town and country conservation areas, an instrument from the 1961 Monuments Act. The ambition to alter inner city areas in stages proved difficult to put into practice. How do you design a large office or public building in a fine-grained townscape? Where is the human dimension in cities that are full of motor vehicles? And how do you achieve customization in a building sector that for years has been encouraged to upscale and industrialize?

Illustrative of the shift in thinking about inner city construction were the University of Leiden's building plans. In 1960, a high-rise complex designed by Piet Zanstra (1905-2003) for a prominent site in the historical centre provoked strong opposition. According to future users the 120-metre tower was 'unproportioned', not in keeping with the tight-knit mix of functions in the inner city and incompatible with the decentralized layout of the university.[5] In 1970 the development was put on hold and in 1975 the government architect, Wim Quist (1930-2022), decided to start again from scratch. Under his direction Tjeerd Dijkstra, Joop van Stigt and Bart van Kasteel formulated a spatial strategy for the area. Zanstra's tower was replaced by six smaller buildings linked by outdoor space.

OPEN COMPETITION 1977

The process that culminated in new premises for the House of Representatives began in 1970 when six members of parliament called for a new parliament building.[6] A House of Representatives Housing Committee was established and tasked with investigating how much space the House needed.[7] It turned out that the parliament wanted three times as much space as was then in use.[8] Despite this, the House of Representatives would be able to remain near the Binnenhof. The Government Buildings Agency had bought up properties on Hofstraat and Lange Poten and with the forthcoming relocation of the Ministry of Justice to Schedeldoekshaven (1978) its building on the corner of Het Plein and Lange Poten would also become available. The House of Representatives could avail itself of the entire area bounded by Binnenhof, Hofplaats, Lange Poten and Het Plein, with the exception of the Supreme Court building and the former Colonial Office on Het Plein (fig. 1).

In 1977, a design competition open to all Dutch architects was organized for this project. The brief was to house the House of Representatives in accordance with detailed terms of reference and to carefully integrate the complex into the Binnenhof conservation area.[9] The House of Representatives wanted a welcoming building that radiated openness and accessibility. The competition jury was chaired by Government Architect Quist, who invited Dijkstra and Van Stigt to join the jury. Their previous year's experience in Leiden no doubt played a part in the assessment of designs and in the jury's uncompromising conclusion: of the 111 entries not one fulfilled the assignment. The jury awarded prizes but saw no reason to commission a follow-up design from any of the designers.[10]

Various reasons for this debacle were canvassed in the professional press, including the absence of good architects, an errant jury, a faulty and inconsistent design brief, and the decision to hold a competition when an interactive design process involving all parties would have been more appropriate.[11] In the words of the architect Izak Salomons, most entries placed the new buildings unceremoniously against the Binnenhof, they roofed over the Hofplaats and had all the charisma of a department store or anonymous office building.[12] Attention was so firmly focused on the structural interpretation of the terms of reference that the building's appearance and its integration with the context scarcely got a look-in. The question of how parliament's symbolic significance could be expressed in the architecture was not even posed, let alone answered.

One entry stood out from the rest and gave rise to animated discussion: the design by Office for Metropolitan Architecture (OMA). This practice, founded in 1975 by Rem Koolhaas (b. 1942) and Elia Zenghelis (b. 1937), wanted to break open the buildings around the Binnenhof, greatly exceed the 18 metre building height and place the new building at right angles to the Knights' Hall (fig. 2). Instead of a modern parliament next to a museumized Binnenhof, the new would invade the old. The radicality of the intervention appalled the jury: 'The designer has … adopted a view whereby the surroundings are destroyed, and he subordinates the user to his formal vision.'[13] Nonetheless,

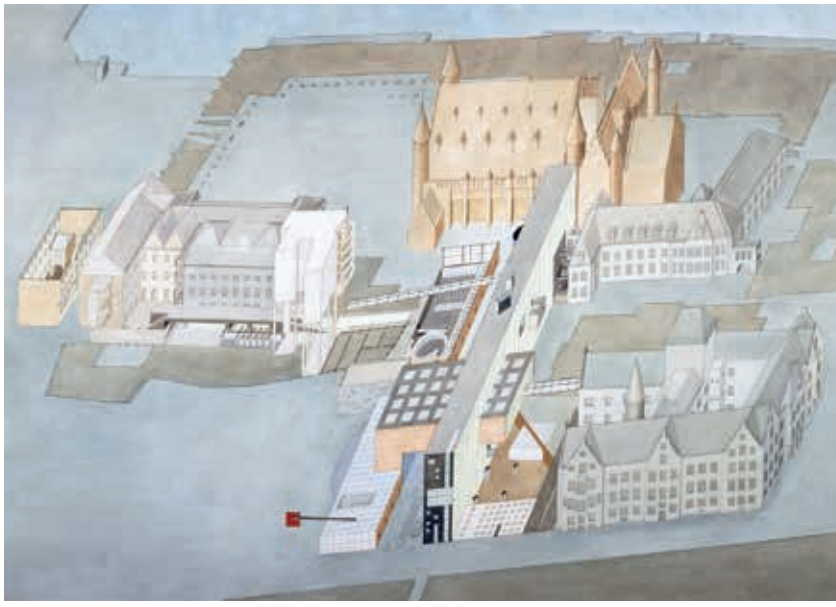
OMA shared first prize with Environmental Design, the practice of Leo Heijdenrijk (1932-1999).

INVITED COMPETITION 1979-1980

In the wake of the disappointing open competition, politicians were keen for a rapid solution. House Speaker, Anne Vondeling: 'The extension will have to excel with its interior. It cannot compete with the Binnenhof and here, amongst all those multifarious other buildings on Hofweg and Lange Poten, it is unlikely that a situation will arise in which people are struck speechless by the beauty of the surroundings.'[14] Member of the House and chair of the Construction Advisory Committee, Hessel Rienks: 'If it could be beautiful as well, so much the better.'[15] On the advice of the competition jury the minister decided on an invited competition. Because architects who had participated in the open competition were excluded, there were not a lot to choose from.

Quist selected three architects for this second competition: Aldo van Eyck, Arie Hagoort and Pi de Bruijn. Van Eyck (1918-1999) was professor in Delft. Ten years earlier (1967) he had produced a design for the Deventer town hall, located in the historical environs of the Grote Kerkhof. This plan was considered a classic example of a contextual design approach, even though it remained unrealized.[16] Hagoort (1929-1999) and his OD205 practice had realized many public buildings and was at that moment working on the National Library of the Netherlands (Koninklijke Bibliotheek) in The Hague.[17] The selection of De Bruijn (b. 1942) was unexpected. Together with Ruud Snikkenburg he had built a community centre in Amsterdam, which had won the Merkelbach Prize in 1976.[18] Quist had had dealings with De Bruijn in the Bijlmermeer, when the latter worked for the Municipal Housing Agency. Van Eyck refused to take part in a contest and was replaced by Groep 5.[19] This practice, headed by Edzard Luursema (b. 1931) and Hans van der Linden (1937-2006), was known for its process-focused approach.[20]

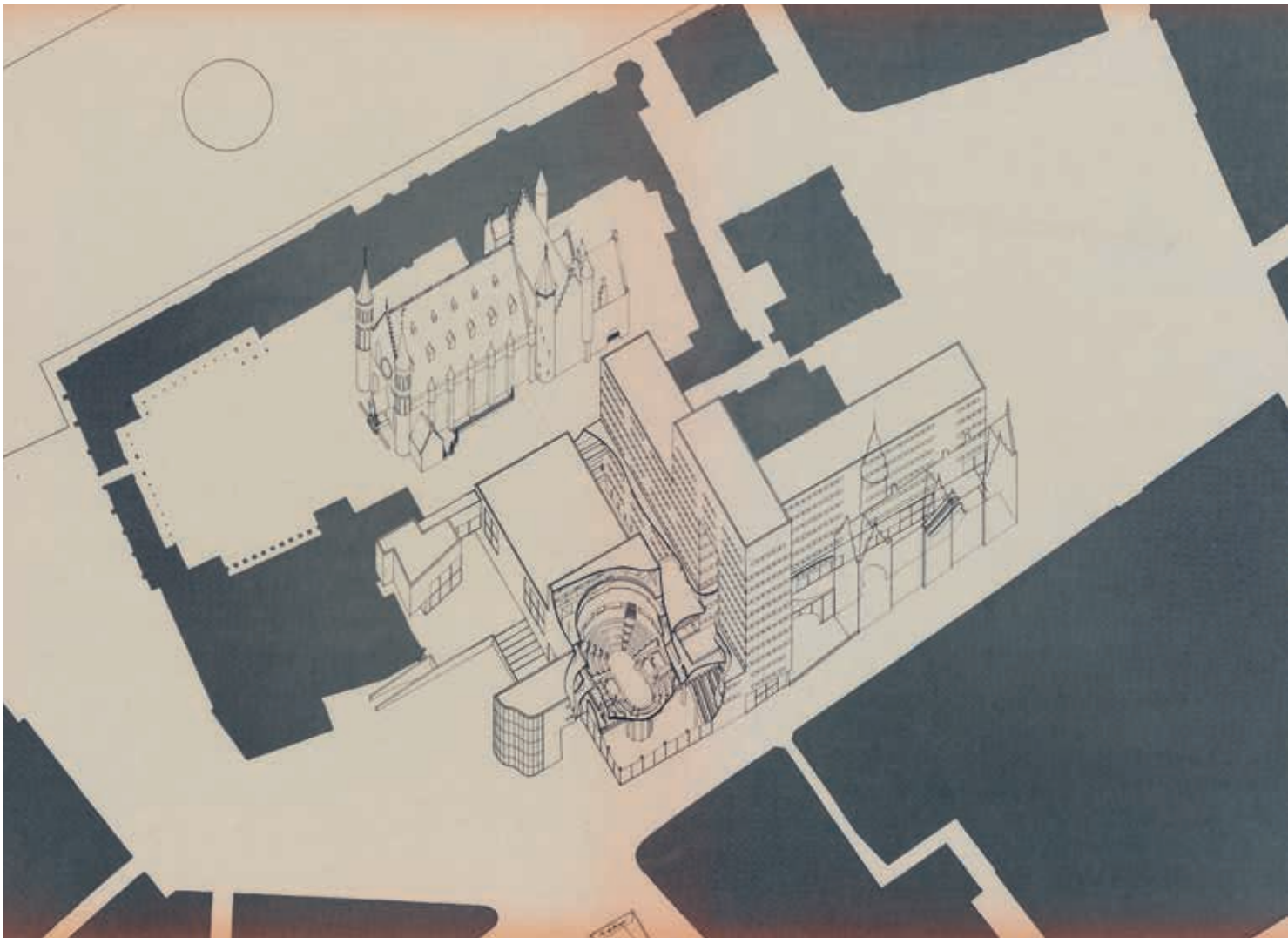
After the open competition debacle, the invited competition could not be allowed to fail. The aim was to select an architect rather than a design as such. Tjeerd Dijkstra (b. 1931) had meanwhile succeeded Quist as government architect, but Quist remained involved as chair of the evaluation committee. This committee, along with the House of Representatives' Construction Advisory Committee, the City of The Hague and the Department for the Preservation of Monuments and Historic Buildings (RDMZ for short in Dutch), were to submit a written opinion to Dijkstra, who would then formulate a selection recommendation for the minister.[21] Even before the advisers set to work, the designs were exhibited, published and publicly discussed.



2. Office for Metropolitan Architecture, open competition entry 1977 (OMA)

Groep 5 had come up with an introverted ensemble that did not engage with either the Binnenhof or the surroundings. Hagoort's design, which included substantial demolition, entailed a complicated construction spanning the Hofweg. The design by De Bruijn was conceptually similar to the earlier plan by OMA, involving an incursion into the Binnenhof and office blocks at right angles to the Knights' Hall (fig. 3).[22] The opinions sent to government architect Dijkstra were critical in tone. Groep 5's design was functionally deficient, and it infringed on the historical buildings near the Binnenhof.[23] The RDMZ regarded the fact that Hagoort's design did not encroach on the Binnenhof as positive, but the other advisory bodies saw it as a missed opportunity. The city council regarded his traffic intervention as undesirable. RDMZ's verdict on De Bruijn's design was that 'The erosion of the contained character of the Binnenhof, the partial demolition of the Justice ministry and the dominant height of this plan mean that this design shows too little respect for the existing area and its buildings.'[24] The city council thought that this design was meticulously composed but that its size, scale and architecture entailed an unacceptable impairment of the precious cityscape.[25]

The evaluation committee concluded that none of the designs was satisfactory.[26] All the same, they also felt that the designs demonstrated that a good solution was possible, were the preconditions and the number of square metres to be adjusted. The committee thought that De Bruijn had demonstrated the best understanding of the task: 'Despite the fact that this design entails considerable demolition, this designer does not treat the historical element in a cavalier manner.'[27]



3. Pi de Bruijn, invited competition entry 1980 (Nieuwe Instituut)

Dijkstra advised the minister to put De Bruijn forward as the architect of the House of Representatives.[28] He was positive about De Bruijn's spatial design, especially the connection and the 'tension' between the new building and the Binnenhof with the Knights' Hall.[29] Thanks to the reuse of existing buildings the Binnenhof continued to play a role in the government of the Netherlands. Dijkstra did draw attention to a few negative points, such as the breach of the building height, but felt that these could be overcome once the terms of reference had been revised. He took it for granted that De Bruijn's analytical and systematic approach would result in an acceptable design. His recommendation was adopted and in 1980 De Bruijn was duly appointed.

RESEARCH PHASE 1981

The first step on the path from the invited competition to the final design for the House of Representatives was a research phase during which all the basic principles were reconsidered. Several parties were involved: the architect, Pi De Bruijn, the House of Representatives, five ministries, various government agencies, the Hague city council and government bodies housed around the Binnenhof.[30]

The open and invited competitions had shown that the discussion of the designs centred around two points: (1) the spatial and architectural integration with the Binnenhof conservation area and (2) the connection between old and new within this ensemble. In its advice on the invited competition, the RDMZ had already listed precisely what could and could not be demolished. Surprisingly, it had no objection to the demolition of the Supreme Court, an 1865 building by W.N. Rose, because 'its intrinsic qualities have been so badly compromised that there can no longer be any question of heritage value in the meaning of the Act'.[31] The building was set back from Het Plein, generating a forecourt between the Ministry of Justice and the Colonial Office (fig. 4). The RDMZ wanted to retain the forecourt but any intrusion into the Binnenhof was taboo. At most the Binnenhof 5 premises could be

replaced by a new building, to prevent the Binnenhof from becoming 'too sterile'. The RDMZ further stated that Hotel Central on Lange Poten should be retained, even though it had no heritage status. If this advice were followed the spatial structure would be preserved, the cityscape would largely retain its historical character and the new buildings would only be visible on the forecourt on Het Plein and on the Hofplaats-Lange Poten corner.

De Bruijn used a model of his design to explore the spatial 'carrying capacity' of the location. This revealed that site could not accommodate both the House of Representatives and the Supreme Court. If the Supreme Court were to be relocated, the terms of reference could be satisfied in accordance with all the RDMZ's preconditions and basic principles (demolish the Supreme Court, retain the Ministry of Justice, Colonial Office and Hotel Central).[32] The existing buildings were deemed suitable for offices while in the new building there would be space for circulation, meeting rooms and dining rooms.

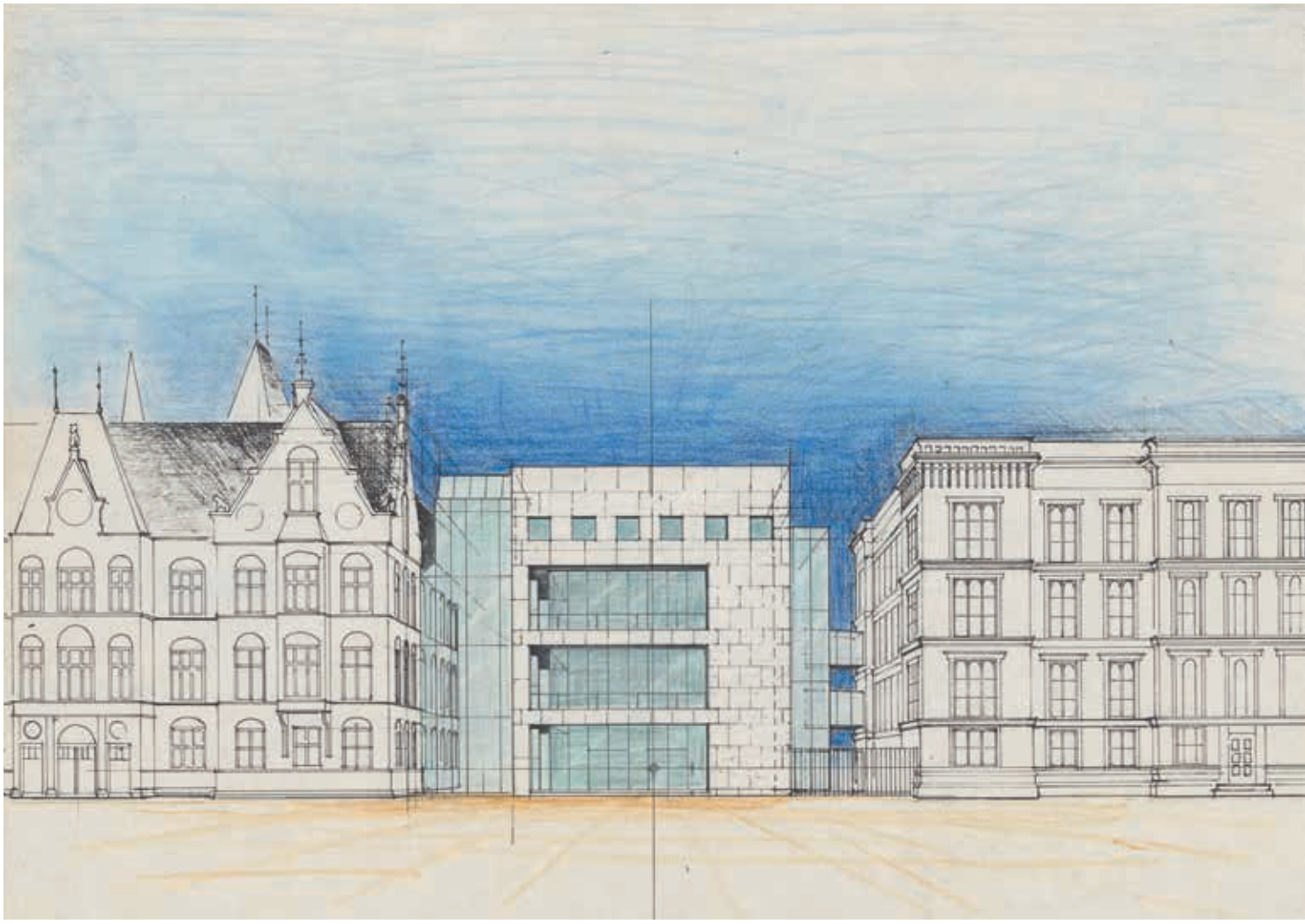
One important question remained unanswered: how to conjure a coherent parliament building out of the mix of old and new buildings.[33] De Bruijn did not want a maze-like complex, but a clear structure.[34] He felt that the new building should give the House of Representatives clarity and legibility. The demolition of the Supreme Court would allow the complex to be made up of three parallel strips: the central new-build stretching from Het Plein to Hofplaats, flanked by the existing buildings on the Binnenhof and Lange Poten respectively (fig. 5). De Bruijn conceived the new building as a central hall that provided access to the surrounding buildings and as a public arcade linking Het Plein with the Hofweg, with a possible side exit to the Binnenhof via the Hofpoort. This introduced two new design ideas: the new-build as structuring element, and a public route through the building as an expression of the parliament's transparency and accessibility. In July 1981 the report on the research phase was published, along with the welcome news that a consensus had been reached on the basic principles. The new-build programme had been reduced by sixteen per cent and the planning area had been enlarged to encompass the buildings at Plein 1 and Plein 2 (Colonial Office and Supreme Court).[35] The terms of reference could be accommodated within the prevailing building heights. At most there could be spatial design grounds for suggesting a 'one-off breach' of the building height on the corner of Lange Poten and Hofplaats.[36]

PRELIMINARY DESIGN 1982

The research results were fleshed out in the Preliminary Design (PD). This showed a large meeting and communications building between Het Plein and Hofplaats separated from the existing buildings on either side. The intermediate space on the Binnenhof side

4. Het Plein with the Ministries of Justice (left) and Colonies (right) and in between the set-back building of the Supreme Court, postcard c. 1910, published by H.S. Speelman (The Hague Municipal Museum)

5. Pi de Bruijn, design study of the new buildings showing elongated communication building and circular parliamentary chamber, 1981 (Nieuwe Instituut)



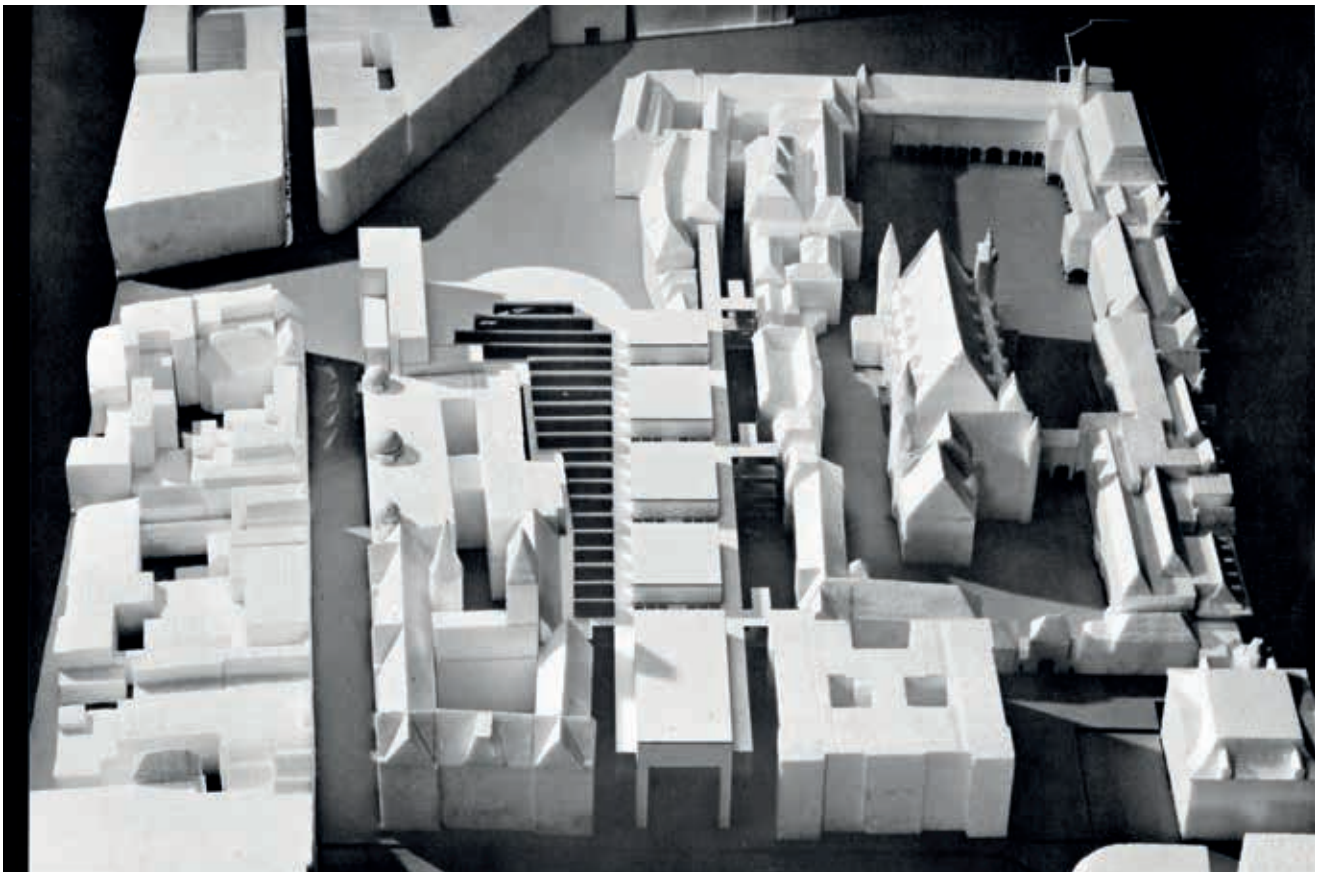
6. Pi de Bruijn, Preliminary Design with new street frontage on Het Plein, 1982 (Nieuwe Instituut)

(the former Hofgracht) was rendered as a 150-metre-long garden with several links between old and new buildings. The intermediate space on the Lange Poten side was turned into a 24-metre-high hall with a glass roof. On the Hofplaats, two volumes completed the new buildings: the parliamentary chamber and a press tower on the corner with Lange Poten.

The House of Representatives' wish to make the parliament accessible and welcoming was interpreted literally in the design. The central hall (later called the Statenpassage) was conceived as a public arcade with entrances at both ends and on Lange Poten. The parliamentary chamber was on the first floor, the public gallery on the second. That made it possible to restrict first floor access to members of parliament, assistants and registered visitors. A long escalator carried people coming to listen to parliamentary debates from straight the central hall to the second floor.

Contrary to RDMZ's advice, the forecourt between the ministry of Justice and the Colonial Office disappeared. The House of Representatives toed the building line and, together with the two former Ministries, formed a continuous frontage on Het Plein (fig. 6). Inside the hall, a row of lofty columns was erected along the walls of the historical buildings to support the glass roof. De Bruijn wanted to create a sense of calm and an uncluttered space that would radiate unity and coherence. To this end he chose granite for both the internal and external walls and the floors. The new building was made up of a sequence of five volumes, with (slightly lower) the glass roof of the central hall, which spanned the space between the old and new buildings (fig. 7).

On the interplay between old and new, De Bruijn wrote: 'The Binnenhof shuts the city out with its perimeter wall. The new building lets the city in. The public can walk via the central hall from Het Plein to the Hofcingel.'[37] And: 'The frontage of the Knights' Hall is reflected in this 20th-century design; right through the perimeter wall it forms a single line with the front of the new building. Even the height of the new building is the same as the top of the Knights' Hall. With my design I believe I have achieved a harmonious synergy between seven centuries of construction. The design



7A and 7B. Pi de Bruijn, Preliminary Design, 1982 (Nieuwe Instituut)

is based on maximum openness with an accent on the central hall. To emphasize that transparency I designed an arcade from Plein to Hofcingel [Hofplaats].'[38]

FINAL DESIGN 1983

The consensus on the basic principles reached during the research phase endured throughout the rest of the design process. Discussion was confined to costs and what was or wasn't technically feasible. One year after the Preliminary Design (PD), the Final Design (FD) was ready and building preparation work could begin. The main differences between the PD and FD concerned the scrapping of the parking garage on financial grounds, an alteration to the construction of the central hall, and the partial roofing of the courtyard on the House of Representatives' side.

One striking difference is that in the FD the new volume no longer consisted of five separate elements but had become a single entity. De Bruijn commented that this was typical of his way of working: 'A block containing two hundred dwellings presents in the first instance as a single building. That is related to what is always most important for me: *simplicity*.'[39] The pursuit of simplicity and calm was a guiding principle of the design. When the roof light in the central hall was being worked out in detail it was discovered that the structure would need reinforcing.[40] The choice of lattice girders for this job raised the roof of the hall, which ended up on the same level as the roof of the meeting block. The connection with the Justice building and Hotel Central, originally below eaves height, shifted to the eaves and the roof plane (fig. 8). This resulted in a series of (complicated) connections and vertical (glass) infill elements. The House of Representatives' desire to incorporate its former chamber (the stadholder's ballroom) into the complex and make it accessible resulted in the partial roofing of the courtyard (Schepelhal).

REALIZATION 1986-1992

Upon completion of the new building in 1992, De Bruijn remarked: 'I think a building should be lucid and uncluttered. It should be the right size … I think I have succeeded in that with this new House of Representatives building. You only have to look at the arcade that runs along the small meeting room: everything is in accord. It creates a sense of wellbeing, in the same way that Italian cities can create a sense of wellbeing. I sometimes wonder whether Members will make better decisions in this building. That's unknowable, of course. But it does make a difference if you enjoy being somewhere, or if a building puts you off. This is a building people will enjoy being in' (figs. 9 and 10).[41]

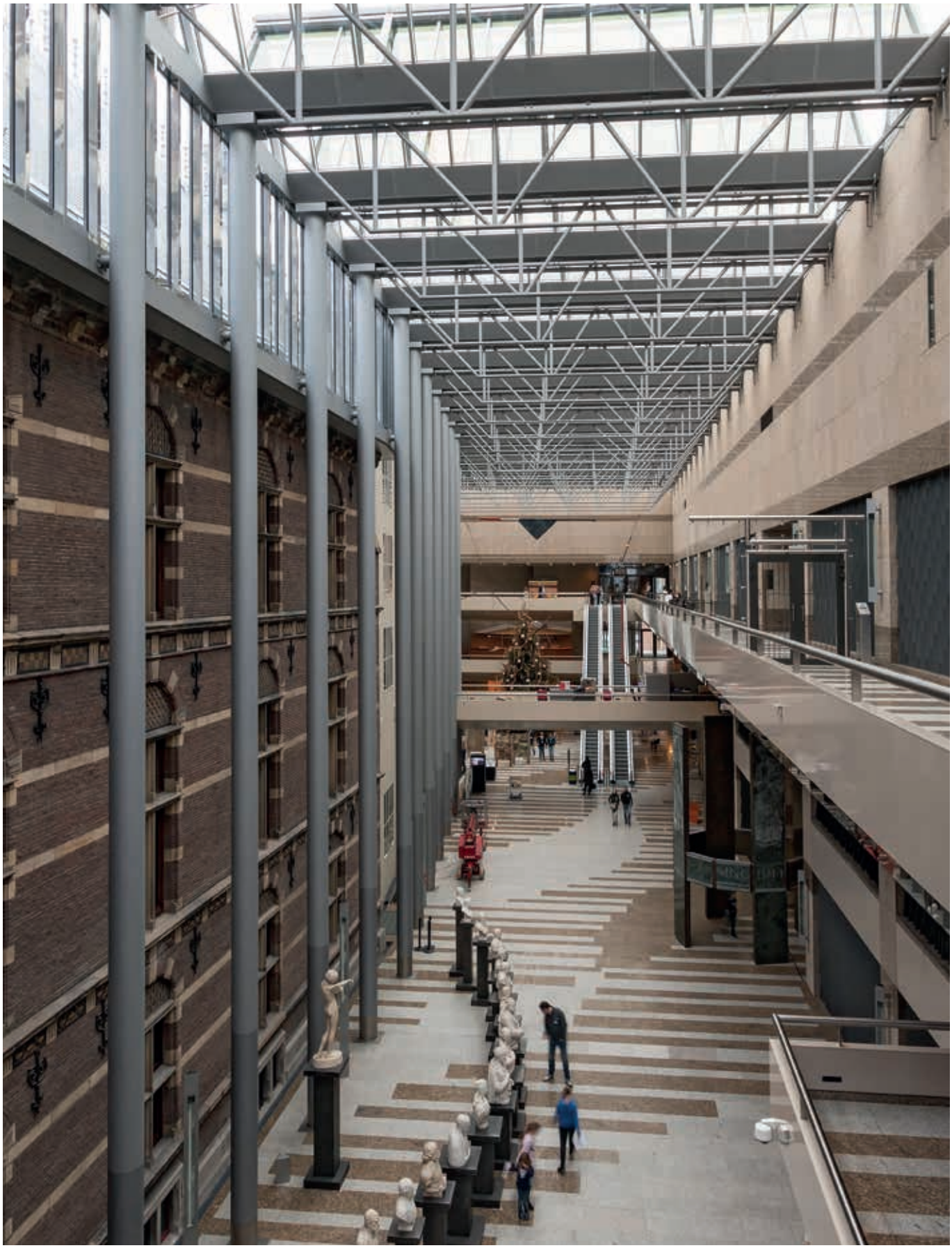
Even before the official opening, the House Speaker, W.J. Deetman, decided not to make the House of Representatives publicly accessible. The closing off of the central hall put paid to the idea of 'traversibililty'. All that remained was the glazed arcade between Hofpoort (Binnenhof) and Hofplaats. De Bruijn, for whom this was the necessary final step in the process of giving the parliament a contemporary and fitting accommodation, resisted in vain.[42] Unlike in the town halls of Amsterdam and The Hague, the House of Representatives public passageway was never realized. The central hall became part of the interior and after a few years air conditioning was installed.[43]

RESULT

Unlike in De Steurs' day, the question of what constituted a dignified government centre and what the most fitting architectural expression would be was simply not posed during the run-up to the extension of the House of Representatives. Instead, the discussion was mainly about functionality, to which other ambitions were gradually added: integration with the protected streetscape, connecting old and new, using the new building to structure the complex, rendering the business of politics visible and, finally, achieving simplicity and calm. Architect Pi de Bruijn wanted to let the city in, to make visitors feel at home, and to bring unity by creating order and calm through the consistent use of Brazilian granite.

The ambition to incorporate the new building carefully into the conservation area, grew out of the RDMZ's advice to preserve most of the urban structure and the historical periphery of Binnenhof and Lange Poten. During the design phase a thin and airy connecting structure, surrounded by outdoor spaces, was envisaged between these two. Step by step the new structure was bulked out, until a tall, solid box-shape remained, which according to De Bruijn expressed simplicity (fig. on p. 4-5). The end result was a functional, coherent complex with the central hall as structuring element, but not as originally intended. The hall provides a sense of place and clarity in the interior. The size of the parliamentary complex is evident here while outside, in the conservation area, that large scale remains for the most part hidden from view.

The ambition to make the House of Representatives welcoming, open and public, in contrast to the introverted Binnenhof, came to naught. From today's perspective, the limited public accessibility is unsurprising. But the threat from radicalization and terrorism belonged to a later date and played no role in this decision to close the complex off from the public. From its opening, the new House of Representatives complex presented to the city as a hermetic stronghold. Hofplaats was intended to be the vibrant public square of democracy, with glazed corridors around the cham-



8. Statenpassage hall with the rear elevation of the former Ministry of Justice building on the left, 2018 (photo Dick Valentijn, Cultural Heritage Agency)

9. Meeting room overlooking the internal garden, 2018 (photo Dick Valentijn, Cultural Heritage Agency)

10. Chamber, 2018 (photo Dick Valentijn, Cultural Heritage Agency)

ber, an entrance and a precinct for demonstrating citizens. In reality, the square never really came to life. Demonstrations took place at the entrance on Het Plein and politicians were rarely to be seen walking the glass-walled corridors.

The connection between old and new was rendered literally by shifting access to the old buildings to the new central hall. This in turn had a detrimental effect on the historical buildings' connections with the surrounding area. The walls of the hall are formed by historical buildings (Justice and Hotel Central) and new-build (meeting block and entrance to the Chamber). The former rear walls of the buildings on Lange Poten retained their rear-wall character in the Statenhal, while their front walls (on the street) lost their entrances and ceased to contribute to a lively streetscape. The physical connections between old and new, such as the alignment of the new building with the roofs, gutters, windows, cornices and turrets of the surrounding buildings was resolved on an ad hoc basis. Historical gables, cornices, wall anchors and reliefs were damaged in the course of anchoring floors, bridges, railings and parapets in the historical fabric. The detailing presented a medley of materials, colours, directions, welding pieces, fitting pieces, false walls and gutters.

The pursuit of simplicity resulted in a taut new-build volume slotted between the historical buildings. The overall impression is defined by the ubiquitous Brazilian granite finish. The historical buildings are effectively stitched together by the granite and framed by a rhythmic series of tall columns that stand like a veil in front of the historical elevations. Standing in stark contrast to the simplicity of the grand gesture of the new building, is the untidy connection this grand gesture makes with the anything but simple and unambiguous antithesis of the surrounding historical buildings.

In 2015, long overdue maintenance and faulty building services prompted the government to commission a comprehensive renovation of the Binnenhof. This major operation also provides an opportunity, within the scope of the desired sober and functional approach, to reconsider the qualities of the House of Representatives and to adapt them to current wishes. OMA was awarded the commission in 2017. Two years later, after a repetition of the controversy provoked by its open competition design, OMA was replaced by Architekten Cie., one of whose partners is Pi de Bruijn. This gives De Bruijn a second chance to take what he regards as the necessary final step: to give the parliament a fitting home and to express the connection between the building and its surroundings as well as between the parliament and society, using other architectural means than public accessibility.

NOTES

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19 R. Brouwers, 'Ingrijpend bouwproject in de Haagse binnenstad tekent zich af', *Wonen-TA/BK* 1980, no. 3, 15. De Bruijn claimed that *he* had been selected as a replacement for Aldo van Eyck; interview with De Bruijn, 13 July 2018.
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LARGE-SCALE CONSTRUCTION IN A HISTORICAL CONTEXT

THE LONG ROAD TO NEW PREMISES FOR THE TWEEDE KAMER

PAUL MEURS

The new, enlarged premises for the Tweede Kamer (Lower House) took shape between 1970 and 1992. The key issue was how to integrate this huge complex with the historic Binnenhof. This article describes the design process, the underlying ideas, and the outcome.

In 1975 an open architectural competition was organized for the building's design. The task was to house the Tweede Kamer in accordance with a detailed brief and to insert the resulting complex with utmost sensitivity into the Binnenhof heritage site. The jury concluded that none of the submitted designs met these requirements. OMA's design did, however, spark debate. It broke open the buildings around the Binnenhof and placed the new-build next to the thirteenth-century Ridderzaal (Knights' Hall). The sheer radicality of the intervention appalled the jury. In the wake of the failed competition, three architects were invited to submit designs. Once again, the designs were deemed unsatisfactory, and the parameters were revised. The panel of judges felt Pi de Bruijn had best understood the nature of the task. In 1980 he was appointed architect.

Crucial to the eventual outcome was a recommendation from the Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg (Government Department for the Preservation of Historic Buildings) to the effect that the urban design structure should be meticulously preserved. The new-build should only be visible on Het Plein and on the Hofplaats-Lange Poten corner. A major consideration was how to conjure a coherent parliament building out of the mix of old and new. De Bruijn strove for clarity and legibility. He conceived the new section as both a central hall in the Tweede Kamer and a public passageway in the city: a public route as an expression of the transparency and proximity of the parliament vis-à-vis citizens. Architecturally he aimed for an impression of calm and a clearly laid-out hall that would radiate unity and coherence. In the materialization this was achieved through the use of granite for the floors and the internal and external elevations.

Even before the opening, the Chairman of the Parliament had decided against making the building publicly accessible; the central hall became part of the interior. The ambition to make the Tweede Kamer open and accessible came to naught and from the outside the complex looked like an impenetrable fortress. The question of what constituted a dignified centre of government and what architectural expression that entailed was never posed. Instead, the focus was on functionality, integration with the heritage context, connecting old and new, rendering the business of politics visible and striving for simplicity and calm. This manifested as a taut new-build volume slotted in between the existing buildings. Against the simplicity of the grand gesture, there is the disorderly connection with which the new building lands on the anything but simple and unambiguous converse of the surrounding historical buildings.