



*View of Schoonhoven-North with in the background the historical center
Photographer unknown*

Marc Bukman is an architect and owner of Steenhuis Bukman Architects, based in Delft, the Netherlands. He is specialized in public housing in inner-cities and developing areas. The following article, the last in a series of four, describes the reconstruction of an postwar district in Schoonhoven, The Netherlands.

Delft School and 1960s modernism

Schoonhoven is a monumental medieval town on the river De Lek, historically known for its silver industry. Throughout the centuries the town has remained more or less intact and has hardly grown. Until after the Second World War, when the newly built Schoonhoven-North district was constructed. In this district the history of postwar Dutch urban planning and public housing is clearly visible.

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The eastern side of the district is built in a traditionally brick architecture, with pitched tiled roofs and craftsmanlike detailing. This architectural style, also known as the 'Delft School', gets its name because of the traditional building methods that were propagated at the Delft University of Technology (TU Delft) just after the War. Architect and city planner Granpré Molière (1883-1972) was the most important advocate of the style.

More to the west, the buildings in the district are subtly changing style, from 1960s modernism to the small scale and 'human size' of the 1970s. The locations where Steenhuis Bukman Architects have built are right on the border of the post-war 'Delft School' and the more rationally styled sixties buildings.



*1950s Delft School housing (left) and 1960's modernism (right)
Photos by Steenhuis Bukman Architects 2018*

New urban development approach

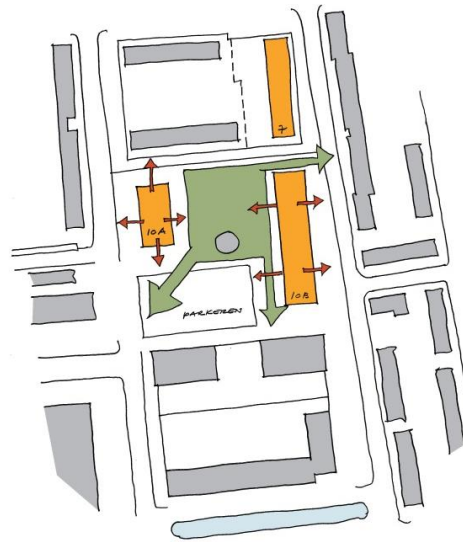
The reconstruction of Schoonhoven-North radically changed the urban layout of the area. The large scale demolition of dwellings made it possible to develop a large public space that has been designed as a neighborhood park. Two apartment blocks are positioned here, free standing in the greenery. A row of low-rise houses completes the transition from the park to the adjacent street. Although the approach is rigorous, the buildings have been intentionally kept small in scale. The apartment blocks are just three and four storeys high and so they fit in perfectly with their surroundings. The lowrise block is two floors high with a three story accent, anchoring the plan even more effectively in the context.

As far as the architectural design is concerned, the underlying principle was to keep the specific urban situation of the planning area pure, at the interface between fifties and sixties buildings. The new buildings are thus more modernist (1960s) than traditional (1950s) in character. This has resulted in the new blocks being built all with flat roofs. The design emphasis is on the block as a totality, rather than on the (articulation of the) single house. No

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spectacular sculptural elements or complicated detailing, but rather simple blocks in recognisably all-round volumes.

All new buildings in the development are social rental homes, commissioned by housing association QuaWonen.



New urban composition with neighborhood park in between apartment blocks and row housing on the north side



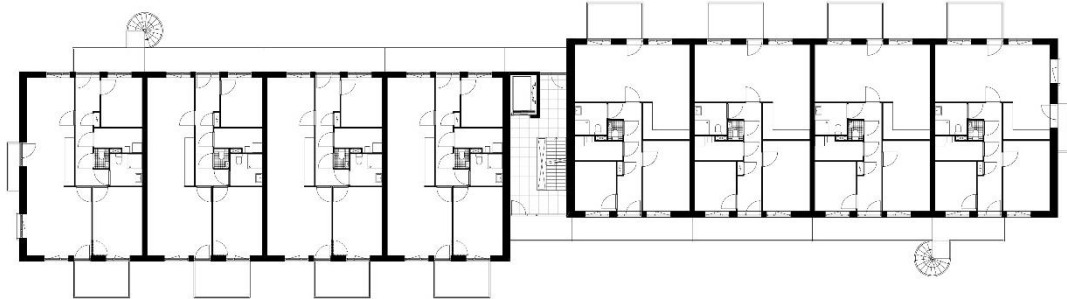
*Street view with apartments (left) and row housing (right)
Left photo by Steenhuis Bukman Architects, left photo by Jannes Linders*

Orientation dilemma

The apartment blocks have a relatively simple structure with dwellings on a gallery. However, the urban design with free standing blocks introduces a dilemma. Because of the liveability in the streets it is desirable to give the apartments a street view. This would mean that the galleries would be situated on the park side, where it is also desirable to give the apartments an orientation, and which, furthermore, is the sunny side. The long, three story block on the east side of the location has therefore been transformed. The building's floor plan has been given a bayonet shape, so half of the dwellings are facing the street and the other half (rotated 180) are facing the park. The main stairwell, located centrally in the block, functions as a transparent space in between, accessible to residents from two sides. At the location of this main entrance, the building components are shifted in relation to each other so that a staggered building line is created, the block length is reduced and the image is enlivened.



*Parkside view on the long block with bayonet structure
Photo by Jannes Linders*



Bayonet shape floor plan, with living rooms in width (right part) and in depth (left part)



Three storey apartments, street view with bayonet and short galleries
Photo by Jannes Linders

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The design intervention of rotating the building structure has contributed to enlarging the housing differentiation. On the park side (also the sunny side), living rooms and kitchens are projected in the width of the house, oriented maximally to the sun and the view. The other part of the block, with the street-oriented apartments, has a floor plan where the living room and kitchen are actually designed in depth. This allows sunlight to enter the living rooms via the dining area at the gallery. An additional advantage of this building structure is that the galleries are short at all times. Because a maximum of four households using a gallery, it will never be anonymous, something that turned out to be the problem with many postwar buildings.

On the west side of the plan area is a more compact four storey apartment building with a similar, rational layout. Due to the limited building length, the gallery here is automatically short, also with only four front doors per storey. By placing the main staircase and the escape staircase in front of the block, the gallery image is further restricted and the all-sidedness is emphasized.



*Four storey apartments with entrance hall, visual shortening the gallery length
Photo by Jannes Linders*

Architecture

In architecture, the apartment blocks and single-family homes are related.

The color scheme is light and the houses are optimally oriented to the surroundings, with large window sections. The facades are masonry in a golden yellow brick with anthracite joints.

Continuous bricklaying all around emphasizes the all-sidedness. The windows are staggered and the facade frames are positioned loosely, giving the plan a relaxed and pleasant image. The apartment blocks have generous overhangs so that the impression of pavilions in a park-like setting is accentuated.



*Staggered windows and -frames
Photo by Jannes Linders*



*Facade fragment apartment block
Photo by Steenhuis Bukman Architects*



Row housing
Photo by Jannes Linders