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The concrete obduracy of Hoog Catharijne. The tensions between local politicians, citizens and a private developer 1963-1973

Introduction

In the current historiography of Dutch politics in the 1960s and 1970s an image is being depicted of a rather tolerant administrative elite, which flexibly and more often than not pre-emptively responded to demands made by pressure and interest groups.¹ These demands were often concerned with a more transparent and democratic decision-making process in policy domains such as education and health care. By directing a tolerant policy towards demanding citizens, politicians thought conflict could be prevented. By doing so they simultaneously invoked a progressive and modern image of their style of politics. Although this notion of a visionary Dutch elite seems plausible for most national policy domains, it tends to overlook the decisive role of market parties in decision-making processes at a local level. If one focuses on the role of private developers in Dutch urban planning, the image becomes much more diffused and complicated. Whereas local politicians often wanted to grant the demands made by urban action groups for a more democratic decision making process, private developers did not. These developers, which in the Netherlands became continually more powerful and numerous over the 1960s, did not have the same democratic responsibilities as local politicians had. Their view on society was understandably a rather technocratic one.

This worldview increasingly collided with the democratic and anti-capitalistic rhetoric uttered by urban action groups over the latter half of the 1960s, and especially the 1970s. During these decades, the technocratization of Dutch society by non-elected bodies, such as private developers, ran parallel to strong democratization tendencies. The latter tendencies were often initiated by administrative elites. Local politicians decided to give citizens a stronger voice in the field of urban planning by implementing planning laws, consultation events and the option of filing objections against redevelopment schemes. These signs of indulgence demonstrate that local politicians, albeit perhaps out of a fear of their own position, simultaneously tried to democratize society *and* modernize the built environment. This eventually brought them in a tight spot between private developers on the one side and protest groups on the other. In the current Dutch and most international historiography local politicians are usually sided or even aligned with developers, by which a bipolar conflict between a technocratic state apparatus is opposed to grass roots movements criticizing the

¹ J.C. Kennedy, *Nieuw Babylon in aanbouw* (Amsterdam 1995), and H. Righart, *De eindeloze jaren zestig. Geschiedenis van een generatieconflict* (Amsterdam 1995).

urban renewal order.² This image is often too simple.

In this paper I would like to highlight the role of market parties in the Dutch decision making process. The urban renewal project 'Hoog Catharijne' serves as a case study, but my assumption is that public-private partnerships can also be researched for other policy domains. Secondly, I would like to demonstrate that in some cases we should perceive the post-war struggle over urban renewal as a tripolar conflict instead of a bipolar difference, in which more attention should be paid to the shifting positions of the three actors involved. These actors did not only struggle with each other, but also within their own ranks over the merits and wrongs of urban redevelopment. Since the focus of this session is on the role of action groups, I will pay particular attention to how urban action groups positioned themselves. During the early-1970s, some of these groups moved from a revolutionary to a radical activism, leading them to reject participatory planning and condemn action groups who did partake in the decision making process. The main issue I would like to address is how an initially welcomed public-private partnership became highly contested when critical citizens in the early-1970s started to lambast the rigid working methods of the private developer involved. In my talk, I will solely focus on Utrecht's protest groups, but it speaks for itself that their emergence can only be understood by giving an empirical overview of preceding developments. With this paper I hope to bring together the interaction between urban action groups, local authorities and commercial interests into a single analytical framework, demonstrating how local politicians and private developers simultaneously stimulated and reacted to a rapidly democratizing society.

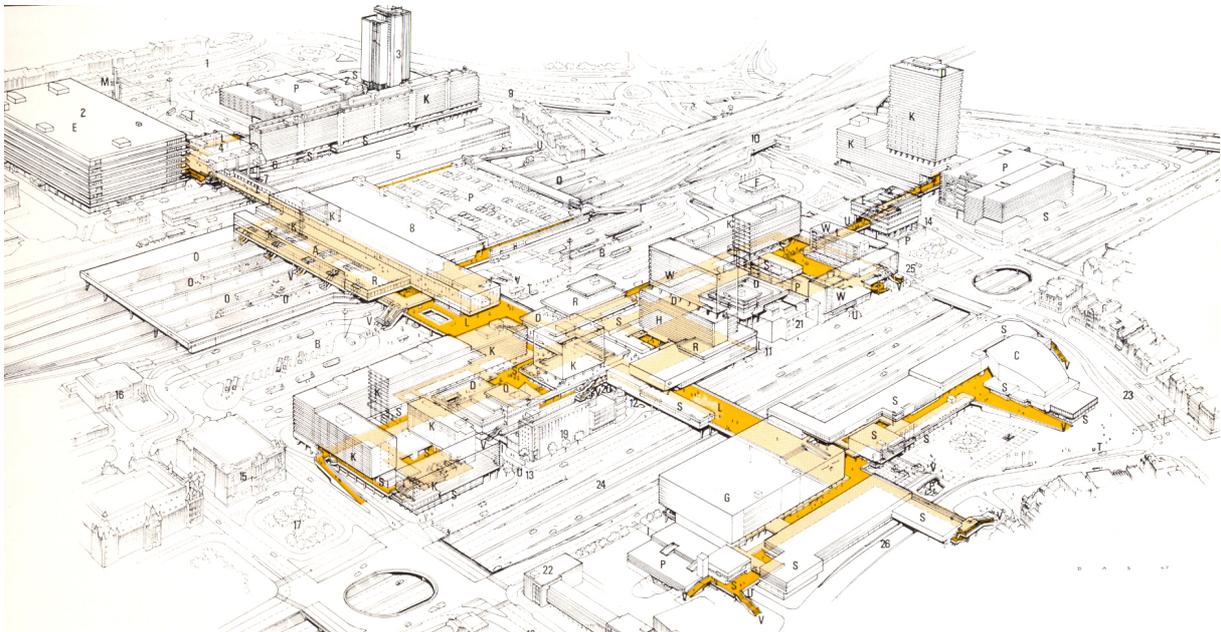
Hoog Catharijne as a case study

The construction history of the privately initiated redevelopment project Hoog Catharijne, located in the inner city of Utrecht, is a classic example of how public and private actors attempted to work together in the field of urban planning during the post-war era. When the Dutch construction company Bredero launched the project in 1962, virtually everyone in Utrecht praised this vast shopping and office complex, but during its construction the public consensus altered radically. Criticism came from young professionals in the field of urban planning as well as local protest groups, eventually followed by local politicians.

Hoog Catharijne's plan encompassed the redevelopment of Utrecht's central railway station and an adjacent nineteenth-century mixed-use quarter, which were regarded as inefficient and obsolete at the time. Furthermore, the scheme included the sealing of a canal to give way to a multi-lane arterial road, parking spaces for thousands of cars and an elevated

² W.S. van der Boor, *Stedebouw in samenwerking. Een onderzoek naar de grondslagen voor publiek-private samenwerking in de stedebouw* (Alphen aan den Rijn 1991), V. Mamadouh, *De stad in eigen hand. Provo's, kabouters en krakers als stedelijke sociale beweging* (Den Haag 1992), H. de Liagre Böhl, *Amsterdam op de helling. De strijd om stadsvernieuwing* (Amsterdam 2010), C. Wagenaar, *Town planning in the Netherlands since 1800* (Rotterdam 2011), H. van der Cammen and L. de Klerk, *Ruimtelijke ordening. Van grachtengordel tot Vinex-wijk* (Alphen aan den Rijn 2000), K. Schuyt and E. Taverne, *1950. Welvaart in zwart-wit* (Den Haag 2000), C. Klemek, *The transatlantic collapse of urban renewal. Postwar urbanism from New York to Berlin* (Chicago 2011). S.V. Ward, *Planning the twentieth-century city. The advanced capitalist world* (Chichester 2002).

indoor pedestrian area that would connect local businesses and shopping venues to the old inner city and a new central station. Hoog Catharijne was a typical product of modernist urban planning, in which traffic flows and urban functions such as living, shopping and work were to be strictly separated. With these features, the complex was suited to accommodate the emerging services-based economy and cope with the corresponding mounting economic pressures on Utrecht's inner city. In order to accommodate a growing number of cars, more retail- and shopping venues and increasing amounts of office space, several Dutch municipalities considered the comprehensive redevelopment of their inner cities during the 1950s and 1960s, but Utrecht was the first city to co-operate with a private developer to do so. Hoog Catharijne was bound to be the largest urban renewal operation ever carried out in the Netherlands.



The original plan for Hoog Catharijne

Popular and administrative appraisal

At the time of the plan's conception in 1962, Utrecht was the fourth city in the country with a population of some 250,000 inhabitants. The mayor and municipal executive had already considered partial urban renewal in the 1950s and early 1960s, but the city's aldermen soon found that they lacked the financial means to execute any plan. In addition, they thought of themselves as ill-equipped to deal with the complexities involved with the reconstruction of the inner city. The plan as proposed by Bredero, therefore, came as a welcome surprise. The construction company proposed that it would not only finance the redevelopment project, but also to integrate formerly separated procedures in the building process such as acquisition,

design, construction, exploitation and marketing.³ Consequently, only one developer oversaw Hoog Catharijne's complete planning process. The municipal executive however saw this concentration of power as an advantage, since it lacked the means to develop a similar plan itself. The plan was met with great enthusiasm in Utrecht and beyond. A local newspaper wrote that the 'overwhelming' plan would soon give 'Utrecht the appearance of an ultra-modern city'.⁴ An architectural journal was similarly enthusiastic: 'Every realistic city council would be delighted when an initiator would come to the fore with brains, money and pushing power, especially one who is convinced that he can do the job within a time span of ten years.'⁵ Even the local heritage movement embraced the plan.⁶ The exuberance for the redevelopment of Utrecht's station quarter seemed to be omnipresent during the early-1960s.

Bredero-representatives and city officials repeatedly expressed their satisfaction over the harmonious way in which the Hoog Catharijne plan had come into existence, while simultaneously stressing the merits of public-private partnerships in the field of urban planning.⁷ Local politicians clearly wanted to propel the city's image, from the provincial capital it had always been, into a metropolis geared for the future. They unconcernedly conceded decision-making power to Bredero, thus making the construction company a power broker in local politics. This somewhat threatening prospect however did not influence the voting over the plan's implementation. Out of 45 city councilors, only two voted against the far-reaching contract with Bredero.⁸ Local politicians repeatedly stressed a quick implementation of the plan, and in 1967 construction commenced. Protests remained virtually non-existent around this time, even though it was clear that the city council's decision to go ahead with planning procedures would give Bredero a free hand in Utrecht's inner city for almost ten years.

The almost submissive stance by which Utrecht's politicians and citizens received Hoog Catharijne may be explained through an urge for the rapid modernization of society, which was made possible by encouraging economic growth figures. Being modern became a 'moral imperative' in the early-1960s.⁹ At the same time, Dutch local politics were rather a-political during this period. Politicians and citizens put a lot of trust into technological knowledge, as displayed by companies such as Bredero, on which they were increasingly compelled to fall back in a post-industrial society that was progressively becoming more complex. Furthermore, private redevelopment was uncommon in the Netherlands. As a consequence, there were no negative experiences with the phenomenon whatsoever.

Analogous to the idea of a pre-emptively acting Dutch administrative elite as presented in current historiography, several efforts were made at a national level to formally regulate participatory planning during the latter half of the 1960s. However, these ideas only

³ Schuyt en Taverne, 1950, p. 187.

⁴ *Het Centrum*, 11 oktober 1962, cited in: H. Buiters, *Hoog Catharijne. De wording van het winkelhart van Nederland* (Utrecht 1993), p. 36.

⁵ J. Petri, 'Hoog Catharijne', *Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting* (1964), p. 142.

⁶ K. Wiekart, 'Het plan-Dingemans en Hoog-Catharijne. Een synthese lijkt mogelijk', *Kunst in Utrecht*, nr. 5 (1962), p. 75.

⁷ Utrechts archief, *Plan Hoog Catharijne* (Utrecht 1962), p. 5.

⁸ Buiters, *Hoog Catharijne*, p. 47

⁹ J.C. Kennedy, 'Voorwoord', in: G. van den Brink, *Moderniteit als opgave. Een antwoord aan relativisme en conservatisme* (Amsterdam 2007), p. 25.

sluggishly found their way into the hearts and minds of Utrecht's local politicians. When Hoog Catharijne's spatial plan was to be finally approved by means of a co-decision procedure in 1969, several soon-to-be affected citizens filed complaints. These were almost without exception disregarded by the municipal executive, a stance that was approved by the city council. A social-democrat councilor deemed it 'impracticable' and 'unnecessary' to take the citizens' objections into consideration, whereas a liberal-conservative councilor stated that he admired the amount of time and effort citizens had put into the co-decision procedure, but that when the objections were weighed 'in the end the public interest, namely the success of Hoog Catharijne, should prevail'.¹⁰ The councilors were not the only ones to utter such skepticism about the merits of participatory planning. During the late-1960s Dutch urban planners fiercely debated civil interference in the planning process. They identified 'growing tensions' between citizens and public authorities over the spatial order, but questioned if more democracy could solve the issues involved.¹¹ Hoog Catharijne's planner-in-chief not only detested citizen participation, he also doubted whether civil servants themselves had any inclination about what spatial planning was actually about.¹² On the whole, Utrecht's local politicians, and especially Bredero-representatives, shared an outspoken technocratic view on urban planning during the first years of Hoog Catharijne's construction.

The emergence of local criticism and calls for participation

The general public approval of Hoog Catharijne and the citizen's relative modesty only radically altered in 1970, when Bredero rejected an alternative plan for a parcel within the company's predetermined redevelopment area. The optional scheme concerned a venue for musical performances that would abolish an arterial road as proposed by the construction company. It was the way in which Bredero-representatives opposed this alternative that sparked off widespread critique, rather than the wholesale demolition of the station quarter or the aesthetic appearance of Hoog Catharijne. The citizens' critique eventually drove a wedge between the private developer and the municipal executive. However, it should be stressed here that this happened in conjunction with a belated municipal strive for more democratic planning, and a remarkably persistent technocratic stance disseminated by Bredero. The discussion over the alternative plan for a musical venue became the first public encounter between the opposing societal views of the three actors involved in the determination of Utrecht's urban future.

Soon after the alternative plan became public, an action group came into existence to appeal for its implementation. It could count on the warm support of the local press.¹³ The action group consisted of a motley crew of stakeholders: local politicians pleading for a democratization of society, engaged young adults and local shop owners.¹⁴ Immediately after the action group made itself heard and the press had endorsed its demands, city councilors and

¹⁰ Utrechts Archief, Raadsverslag 20 februari 1969.

¹¹ J. Viegen, 'Zin en onzin van de "inspraak"', *Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting* (1970), p. 104.

¹² H.T. Vink, 'Democratisering van de ruimtelijke ordening', *Stedebouw en volkshuisvesting* (1970), p. 488.

¹³ D.A. van Ruler, 'Afwijzing Vreeburgplan onaanvaardbaar', *Plan*, jrg. 1, nr. 1 (1970), p. 6.

¹⁴ Utrechts Archief, 'Open brief Aktiegroep Vredenburg aan B en W', 20 February 1970.

civil servants started to express their doubts about the co-operation with their private partner. Civil servants started to speak of Bredero as being too business-minded. This swift change of mind demonstrates just how fragile the consensus within the Dutch urban renewal order was at times. In order to make up for the backlog in the provision of information, local politicians wanted to involve action groups in future planning decisions over Hoog Catharijne. However, they stated that little co-operation was to be expected from Bredero in doing so.¹⁵

To show its commitment to the democratic cause the municipal executive published a bill in which the administrators called for a ‘lively exchange of thoughts’ with local citizens. In the bill, the politicians stated that Utrecht should adapt to the ‘changing needs and wishes of society’.¹⁶ The publication was extremely ill received, especially by the so-called ‘Binnenstadscomité’.¹⁷ This committee was the successor to the one-issue action group that was set up to endorse the implementation of the alternative plan for a musical venue. It mainly represented the interests of small shop owners who feared revenue losses due to Hoog Catharijne. In a tendentious reaction on the municipality’s bill, its chairman stated that it was ‘just another traffic scheme with no planning visions’.¹⁸ Despite these harsh comments, the committee would eventually co-operate with the municipality to safeguard the interests of its members.

The rising protests and changing moods within the municipal executive and city council had not gone unnoticed by Bredero. Its managing director Jan de Vries soon stated that the council should base its future planning decisions about Hoog Catharijne on facts and figures instead of emotions and opinions, by which he positioned himself as a true technocrat. In pursuit of the most efficient problem-solving strategies, technocrat experts such as De Vries contended that their technical methodologies and modes of decision-making were ‘value-free’.¹⁹ During Hoog Catharijne’s construction and decision-making process De Vries frequently lambasted the interference of critical citizens and journalists, as might be exemplified by the following quote: ‘I don’t have anything to do with the public at large, nor the press. We decide on what happens here.’²⁰ He combined a marked contempt of Dutch journalism with an outspoken technocratic view on society by stating that his company was only willing to be transparent towards those who govern, and that the press was not responsible for a well-functioning democracy.²¹

To De Vries’ opinion, action groups only acted out of their own interests, which usually led to ‘unmotivated’ delay in construction processes.²² Bredero was the company that would objectively transcend partisan interests by basing its research on empirical calculations:

¹⁵ P.A. Wilbrink, *De analyse van een besluitvormingsproces. Een case-study inzake de besluitvorming bij het rekonstruktieplan Hoog Catharijne; in het bijzonder met betrekking tot het Muziekcentrum* (Utrecht 1971), p. 46.

¹⁶ Utrechts Archief, Archief Gemeenteraad 1970, *Kernbeeld. Discussienota over de oude stad*, mei 1970.

¹⁷ Utrechts Archief, Archief Gemeenteraad 1970, *Kernbeeld. Discussienota over de oude stad. Reacties*, and: *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 26 May 1970.

¹⁸ *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 4 July 1970.

¹⁹ F. Fischer, *Technocracy and the politics of expertise* (Newbury Park 1990), p. 48.

²⁰ *De Haagsche Post*, 21 April 1971.

²¹ *Utrechts Nieuwsblad*, 29 May 1971.

²² J. de Vries, ‘Misverstanden over de projectontwikkelaar’, *Plan*, jrg. 5, nr. 5 (1974), p. 6.

‘Fundamental research is just as important for the responsible production of space as it is for the production of industrial goods.’ According to De Vries, the social sciences were not yet able to contribute to the studies his company made, since these were too intermingled with ‘political emotions’.²³ Bredero’s managing director displayed a deep-seated animosity towards politics coupled with an unswerving commitment to scientific decision-making. For De Vries, competing interest groups such as the Binnenstadscomité were the enemy of a rational conduct of business. In De Vries’ worldview, technocracy was not just the application of technical modes to the solution of defined problems, but a pervading ethos.²⁴

Conflicting interests between the action groups

Bredero’s technocratic stance aggravated the protests against Hoog Catharijne. The self-assurance by which the construction company developed the complex was countered by an equal vigour by action groups from the early-1970s onwards. Hoog Catharijne came to be seen as a symbol of technocratic arrogance by some. A Marxist protest group, consisting of mainly students, radicalized in such a way that it even called for taking up arms against the municipal executive and construction company. This group printed a widely read wallpaper named the ‘Muurkrant’, which had a circulation of several thousand copies. In its minutes, the editorial team stated that it wanted to ‘stir up the hate against the ruling class, develop a massive militant solidarity, organize the masses and finally arm them and unchain a class war’.²⁵ The editors said they wanted to ‘execute the executioners of Utrecht’s inner city’.²⁶ Hoog Catharijne was presented as a capitalist coup on Utrecht’s inner city. These types of threats and accusations against the municipality and Bredero were made on a weekly basis, and posted on highly visible spots in Utrecht’s inner city. It was not solely the way in which Bredero executed the development of Hoog Catharijne, but also the company’s capitalist signature that was a thorn in the eye of the Muurkrant-collective.²⁷

With its fierce rhetoric and ideological ambitions the action group distinguished itself from the Binnenstadscomité, which increasingly co-operated with the municipality to get its point across. Whereas the Muurkrant-collective pleaded for an unscrupulous revolution, the committee was more focused on an evolution of the political system in order to obtain more democratic rights, save Utrecht’s townscape and safeguard the interests of small shop owners in the old inner city. It should be stressed here that the Muurkrant saw Hoog Catharijne not only as an intrinsic threat, but also as a *casus belli* by which the collective could mobilize Utrecht’s citizens to revolt against the system. By doing so, both the Muurkrant and the Binnenstadscomité vied for the favor of Utrecht’s small shop owners. Consequently a mutual conflict between the two action groups was born. The Muurkrant stated that ‘Bredero’s

²³ De Vries, ‘Misverstanden over de projectontwikkelaar’, p. 3.

²⁴ A. Giddens, *The class structure of advanced societies* (New York 1973), p. 258.

²⁵ IISG, Archief Muurkrant Utrecht, notulen Muurkrant, De noodzaak tot samenwerking van de oppositie, tweede gewijzigde uitgave (December 1970).

²⁶ IISG, Archief Muurkrant Utrecht, ‘Medebeslissingsrecht? Nooit van gehoord. Inspraak? Ja, dat is bij ons keurig geregeld hoor’ (June 1971).

²⁷ H. Buiten, ‘Naar een internationaal bouwconcern. 1947-1986’ in: W.M.J. Bekkers, *Bredero’s bouwbedrijf. Familiebedrijf, mondiaal bouwconcern, ontvlechting* (Amsterdam 2005), p. 85.

greedy department stores and parking garages would cut off the shop owners and their clientele in the cozy old inner city.²⁸ This was exactly the same opinion as ventilated by the Binnenstadscomité, albeit expressed in much stronger terms. The sharing of common goals and the co-operative political stance of the committee led the *Muurkrant* to insinuate that the action group was ‘infiltrated by Bredero’s figureheads’, and it was held to be co-responsible for the devastation of Utrecht’s inner city.²⁹ In the eyes of the *Muurkrant*-editors, the committee was weakening the revolutionary potential of Utrecht’s citizenry. It chose a strategy of polarization and mobilization and opposed the committee’s ‘bourgeois activism’. Utrecht’s shop owners, mostly of middle-class descent, unsurprisingly chose for the latter protest mode.

Instead of solely contesting the municipality’s urban policy, the Binnenstadscomité wanted to make Utrecht’s politicians ‘more aware’ of the wrongs in the partnership with Bredero.³⁰ This less confrontational strategy bore fruit in 1972, when the municipal executive designated the old inner city as a pedestrian area after demands by the committee. Around this time, local politicians were becoming increasingly alienated from their co-operation partner due to the remarkable press statements made by Bredero’s managing director Jan de Vries. These were considered to be incompatible with the municipality’s urge for a democratization of its decision-making processes. The latter development was on the one hand the result of the technocratic positioning of Bredero and the rising protests against this, on the other hand the consequence of broader societal developments. Just as other policy domains, Dutch spatial planning became highly politicized during the early 1970s.³¹ The relationship between politicians and citizens was redefined according to key concepts such as equal say and joint decision-making. In the field of urban planning this resulted in the change of the citizen’s role from a ‘planning subject’ into a cooperative ‘planning object’.³² In Utrecht the municipality also – however belatedly – tried to implement co-decision procedures, but since the contracts with Bredero were already sealed in the early-1960s it was often impossible to amend the Hoog Catharijne plan. This became painfully clear when the municipal executive, after protests by the Binnenstadscomité, wanted to stop Bredero from demolishing a nineteenth-century landmark located in the station quarter. After deliberation with both the construction company and the action group, the aldermen had to comply with the former’s conclusion: ‘A deviation from the original plan can lead to a severe disruption of the agreed-upon time schedule’.³³

Utrecht’s municipal executives may not have been able to alter the plans for Hoog Catharijne, but they did start to publicly express severe criticism on Bredero’s rigid working methods. The alderman concerned with spatial planning stated in 1973 in a newspaper article entitled ‘The god given concrete obduracy of Hoog Catharijne’ that today he ‘would have

²⁸ IISG, Archief *Muurkrant* Utrecht, ‘Politie arresteert vier kabouters. Reden: té vrije meningsuiting’, 25 September 1970.

²⁹ IISG, Archief *Muurkrant* Utrecht, Notulen *Muurkrant*, 15 April 1973.

³⁰ Utrechts Archief, Binnenstadscomité notulen, 31 October 1972.

³¹ P. de Rooy, *Republiek van rivaliteiten. Nederland sinds 1813* (Haarlem 2002), p. 240.

³² Van der Cammen and De Klerk, *Ruimtelijke ordening*, p. 242.

³³ Utrechts Archief, Reactie Bredero op bijeenkomst ‘Red de Utrecht’ en college, (16 February 1973).

drawn up a totally different contract than in 1963'.³⁴ Feelings of remorse dominated the article – a stark contrast with the praise by which the same alderman had received Hoog Catharijne a decade before. The Muurkrant remained extremely critical, despite the municipality's new insights. Its irreconcilable and uncooperative stance may lead one to believe that the Muurkrant was only interested in antagonizing local politicians and Bredero-representatives. However, this would be a rather cynical point of view when one takes into account the thousands of man-hours spent on editing and producing the wallpaper in conjunction with the upheaval the collective caused behind the scenes of the municipality as well as the construction company. We should take the goals of the Muurkrant seriously by closely examining its self-image in comparison to that of the Binnenstadscomité.

Towards a comparative analysis of urban action groups

How should we explain the fundamental differences between the two most important urban action groups that came to the forefront during the construction of Hoog Catharijne? This question can only be answered by taking into account how these groups wanted to achieve their goals. Here, Max Weber's ideas on *Gesinnungsethik* and *Verantwortungsethik* might be useful. In the latter half of the 1960s the individualization of Dutch society brought about a quest for 'engagement' and new convictions, preferably with an exalted ideal.³⁵ This consequently led to a politicization of human relations and a widespread dissemination of what Weber calls *Gesinnungsethik*, 'the ethic of ultimate ends', which meant the doing of good deeds out of conviction without paying notice to the possible consequences: 'The believer in an ethic of ultimate ends feels "responsible" only for seeing to it that the flame of pure intentions is not quenched.'³⁶ The members of the Muurkrant-collective can be seen as representatives of this type of politics. If their actions were counterproductive for the good cause, they ascribed this to the character of their opponents instead of the nature of their own handling. This stood in stark contrast to how the Binnenstadscomité operated. Their style of politics can be categorized as *Verantwortungsethik*, 'the ethic of responsibility', in which the consequences of political deeds are always taken into consideration. A proponent of this style of politics will always feel the need 'to give an account of the foreseeable results of his or her action'.³⁷ Both styles had far-reaching consequences for the way in which the Muurkrant and Binnenstadscomité tried to get their point across, respectively a rhetoric filled with emotional platitudes and a style dominated by rational considerations subject to debate by others.

The radical tone of the Muurkrant-collective should also be explained as a way to distinguish itself from the 'bourgeois' Binnenstadscomité. Its student members had become simultaneously overconfident and suspicious due to the top-down democratization strategies by Dutch governmental bodies in the latter half of the 1960s. Also, successful extra-parliamentary actions against urban renewal abroad provided a source of inspiration and hope

³⁴ *De Volkskrant*, 14 juli 1973.

³⁵ De Rooy, *Republiek van rivaliteiten*, p. 240.

³⁶ M. Weber, *Politik als Beruf* (Munich 1926), p. 29.

³⁷ Weber, *Politik als Beruf*, p. 29.

for the Muurkrant-activists.³⁸ Intellectual ideas were frequently and rapidly exchanged between representatives of student movements during this period, and young New Left leaders were at the vanguard of protests against urban renewal all over the Western world.³⁹ Herbert Marcuse's influential essay 'Repressive tolerance' provided an intellectual framework to reject the invitation to participate in co-decision procedures, which were initially regarded as a scam by both the Binnenstadscomité and the Muurkrant.

Conclusion

On the 24th of September 1973, ten years after a long and tedious planning and construction process, Hoog Catharijne opened to the public. At that time it was already much disparaged, not because of its architectural qualities, but because of the way in which the involved private developer had operated. Soon after the opening celebration the Binnenstadscomité dissolved itself. It had reached most of its goals through cooperation with Utrecht's municipal executive. The Muurkrant continued its ferocious attacks on Hoog Catharijne, albeit less frequently and with more attention for other 'atrocities' in the capitalist system. Local politicians frequently stated that they had learned their lesson from ceding too much decision power to Bredero, for which they tried to atone by offering more participatory planning. Although this was attempted, after the arrangements were made and the contracts were sealed, the power of Bredero's technical control could not be brought within the range of democratic consensus to any further extent. Years after Hoog Catharijne's completion, Bredero's managing director, Jan de Vries, declared that he was not concerned about the reputation of the complex, 'as long as those in relevant positions know: You can always trust these guys at Bredero'.⁴⁰

With a political focus on participation, equal say and social activism, market forces in the field of urban renewal were increasingly seen as undemocratic bodies with illegitimized power over the Dutch living environment at the beginning of the 1970s. For the Muurkrant, spatial planning was ideally suited as a polarized political arena because of the vested interests and the co-operation between public and private partners. For the Binnenstadscomité and municipal executive, the construction of Hoog Catharijne resulted in a conflict between efficiency and participation. As the case of Hoog Catharijne demonstrates, we should be careful not to sketch a too simplistic and monolithic image of the protests against the urban renewal order. When one researches the politics behind this order, close attention should be paid to shifting positions and the mutual conflicts between blocks that at first sight might seem to represent a singular interest, but actually have a more complex motive within the realm of urban planning. My contention is that this not only holds true for several other case

³⁸ A. Verbij, *Tien rode jaren. Links radicalisme in Nederland 1970-1980* (Amsterdam 2005), p. 86.

³⁹ 'Zustand und Aufgabe der SPD. Beschluß des Bundeskongresses der Jungsozialisten in Munich vom 5.-7. Dezember 1969' (Munich 1969), in: S. Miller and H. Potthoff, *Kleine Geschichte der SPD* (Bonn 1991), p. 434, and: Klemek, *The transatlantic collapse of urban renewal*, p. 191.

⁴⁰ 'Misleiding! Ze weten wel beter. "Betonboer" Jan de Vries over Hoog Catharijne; de publieke opinie; winst en verlies; kernenergie en de kreten van de regering' in: *Elsevier* (28 May 1977).

studies in the Netherlands, but also for redevelopment projects in other West-European countries.⁴¹

⁴¹ The political dynamics during the construction of an urban redevelopment project in the West-Berlin borough of Kreuzberg during the 1960s and 1970s were very similar to the situation in Utrecht, as preliminary research proves: *Neues Kreuzberger Zentrum: from Glitzerding to Profitwurm. The urban renewal process in Berlin-Kreuzberg and the growing tensions between local politicians, private developers and citizens 1963-1974.*

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