Building materials and trade: changes in the building organisation between North and South (1500-1650)

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In the year 1488 master Johan Oosterhuys from Deventer undertook a journey to Namur in order to buy stone for the new Noordenberg tower in the aforementioned city. His journey was remarkable to say the least. Deventer, in the east of the Northern Low Countries, traditionally bought its stone from the Rhineland, as did the rest of the Northern Low Countries in the Middle Ages. At the end of the fifteenth century, the city of Deventer imported sandstone from the duchy of Bentheim in particular. For the building of the Noordenberg tower, however, apart from Bentheim sandstone, ‘blue’ limestone from Namur was also selected. The reason Oosterhuys chose to go to Namur probably lay in the fact that, at the time, an alternative to the high cost of transport tolls on the River Vecht between Bentheim and Deventer was being sought. Yet on the other hand, the Namur stone had to come a longer way: from the South, over the River Meuse, and from there, shipped to the North by way of Gorinchem.

The Deventer example shows that around 1500 there were several regions exporting stone for construction in the Northern Low Countries. The stone trade produced raw materials, ones that were partially worked, and ready-made products, depending on the local traditions and the demands of buyers in the North. These demands in particular were on the verge of a decisive change that would lead to the emancipation of the building industry in the North. Up until the sixteenth century, the relationship between the Northern and Southern Low Countries indeed seemed to be a one-way trade, at least as far as stone was concerned. The lack of this material in the North, combined with the fact that a well organized network of stonemasons, traders and building masters had existed in the South from an early date, led to the widespread diffusion of Gothic architecture from Southern Brabant. The products of this ‘exported architecture’ can be found all over Zealand and Holland; the hegemony of these building masters (Keldermans, De Waghemakere etc.) was so absolute that, already in the early fifteenth century, the only two church building lodges that existed in the North started to buy ready-made products from the regular stone traders. The first was 's-Hertogenbosch, which is in fact situated in Northern Brabant and, as the fourth main city of the duchy, was naturally linked to the South on the professional and political level; the second was Utrecht, centre of the most important Northern bishopric.

Quarrymen, traders and building masters – often members of the same family – sold their materials along with pre-prepared architectural elements. The ‘Brabantine Gothic’ made from the white, sandy limestone from Lede, Balegem and Gobertange was therefore the dominant form of architecture in both North and South. Regions like the Meuse Valley, the Rhineland and the Bentheim area had a much looser grip on the development of architecture in the North at the time.

This late medieval tradition would drastically change in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. For a long time the war between North and South has been considered as the main reason for this change, but the socio-economic situation changed too at that time: for the construction industry in
the North this meant that, instead of importing architecture, a more independent role could gradually be assumed. The expansion of the Dutch cities and the collapse of the nobility and Church as building commissioners, led to changes such as the institutionalization of construction and the growth of specialization from the 1530s onward. The municipal building companies emancipated themselves; i.e. they started designing, organizing and realizing major projects on their own. For the stone traders and for the traditional building masters, such as the Keldermans family, this meant a reduction in their part and influence in architectural developments.\(^8\)

In this same period, white limestone from Brabant became scarce and was only found in smaller blocks, while around 1530 trade from the Meuse Valley received a major boost, since one of its main impediments fell away. The staple right of the Gelderland city of Venlo – at that time Gelderland was not yet part of the Habsburg empire – came increasingly under pressure, especially from the industrial town of Liège; after the disappearance of the staple right, Meuse traders were able to sell their products directly to the North, with Dordrecht becoming the major trading city.\(^9\) Stone trader Willem I van Neurenberg profited greatly from this change. From the 1530s onward he became a presence in the Northern market, first of all in Nijmegen, his first Northern outpost, where he delivered stone for the town hall, the harbour, the fortress and other projects.

\(^8\) The changes in the design process were also influenced by the presence of Italian masters in the Low Countries. De Jonge 1994a; Duverger 1964, pp. 181-182.

\(^9\) Although the abolition of Venlo’s staple right only became official in 1545, the export of building materials from the Meuse Valley had increased since the end of the 1520s. Kleintjes & Sormani 1910-1919.
Although continuity in stone trading between North and South was maintained, a medieval stone trading business as run by the Brabantine Keldermans only bears a slight comparison to the activities of the successive sixteenth and seventeenth-century leading stone trading family, the Van Neurenbergs from the Meuse Valley. Their activities will play a central role in the present chapter. The change in the traditional trade pattern together with the consequences this had for the Van Neurenberg family, and the relationship between the different stone producing areas, all form part of this study.

Building Materials and Techniques

At the beginning of the sixteenth century there were few indications of the changes that were about to occur in the construction industry. The expansion in population, combined with a professionalization in municipal organization, formed the basis for this change. Throughout the Low Countries, cities and trade were booming and various regional centres had developed. In around 1500, international trade was concentrated in Antwerp, which had taken over the position Bruges had formerly enjoyed, and this also led to increased profit and prosperity in the nearby Zealand cities. Products from Brabant and Flanders were transported by way of Antwerp, and with regard to the construction industry, the city was to become a major port for the international marble and stone trade. This was evidenced by the construction of the town hall designed by Cornelis II Floris (1561-1565), with a façade completely covered with blue limestone from Namur and various ‘Belgian’ marbles, all from the Meuse region.10

In the far north it was the town of Dordrecht that played an increasing role in North Netherlands stone trading, although this city lost its position in the seventeenth century in favour of Amsterdam. In the north-east it was the Hanseatic cities of Zwolle, Kampen, Zutphen and Deventer that held an essential position in the trade with Northern Germany.11 In the south-east where the main bulk of stone was carried over the River Meuse, the trade became more important and developed into a deep-rooted and long lasting situation, due to the abolition of Venlo’s staple right.

As was said earlier, the withdrawal of the nobility and church as building commissioners marks the end of the Brabantine stone trade. From about 1450 onwards there had been a boom in church building, but by 1530 these projects had either been completed or halted.12 Craftsmen and building masters lost their jobs, and so were forced to take on freelance commissions or turn to municipal building. With this change, the building sector moved toward a more independent form of organization in the North.13

Another change that took place was in the design of applied architectural forms, as has been described in the preceding chapters of this book. When the first ‘antique’ elements appeared during the early decades of the sixteenth century, the stone trade in the Meuse valley tried to export products in its own version of this new style, which can still be seen in Maastricht, Nijmegen and Zaltbommel.14 This last surviving trace of traditional practice, albeit clothed in the new style, was based upon the influ-

10 Adriaensens 1980; van Tussenbroek 2001c.
13 Peeters 1987; van Tussenbroek 2001b.
14 Vos & Leeman 1986, p. 11.
ence of Liège as a centre of artistic renewal, at the heart of which stood the buildings commissioned by the prince, bishop Erard de la Marck, as we shall see in the example of the Nijmegen Cloth Hall. This export of Southern forms and architecture was nevertheless bound to decay due to the North’s newly found independence.

From a building-archaeological point of view, the sixteenth century was also a period of renewal. The use of brick patterns changed: the traditional ‘standing’ or English bond, relieved by a cross bond, had been in use since about 1325 and can especially be seen in façades; for example, the aforementioned Maarten van Rossumhuis in Zaltbommel (1537, dated by dendro-chronology). However, in the early Renaissance façade of Korte Nieuwstraat 2 in Utrecht (1540), a (until that moment) rarely applied header bond was used, thus the introduction of Renaissance forms also brought about a change in brick patterns. At the same time, brick sizes continued to decrease. High-quality small bricks from Holland (IJsselsteentjes) were exported all over the Northern Low Countries, but a similar trend can be noted in local production. The range of traditional roofing materials (roof tiles, over-and-under tiles, slates) was extended by the invention of a new pantile. New city legislation – often spurred by a dramatic fire (Harderwijk 1503, Zaltbommel 1524, Delft 1536, Breda 1538) – forbade the use of ‘soft’ materials like straw (thatched roofs) and encouraged the use of fire-proof roofing materials. This led to a increased demand for simple curved pantiles, which spread from the province of Overijssel to the rest of the Low Countries. In the middle of the sixteenth century roof construction took another turn. In the fourteenth century, the traditional medieval common rafter had already been reinforced with trusses that transferred the weight of the roofing materials onto the load-bearing walls beneath in a much more effective way. Running lengthwise, on both sides of the trusses there was a roof plate over the upper tiebeam: this horizontal piece of wood supported the rafters at mid-height. In the middle of the sixteenth century these roof plates were more and more frequently replaced by purlins, which were positioned parallel to the roof’s inclination, and (partially) let into the truss posts. In this way the rafters received even better support. Two other features, the ridge-purlin and the central post, were also inventions of the sixteenth century.

The use of oak had dominated the construction of wooden buildings for hundreds of years, but by around 1600, the diminishing size of deciduous forests, the troubling war and trade situation, plus the increasing demand for wood for housing and ship building, led to the use of pine – imported from the Baltic and other areas – from the time of the Twelve Years’ Truce (1609-1621) onward. Cornelis Cornelisz.’ invention of the crank in 1598 led to an industrialization of wood. Trunks were no longer squared by hand, but cut in sawmills. It was not long before changes in construction


occurred: the disappearance of the wooden skeleton (an important construction principle in the Northern Low Countries) and the building of simple floors were typical consequences of the use of pine. These new principles were first applied from about 1580; by around 1650 they had become commonplace. 17 The sixteenth century also saw an increasing use of iron nails in North Netherlandish roof constructions, and of wall-cramps. Iron came mostly from Liège; rationalization and better production techniques, especially the possibility to heat furnaces to higher temperatures, had led to much lower prices. 18

A remarkable example of how renewal in society, architectural principles and building techniques went hand in hand is Huis Ten Bosch in Maarssen (1628), designed by Jacob van Campen. Apart from being a prime example of the latest architectural fashion, i.e. Dutch Classicism, the building also displays new technical features. First of all, it shows a combination of simple and combined floors. 19 Even more striking is the fact that Van Campen’s building is one of the earliest examples of a house with a cavity wall, which ensures better insulation from both heat and cold. Such walls are also present in the works of his contemporary Philips Vingboons, whose final design for House Vredenburg in the Beemster (1643) is the earliest architectural drawing to show a cavity wall. The reason for this is undoubtedly that the wealthy commissioners wished to have more comfort in their homes. 20

The Municipal Building Company

Between 1514 and 1622 the population in Holland increased by 245%, and the rate of urbanization was equally high, 21 which led to a rapid growth in building activities. As a side effect, the increased frequency of fires in cities also contributed to expansion in the construction industry. Monetary renewal brought about an increase in the flow of hard currency, and financial trade traffic was being professionalized. 22 Together, all these factors contributed to the demand for a well organized trade in building materials. 23 Applying the golden rule that a self-run organization is cheaper then hiring specialists, the larger cities of the sixteenth century created their own municipal building companies, with city stonemasons becoming the leading figures within them. 24

The growing importance and independence of the cities in the North is illustrated by the municipal building commissions assigned to the Keldermans family in the last years of their activity, up until 1557. The commissions between 1450 and 1530 were mainly concentrated in the South (the town halls of Hoogstraten, Middelburg, Zoutleeuw); 25 it was only in the last decades that Laureys and

18 Yernaux 1939.
20 Kooij 1996.
22 A sign of this is also the increase of printed lists, schedules etc., in relation to currencies and tolls. de Vries & van der Woude 1995.
23 Also older materials were being re-used. See De Jonge 1999e.
24 This applies especially to the larger cities. Smaller cities maintained their former organizational structure for a longer time. van Tussenbroek 1999a.
25 Meischke 1987a, passim.
Marcelis Keldermans received municipal commissions in the Northern Low Countries (Harderwijk, Hattem, Rhenen, Tiel, Utrecht, Wageningen) and worked on fortifications there.26

The Van Neurenberg family from the Meuse Valley can be seen as successors or heirs to the Keldermans family. By about 1500 they already had a substantial position in traditional stone trading and ambulant building activities. Early commissions such as those in Averbode, Herkenrode and Huy show that Coenraad I and Willem I van Neurenberg were responsible for building design, the supply of stone, and building supervision. At the same time Coenraad I was assigned werckmeester (master of building works) for Maastricht’s St. Servaas church, and he also worked as master builder for the town.27

The main difference between the two families was their geographical origin: both were closely linked to the still strictly divided but inevitable rivers, the Schelde and the Meuse, which were so crucial for transport to the North. The Keldermans family, traders in white limestone from Brabant, were exponents of the Schelde trade, while the Van Neurenbergs, trading in blue limestone from Namur, ‘Belgian’ marbles and mergel (marlstone), used the River Meuse.

Once the Van Neurenbergs began to operate in the Northern market, its dependence on the Keldermans family was over. Only the first commissions in Nijmegen in the 1530s show traces of the medieval tradition, as we shall see below. From their traditional way of working as designers, stone suppliers and building masters, the demands of the Northern market soon forced the Van Neurenbergs into the position of mere stone suppliers, under conditions completely controlled and laid down by the North. The cities took over the role of developing architecture, with stone traders pushed into a position of serving their needs, although this dramatic change did not mean that the amounts of material shipped from the South diminished. The Van Neurenbergs succeeded in retaining a dominant position in the architectural history of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.28

318. Blue Namur stone belongs to a large quantity of carboniferous limestone, extended from Tournai up till Aachen. The hey-day of stone from Tournai was in the 12th and 13th century, and that of blue stone from Namur in the 16th and 17th century. (drawing author).

319. Like the carboniferous limestone, various marbles are extended over a large area. The exploitation was taken up in the 16th century, especially around Rance, Agimont and Limbourg (drawing author).

27 “[…] den stads meester van Tricht”. van Tussenbroek 2001a, chapter III.

28 Only rarely were complete façades ordered at the quarry. The architecture therefore became less and less a matter for the stone trade. Meischke et al. 1997, chapters IV, V en VI. The guilds impeded the ordering of complete architecture. Kolman 1993, p. 135.
In the cities it was the masters of the building lodges, the master masons and stonemasons – all members of the relevant guilds – who were responsible for the supervision and development of building. Some of them had their own workshops or were assigned as municipal building masters, which was the case with Jan Darkennes in ‘s-Hertogenbosch, Joost Jansz. Bilhamer and Hendrick de Keyser in Amsterdam, and Lieven de Key in Haarlem.²⁹ In the bigger cities the institutionalization led to a professional organization, in which the city itself took over regular municipal construction such as building bridges and locks, the maintenance of streets and, of course, the fortress (see Part III, Chapter Two). A city stonemason was responsible for the design of prestigious architectural projects, and the building team was supervised by municipal officials, with the so-called stadsfabryk as the head. However, this building supervisor was not necessarily someone who had practical experience in the building trade.³⁰

Public Contracts

Whereas designer, stone supplier and building master had formerly been concentrated in one person, the division of these roles led to a new system of communication within the building trade. It meant that the public call for tenders for specialized building commissions increased, and that the contracts drawn up contained detailed lists of the work that had to be done. This principle of public contracts was not new.³¹ However, the division of construction work into separate specialized areas did cause an increase in the number of public contracts, which were normally limited to stone working, carpentry and bricklaying. The person responsible for drawing up the specifications did not automatically receive the commission. For the building of the new Schuttersdoelen (archers’ butts) in Gorinchem in 1589, the separate aspects of the building work were put out to tender. Jan Gerritz opened the bidding for the carpentry work at 2,000 guilders. It was laid down that the person who wrote the technical specifications would be paid 25 guilders if he were not the one to win the commission.³²

The fact that design, building specifications and the building crafts themselves were becoming increasingly separated also meant that the overall responsibility for the building was shared by a number of people. The commissioner often had a design ready before he commissioned the actual construction works. It is consequently difficult to ascribe the building to any one person. The result of these developments was that the building process constituted a new phase, separate from and subsequent to the design phase. Not only did the practice of commissioning technical specifications increase, but also the demand for architectural drawings as a means of communication between the different specialists, which meant that new architectural fashions spread more rapidly and widely than ever before. Specifications were copied or even printed; published drawings could be seen at the commissioner’s, and both served as guidelines for those attempting to win a commission. Publicizing designs meant that not just one, but many potential building masters could view the designs, so that even if they did not receive the commission, they learned more about current architecture and its possible novelties, which they might also make use of on other projects.

Where a municipal stonemason was employed, generally speaking he was responsible for the design of a new project, although the building masters were still free to ask someone else to make a drawing, which was why city stonemasons like Joost Jansz. Bilhamer, Hendrick de Keyser and

³⁰ Like Jan van Hoppen in Amsterdam or Peter Fransz. (Timmermans) in Antwerp.
³¹ This does not mean that the separation of design and construction had not occurred before. In 1376 the carpentry works of the belfry in Ghent and in 1386 the works for the town hall of Nivelles were put out to tender. Janse 1964, p. 26. After the decision to build a new town hall, the magistrate of Damme wrote a letter in 1461 to carpenters and stonemasons of several lands and cities in order to get the lowest price. Copies of the project, divided in stone and woodwork, were sent to Ghent, Brussels, Mechelen and Antwerp. Devliegher 1965, pp. 148, 151. In the same year in Utrecht we find the word verdingen (negotiate) in the church bills of the cathedral. Janse 1964, p. 26.
³² Ibidem, p. 27.
Lieven de Key not only operated in Amsterdam and Haarlem, but also in Hoorn (the weigh house), ’s-Hertogenbosch (registry, rood loft) and Leiden (Rijnlandshuis). In the following section we will consider the position of the stone supplier within the building industry.

**Early Building Activities of the Van Neurenberg Family**

Until around 1530 the Van Neurenbergs worked as a traditional stone trading and master builder’s family, like the more famous Keldermans. Coenraad I van Neurenberg’s activities were concentrated within more or less regional boundaries, with their centre in Maastricht where he had his own workshop and from which he sold micro-architecture such as altars and rood lofts, as in the case of Averbode Abbey. On other occasions, such as at Herkenrode Abbey, Coenraad acted as both a stone trader and a builder. Coenraad’s son Willem I had a similar practice.

When the staple right of Venlo was abolished and the River Meuse trade began to boom, Willem I van Neurenberg soon went North. One of Willem I’s main projects was the construction of the Nijmegen Cloth’ Hall, which was almost completely renewed between 1533 and 1545. From the early 1530s onwards, Willem managed to become the major blue stone supplier in Nijmegen. The stone was meant for the harbour, the fortress, and the new Hezel Gate built by local municipal craftsmen. Van Neurenberg’s role had by now been reduced to solely that of a supplier of carved stone. More exemplary of the medieval tradition in the building industry was Willem’s part in the renewal of the Clothmakers’ Hall. In 1533 he was asked to inspect the old hall dating from the fourteenth century, and in the same year talks took place about him supplying the blue stone for the new hall.

In all likelihood, Claes de Waell, a surveyor from Nijmegen, made the basic design for the new hall. Since the city accounts are not quite clear on this point, we may suppose that his design had to

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33 van Tussenbroek 2001b, pp. 54-61.
34 In the city accounts of 1533 there is the entry “Derrick geweest aen meister Wilhelm tot Triicht des blowensteenshalve, hem gegeven 3 gulden, 4 stuiver”. Ibidem.
35 The price difference between both shipments is interesting: one cost 10 Brabantine guilders per 100 feet, the other 18 guilders per 100 feet. This was a matter of the way the stones were cut.
take into account the existing situation since the older cellars and north wall were to be retained in the new hall. Van Neurenberg supplied the stone, including the capitals and the Renaissance decoration for the centre part of the hall. In 1542 he was paid for the 89 days he had been present in Nijmegen supervising the building activities.

Building-archaeological research shows that parts of the fourteenth-century Cloth’ Hall still exist in the present building, such as the cellars and north wall mentioned above. The main parts date from the time of Willem van Neurenberg, who built a hall with pillars of blue stone and traditional wooden floors made by local carpenters. The building was covered with a huge roof, as shown in the reconstruction. Although the Clothmakers’ Hall contains some Renaissance elements, the building is mainly Gothic, with a mixture of ‘old’ and ‘new’ decorations. Despite the later changes, it can be seen as one of the important municipal building commissions of its time – one where the traditional and the modern meet.

**Further Expansion to the North-west**

Willem I van Neurenberg extended his activities in the North. He delivered the tomb for Catharina van Bourbon, mother of Karel van Egmond, Duke of Gelre, which should be seen as an item

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36 A dendrochronological survey was unsuccessful. Glaudemans & van Tussenbroek 2000. See also Weve 1889.
from the Van Neurenberg family’s earlier line in rood lofts and altars. Throughout the period in which the family was present in the market, the trade in black and coloured marbles from the region around Rance, Philippeville and Agimont developed into a substantial part of its activities. In Nijmegen Willem was assigned as lockmaster, he supplied stone for the Moerkensgate in Roermond, probably also for the house of Maarten van Rossum in Zaltbommel, and worked in ’s-Hertogenbosch on a bulwark at the Orthen Gate, designed by Alessandro Pasqualini (see Part One, Chapter III).37

In the following decades the family extended its range but decreased its actual building activities due to the changes in the organization of the building industry discussed above. In the late 1540s Coenraad II van Neurenberg supplied stone for the church of St. Walburgis in Zutphen; in 1570 he supplied columns of blue Namur stone for the new entrance portico of Cologne’s town hall, designed by Cornelis II Floris from Antwerp.38 The supply of materials for the new Clothmakers’ Hall of Sittard, designed by Maximilian Pasqualini (b. 1534 – d. 1572) in the 1560s follows the same pattern.39 Coenraad was merely the stone supplier; the realization of the building had been taken over by municipal craftsmen.

A similar picture emerged when the tower of St. Nicholas in Amsterdam, also known as the Old Church, was enlarged in the years 1563-1565 as part of a bigger building campaign.40 In 1563

37 van Tussenbroek 1999b.
38 Kiene 1991.
40 This was instigated by parish priest Florentius Egbertz., who in the 1550s had already provided the impetus for the enlargement of the middle nave and the building of a chapel dedicated to Mary. Noach 1939, p. 31.
STAMBOOM VAN DE STEENHANDELAFAMILIE VAN NEURENBerg TUSSEN CA. 1465 EN 1650

Coenraad van Neurenberg (ca. 1465 - ca. 1542)

Willem I van Neurenberg (ca. 1490 - ca. 1548)

Coenraad II (ca. 1520 - < 20 - ca. 1595)

Jeanne Dembourg († 1574)

Isabeau de Marechal

Coenraad III († 1548 - 2 - 31 - 1603)

Marie le Bidart († < 7 - 11 - 1597)

Margretha de Swart

Coenraad IV

Charles (†)

Marie Avondeaulx van Schie († 2 - 1604)

Marie Willemot (3-11-1587)

Anne d'Harscamp

Charles le Mercenier

Pieter Adriaens v. Delft

Coenraad V

Johan I

Johan

Coenraad

Willem

Beatrix

Elisabet

Coenraad

Matthijs

Coenraad

Adriaan

Pieter

Gilles

Daniel

Maria

3.25. Genealogical tree of the Van Neurenberg family. beware ZONDER lijn

Building Materials and Trade
the church authorities decided that the medieval tower had to be extended, for which Joost Jansz.
Bilhamer, Amsterdam’s city stonemason, probably made a design. Tenders sought for the stonework
resulted in a consortium of Coenraad II van Neurenberg, together with Pierçon Lambillon, another
leading blue stone tradesman in that period. The work was clearly described in the technical specifica-
tions, which were presented with a drawing showing the difficult parts. Van Neurenberg finished his
part of the project in 1565.  

Family Circumstances

In the 1570s and 1580s some important changes occurred in the Van Neurenberg family’s
circumstances. Coenraad II van Neurenberg stopped working in the North to become ducal master
mason in Namur. In 1571 he was appointed Maître des ouvrages de maçonnerie. In Namur he was to be
responsible for the fortress, and he also built the town hall in 1572, and the meat hall in 1588-1590.
In addition to this, he may have continued to guarantee the stone supply to the North.

It was his son, Coenraad III (b. 1548) who continued the company in the North. In 1577 he
delivered a supply of 4.000 blocks of stone for the Arnhem fortress in response to a commission from
the Spanish king. A year later he was in Amsterdam, supplying blue stone for a number of bridges.
He continued living in the South until 1585 when he moved with his wife Marie le Bidart (also from
a stone trading family) and their four children from Namur to Dordrecht. In doing so he was only
one of the many: other Protestant (stone) traders from the Meuse Valley, such as Willemot, Lambillon
and De Geer, also moved to Dordrecht. The city had an excellent geographical position in terms of
supplying Holland, and developed an active incentives policy to attract traders, craftsmen etc. from
other regions. In addition, there was a tolerant environment regarding religious matters.

In that same year, after the Siege of Antwerp by Alexander Farnese the River Schelde was
closed. Brabantine traders could no longer ship their products to the North. The move to Dordrecht
by the traders from the Meuse Valley can be seen as an aggressive attempt to control and take over
the market, a move that for the most part succeeded. Although the conflict also affected trade on the
Meuse, this commercial lifeline was kept open despite blockades in the years 1584-1586 and 1599-
1602 when it was temporarily closed. The traders were well organized and tried to lower the costs
of the tolls. The system of licent and convoy money, introduced by William of Orange in 1573 as a
contribution to offset the costs of war, was copied by the Duke of Parma, so that in the North as in
the South, the traders could continue to cross the lines with passports recognised by both parties. In
this way the River Meuse was kept open for transport.

Stone Supply in the West

From his base in Dordrecht, Coenraad III worked in Holland and Zealand. He delivered stone
for the restoration of the church of Etten and for the Haarlem weigh house. He built locks, among
others ones in Amsterdam (1594) and Middelburg (1598). In 1596 Joris Rochet, another stone trader
from the Meuse region, supplied the blue stone of Namur for the Vlissinger Gate in Middelburg, but
there is no evidence that these traders were also responsible for designing architecture. Their operational

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41 Ibidem, p. 172.
42 Courtoy 1912, p. 510.
43 van Tussenbroek 2001a, pp. 120-121.
44 Classen 1951.
45 de Bruijn & Huisman 1992.
46 The traders from the Meuse Valley were mostly members of the Walloon church. GAD Doopboeken Waalse kerk.
47 Meulleners 1886.
49 van Tussenbroek 2001a, chapter XII.
50 Japikse 1925, part VIII 1593-1595, p. 337 and Huisman 1986, p. 34.
range, however, was extended to Flanders. In the 1560s Coenraad II was already supplying stone for a city gate in Bruges, and at the end of the 1570s Coenraad III delivered red marble from Agimont for the town hall of Antwerp after damage to it in 1576. Coenraad III was in Antwerp more often: he had personal contacts with Peter Timmermans, also known as Peter Frans, the municipal werkmester, surveyor and building master who bought stone from the Van Neurenbergs. The stone was shipped over the Meuse via Dordrecht to Antwerp.

An interesting building commission at the time was the first (stone) Protestant church in the Low Countries, built in Willemstad in the years 1594-1610. Untypically, part of the design and building of the church were in the hands of Coenraad III van Neurenberg. Willemstad had been founded as a fortress against the Spanish at the end of the sixteenth century. In 1584 the location, which was then not much more than a small village, was given to William of Orange as compensation for losses he had personally suffered in Spanish-dominated Brabant.

The village needed to be fortified and thus was made into a garrison town. The Prince died on July 10, 1584, and two years later, on August 12, 1586 Prince Maurits granted city rights to the town. There was a town hall, also used ‘to preach God’s Word therein’ (Godts Woord daerinne te verdiggen). Maurits donated 600 guilders to build a church, but it took until 1594 for building to begin. On August 2, 1594, the Middelburg carpenter Adriaan de Muyr was commissioned to make a model of the church. As we have seen in the preceding chapter, on Prince Maurits’ personal instructions, a centralized structure was designed. The preparations and the design resulted in an order for stone from Coenraad III van Neurenberg worth 5,800 guilders.

In addition to supplying the stone, Van Neurenberg was also asked to adapt the existing design in order to make a larger church, and to add a tower. He also wrote the technical specifications for the church foundations in De Muyr’s design. The fact that Van Neurenberg received this commission was due to his fame as a lock builder and builder of foundations. He was responsible for the realization of the first phase of the work, even though this was an unusual procedure since no member of the family had been known to work as a master builder since 1542. However, the reason is not hard to find: as mentioned earlier, Willemstad at the time was hardly more than a village with a few dozen houses and lacked the professional municipal building company Van Neurenberg normally had to deal with in other, larger cities. This lack of facilities, specialists and guilds should be seen as the main reason why Van Neurenberg operated as a master builder in Willemstad. His know-how stretched beyond that of a mere supplier of stone. From October 1596, the start of the actual construction work, until his death on November 2, 1603, Coenraad III supervised the laying of the foundations, the supply of stone, and a part of the bricklaying. After 1603 Cornelis Verhoeven from Rotterdam oversaw the works.

**Dynastic Developments: the Politics of Marriage**

Coenraad II died in 1595 after having operated mainly in Namur since 1570. When Coenraad III died eight years later on November 2, 1603, the two members of the family who had led and developed the company since 1570 were gone. Coenraad III, however, had three sons who, following the family tradition, also become active as stone traders. These were Coenraad IV (b. 1571), Willem

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52 Parmentier 1948.
53 About ‘Belgian’ marbles: van Tussenbroek 2001c.
55 Juten 1922 and Ozinga 1929, pp. 12-19. See also Part Three, Chapter III.
56 Juten 1922, p. 11 and van Nispen 1983.
57 Dane 1950, p. 21.
58 Ibidem, p. 56.
59 Ibidem, p. 64.
61 Juten 1922, p. 12. Two iron feet were made as measures, one of which Van Neurenberg received for use in the quarry; the other was for the city.
62 More in van Tussenbroek 2001b.
II (b. c. 1575), and Pieter van Neurenb erg (b. c. 1580). At the time of Coenraad II’s death, the youngest of the three, Pieter, was sent to Namur to ensure that continuity was maintained and that the family could be sure of the essential supply of stone from the South while Coenraad IV and Willem II remained to operate in the North.

Although Coenraad IV was the oldest son, it was Willem II who stayed on in the family home in Dordrecht and became its owner. Shortly after 1610, Willem II must have married Marie Wijmoth, a daughter of Jan Wijmoth, a stone trader from Liège whose family, like the Van Neurenbergs, had come to Dordrecht in 1585. In 1606 Willem became a member of the Dordrecht bricklayers’ guild. A year earlier he completed the façade of the Nijmegen church arch, which was part of the Clothmakers’ Hall that had been built by Willem I van Neurenberg around 1540.

In 1594 his brother, Coenraad IV, married Marie Avondeaulx van Schie. They had two sons, Coenraad (1601) and Johan (1603), neither of whom became a stone trader. Coenraad’s wife died in childbirth with the second son, and subsequently Coenraad married Yde Jans. Twenty years later, in 1627, he married a third time. His wife was Judith Dermelle van Nijvel who was living in Amsterdam. Coenraad’s activities as a trader were diversified: he traded in blue stone and marbles, but also in coal. He was active as a lock builder and took out a patent for a dredging machine.

The third brother, Pieter, remained in the South. In 1601 in Namur he married Anne d’Harscamp, who was from a family of master smiths and iron casters. For a time Pieter went to the North where his main activity must have been focussed on the supply of stone from the quarries to his brothers in order to guarantee the continuity of the company, although the lack of personal or family records makes it hard to establish the company’s internal structure. One piece of evidence we do have concerns Pieter’s activities on October 9, 1614, when he drew up a contract with Gilles van Maasniel and his father-in-law Hubert Misson to supply them with a year’s supply of gravestones. The stone was to be shipped in Bouvignes, and was without doubt meant for the Northern market.

Demographic expansion and economic prosperity had a positive effect on the quantity of building activities. In addition, structural changes within the construction industry continued. Division and specialization grew, and municipal building companies became centres of creativity. They were the major commissioners of traders like Van Neurenberg, but the court and the patriciate also increased their position in this area.

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63 Ibidem, chapter IX.
64 Ibidem, pp. 126-127.
65 Doorman 1940, p. 115.
66 Courtoy 1920, pp. 236-237.
The masters of the municipal building companies were responsible for the design of city buildings (to which in this period churches also belonged) and were the main commissioners of stone. Sometimes they had their own stone masonry workshops, as Lieven de Key had in Haarlem and Joost Jansz. Bilhamer and Hendrick de Keyser in Amsterdam. The growing importance of these municipal masters is reflected in the networking and marriage politics of the Van Neurenbergs. The group of Meuse River traders that came to Dordrecht in 1585 formed a close society that tended to intermarry. In the following decades, however, more traders married local girls or went to Amsterdam. For stone traders it was a clear sign that the old hegemony of traders from the stone producing areas had collapsed: Dutch entrepreneurs started to take over the market, which can be seen from the marriages of Anna van Neurenberg, daughter of Coenraad III, and Marie le Bidart, baptized on November 1, 1585.\(^{67}\) In Dordrecht Anna married Jacques Saverij, a trader from the South with whom she had one son, Matthijs.\(^{68}\) The father died young, and on May 28, 1616 Anna, by then thirty years old, married for a second time – to Pieter Adriaensz. van Delft from Amsterdam. Van Delft, who did not come from the South, was one of the leading independent stonemasons and traders of his time. His main trade was focussed on Bentheimer sandstone. He, too, had been previously married – to Mayke Steenwinckel, who was quite possibly related to the well known Steenwinckel family of stone traders and master builders from Antwerp: Louwrens, Hans the Elder, Hans the Younger, Laurens and Willem, then active in Denmark and elsewhere in the North.\(^{69}\)

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67 GAD Klapper Waalse kerk.


69 Louwrens worked from 1578 onward on the town hall of Embden and Hans the Elder, his son, was royal architect for Christian IV of Denmark from 1582. Roding 1991, pp. 27, 30.
Pieter van Delft’s activities were concentrated in Amsterdam, where by 1610 he had his own business, working on a great many projects. Between 1611 and 1629 he is found building the office of the *Huiszittenmeesters* (wardens) of the Old Church in Amsterdam, where he also supplied stone for the sexton’s house, gravestones and other items. Outside Amsterdam, he supplied sandstone for the new weigh house in Nijmegen in 1612, and his work is known as far to the east as Lübeck. Most of his activities, however, were concentrated in Amsterdam. In June 1622 he was paid for blue stone he supplied for the house: St. Lucienseeg 25. On August 13, 1625, he earned 187 guilders and 4 stivers for an *Italiaanse vloer* (Italian floor).

The advantages of the marriage between Anna van Neurenberg and Pieter van Delft are clear: for the Van Neurenbergs it meant an opportunity to marry into a ‘new’ stone trading family that focussed on the sandstone trade and had a vast network within municipal administration. On the other hand, the Van Delft family had the advantage of marrying into an ‘old’ stone trading family, thus assuring itself of a supply of marbles and blue stone. In the following section we will see the importance of the Amsterdam connection, such as when Van Neurenberg collaborated with municipal stonemason Hendrick de Keyser.

### The Blue Gate in Leiden

One of Coenraad IV’s first major commissions was to supply stone to the city of Leiden. In addition to providing approximately 6,000 feet of blue stone for the fortress, Coenraad was asked to undertake the renovation of the old Lopsen or Rijnsburger Gate, dating from around 1355, and by 1599 plans were underway. The gate stood in a strategically important position, and after the siege of the city in 1574 it was reinforced with a half bulwark and a bridge in front. “*Coenraet van Noerenberch de jonge*” was responsible for the design of the new gate, which meant that he wrote the technical specifications for the stonework, which were then printed and circulated.

The stonework was put out to public tender and had to be of good blue Namur stone. Coenraads specifications, ground plan and designs were on view for inspection in the town hall. Four tenders were received:

* Mr. Coenraad van Neurenberg for 11,000 guilders
* Andries de Valckenier from Middelburg for 13,500, 13,000 and 12,800 guilders
* Cornelis Roelandtz. from Delft for 9,900 guilders

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70 Meischke 1994, p. 117.
71 Between 1614 and 1640 Pieter van Delft supplied approximately 650 tombstones for the Old Church. Unpublished article Ruud Koopman, Zaandam.
72 Meischke 1994, pp. 118-119.
74 Meischke 1975, p. 154.
75 Ibidem, p. 155.
76 van Tussenbroek 2001a. Not only Pieter, but also his brothers Claes, Dirck and Herman were in the stone business.
77 “[...] goeden blaeuwen onvervalschten ofte onberispen Naemschen steen”. van Oerle 1975, p. 344.
Jeroen Gerytz. *antysnyder* (antique sculptor) from Leiden for 11,000 guilders. The contract was given to Cornelis Roelandtsz. on March 10, 1603, but because one of his competitors was by then willing to make the same offer, Roelandtsz. was forced to lower his price to 9,700 guilders. The actual realization of the gate was the task of the municipal carpenter, Cornelis Egbertsz.. His successor, Jan Ottensz. van Seyst, took over the work in 1604. The bricklaying contract was given to Jacob Dirksz., who was succeeded by Hendrick Cornelisz. van Bilderbeeck in 1603. It took until 1610 to finish construction.

The technical specifications for the gate are contained in a seven page printed document, the oldest Dutch example of printed building specifications meant for circulation. Most probably, it was Coenraad IV van Neurenberg who wrote them, but this does not necessarily mean that he was also responsible for the design of the gate. In the written sources it says that Coenraad ‘t patroon van de poorte heeft gemaect ende geteyckent,’ which could mean that he also made a technical drawing. The specifications relate only to the stonework. Those for the woodwork would not have been written by Van Neurenberg but by someone specializing in wood, since the material, techniques and terminology required expertise that was different from that of a stonemason. Taking this into account, it becomes less probable that the writers of the technical specifications are also the architects or designers of the work.

The writing of technical specifications comes after the design stage, which in this case means that there is no certainty that Van Neurenberg was also the architect of the so-called Blue Gate, as it was henceforth called.

The ‘s-Hertogenbosch Rood Loft

Probably an even more noteworthy example than the Blue Gate in Leiden is the rood loft from ‘s-Hertogenbosch. In 1610 Coenraad IV van Neurenberg received the commission to replace the 1584 rood loft, damaged when the cathedral spire caught fire and fell into the church. Repairs took a long time, and it was 1610 before plans for a new rood loft were developed. In the light of Counter-Reformational activities, the realization of the representative rood loft was given priority over repair works on the organ, the sacrament tower and the bell in the west tower.

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78 Ibidem, p. 345.
79 Ibidem, p. 344.
80 The term *patroon*, pattern, can mean the entire design, but also a working drawing that accompanies the specifications. Haslinghuis & Janse 1997, p. 348.
82 Avery 1969.
83 Mosmans 1931, p. 436.
Once the decision to build a new rood loft had been taken, the church authorities investigated the splendid examples of rood lofts in the Southern Low Countries. The Twelve Years’ Truce made travelling easier, and an example was soon found in the rood loft renewed after 1585 in the cathedral of Our Lady in Antwerp. It comprised a tribune with a balustrade supported by three round-headed arches, and was decorated with sculptures. The 's-Hertogenbosch church authorities commissioned two drawings based on the Antwerp model, but with architectural variants. One design showed five passageways, whereas the other, which followed the Antwerp example more strictly, showed three. Neither the author of these designs nor that of the Antwerp loft is known.

This was modelled after ones in St. John’s in Ghent and Cambrai. Steppe 1952, pp. 274-275, n. 34.

It was Rafael van den Broecke (Paludanus) who build the rood loft. Jacob Anthonis prepared two designs in 1594, based on an older one from 1589. Construction took from 1597 to 1599, whereafter Robert and Hans de Nole made the sculptures. The materials were black and red marbles and alabaster. Ibidem, p. 277.
Although technical specifications were drawn up for the five-passageway variant, it was the rood loft with three passageways that was finally built. The materials, supplied by Van Neurenberg, were extremely luxurious and costly. Black, polished touchstone was decided upon for the plinth. The floor was to be laid with red marble and white alabaster, with a two foot wide piece of black touchstone between each arch. The ten pedestals to be placed on the floor were to be made from black stone inlaid with red marbles from Rance or Agimont, depending on where the best quality could be acquired.\(^87\)

In June 1610 Coenraad IV van Neurenberg was asked by the church board to prepare an estimate of costs for both designs, which had clearly been ordered already from someone else.\(^88\) After preparing his estimate – which leaves no doubt that Coenraad was asked because of his leading position in the marble trade – the church board decided on December 13, 1610, to draw up a contract with him to build the rood loft according to the second design. The contract was signed eight days later, on December 21.\(^89\) At the start of 1611, the church board made its decision on the iconography for the rood loft and reported their decisions to the city council, who were to pay for the work and who agreed with the choices made.\(^90\) Because the design was subsequently added to and altered, the eventual costs went over the proposed budget of 11,000 guilders by many thousands.\(^91\)

Once the stone had been delivered, the actual carving and sculpting was done in 's-Hertogenbosch by several unknown engineers or masters.\(^92\) In the years 1611-1612 the craftsmen were given 10 guilders’ pay. By 1613 the rood loft was finished, and the craftsmen left town on September 28.\(^93\)

Most probably, the same craftsmen did not make the sculptures on the rood loft and the architectural parts. When on January 27, 1611, the church authorities presented their views on the sculptural parts for the rood loft several sculptures from white alabaster had already been made.\(^94\) Although the report stressed that Coenraad van Neurenberg would also be responsible for supplying the sculptures, this does not therefore mean that he himself was a sculptor, as has been stated in earlier studies.\(^95\) For this work he hired other craftsmen and artists, among whom the most famous was Amsterdam city stonemason Hendrick de Keyser, although we have no information on the extent of his commission for the sculptural parts of the rood loft.

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\(^87\) For details: Buschman 1918, pp. 30-32.
\(^88\) Coenraad IV van Neurenberg was already in 's-Hertogenbosch in 1608, strangely enough as a citizen. Mosmans 1931, p. 437. What his activities were between 1608 and 1610 is not known. See also Meischke et al. 2000, p. 119.
\(^89\) Buschman 1918, pp. 33-34.
\(^90\) Steppe 1952, p. 281.
\(^91\) Mosmans 1931, p. 439 and Buschman 1918, pp. 34-35.
\(^92\) van Zuijlen 1863-1876, II, p. 1212. See also Neurdenburg 1938, p. 39.
\(^93\) Van Zuijlen 1863-1876, II, p. 1205 and 1212. They were also paid in September 1613 “voor den patroon te maeccknen vanden hoogen Aultaer metten Crucifix” (for the design of the main altar with the crucifix).
\(^94\) Buschman 1918, p. 33.
\(^95\) Bergé 1990, pp. 439-463, cat. no. 179.
Once it became known in Amsterdam that De Keyser had been commissioned for a certain marble sculpture of St. John for the church in 's-Hertogenbosch, he was halted by the Amsterdam city council on the charge of “idolatry”, and the work was stopped. De Keyser was reprimanded by the city, and further sculpture work was most probably completed by his future son-in-law and apprentice, Nicolas Stone.

**Commissions in Hoorn, Middelburg and Utrecht**

Collaboration with De Keyser must be seen in the light of the Van Neurenberg network. The growing prosperity, the comparatively stable political situation in the years 1609-1621, and the booming building industry are reflected in the family’s work, for example in Hoorn where a new weigh house was built. The States of Holland and West Friesland had granted the city of Hoorn the right to build a new weigh house on January 13, 1602, and construction of a new building followed a

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96 “[…] seder S. Jansbeeld uitt merbre te houwen voor die van S. Hertogenbosch, om aldaer in de kerck tot afgodery gebruyckt te worden”. Kannegieter 1942, pp. 110-111.

97 Neurdenberg 1938, p. 43. Stone was in the Low Countries until 1615, when he married Hendrick de Keyser’s daughter and moved to London.

few years later. On May 8, 1608 the city council decided to begin the project, and for the design they turned to Hendrick de Keyser, who received more than 32 guilders for the design of *verscheyden uytwerpen ende patronen* (different designs and patterns). On June 2, 1608, the city council agreed to commission Hendrick de Keyser to supply the blue stone. De Keyser did not buy the materials directly from the quarry where the stone would be cut, but used Willem II and Pieter van Neurenberg as middlemen. On June 13, 1609, 33 guilders were paid for the transport of blue stone from Dordrecht to Hoorn. Pieter Jansz. Livorno, head of the municipal building company of the city of Hoorn, declared in September and November 1609 that he, together with Hendrick de Keyser, Willem II and Pieter van Neurenberg, had surveyed the stone for the new weigh house to determine the total amount to be paid to De Keyser.

The Van Neurenberg family was not only asked to undertake new building projects, smaller adaptations and changes to buildings were also part of their work, as had been the case for the whole of the sixteenth century. The family also remained active in a broad range of building activities. In 1613 Coenraad IV was occupied with the blue stone supply for the new entrance to the Middelburg town hall, from the Noordstraat to the market. The work itself was carried out by the mason Daniel Carlier.

Another commission the family received was for the Catharijne Gate in Utrecht, one of Willem II’s better-known projects. The gate was designed by painter-architect Paulus Moreelse and was built between 1621 and 1625, as was mentioned in Part Three, Chapter II. The first plans were discussed on May 29, 1620. The exact position of the gate was decided on September 7, 1620, and models were commissioned on September 21. In the magistrates’ resolution of October 16, 1621, it was recorded that the model of the gate and the foundations had been inspected. At that time, Mayor Cornelis van de Poll and Paulus Moreelse decided to send a letter to the traders in Dordrecht in order to gather information about the stone required. In an attempt to keep prices as low as possible it was stated explicitly that the blue stone traders were to be contacted separately, in order to avoid competitors knowing one another’s business. The decision to contact Dordrecht traders may indicate that it had already been decided to cover the gate with blue stone from Namur. If sandstone had been sought, it is much more likely they would have turned to Zwolle or Amsterdam rather than Dordrecht. The resolution of November 21, 1621, states that the commission for the supply of stone was granted to

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99 On January 15, 1608, the city bought the house that stood to the north of the weigh house in order to incorporate its ground into the new project. Kiem 1996b, p. 83.
101 “Hendrik de Keyser Ingenieur wonende tot Amsterdam”, Kerkmeyer 1911, p. 237.
103 Kiem’s statement of 1996 (Kiem 1996b, p. 87) that: “Am 7. September 1609 war der Neubau dann so weit fertiggestellt, daß die Natursteinarbeiten aufgemessen werden konnten” is dubious. The measuring of the stone is related to the delivery, before construction works were started.
104 Unger 1932, p. 11. Coenraad would have collaborated with stonemason Esaia Schaep. Kesteloo 1883.
105 Besides the Catharijne Gate, the town hall of Vlissingen has also been ascribed to him, though on unclear grounds. Vermeulen 1931-1941, II, pp. 283-285.
106 HUA, Stadsarchief II, 121. Resoluties van de Vroedschap. With thanks to Koen Ottenheym.
Willem II van Neurenberg, at a cost of 17 stivers per foot. An apprentice was present in Utrecht while the stone was being used to build. The general conclusion, however, is that Willem’s role in the design and building of the gate was limited to supplying and overseeing the stone for it. Stone trading on a smaller scale is also found in Leerdam, where in 1615 Willem II van Neurenberg supplied stone for doorsteps and other parts of the town hall. Most probably it was required for a minor alteration in the building, which was completely renewed after 1631. Willem II van Neurenberg also supplied stone for the rebuilding of the Sommelsdijks church in 1632.

**Dutch Classicism on the Construction Site**

In this period, a new architectural language developed, as has been discussed in the preceding chapters. Dutch Classicism, the latest architectural innovation of the time, was promoted by the court; i.e. Frederik Hendrik of Nassau, Johan Maurits van Nassau-Siegen and Constantijn Huygens. Their example was followed by magistrates and traders, of whom Joan Huydecoper and the Trip family are well known examples. After the generation of Hendrick de Keyser and Lieven de Key, a new group of intellectual painter-architects stepped into the foreground, in particular Jacob van Campen, Pieter Post and Philips Vingboons. The Van Neurenberg family’s involvement with this milieu not only meant a shifting of their professional contacts towards the new class of architectural practitioner, but also a potential broadening of their clientele in the uppermost echelons of society. Nevertheless, the stone supplier, stonemason and trader kept their subservient positions in the newly evolved professional structure in the North, which meant that the Van Neurenberg’s role did not really change, no matter how successful their business. One point of interest is the fact that the demand for luxury marbles increased, not only from the Southern Low Countries, but also from Carrara. The activities of the Van Neurenbergs show that they were able to maintain their leading position in the building sector, and especially their almost monopolistic role in the trade of red and black marbles. The contacts with the South also remained active, thanks to the efforts of Pieter van Neurenberg. The Northern network provided an ongoing stream of commissions for the supply of marbles and blue stone.

It was in this particular environment that the Van Neurenbergs were active from the 1620s, with the family and their network closely involved in the realization of designs by Jacob van Campen. For instance, in the 1630s Pieter van Delft was involved in the renovation of the Burghers’ Orphanage in Amsterdam. In addition to the boys’ gallery, probably built by Pieter de Keyser in 1634, he supplied stone for the girls’ court, and he was also the main supplier for the girls’ gallery. The design was, of course, made by Jacob van Campen. The governors of the orphanage had bought the necessary sandstone – fifteen shipments – in Zwolle, under the supervision of Pieter van Delft. It was to be cut by Pieter’s workshop according to Van Campen’s instructions. Moreover, Pieter was also responsible for the supply of paving stones for the floors. The same pattern of collaboration can be noted during the construction of the playhouse, commissioned by the orphanage in 1637. Van Campen was responsible for the architecture, Van Delft was again solely the stone supplier.

Coenraad III van Neurenberg had already worked for the Nassau family in Willemstad in the sixteenth century, while their temporary partner, Hendrick de Keyser, built the monumental tomb for Willem of Orange in the New Church in Delft, and brother-in-law Pieter van Delft worked closely with Jacob van Campen. In 1621 Willem II van Neurenberg supplied stone for alterations to the Nassau...
palace in Breda. Prince Maurits’ stonemason – most probably Adriaen Willeboortsz. Spierinxhouck – contracted Willem II to supply blue stone for the Breda palace. He was first required to show samples of the stone before the final commission was given. When these samples were approved, Willem supplied 1,950 feet of blue and grey stone. In the years 1620–1621 the gardens of the castle were laid out under the supervision of Balthasar Baldi. Maurits embellished them with a gallery and an aviary with two arcades. The works were supervised by Melchior van Harbach.

Within a relatively short period of time, another palace was built: Honselaarsdijk in Naaldwijk. The building campaign lasted from 1621 to 1647, and the responsible architects and building masters were those at the very top of the contemporary building hierarchy (see Part III, Chapter One). Together with Huis Ter Nieuburg, Honselaarsdijk was one of the most prestigious buildings of its time, with Jacob van Campen as one of the architects.

The use of expensive building materials must be seen in relation to the representational status of the building. The huge loads of ‘Belgian’ marbles already supplied in the 1620s would have been considered an appropriate use of materials given the royal context. Indeed, a model for this can be found in the ancient world where the use of some of the most precious marbles was limited to the noblest members of society. Only an emperor could be buried in a sarcophagus made of porphyry; for people of lower social status, a sarcophagus in any material other than simple white marble was considered inappropriate. This attitude is reflected in seventeenth-century Holland. Under the influence of Vitruvius and other classical authors, modern thinking pointed out that ostentation in the use of materials was a sign of bad taste. Architecture of quality was defined by its correct proportions rather than by its ornament. Or, as Constantijn Huygens wrote: “Many marbles and much gold decorates your foolish carpentry/ on the outside wildfowl and inside even worse.”

Such reflections did not apply to Frederik Hendrik. As Prince of the Northern Low Countries he was free to use exceedingly expensive materials in his buildings. His status demanded the overt appearance of wealth. In the case of Honselaarsdijk, it was again Willem II van Neurenberg who provided the Prince with materials, and huge quantities of red and black marbles were sent to the site. In 1625 Willem was paid 1,100 pounds artois for three pairs of marble columns, possibly meant for the portico of the middle pavilion, which was under construction in those years. Other supplies were paid for in 1631, including the chimneys, floors and stone and marble elements that Willem had shipped to Honselaarsdijk in the years 1626, 1627, 1628, 1629, 1630 and 1631, for which he received more than 8,000 pounds artois. This stone, used for building the eastern, northern and western wings of the palace, also serves to demonstrate the Van Neurenbergs’ financial position: they had to advance money for the stone over many years before finally receiving the payment they were due.

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116 Based on ARADH Nassause Domeinraad, inv. no. 8414, Rekening van de rentmeester N.N., over het jaar 1621. Copy without date [seventeenth century], fols. cxxi v – cxxi r. With thanks to Annemie De Vos.
117 In the stone trade such examples are very rare. In the jewellery trade, it was a common procedure. Gelderblom 2000, p. 128.
120 “Veel marmers en veel gouds verçiert uw mal getimmer/ Dat buiten wildsangh is, en binnenwercks noch slimmer”. Worp Gedichten, V, p. 25.
122 Ibidem, p. 262: “…betaelt aen Guillaume van Noremb., coopman van steen ende mr. steenhouver te Dordrecht de somme van acht duisent veertienden ponden tien schellingen artois, over soo veele den selven van Sijne Furst. Doorfluchtijcshelt, was competerende, over marber ende hartsteenwerck bij hem aen schoorsteenmantels vloeren, liisten &c aent gebou vant huijs te Honshoelredijck in de jaren XVIC sessentwintich XVIC sevenentwintich XVIC achtentwintich XVIC negentwintich, XVIC dertich ende XVIC eenendertich gelever […] 8014 ponden artois en 10 schellingen”.
123 Meischke & Ottenheym 1992, p. 120.
The End of the Family’s Trading Activities

Providing stone supplies for Honselaarsdijk represents both the culmination and the end of the Van Neurenberg trading era. As with the Keldermans in the middle of the sixteenth century, the Van Neurenberg trading activities came to an abrupt halt some years later. This phenomenon, however, should be seen in a broader context: families that gained status and power by their trade and money acceded to the select circle of the cities’ elite and began to concentrate their activities to an important degree on governmental issues. Not infrequently this was a very lucrative business, which created opportunities to stimulate profitable trading situations, so that the ties with their ‘former’ identity and business were not completely severed. The main Dutch trading families, who at the same time were represented on city councils, boards etc., had very close ties, which contributed considerably to the monopolistic atmosphere of the Dutch staple market.

How those families were linked, and how their activities coincided can be seen in the interrelationships of, amongst others, the Van Neurenberg, Trip, De Geer and Lambillon families. For example, at the end of the seventeenth century Peter Lambillon took part in Adriaen Trip’s peat polder project in Wildervank, together with Steven and Louis de Geer. Earlier examples of business collaboration between the Trip and Van Neurenberg families can already be found at the end of the sixteenth century. Textile entrepreneurship led to the building of a textile mill in Dordrecht by Jacob Trip and Johan van Neurenberg. Another Johan van Neurenberg was involved with Hendrick and Samuel Trip in a cloth-making company whose products were exported to Bordeaux and Sweden. Trade in iron and the extraction of salt also formed part of their activities. The Van Neurenberg business developed international links: supplying stone to the tropics and exploiting lime kilns in Malmö were part of their expanding trade.

The governmental activities of the Van Neurenbergs were strengthened from about 1640 onward. After the deaths of Coenraad IV, Willem II and Pieter van Neurenberg, Johan I van Neurenberg, the eldest son of Willem II, lived in the family house at the Nieuwe Haven in Dordrecht. During his life he occupied a large number of public offices. His wife, whom he married on July 21, 1634, was Elisabeth Trip, a daughter of Jacob Trip and Margaretha de Geer. With him, the trade in stone came to a definitive end.

Conclusions

The Van Neurenbergs were active in the building sector between approximately 1480 and 1640 during which period they dominated the trade in stone from the Meuse Valley. The family’s activities reflect the changes that occurred in the building industry and in the political situation, which in turn partly explain the changes in the competitive position of the Meuse Valley vis-à-vis other areas. The sixteenth century was a time of rapid demographic expansion. On top of this, the second half of the century saw an explosive increase in prices while salaries lagged behind. For a large group of workers this resulted in economic and social decline. Only a small group of entrepreneurs and traders, such as the Van Neurenbergs, managed to turn events to their advantage.

For them, several exceptionally favourable changes occurred in the sixteenth century. Up until that time, trade in Namur stone had primarily been a regional affair, but once the century was...
underway a situation developed in which traders managed to develop lasting footholds in the North. Under the influence of the improvements in iron making, the increase and expansion of industry, and the changing political situation, direct trade developed between the Northern Low Countries and the Meuse Valley. An essential part of this development was the fact that Venlo lost its position as a staple town, thus enabling the stone traders from the Meuse Valley to trade directly with the North.

These expansionist tendencies from the Meuse Valley itself were consolidated by an increasing demand from the North for supplies of stone. Within the urban context in particular there was a major increase in building due to population growth. This was expressed through building commissions and the setting up of the municipal public works departments.

With the separation of the Northern and Southern Low Countries, international trade with the Baltic and the Mediterranean was increasingly concentrated in Amsterdam, while inland trade also opted for Amsterdam as its locus. After the fall of Antwerp in 1585 and the closing of the River Schelde, the international stone trade became entirely concentrated in Amsterdam. However, there
was also a major consequence for the trade in stone within the country: the relationship between
the principal stone production areas – the Meuse Valley, Brabant/Hainaut and Bentheim – changed
dramatically. The Brabant and Hainaut trade, which had been entirely dependent on the Schelde for
transport to the North, came to a virtual standstill. At the same point in time, a group of stone traders
from the Meuse Valley decided to permanently establish themselves in Dordrecht in the Northern Low
Countries. These traders had acquired a more or less fixed share of the market in the North during
the preceding decades. Economic, religious and personal considerations, in combination with favour-
able preconditions, motivated them to emigrate together, although without cutting their ties with the
South. The decision proved to be a highly advantageous one: they filled the vacuum created by the
disappearance of trade from Brabant and Hainaut by expanding their existing activities. Establishing
themselves in the North did not mean they were cut off from their suppliers, since they managed to
obtain licences for the import of stone from the Meuse Valley. Thus, for these traders, any negative
consequences resulting from the wartime situation were marginal.

The development of architecture that was independent of the trade in materials obviously did
not happen by itself. The rise of public works departments is one of the reasons for the independence
of the building trade (see also Part Three, Chapter 2). The more the towns increased in importance
as the initiators of building projects in the sixteenth century, the more the institutionalization of munici-
pal building increased: the town council appointed a head of public works and sometimes there was
even a separate administration for the building sector in the form of a municipal building company.
In various towns, such as Amsterdam, Leiden and Haarlem, there was the quite rapid appointment of
municipal officials who were responsible for the town’s masonry, brick or timberwork. These people
were to leave their mark on municipal building.

One of the principal consequences of this development was the disappearance of the former
need to hire the services of master masons from outside the town. Instead, the towns employed their
own masters to do as much of the work as they could and only called in outsiders if the situation made
it inevitable. This meant almost no change at all to the business of stone traders in terms of supplying
materials, but where, of old, they had also been active as master masons it meant a new limitation
on their activities. In the case of the Van Neurenberg family, the turning point came in about 1550.
From this point on, the family was forced to adopt a specialized role. The major difference with the
preceding period was not so much due to a change in the activities themselves but more of a narrow-
ing of scope. Except for the disappearance of their position as master masons their activities remained
the same. This limitation did, however, mean that other specialists determined the architectural form
the delivered materials took. The way that building work was organized, including the design of the
building, was determined by the patron so that the stone supplier’s influence in the construction pro-
cess was reduced. In the Van Neurenberg family practice we encounter multiple proofs of this. Only
in Willemstad was Coenraad III still active as master mason, which was due to the lack of a building
company in what was virtually a small village that had recently received town rights.

The building sector continued to be subdivided in the seventeenth century. It was not just the
stone traders who specialized, but also the designers. There was often a separation between building
design and building specifications, with the execution in yet other hands again.

A constant factor in the seventeenth century was the composition of the group of stone suppli-
ers: families from the Meuse Valley had traditionally dominated the trade in Namur stone, marlstone
and ‘Belgian’ marble, and this situation had hardly changed since about 1585, when a group of traders
had established themselves in Dordrecht. These families had close ties with one another, due, naturally,
to their origins, but also due to mutual familial ties which meant that a strong network had moved
North in its entirety. Research has revealed that it took a number of decades before this group began
to integrate into their new environment in terms of trade and marriage.

During the sixteenth and the first half of the seventeenth century, the trade in stone became
largely a matter of logistics. The stone was bought in the South while its design was dictated in the
North. Examples include the tower of the Oude Kerk in Amsterdam, the weigh house in Hoorn, the Catharijne Gate in Utrecht and Frederik Hendrik’s palaces. Most of the time the working of the raw material still took place at the quarry in the South. Various contracts have revealed how the material was worked at the *kuyl* (quarry) and then shipped North ready for use. This situation quickly changed, as the example of Amsterdam shows. In the sixteenth century the town still acquired most of its ready-cut stone elsewhere, whereas in the seventeenth century a flourishing local stonemasonry sector developed. Dozens of larger and smaller stonemasons’ yards and stonecutters were active. Stone was purchased from the Meuse Valley, Bentheim and the Mediterranean then cut in the town itself. Within a century, a position of Northern dependence on the South had metamorphosed to a situation where, to a large extent, the cutting of stone had been taken over by the Northern Low Countries themselves.