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Renovating early modern Leiden: new perspectives on the building trades

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ABSTRACT: What is still missing in construction history is an understanding of the submarket for renovation, maintenance and repair work – a submarket that probably had a larger turnover than new construction, but barely left any paper trails in the past. However, insight into the working of this submarket is required before we can even start analysing how building contractors and building craftsmen divided their activities between new construction and renovation. This paper uses 100 well-documented histories of houses along the Rapenburg in Leiden (The Netherlands), detects renovation cycles and analyses their main characteristics and determinants. Renovation offered the actors in the building process many opportunities but involved certain risks as well. Attempts to manage risk can be seen in their entrepreneurial strategies.

KEYWORDS: Early Modern Period (1500-1800), Leiden (The Netherlands), Private Housing, Renovation Works, Entrepreneurs

1 INTRODUCTION

When the Journal of Construction History was launched in 1985, John Summerson (1985) wrote that history of construction could mean two things: (a) the history of design and (b) the history of building practice. Robert Carvais (2010) defined the latter as a history of building materials, technology, innovation, knowledge, site-management, legal framework, finance and the actors in the building process. He pleaded for a social history of construction in which, apart from architects, engineers and building contractors, also construction workers and labourers would get the attention they deserve. I would like to add that for a better understanding of these groups of actors we first need to extend our analysis to renovation, as well as new construction, since most building contractors and construction workers were engaged in both segments of the market.

Unfortunately, early modern renovation remains a great unknown in historiography. Only some publications in construction history (e.g. Alonso Ruiz 2009, Bossi 2009) cover the topic, but usually they deal with individual buildings for which explicit authorship of architects, engineers or building contractors have been assigned, and for which sufficient accounts are preserved. Even economic and business history tend to omit or underestimate the importance of renovation in the whole of the building industries (Broadberry and O’Rourke 2010, Jones and Zeitlin 2007). Still, its turnover was possibly higher than that for new construction. It is striking that in 2016, the value of new construction of housing and utility buildings in the Netherlands was 18,650 million euros (VAT excluded), whereas repairs and renovations in the same sector were 11,700 million and general maintenance works another 10,275 million (EIB, 2017, 13).

This article raises the following research questions. How important was the market for renovation in the early modern period? Did building and renovation cycles complement each other or did they merely coincide? What happened to the standing stock of housing during periods of urban expansion and urban decline? What were the risks and opportunities for the contractors and construction workers involved, and how did this reflect in their entrepreneurial strategies? These questions will be investigated for the neighbourhood of Rapenburg in the city of Leiden (The Netherlands).

2 LEIDEN AND RAPENBURG

Leiden was a slowly growing city until 1574, when it covered a surface of 110 hectares and contained 3,044 houses and 12,456 inhabitants. During the Dutch Revolt (1568-1648), it reaped the benefits of its excel-
lent location in the densely urbanized region of Holland, its proximity to the international gateway of Amsterdam, and an influx of knowhow and cheap labour, provided by immigrants from the Southern Netherlands. In no time, it succeeded in reviving its languishing textile production; textiles became a major international export, which made Leiden the second city in Holland and the largest industrial city in Western Europe. Production levels rose from a few thousand bales of cloth and linen in 1579 to over 140,000 around 1660. 75 per cent of the male active population was employed in the textile industry, while others produced for the local market, in the sectors of food (including breweries), construction, woodworking, clothing and shoe manufacturing. Between 1575 and 1676, the population quadrupled to 56,000 inhabitants, living in about 13,000 houses dispersed over an inner-city surface of now 1.98 km² (Van Maanen 2002-2004).

Two consecutive urban extensions, in 1611 and 1644, provided respectively 1,035 and 174 new plots of land, which were redeveloped by investors, speculators and building contractors and resulted in about 50 per cent more houses than originally planned. Most of them were inhabited by textile workers. The more strictly organized extension of 1659 delivered another 1,572 small houses, built back-to-back (Van Oerle 1975, Van Oosten 2014). It was no coincidence that these new parts of the city were located in the northeast, where the stench of industrial activities would not discomfort the city centre (Fig. 1).

Leiden’s lopsided specialization in textiles, however, proved to be detrimental when competition from Tilburg and Verviers grew, and the import of cheap fabrics undermined this sector during the eighteenth century. Some of the residents emigrated, and the population dropped to 37,000 in 1750 and even to 31,000 in 1795. The number of houses followed the same trend and fell to 8,567 and 7,514 houses respectively (Tjalsma 1985).

Demographic growth is always intercepted by the standing stock of housing, before builders and speculators start to exploit remaining open spaces, and governments start to plan urban extensions (Abrahamse 2010). Conversely, demographic decline does not automatically lead to the demolition of redundant housing, but rather to the consolidation of existing houses into larger units (Deneweth 2008). Hence, renovation is an important segment of the building sector. The successive phases of fast urban growth and harsh decay make Leiden an excellent case in which to investigate renovation. If we consider that between 1575 and 1676 the number of houses increased from 3,000 to 13,000 and that only about 3,400 new houses were built in the new urban extensions, then we know that 6,600 new dwellings must have been created within the built tissue, either by construction on empty lots, by redevelopment or by splitting up existing buildings.

A second element that makes Leiden an outstanding case study for renovation is the existence of detailed construction histories for about 100 houses along the Rapenburg canal (Fig. 2). An interdisciplinary team devoted 17 years (1969-1986) to the exploration of all possible sources related to these houses. They reconstructed every single “house history” from 1386 until 1986, including details on construction, renovation, sales, interior design, material culture, and the lives of owners and tenants (Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1986-1992, 10 vol.). Parts of Leiden were destroyed during the Siege of Leiden (1573-1574) and during the gunpowder disaster of 1807, in which 220 houses around Steenschuur and Rapenburg were destroyed. For this contribution, I focus on the period between 1580 and 1790 in order to deal with ‘normal’ building cycles.

Rapenburg, situated southwest of the city centre, was initially a moat – part of the medieval ramparts of Leiden. Most houses at the existing east side of the canal faced the inner city and had their back gardens...
with summerhouses along Rapenburg. The urban extension of 1386 required the demolition of these ramparts, after which a new area was developed at the west side of Rapenburg, where new houses were oriented towards the canal right from the start. By 1450, 60 per cent of the area was already built on, covered mostly by private houses and three convents with large gardens (Saint Barbara, Roma and the White Nuns). Rapenburg is an outstanding example for studying transformations in the existing built tissue of an inner city. I use the descriptive micro histories of Rapenburg to detect and interpret larger patterns related to renovation and compare them with building cycles.

3 BUILDING AND RENOVATION CYCLES

Economic historians have been intrigued by the existence of production cycles in the building sector. Ad Knotter (1987) detected that building cycles in seventeenth-century Amsterdam averaged about 20 years, and Richard Barras (2009) calculated that building cycles in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century London averaged between 15 and 17 years. Both authors explain these cycles as an effect of the interplay between demand and supply. Immigration and growing demand for housing spurred urban development and new construction to a level when oversupply tended to curb housing prices and put a check on further construction. Once prices stabilized or started to rise again, a new building cycle set off. Hence, the main explanatory factors for building cycles in the private housing market are population growth and urban development. Closely related to this is the working of the financial market, which is strongly connected to economic trends, and driven by the availability of money and the willingness to invest. Positive economic expectations stimulate investments and even lead to speculation in the housing market, whereas negative expectations cut out speculation and slow down construction. Finally, exogenous factors such as wars, bad harvests and epidemics disrupt the normal working of the market and tend to have immediate effects on construction.

These factors pertain to (new) construction in periods of urban expansion only and are mainly explained by economic determinants. I will here delineate and explain renovation cycles within the built tissue, but I will consider periods of growth as well as decline, and will include cultural factors in the analysis. ‘Construction’ will here be used to mean the building of completely new houses or outbuildings, whereas ‘renovation’ will be considered in its broadest sense, including the improvement of existing buildings but also maintenance and repair work. All data related to construction and renovation in Rapenburg were calculated for 10-year intervals, because not only the number of projects is too few to process them on an annual basis, and also most renovation works are attributed to a period of time rather than pinpointed to one particular year. Over this entire period, the Rapenburg area contained almost 100 different houses. The continuous joining and splitting up of properties, however, resulted in at most 75 different properties at any given moment. Although the focus is on renovation works, we cannot investigate them without considering construction at the same time.

Rapenburg witnessed 245 construction and renovation projects during the period of urban and economic growth (1580s-1660s) compared to only 166 projects during the subsequent, and longer period of urban decline (1670s-1780s). It is obvious that these figures are underestimates. Construction and large renovation works always required building permits, especially when the building touched upon public space, and these are therefore easier to trace. Smaller renovations, maintenance and repairs left fewer records, but can sometimes be deduced from court cases and conflicts between neighbours, contracts, accounts, inventories of estates or ego-documents. These sources were all explored during the Rapenburg project.

4 RENOVATION CYCLES AND THEIR DETERMINANTS IN RAPENBURG

Figure 3 establishes a remarkable simultaneity of construction and renovation cycles until the end of the Golden Age (1670), after which new construction became quite rare and renovation works initially fell back to a lower level but rose again during the eighteenth century. I distinguish five phases in which different factors explain renovation cycles.

4.1 Phase 1 (1580s-1630s)

During phase 1, housing stock in Rapenburg increased by 27 per cent. The main drivers of renovation were the same as those identified by Knotter and Barras for building cycles: demographic pressure, opportunities for profit by developing land and renovating houses, investments and speculation. The elites invested in residences for themselves as well as in cheap rental housing, whereas building craftsmen invested in the cheaper segments of the market.

At the end of the sixteenth century, residents of Rapenburg still represented a cross-section of the population of Leiden, with textile workers inhabiting the smallest houses. The many open spaces in between houses and near the convents, which were secularized during Reformation, were very attractive to local investors and building craftsmen; they bought up land and buildings as soon as the first waves of immigrants started to settle in Leiden.
A good example of the first group of investors is governor and cloth merchant Adriaen Knotter, who acquired the former convent of Roma at the west side of Rapenburg, converted the central part of the building into a private residence in 1585, and redeveloped the remaining part into seven lease-units (Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1988, vol. 3B). The east side of Rapenburg was still partly oriented towards the city centre and had its main buildings along the Papengracht, Zand and Pieterskerkhof and its gardens along Rapenburg. In these first decades of demographic pressure, several owners exploited the full potential of their land. Two of them were Daniel van der Meulen and his wife Hester della Faille, who belonged to the commercial elite. When settling in Leiden, they bought a plot of land with two small houses at the Zand square and a large garden cum summer-house extending to Rapenburg. Van der Meulen hired two neighbouring master carpenters to replace the existing houses along the Zand square with four small, new houses in the traditional Flemish style. The residence he had in mind for himself would be of a completely different order. Remarkably, he appointed Luder van Bentheim of Bremen (Germany) to design his Leiden residence and supply the most luxurious stone building elements, such as cross-windows, windowsills, pilasters, and battlements. Daniel’s brother Andries, who resided in Bremen, might have been the intermediary between the architect and his client. In Leiden, Daniel appointed his personal agent Berwijns to supervise several teams of local building craftsmen. After completion, Hester was thrilled to welcome royal guests into her luxurious residence, but for her neighbours, she would prove to be a tough person to deal with, as will be discussed below (Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1986, vol. 1, 277-282).

Master carpenters and masons usually invested on their own account in the cheaper segment of the market. They bought decayed houses and replaced them with multiple new, mostly small houses, or renovated them by replacing thatched roofs with tiles, renewing façades and extending houses by adding summer kitchens or additional floors. Most of them sold these houses immediately after construction or renovation, one of the reasons why the average term of property ownership was quite low during the 1580s (Fig. 4). The fact that many investor-renovators belonged to the building trades is also evident in the interruption in both construction and renovation activity in Rapenburg during the 1610s (Fig. 3). When 1,035 plots of land were developed in the new northern extension of Leiden, the entire building sector redirected its efforts to this part of town. Of the identified buyers of 805 plots, 348 were masons and carpenters, and 80 were suppliers of building materials. Most of them cooperated to join plots and redevelop them with smaller units, the result being that this new extension contained about 50 per cent more houses than initially planned (Van Oosten 2014, Van Oerle 1975).

4.2 Phase 2 (1640s-1660s)

Phase 2 of Rapenburg’s development ran from the 1640s until the 1660s and reconverted a neighbourhood with a mixed social topography into one increasingly dominated by regents, merchants and entrepreneurs. This social segregation was an effect of 1) the relocation of thousands of textile workers into the new urban extensions northeast of the city centre, and 2) the wish of local elites to create a high-status neighbourhood for themselves. A second characteristic of this second phase was that local building contractors replaced the foreign architects and material suppliers that were engaged during the first phase. These local actors had accumulated wealth from speculation and now set the trends for this submarket.

The city council understood very well that Leiden’s textile sector was so successful because of the abundance of cheap labour. It therefore invested in new urban extensions, which were realized in 1644 and 1659 (Fig. 1) and provided cheap housing for about 2,000 weavers and their families. At the same
time, houses and lots in existing neighbourhoods continued to be split up or redeveloped for the benefit of multiple families. In opposition to these trends, the middling social groups and local elites started to complain that Leiden had become an unhealthy industrial city where large houses had been demolished and replaced by little hovels (Posthumus 1908, 997-1006). They repeatedly asked for the creation of an upmarket neighbourhood, and Rapenburg, situated in the healthier southwestern corner of Leiden, would become that place—not by planning, but by private initiatives during the 1650s and 1660s.

The first person to fully exploit the potential of Rapenburg was the stonemason Willem Wijmoth, who relocated his house and workshop to Rapenburg in 1651. When the aforementioned Adriaen Knotter decided to develop the remaining land of the Roma Convent in that very same year, Wijmoth and master mason Jan Claesz. Pety joined forces. They bought all the lots and redeveloped them. Whereas Pety usually preferred to build smaller houses, Wijmoth created larger buildings. Wijmoth also renovated many houses along Rapenburg, mostly by providing them with new façades. His first creations were inspired by Philip Vingboons, an architect who had been very popular in Amsterdam during the 1630s. Vingboons added stone sculptural elements to the traditional step-gabled façades, decorating them with pilasters, capitals and pediments in natural stone. Of course, promoting this style in Leiden would not do any harm to Wijmoth’s business. While his first creations were not that remarkable from an architectural point of view, Wijmoth started paying more attention to design when consolidating two or three houses under one roof. His main inspirations were architect Arent van ’s Gravensande and master carpenter Willem van der Helm. Wijmoth used an original design by van der Helm for Rapenburg 29 and applied it with minor adaptations in several more of his renovation projects (Lunsingh Scheurleer 1986, vol. 3A, 220-227).

The most important contributions of Wijmoth and his fellow contractors were that they completely changed the appearance of Rapenburg and inspired their fellow citizens to follow their examples. Although this renovation wave seems to have been supply-driven, the actions of these building contractors were often more demand-driven than one would assume at first sight. When discussing the risks and opportunities related to the construction process, I will come back to this. Consolidation of former houses into larger units diminished the number of houses during the 1640s. Although most façades were newly built, some of them just covered existing houses behind them. The high number of renovation projects during this phase (Fig. 3) partly resulted from the fact that owners had to rearrange the lay-out of rooms and hallways to better fit the more proportionate placement of windows and doorways in their new façades.

4.3 Phase 3 (1670s-1700s)

The intense construction and renovation activities that characterized phases 1 and 2 came to a sudden halt during the 1670s (Fig. 3). The “annus horribilis” of 1672 (war and financial crisis) brought Holland’s Golden Age to an abrupt end. Although Leiden’s textile production was stable until the end of the century, economic expectations were not such that they would stimulate additional investments in construction. Moreover, speculation related to the remodelling of the Rapenburg area had resulted in extremely high real estate prices (Fig. 5). As soon as housing prices started to decline in the 1670s, owners refrained from selling their houses at a loss. Whereas properties were sold every 30 years during the third quarter of the seventeenth century, they now remained within the same family for almost 50 years (Fig. 4). Since most owners tended to renovate their houses when they first moved in, long-term property ownership led to a decline in renovations.

![Figure 5. Index of housing prices (1590 = 100), based on 391 known sales prices, in Lunsingh Scheurleer, 1986-1992, 10 vol.](image)

4.4 Phase 4 (1700s-1740s)

Phase 4 coincided with economic recession and demographic decline that resulted in high vacancy levels all over the city. The local elites in Rapenburg took advantage of the situation by buying adjacent houses and re-connecting the former constituent parts of the original plots. What had once been the main buildings facing the city centre had now become outbuildings of the residences along Rapenburg. Several of them were converted into stables and coach houses, an indication of the upgrading of this neighbourhood (Blondé 2001). An effect of the increasing use of coach houses was that several owners asked the authorities to protect their façades and entrances (and visitors) by delimiting a zone with stone pillars connected by iron chains, a forerunner of the later footpaths.

The real upgrading of this neighbourhood manifested itself inside the houses. Several owners improved their interiors according to the latest fashion (Rococo) with porte-brisées, ceilings decorated with...
paintings and/or Italian stucco, mirrors, painted wallpaper and woodcarvings. In 1748, Allard de la Court bought Rapenburg 16 for 5,720 guilders. To prepare the house for his son’s wedding, he hired several masons, stonemasons, carpenters, plumbers and plasterers, and renovated and redecorated the entire house, which cost him 9,310 guilders or 1.5 times the value of the house. Just for the sake of comparison: a master carpenter earned about 600 guilders a year. Just like Van der Meulen found the right inspiration and craftsmanship in Bremen (phase 1), the elites now hired the best interior artists from other places. Italian plasterers seem to have settled in The Hague from where they offered their services for creating highly decorated stucco ceilings. Paintings also were ordered from elsewhere, for instance by Jacob de Wit in Amsterdam.

The larger renovation works were concentrated in the 1720s when houses were brought on the market again. A combination of two factors explains this (Figs 3-5). First, the former property ownership terms of about 50 years resulted in undivided inheritances between second and third generations, often a breaking point in the joint management of property. Second, the large vacancy rates had disappeared, since older houses were demolished and many houses were consolidated into larger units. This resulted in (slowly) rising housing prices in the 1710s. Renewed activity in the real estate market, also triggered renovation works.

4.5 Phase 5 (1750s-1780s)

Exactly the same factors explain what happened during phase 5. After the crisis of the 1740s housing prices tended to rise again and real estate circulated faster than before (Figs 4-5). Only occasionally were houses split or joined. The major renovation works during this period were mainly inspired by fashion. Several owners replaced their former spiral staircases at the back of hallways with open staircases embellished with woodcarvings that acted as real eye-catchers when entering the central hallway. Changing staircases and extending hallways had a significant impact on the design and layout of houses. Not only did rooms have to be redesigned and refurbished, in some cases the entire façade was renewed, often in Neoclassical style. Although several houses had been joined to make larger units during the previous period, many of them still had their separate entrances and were only linked by openings on each floor. Thorough renovations during the second half of the eighteenth century created one central front door, opening up into a central hallway that gave access to all rooms. Since the layout of rooms had to be altered, window openings had to be readjusted as well – a perfect occasion to renew the entire façade.

Considered from an economic point of view, these high impact renovation works are counterintuitive since they happened in a period of economic and urban decline. In such periods, elites tended to redirect their investments to their personal residences and spend more money on conspicuous consumption, as has been shown for Delft (Wijzenbeek-Olthuis, 1987) and Antwerp (Blondé and Van Damme) as well. Moreover, cultural change is a more important factor in building and renovation cycles than hitherto acknowledged. Self-representation was important to the local elites. Since Renaissance architects had stressed the importance of stylish front gables, to signify the taste and wealth of the occupants, many houses in Rapenburg got new façades during the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The privatization process of the second half of the eighteenth century caused elites to spend more time indoors and organize tea-parties, literary salons and grand balls in their own residences (Sakari Korhonen 2013). Fashionable interiors now became more important and entrance halls, salons and garden rooms were refurbished to match the style of the house.

5 THE ECONOMIC WEIGHT OF RENOVATION PROJECTS, MAINTENANCE AND REPAIRS?

The gradual change of Rapenburg demonstrates that there were three times as many renovations as construction projects in the area (Fig. 3). Obviously, building a new house usually took more time than most renovation projects. On the other hand, construction is always better documented since building permits were required, whereas smaller indoor renovations were not necessarily recorded. Hence, the total volume of renovation work must have been much higher than is known. A second objection can be that the nature of renovations in Rapenburg was not necessarily representative, since this was a high-status neighbourhood where property owners could easily afford renovations. Nevertheless, the activity in Rapenburg indicates the volume and variety of renovations occurring in the city. We need more information on the economic weight of this kind of construction work to better understand segmentation in, and organization of, the building sector.

Therefore, I would like to plead for more systematic research on renovations, maintenance and repair works. Promising sources of information are household accounts. The few ones left by former owners of Rapenburg offer a glimpse of the magnitude of this market. They covered several years and mentioned annual payments for maintenance and repairs executed by masons, stonemasons, carpenters, glaziers, plumbers, smiths and housepainters. Unlike construction and major renovations, which were coordinated by architects and building contractors working with flexible teams of own employees and subcontractors, these works were executed by independent master craftsmen. A second opportunity for further research
6 RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR CONSTRUCTION WORKERS

Renovation, maintenance and repairs offered many opportunities for building craftsmen. Moreover, the quantity of (indoor) maintenance projects made these perfect for countering temporary unemployment from interruptions and delays at construction sites, or during periods of exceptional weather conditions. Therefore, a better understanding of the submarkets of renovation and maintenance can illuminate labour organization between sites, and even document if building craftsmen were able to combine wage labour on larger sites with independent work elsewhere. It also explains entrepreneurial strategies.

As to opportunities, most building craftsmen established their workshops in neighbourhoods with high demand for construction and renovation. Building craftsmen bought, renovated and sold houses, holding them for short periods. Only the wealthier ones invested or speculated in real estate. Wijmoth, for instance, was able to cash in three times during his projects: first, by breaking down (parts of) existing houses and selling or reusing all useful elements; second, by leasing new houses during the first years after construction; and third, by selling the houses in a period of rapidly rising real estate prices. The lot on which he built Rapenburg 53, for instance, cost 2,075 guilders in 1651, and the construction cost was estimated at 4,337.5 guilders. Wijmoth leased the house for about eight years before selling it for no less than 10,900 guilders. Leasing recently renovated houses was common practice among building craftsmen, but also a cunning strategy since these houses were often occupied by their (future) clients. When drawing up building specifications, Sylvius de le Boe constantly referred to details he found attractive in the house he leased from Wijmoth. The latter was involved in the construction and renovation of at least 16 houses along Rapenburg and supplied building materials for many more renovation projects in the same neighbourhood. In 1659, he moved his business to the Herengracht in Leiden’s last extension, where a subdivision of over 1,500 lots opened up new perspectives for his business.

Renovation works involved risks as well, which is revealed by the many conflicts among neighbours resulting from construction or renovation during the very active periods, phases 1 and 2. The densification of the built environment required the use of common party walls, and often resulted in blocked windows and views into adjacent gardens, and problems with common gutters and sewers. Complaints and court cases not only delayed work but also necessitated the adaptation or removal of illegally built constructions. The aforementioned Hester della Faille, for instance, would not tolerate any new walls that fenced her neighbours’ gardens and simply tore them down at night, thus provoking a court case in which she could stipulate her demands. The Rapenburg housing histories mention several cases of wilful destruction by angry neighbours. But accidents happened as well. When publisher François de Heger wanted to upgrade his house at Rapenburg 52 in 1646, he just ordered a new façade. Construction workers shored up existing walls and chimneys, but an unforeseen gust of wind destroyed the entire construction. The carpenters and masons blamed each other, but they eventually charged all additional costs to De Heger, who had anticipated expressing his standing through a modern façade, but went bankrupt instead.

These fait-divers shed light on contemporary practices during renovation. There was no insurance to compensate owners or construction workers for mishaps during renovations. Entrepreneur Willem Wijmoth knew ways to circumvent such problems. Although Wijmoth definitely speculated in the housing market by buying, renovating and selling houses, there are indications that several future buyers drew up building specifications before Wijmoth bought the houses. The entrepreneur becoming the owner was an indirect insurance that worked both ways: Wijmoth carried all risks during construction in return for the surplus value of the house. On the other hand, there would be no discussion about unforeseen price rises of building materials or additional labour costs when things went wrong. Wijmoth was sure that if the client would not be able or willing to pay for the finished product, he could still sell it on the market. Clients who hired master craftsmen for renovations also circumvented risks by not paying by the day or by piece, but by the whole instead. This way, it was the building contractor or master craftsmen who bore the risks. The practice of defining a lump sum for the complete project was not new, but gained in importance during the early modern period (Meischke 1993).

7 CONCLUSION

To understand the potential of the building sector for its actors, and most importantly for the building contractors and master craftsmen involved, we need to integrate the submarkets of renovation and maintenance into the discussion. A preliminary case study on the neighbourhood of Rapenburg demonstrated
that renovation works offered almost three times as many assignments as new construction. We still have insufficient information about repairs, but it seems that these projects created a continuous stream of small jobs. In periods of urban growth (phases 1 and 2), renovation and building cycles merely coincided, both being influenced by the economic and demographic trends, housing demand and supply. Real estate prices and terms of property ownership proved to be decisive factors for the frequency of renovation works. Periods of urban decline (phases 3 to 5) did not require that much construction, but a redirection of investments to conspicuous consumption and cultural changes stimulated renovation works that partly compensated for the loss of assignments in construction. We should also pay more attention to contradictory trends within one city that required different types of work and knowhow. Whereas the city government of Leiden planned urban extensions with many small, uniform houses for textile workers, construction contractors and craftsmen, investors, and residents of the old city centre, and more particularly Rapenburg, slowly adapted the built tissue to the needs of middling social groups and elites.

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