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## Abstract

This paper tries to define a method to assess the urban, architectural and historical values of post-war neighbourhoods in the Netherlands, taking the Western Garden Cities in Amsterdam as a case study.

Post-war neighbourhoods represent the majority of the housing stock in the Netherlands. Having completed their lifecycle – and, in some cases, become the scene of social problems – their reconstruction has become a major issue mainly since the 1990s. This led to interventions at the expense of their original architectural and urban qualities. Since the crisis that began in 2008, the pace of reconstruction work slowed down. At the same time, the architectural qualities inherent in these neighbourhoods were identified as uniquely valuable, leading to attempts to scientifically establish their potential as cultural heritage. This brought to light serious gaps in the historical knowledge about these neighbourhoods. Moreover, the customary heritage evaluation methods – proved to be unsuitable. For these neighbourhoods, improved methods are needed.

The aim of this paper is the development of a heritage assessment method geared to the specific character of post-war neighbourhoods, using the Western Garden Cities as a case study. Its perspective is that of architectural and urban history. In order to achieve its goal, it identifies the gap between the state of the art of heritage assessment methods and what is required to address the specific qualities of post-war neighbourhoods.

The assessment of heritage significance is common practice in heritage planning worldwide. It provides the justification for listing certain properties as heritage, and defines guidelines for its conservation. Traditionally, heritage assessments were primarily expert-based and disciplinary, led by architectural historians and archaeologists. Their main focus was the conservation of tangible attributes and historic values. Over time, assessments have become far more integrated, including the visions of non-experts and the knowledge of varied disciplines. They began to include intangible values such as their social characteristics. Despite the growth of interest in the assessment of heritage significance, there is little research studying the effects of these trends. Even the traditional methods remain understudied, and the new ways architectural historians and archaeologist see heritage has not been properly analysed. This research fills that gap and specifically addresses issues that clearly need to be tackled, foremost the development of an area-based rather than an object based approach, and the consequences of the new relations between buildings and open spaces. This is indispensable for the

development of a scientifically valid method for assessing the architectural and urban values of the Western Garden Cities, which should also be applicable in similar post-war housing estates. This paper takes buildings as a starting point for analysing the effects of their urban setting; while incorporating urban phenomena, the focus is on architecture. The research will be done within the framework of the Historic Urban Landscape (HUL) approach, but from an architectural historian's perspective.