



LOVED BUT LITTLE KNOWN

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE IN THE PERIOD 1965-1990

NATASCHA LENSVELT

Publications about Post 65 heritage pay relatively little attention to landscape architecture. Is that a reflection of the role of the discipline in the design commissions of the years 1965-1990? Or is it indicative of a blind spot on the part of current observers? This article looks at the work of garden and landscape architects in the Post 65 period, the context in which it came about, and how it is evaluated today.

THE POSITION OF THE LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

Since the 1920s, garden and landscape architects have been part of design teams working on the layout of, among other things, upmarket residential areas, garden villages, new polders and land consolidation schemes. Even so, their contribution was often an elaboration, supplement or adjustment of the work of rural engineers, urban designers and architects. This changed in the 1970s.¹ To accommodate the rapid growth in industry, infrastructure and housing, an integrated approach was needed. Landscape architects were increasingly given a leading role in the redevelopment and expansion of cities and in the design of the landscape. Citizens, too, were given a greater say in these designs, in which nature, environment and car-free space for children at play were recurring themes. It became apparent that landscape architects possessed the will, the knowledge and the skills to integrate an ever-expanding programme and the ideas of users into the design process.

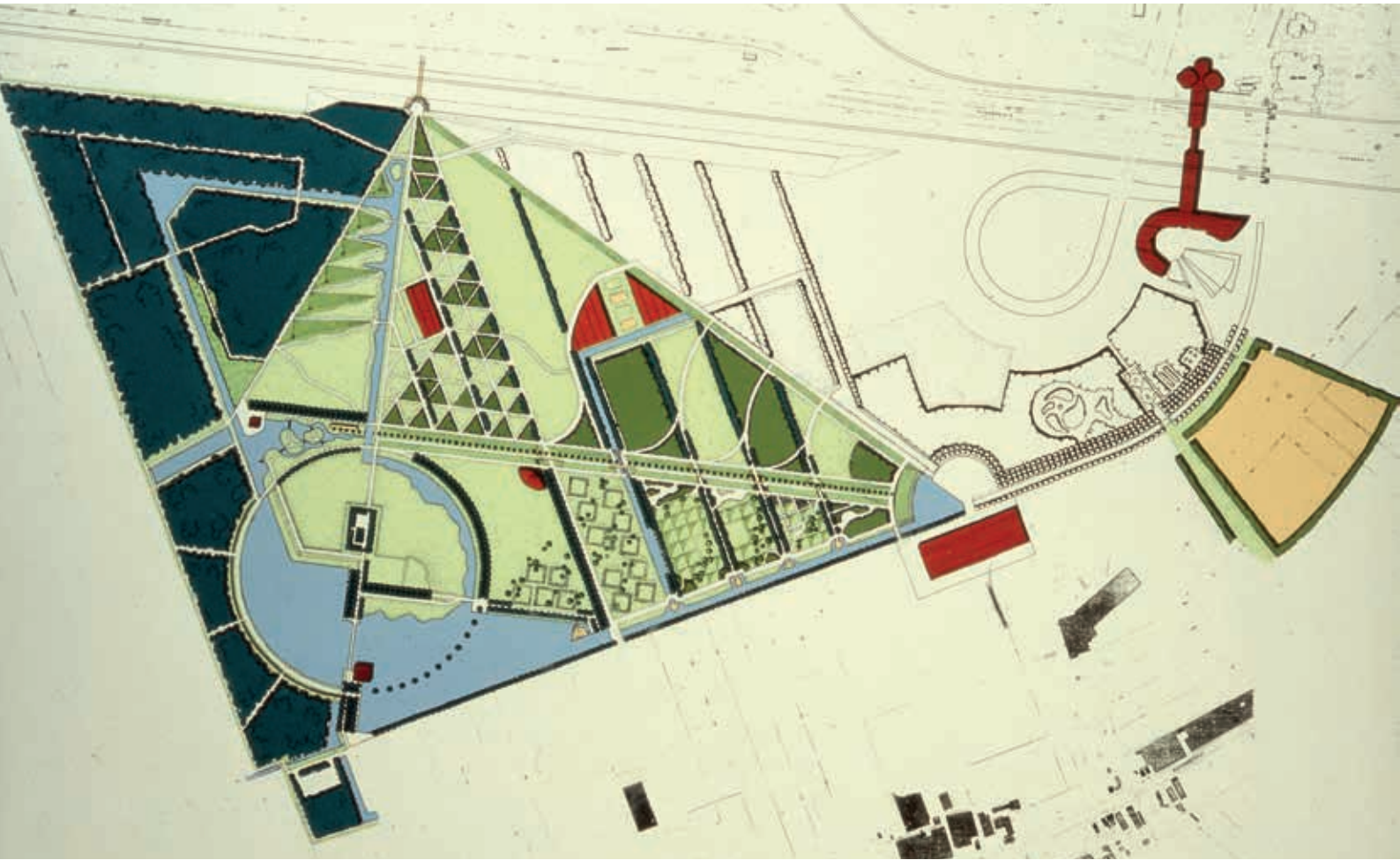
With the population forecast to increase to twenty million inhabitants by the year 2000, green space in residential areas came to be regarded as a basic amenity. Prompted by the Second and Third Spatial Planning policy documents (1966 and 1973-1983 respectively), administrators started looking for ways of accommodating it. In the cities planners wanted to use urban renewal projects to create room for housing with integrated green areas by relocating businesses to the urban periphery, cleaning up company grounds and demolishing substandard housing.² Cities and villages expanded on a grand scale, building new suburban residential areas that proved so successful that middle- and high-income earners increasingly deserted the city for a house with garden in green surroundings.³

In the new districts and designated growth centres small parks, sports fields, allotments, children's farms, and parks with natural gardens were created. Whereas post-war children who had outgrown the playground were still able to go adventuring in ditches and meadows beyond their neighbourhood, the children of the 1970s and '80s played in newly created parks in and around their living area. Foraging along ditches and winding streams was a thing of the past as a good many of them had been filled in to create additional hectares of agricultural land or channelized to facilitate the drainage of water.

Children were not alone in being increasingly shut out of the countryside. The Ruilverkavelingswet (Land Consolidation Act, 1954) paved the way for an increase in agricultural productivity in the process of which church paths and dirt tracks disappeared. A drastic separation of functions was the result. Because recreation, nature and the cultural landscape were under pressure, the 1985 Landinrichtingswet (Land Development Act) paid special attention to the problem. Terms like 'mixed-use development' or 'agriculture with ancillary functions' referred to a new policy in which landscape elements like wooded banks and pools with wetland vegetation were to be embedded in new developments.⁴ But even this new law and the many associated policy documents failed to put an end to functional separation; economic growth took priority. The cultural landscape was turning into an unattractive and poorly accessible work landscape. Automobility was now a problem both during the week (commuters) and at weekends (recreation): the number of fatal traffic accidents skyrocketed and in good weather the roads leading to nature reserves were clogged with cars.⁵

Policy makers compensated recreationists for an inaccessible landscape by creating publicly accessible recreational areas at a new regional level of scale. These car-free green areas were a blend of park and landscape. The recreational area also acted as a green buffer preventing cities from conglomerating. Quite often the catalyst for such projects was provided by the sites of former sand quarries serving the construction industry. It worked both ways in such cases. The sand lake close to the city, preferably accessible by bicycle, relieved the pressure on nature conservation areas and the roads leading to them. Municipal governments collaborated on the realization of these types of

◀ 1. Hexagons in Amstelpark during the Floriade, 1972 (Amsterdam City Archives)



2. Michiel den Ruijter, design for the Floriade in Zoetermeer, 1992 (Stadsarchief Zoetermeer)

recreational areas in order to offer higher income earners an attractive living environment and so curtail their exodus from the city. Garden and landscape architects designed at all levels of scale, from company garden to urban design plan and from city park to land consolidation schemes. There was no shortage of work.

DESIGN

In the cities the large-scale Floriade exhibitions propagated the success of technological progress in the countryside. Glasshouse and ornamental plant cultivation expanded enormously in the 1970s and '80s, even faster than the rest of the economy.⁶ As a result, a lot of time and money could be spent on the design and floral decor of the Floriade sites.⁷ Once again it was a win-win situation. The designers created a main structure that anticipated the site's post-Floriade function: that of city park, like the Amstelpark (Egbert Mos, 1972) and Gaasperpark (Pieter van Loon, 1982) in Amsterdam, or that of residential area, like Rokkeveen in Zoetermeer (Michiel den Ruijter, 1992).

Analysis of the various Floriade sites reveals a stylistic evolution. The design for the 1972 edition on the

eastern outskirts of Amsterdam-Buitenveldert was still under the influence of post-war functionalism, with a clear main structure of straight paths and austere concrete bridges.⁸ A more modern, structuralist detail was the cluster of hexagonal flower beds near the entrance (fig. 1). The hexagon was a popular geometric form that could be coupled together without creating a hierarchy. The home zone, with all its linked housing clusters, is a product of this same way of thinking.⁹

The Floriade in Amsterdam-Zuidoost, ten years later, had a more naturalistic layout with occasional geometric forms like the striking hedge circles. The paths were neither straight nor smoothly curved, but gently inflected. In the design for Zoetermeer in 1992 circles and diagonal lines were boldly superimposed on the grid of still visible polder strips (fig. 2). In 1983 Bureau B+B had made a similar statement in the Prinsenland city park in Rotterdam, where contrasting skewed squares were connected by a diagonal avenue.¹⁰

The Floriade was a hotspot of (urban) landscape architecture stylistic features. By the same token, many civil engineers, ecologists and designers – some university trained, others trained at the Boskoop gar-



3. Overview of Prinsenpark in the Prinsenland district, Rotterdam; at the top, the artwork *Vierkant eiland in de plas* by Frans de Wit, 1997 (Rotterdam City Archives)



4. Ecokathedraal in Mildam, photo probably taken in the late 1980s by Louis le Roy (Louis le Roy archive)

den and landscape design school – worked on the numerous recreational areas, the planning of the Flevopolder and the redevelopment of landscapes and nature reserves. They were employed by national and local governments, Staatsbosbeheer (state forestry service), and private concerns like Grontmij and Heidemij. The aforementioned stylistic features were also on show in these areas, with the exception of the geometric idiom.

In *De paradijsmethode* (2016), Imke van Hellemond described how landscape architects from Wageningen and Delft universities, Staatsbosbeheer and a few private agencies developed analytical methods and concepts that would supposedly produce the best possible design.¹¹ In her view, this ‘paradise method’ proved ineffective.¹² It failed to resolve design dilemmas with respect to nature or culture and history or modernity. But whether it was the result of those discussions or not, the existing landscape (history, culture) was more frequently, and to a greater degree than in the past, incorporated into the design. Modern buildings or infrastructure were now allowed to be visible instead of being hidden away in vegetation. The main task of landscape design in that time of rapid change was to provide a framework of avenues, woods,

water and roads, into which buildings, infrastructure and other elements could be fitted, even after the completion.

CONCERN ABOUT NATURE AND THE ENVIRONMENT

Revelations about the consequences of the agricultural use of the insecticide DDT (death of apex predators like birds of prey), about the pollution of streams and rivers, about acid rain and the extinction of animal species ignited citizen activism. Volunteers were instrumental in the success of the Instituut voor Natuurbeschermingseducatie (Institute for Nature Conservancy Education, IVN), and in the 1970s nature conservancy organizations proliferated. Books about natural gardens and plant communities by the ecologists Ger Londo, Chris van Leeuwen and Victor Westhoff were widely read.¹³ Early twentieth-century plant sociology evolved into vegetation science. Ecologists and designers incorporated that knowledge into garden and landscape designs by increasingly adapting plantings to the local biotope and by using indigenous plant materials. The Nijmegen University botanist Victor Westhoff argued that society should stop putting human beings above nature and instead regard them as part of nature.¹⁴

The artist Louis le Roy shared that conviction. His artworks – like the park along Kennedylaan in Heerenveen and the Ecokathedraal in Mildam – were created over time and with the help of local residents (fig. 4). In his 1973 book *Natuur uitschakelen, natuur inschakelen*, Le Roy discussed the environmental problems we are still contending with today.¹⁵ In the magazine *Plan* he wrote about his ideas and his work in articles aimed at fellow professionals (architects, planners and artists).¹⁶ Since the 1970s, residents and artists have been busy depositing, stacking and planting in dozens of gardens and parks across the Netherlands.¹⁷ Even today many of those nature-rich areas continue to be maintained by working groups of residents.

INADEQUATE APPRECIATION

Parks have become part of the collective consciousness thanks to the major events that have been held there. For three days in 1970, for example, the Kralingse Bos played host to the *Holland Pop Festival*. Ten thousand visitors, some stripped to the waist, smoked their first joint there while listening to music beside the waters of the Kralingse Plas (1936). This was the beginning of a tradition of holding pop festivals in city parks, such as the Bevrijdingspop in the Haarlemmerhout in Haarlem from 1980, and Parkpop in The Hague’s Zuiderpark from 1981.¹⁸ Parks have also provided a venue for demonstrations. The largest ever in the Netherlands, the anti-nuclear weapons demonstration of October 1983, saw 550,000 participants

spread across the Malieveld and Zuiderpark in The Hague.

Although green space can count on being well known and appreciated by residents, this is not reflected in recent inventory reports of Post 65 heritage in the big cities. They list many buildings but few gardens, parks or other green structures.¹⁹ The Hague for example selected one hundred objects, not one of which was a green area.²⁰ This is remarkable in the city where Bureau B+B contributed to a redevelopment plan for the city centre (1987) and wrote a public space proposal (*De kern gezond*).²¹

In the Post 65 inventory that the Oud Utrecht working group conducted for the city of Utrecht, the only green area included – as an aside – was the one around the former provincial government offices.²² We read, not under the heading ‘Architect’ but under ‘Other remarks’: ‘Also worthwhile, the garden design by garden architects N. van der Vliet and P.A.M. Buys’. How is it possible for garden architect Pieter Buys, with his long track record and as founder of today’s MTD practice, to end up as an afterthought and for his partner Bob van der Vliet to be misnamed, while their landscaping around that building was crucial to its appearance? Interesting Utrecht parks like Bloeyendaal and

Beatrixpark (both by Hans Pemmelaar) and Shanghai-park (artist Hans van Lunteren and others) are not mentioned in the report, even though the last had been nominated for listed status in 2016 by the very same working group.²³

The inventory carried out by the Architectuur Instituut Rotterdam in 2009 can be digitally added to by the city council and citizens.²⁴ Private gardens are not evaluated (see the locally listed Teng bungalow), but the Ommoord neighbourhood garden (Louis le Roy with volunteers) and Wollefoffenpark (Bureau B+B), both typical of the Post 65 period, are (fig. 5). The inventory comprises objects and structures up to 1984, so it remains to be seen whether the high-profile but later altered Museumpark (Yves Brunier and OMA) will end up on the register.

The inventories drawn up by the ‘growth areas’ are much more complete. Zoetemeer included gardens, streets and public green space.²⁵ Purmerend’s cultural-historical survey took a spatial design approach, which saw watercourses, sports fields, allotments and courtyard gardens included.²⁶ The city of Almere invited both experts and the public to nominate objects and gave green areas a fully-fledged position within the ‘green-blue’ theme.²⁷ Finally, the green

5. Wijktoen Ommoord in Rotterdam, photo Ary Groeneveld 1973 (Rotterdam City Archives)





6. A crowded beach beside the Henschotermeer recreational lake in Woudenberg, 1985 (The Utrecht Archives)

structure in Houten, in the province of Utrecht, that puts slow traffic in the heart of the city and directs cars to the ring road, enjoys national, even international fame.²⁸ In the heritage policy drawn up by the Houten municipal council in 2023, the central Post 65 bicycle and walking paths are incorporated in a park-like setting.²⁹

METHODS

Why is it that green heritage is still often missing from these inventories? Is it related to the sectorial approach to heritage? Maybe the period in which the compilers of those inventories were trained plays a role, namely before the emergence of broad, more integrated courses like heritage studies and landscape history.³⁰ Whatever the case, publications by landscape architects and landscape historians are failing to reach architectural historians. One way of increasing appreciation for gardens, parks and landscapes would be to bring theory development in landscape and archi-

tectural history and landscape architecture together.

In *Nederlandse landschapsarchitectuur* (1993), Dirk Sijmons distinguished three design strategies.³¹ The first is the focus on the fragment, which spelled the end of grand narratives and ideology-driven design. This approach, which is particularly prevalent in cities, might be called postmodern and is in tune with West 8 designs, like Schouwburgplein in Rotterdam (1993). The imitation dike in the Wollefoopenpark can also be seen as a playful fragmentation of reality.

The second, conservative, strategy is one of fitting in, adapting to the context, and historicization. It can be found in the reconstructed and historicized gardens of the 1970s and '80s, like Het Loo Palace by J.B. van Asbeck and the Havixhorst estate by Buro Hollema. On a larger scale we find historicized elements in recreational areas (Het Twiske by Mariska Pemmelaar), in attempts to conceal modernity (mega farms, infrastructure) with vegetation, and perhaps also in stream restoration projects.

The third strategy identified by Sijmons is the previously mentioned framework concept in which high- and low-dynamic functions can be accommodated. A well-known example is Plan Ooievaar, a vision for the re-development of rivers. One of the first projects carried out was the Blauwe Kamer near Rhenen where the summer dike was cut to allow a dynamic nature area to spring up along the bank.

Sijmon's trio of strategies can help us to categorize and evaluate the large number of multiform projects. In addition to these strategies and the previously mentioned stylistic features, it is possible to distinguish societal and cultural-historical values. Recurrent Post 65 themes are ecology, environment, emancipation, freedom, mass culture and prosperity. The description of those themes in relation to green heritage can serve to call attention to lesser-known types of landscape such as bicycle networks in nature areas or redeveloped landfill sites.³²

CONSERVATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Evaluation of green areas prior to redevelopment is not yet standard practice. Take the Henschotermeer recreational area near Woudenberg. It was laid out in the late 1930s beside a lake created by sand mining operations serving the line of defensive works. After World War II the area was transformed into a (summer) recreation destination, and in 1972, owing to the large numbers of visitors, the lake was significantly enlarged by Heidemij and the park was redesigned.³³ The new design – the maker's name is unknown – strengthened the existing qualities, creating the impression of a lovely lake in the woods. Visitors walked, swam or simply relaxed there and felt in tune with nature (fig. 6). Originally, the government had leased the lake from Den Treek estate via Recreatie Midden-Nederland, which also ran the facilities. But in 2018 Henschotermeer was privatized, and a fence was erected around the park. Since then an entrance fee has been charged

for a previously public amenity and plans have been presented for the construction of holiday accommodation and other facilities in the green surroundings. Concerned local residents for whom the natural landscape and free access were of prime importance campaigned against the plans in 2022.³⁴

Recreation areas are all too often overlooked in spatial policy. Provincial governments are interested in visitor numbers, but cultural-historical and (potential) natural values are insufficiently appreciated and enshrined.³⁵ If the cultural-historical, utility and natural values of Henschotermeer had been analysed before it was sold, it is possible that a future scenario closer to the original intentions could have been developed: in summer a public swimming spot with minimal built facilities, in winter a nature-rich hiking area.

Right now the Netherlands is facing unprecedented demands for space for agriculture, housing, nature and the environment. One possible solution is to reduce the separation between residential, work and recreational landscapes. Parks, neighbourhood green space and recreational areas will need to be increasingly deployed to strengthen biodiversity, improve water quality and raise the groundwater level.³⁶ These functions are relatively easy to integrate provided new management measures or redevelopment are preceded by analysis and evaluation.

As we have seen, Post 65 garden and landscape architects bridged the city–countryside divide. They worked at all levels of scale from private garden to industrial estate and managed to integrate a wide range of functions into a spatially coherent design using their unique analysis and design methods. Their substantial and interesting production merits greater attention in inventory and evaluation studies. To get an accurate picture of Post 65 green heritage, the heritage world could do worse than to emulate the integrated approach of landscape architects.

NOTEN

- 1 R. de Visser, *Een halve eeuw landschapsbouw. Het landschap van de landinrichting*, Wageningen 1997, 61-66.
- 2 Municipal councils were reimbursed for the costs via the 'Interim Saldo-regeling'. E. van Es and L. Voerman, *Stadsvernieuwing in Stroomversnelling. Inventarisatie stadsvernieuwingplannen Interim Saldo Regeling 1977-1985*, Amersfoort 2018, 14.
- 3 Tweede Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening (1965); the Derde Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening was published in three parts: Oriënteringsnota (1973), Verstedelijkingsnota (1977) and Nota Landelijke Gebieden (1977). For a succinct summary of the contents and effects of the policy documents, see F. Bruinsma and E. Koomen, *Ruimtelijke ordening in Nederland*, syllabus Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam 2018.
- 4 Nota Landelijke Gebieden 1977 (note 3).
- 5 The high point was reached in 1972 and 1973 with over 3,000 road deaths per year. swov factsheet, *Verkeersdoden in Nederland*, The Hague 2023.
- 6 C. van Bruchem (ed.), *Agrarische structuur, trends en beleid. Ontwikkelingen in Nederland vanaf 1950*, Wageningen, Report 2008/060.
- 7 The public wasn't just interested in horticulture but also in design. Designing one's own garden became a hobby, stimulated by illustrated magazines and books, and by garden tours by car or coach to England and elsewhere. This heralded the rise of the garden centre as the link between nursery and consumer.
- 8 H. Lörzing, *Van Bosplan tot Floriade. Nederlandse park- en landschapsontwerpen in de twintigste eeuw*, Rotterdam 1992, 44.
- 9 A.M. Backer (ed.), *De natuur bezworen*, Rotterdam 1998. Also consider the structuralist architecture of Herman Hertzberger.
- 10 The design was later amended; one square was omitted. Design drawings in R. Dettingmeijer, *Het Nieuwe Stads-park. Opvallende vormen en pakkende scenario's*, Rotterdam 1991, 105.
- 11 I. van Hellemond, self-published

- version of her PhD thesis *De paradijsmethode. Opvattingen over de modernisering van het landschap in de Nederlandse landschapsarchitectuur (1960-1980)*, 2016.
- 12 Nevertheless, the 'layer-based approach' is used today in design education and landscape research, landscape biography being the most recent product. The layer-based approach distinguishes at least three aspects of the landscape: abiotic (such as soil and water), biotic (plants and animals) and anthropogenic (human).
 - 13 V. Westhoff and H. den Held, *Plantengemeenschappen in Nederland*, Zutphen 1969; V. Westhoff and C. van Leeuwen, *Wilde Planten, Duinen en zilte gronden (deel 1)*, 1970, *Lage land (deel 2)*, 1972, *De hogere gronden (deel 3)* (1973); G. Londo, *Natuurtuinen en parken. Aanleg en onderhoud*, Zutphen 1977. *Wilde Planten* is said to have sold over 100,000 copies.
 - 14 V. Westhoff, *Selectie uit het werk van Victor Westhoff*, Utrecht 2018.
 - 15 L. le Roy, *Natuur uitschakelen, natuur inschakelen*, Deventer 1973.
 - 16 L. le Roy in *Plan. Onafhankelijk maandblad voor ontwerp en omgeving*, 8 (1977) 1, 17-53, 12 (1981) 10, 41-47; 14 (1983) 7-8, 11-14.
 - 17 Artists were regularly involved as garden designers in this period, especially in natural gardens like Shanghaipark in Utrecht. The same is true of projects that tend towards land art, like Krijn Giezen's Franeker Bos; Lörzing 1992 (note 8).
 - 18 The number of events together with everyday use continues to increase, resulting in soil compaction and thus damage to parks.
 - 19 Amsterdam has yet to publish a list, but it evidently gathers information on the period given that it has granted listed status to Gouden Leeuw and Groenhoven, two Bijlmermeer apartment towers from 1973-1975 along with the surrounding park, www.Post65.nl/woontorens-bijlmer-monument, accessed 23 May 2023; and *Cultuur-historische verkenning Gaasperplaspark*, 2016.
 - 20 J. van Hoogdalem and B. Koopmans, *Post 65 architectuur in Den Haag 1965-1995*, The Hague 2019.
 - 21 B+B, which was founded in 1977 by Ank Bleeker and Riek Bakker, who had both started out at stedenbouwkundig bureau Zandvoort, brought forth dozens of well-known landscape architects; M. Steenhuis, *Bureau B+B. Stedebouw en landschapsarchitectuur*, Rotterdam 2010.
 - 22 B. Poortman et al., *Post 65 Selectie en waardstelling van jong erfgoed. Een inventarisatie*, July 2021.
 - 23 www.oud-utrecht.nl/46-erfgoed/actueel/407-sjanghaipark-2, accessed 4 August 2023.
 - 24 www.wakelet.com/@Post65010, accessed 30 May 2023.
 - 25 Neighbourhood exhibitions 'De gave stad', 2001-2003.
 - 26 International New Town Institute, *Cultuurhistorische Verkenning van de naoorlogse uitbreidingswijken van Purmerend*, Rotterdam 2021.
 - 27 It would be interesting to analyse the evaluation differences between experts and laypersons.
 - 28 R. Derks, *Het Groen omarmd*, Wageningen 2013; M. Steenhuis, *Jan Kalff. Landschapsarchitect in de naoorlogse stedenbouw*, Wageningen 2004.
 - 29 R. de Kok and H. Masselink-Duits, *De Houtense historie meer beleefbaar maken*, Houten 2022.
 - 30 It is beyond the scope of this article to discuss a range of potential factors like 'plant-blindness' (an idea floated by J. Wandersee and E. Schussler in 1998) or our current focus on cost-effectiveness.
 - 31 D. Sijmons, 'Pages Paysages Hollandaises', in: G. Smienk (ed.), *Nederlandse landschapsarchitectuur. Tussen traditie en experiment*, Amsterdam 1993, 55-65.
 - 32 A bottom-up approach to link values or themes from the Post 65 period to the landscape architecture of that period; a variation of Erik de Jong's recognition of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ideas in contemporary garden designs in *Natuur en kunst* (Amsterdam 1995).
 - 33 Most of Heidemij's post-1950 project dossiers have been destroyed, according to K. Peeneman in *Heidemij. Gids voor de archieven*, Gelders 0915.1. The Utrechts Archief contains correspondence, budgets and a few technical drawings, no.1820-7.
 - 34 www.rtvutrecht.nl/nieuws/3341178/demonstranten-willen-toekomst-henschotermeer-terug-op-de-politieke-agenda, accessed 4 August 2023.
 - 35 Research into the historical and current role of the Recreational Amenities boards could yield useful information for a vision of the future for recreational areas.
 - 36 In the city, functional overlap is achieved by opening cemeteries and allotment complexes to walkers, and by allowing urban farming in parks.

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Post 65 garden and landscape architects bridged the town and country divide. They worked at various levels of scale and for all kinds of users: from private garden to industrial area and from urban design scheme to land consolidation. Using their analysis and design methods they succeeded in accommodating a wide range of functions in a spatially coherent design. Despite the extent and appeal of their production, current knowledge and appreciation of Post 65 green heritage lags behind that of the architectural heritage. This is

evident from redevelopment plans for green areas and from recently delivered big-city inventory reports from which this type of heritage is largely absent. Knowledge of theory development in landscape architecture, landscape history and architectural history can help to generate greater appreciation for Post 65 green space. After all, Post 65 green heritage is not just of interest from a cultural-historical perspective. It can also contribute to the improvement of nature and the environment in a way that is in keeping with Post 65 ideas.