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SUMMARY

This dissertation, Grand Tour naar het Noorden, investigates the relations between Dutch and Nordic architecture during the period 1890-1965 from a comparative perspective. The starting point of the research is that in the reference books on Dutch architecture only limited attention is given to the relations with Scandinavia. The aim of the study is to draw conclusions about the importance of the reciprocal relations for the architectural history of the Netherlands and that of Scandinavia and Finland. In order to form a balanced opinion about these connections an investigation was also conducted into the relations between Nordic architecture and that of Great Britain and Germany.

From the fifteenth century to the mid-eighteenth century a brisk cultural exchange existed between the Netherlands and Scandinavia. With regard to architecture this came to an end when in the course of the eighteenth century Royal Academies were established in Denmark and Sweden in line with the French model. However the reciprocal relations slowly came to flourish again towards the end of the nineteenth century. This research follows the development of the renewed relations from 1890 to 1960s and aims to find out how, why and by whom this interest was intensified.

After the introduction to Grand Tour naar het Noorden, the first part of chapter 1 outlines in the first part the situation in the Netherlands with regard to Scandinavia at the end of the nineteenth century. In addition the following parts addresses the different movements in European and American architecture around the turn of the century and examines how, in their search for authentic architecture, architects in the Netherlands, Scandinavia and Finland, accepted and incorporated particular movements. With the last part, concerning the World Exhibition of Paris in 1900, the first chapter of the investigation is closed.

The authentic architecture of the Finnish and Scandinavian pavilions at this World Exhibition won great admiration. Chapter 2 therefore focuses on the developments and highlights of Scandinavian and Finnish architecture up to 1930: these include National Romantic architecture, that had its own dynamics in each of the four countries, and the architecture of Nordic Classicism, a style that goes back to the classical formal language and inspired architects who travelled through Italy and Greece. For a long time this specific style, called 'Swedish Grace' in Sweden, was considered wrongly as a transitional stage to functionalism.

The first part of chapter 3 explores the reactions of Dutch architects to Nordic architecture until 1930. There was a great deal of interest in Nordic architecture among architects of the Amsterdamse School - of whom many had worked at the office of Eduard Cuypers - and among architects in the service of the Government Buildings Agency. The publications in Dutch architectural journals, written by Dirk Slothouwer, Gijsbert Friedhoff, Jan Wattjes and others, fulfilled a prominent role. Young architects undertook study tours to Scandinavia and Finland, with or without the support of their teachers. This research gives an impression of the impact and imitation of Scandinavian and Finnish building art in Dutch architecture until 1930.

The second part of this chapter discusses the relations between British and Scandinavian architects from 1900 to 1930. The Scandinavians studied the technique of granite facades in Scotland; they adopted the idea of garden cities in urban planning and drew inspiration from the Arts and Crafts movement. The British interest in Nordic architecture however did not become serious until the twenties when the Anniversary Exhibition was held in Göteborg and Stockholm's Stadshus was inaugurated. The architect Ragnar Östberg was admired and his Stadshus formed a source of inspiration for a number of British architects.

The following part examines Germany’s reporting of and interest in Scandinavian and Finnish architecture before 1930. Except for within artists’ colonies, there was little interest in Scandinavian architecture and reports in the professional press were limited. The architecture of
the main railway station in Helsinki, designed by Eliel Saarinen, made a deep impression and was widely imitated. The importance of the Deutsche Werkbund, Bauhaus and the architecture of Heinrich Tessenow for the development of the Scandinavian and Finnish architecture is also discussed. Finally, it is made clear, on the basis of the many travel notes and journey reports, how the interest of Scandinavian and Finnish architects in foreign architecture and in Dutch architecture in particular manifested itself.

The next two chapters concentrate on developments after 1930: chapter 4 deals with Nordic Functionalism in all its aspects and chapter 5 discusses the reactions to this style by the countries included in this study. Nordic Functionalism had its major breakthrough in 1930 at the Stockholm Exhibition. The most important functionalistic buildings in Sweden, Norway, Denmark and Finland are reviewed in succession to provide more knowledge of Nordic Functionalism. Extra attention is paid to social housing in Scandinavia and Finland. As a reaction to Nordic Functionalism the personal contacts between Dutch and Scandinavian architects increased sharply. In this respect the distinction between the different movements - the so-called traditionalists and the functionalists - turned out to be less stringent than is generally assumed.

In 1930 British architects and architecture students visited the Stockholm Exhibition and in the years after this event a number of British students travelled with a grant through Scandinavia. Interest in Swedish architecture had a longer history than this, but now there was also an interest in Finnish architecture. Functionalistic buildings in Great-Britain are designed mainly by or with architects from abroad - among them many Bauhaus refugees – who settled here in the years before 1940. Due to the political situation in Germany no reaction to Nordic Functionalism was to be expected: in that period reporting on Scandinavian and Finnish architecture in periodicals was also limited.

In the final chapter, the focus is directed at the importance of Scandinavian and Finnish architecture and in particular at urban planning and building techniques, in relation to the post-war reconstruction of the Netherlands. As well as discussing the importance of contacts among the architects themselves, this chapter also investigates government interest in Scandinavia and Finland. Extra attention is drawn to the teachers of TH Delft and the Academy for Architecture in Amsterdam, who stimulated their students to focus their attention on the North. The chapter also considers the role of Scandinavian and Finnish architecture and urban planning in British and German post-war reconstruction architecture. In these countries, the architecture of Alvar Aalto and Arne Jacobsen found particular appreciation.

The conclusion of this study is that the relations between Dutch architecture and the architecture of Scandinavia and Finland since 1890 are continuously present and widely supported in the Dutch architectural world. Grand Tour naar het Noorden demonstrates that in the period 1890-1965 there was a continuous and intensive exchange amongst Dutch, Scandinavian and Finnish architects. These relations between Dutch and Nordic architecture and architects are absolutely unique. The research on the situation in Great Britain and Germany shows clearly that in the same period the relations of British and German architecture and architects were of an entirely different order: here relations were fragmented and very dependent on particular individuals.

The phenomenon of relations with Nordic architecture warrants a prominent place in the prospective compendia of Dutch architecture and town planning. Nordic architecture also deserves a more prominent position within the architectural history of the twentieth century than it has so far been accorded.