Valuation of heritage buildings is usually performed by architectural-historical experts, who use a typology of heritage values based on conservation philosophy. However, philosophies change over time and typologies vary widely in the criteria that they include in their list of values. Social values are relatively new on the scene, and are often left out. Community and spirituality values refer to social or religious meanings that are of considerable importance to local stakeholders.

What happens to valuation systems when external events influence the chances of survival of heritage buildings, such as earthquakes induced by gas extraction in the Netherlands? The responsible party in this case, the mining company, has a perspective on value that differs considerably from heritage experts and the local stakeholders. Moreover, the mining company underestimates the inflicted damage and the importance of heritage in the affected region. This caused a situation with much public unrest, exacerbated by the sometimes sudden and unexpected removal of buildings of historical interest or part of a protected view.

Recently, a new heritage assessment framework was published by the Cultural Heritage Agency, to help with value assessments in the affected region. In the public arena, a special website was launched to monitor disappeared buildings, inviting the public to contribute information and photographs.

In this study, we apply discourse analysis to compare the values that are used in the professional and laypersons’ approaches by analyzing the professional assessment framework and public documents, such as the website ‘Verdwenen Groningen’.

We conclude that heritage policy and heritage value assessments should provide more room for social values, including community, memories and spirituality, to create a balanced valuation system.