



Cultural Heritage Agency
Ministry of Education, Culture and Science

Shared Cultural Heritage Programme

Policy Document 2017-2020

Abridged version

Introduction

Farmsteads in the United States, a church organ in Sri Lanka, a sunken ship off the coast of Australia: just three examples of the history that the Netherlands shares with other countries, traces of the past we refer to as “shared cultural heritage”. Of course, the past we share with other countries has also left its mark on the Netherlands. Not only in our museums, archives and architecture, but also in the food we eat and the language we speak. The Netherlands attaches great importance to this shared past and what its traces can teach us about ourselves and our connections with other countries. For this reason shared heritage is one of the priorities of our International Cultural Policy.

Partners

The responsibility for implementing this policy in the field of shared heritage has been given to the Cultural Heritage Agency under the auspices of the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science. The Agency shares this task with the National Archives of the Netherlands, DutchCulture and the Dutch embassies in Australia, Brazil, India, Indonesia, Japan, Russia, Sri Lanka, Suriname, the United States and South Africa.

These organizations collaborate with one another, with other institutions and with experts to create a sustainable future for shared heritage. Each partner fulfils this role on the basis of its own programme, drawn from its own expertise. Collaboration takes place on the basis of equivalence, reciprocity and respect for ownership. The National Archives facilitate access to historical records. DutchCulture supports the field of Dutch heritage in its international activities. The Dutch embassies play a central coordinating role in the partner countries listed above. The Cultural Heritage Agency focuses on the exchange of knowledge and experience.

International Cultural Policy

To encourage international cooperation and mutual cultural exchange and to strengthen cohesion and effectiveness, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and the Minister of Education, Culture and Science have drawn up an International Cultural Policy for the period from 2017 until the end of 2020. The aims of this policy are:

1. to achieve a strong Dutch cultural sector that is recognized and appreciated abroad;
2. to enable culture to contribute to a world that is safe, just and equipped to deal with the challenges of the future;
3. to deploy culture as an instrument for modern diplomacy.

A number of shared heritage themes have been identified: historical inner cities, heritage and water management, and mutual historical perspectives.

Cooperation

Shared heritage is a rich and very varied field, encompassing everything from cemeteries to inner cities, from canals to clocks, from museum artefacts to warships. The resources needed to take good care of this heritage differ from country to country, as do the approaches, circumstances and available opportunities. This diversity enables heritage professionals to learn from one another.

Collaboration within the Cultural Heritage Agency's Shared Cultural Heritage Programme always arises in response to an inquiry from one of the partner countries or from within the Netherlands. This not only enables the Netherlands to provide its partners with up-to-date expertise, but also to acquire new knowledge which it can then utilize within the Dutch context. Other criteria include societal impact (benefits to the local community) and urgency (the advantages of carrying out a project now as opposed to ten years' time). It is also important to assess whether the Agency can provide added value, or whether the issue might be better addressed by other parties.

Three main themes

Within the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme, the Cultural Heritage Agency's collaborations focus on three main themes:

- Heritage & Spatial Planning
- Maritime Archaeology
- Collections

These reflect the shared heritage themes that form a mainstay of the International Cultural Policy. The Agency promotes knowledge exchange and capacity building by providing training, giving advice and developing knowledge products such as handbooks and inventories.

Heritage & Spatial Planning

A city hall in Jakarta, a former sugar plantation in Suriname or a historic park in Moscow: unless this kind of heritage can be positioned in relation to current social needs, it will never fulfil a meaningful role in a changing society. This calls for a multifaceted approach to heritage, known internationally as Integrated Conservation. The Netherlands has expertise to offer in this area. At the same time, there is an opportunity for the Netherlands to gain knowledge of urban renewal, rural transformation and ever greater challenges presented by water issues and depopulation.

Maritime Archaeology

At the behest of three government ministries (Foreign Affairs, Finance and Education, Culture and Science), the Cultural Heritage Agency is charged with the task of managing and preserving Dutch shipwrecks in foreign waters. For this purpose, the Dutch Maritime Heritage Overseas Programme has been established. In addition to practical collaboration on the protection of and research into shipwrecks, knowledge exchange and capacity building are important. All of these issues are addressed by the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme and enable the Agency to fulfil its mission of long-term management abroad by utilizing the requisite knowledge and skills on site. International cooperation also enriches the Agency's own knowledge base as it applies to the management of maritime heritage in the Netherlands.

Collections

In the Netherlands we have identified a number of trends in the field of collection management:

- a greater focus on the public;
- a scaling back of government involvement;

- increasing differences between large and small museums;
- a focus on the exhibition as an experience;
- a reduced emphasis on conservation and management.

The resulting challenges for collection management are also making themselves felt in our partner countries in the field of management, conservation and presentation. Knowledge exchange and capacity building can therefore strengthen practical heritage solutions both in partner countries and in the Netherlands.

Instruments

Training

Training activities are a vital resource in transferring relevant knowledge and expertise. Bilateral training initiatives are geared towards strengthening expertise in the partner country. Multilateral training offers partner countries additional opportunities to connect, to learn lessons from comparable assignments in other countries and to develop an international network. During their training, participants work on solutions to their own case studies while benefiting from the specialist knowledge and expertise of their peers. In order to guarantee an appropriately high standard of educational and pedagogical input, the Agency runs these activities in collaboration with renowned training institutions. With a view to facilitating ongoing knowledge transfer, training is carried out according to the train-the-trainer model wherever possible.

Advice

The advisory aspects of the Agency's mission focus on specific local case histories, which are often incorporated in a training scenario. The resulting integration generates benefits for both instruments. Advisory missions are always carried out at the request of local authorities and in collaboration with local experts.

Knowledge products

The issues and challenges that emerge from our advisory and training activities are used to develop generic knowledge products in the form of handbooks and guidelines. Examples include a manual for the climatization of museum depots, an inventory of Dutch-Japanese heritage, and a book on rezoning and redevelopment in the Netherlands.

New accents

The International Policy Framework 2017-2020 emphasizes coherence, reciprocity and the measurability of results. It also introduces a new theme: mutual historical perspectives. The Cultural Heritage Agency is therefore stepping up its efforts to intensify and expand its partnerships, along with the other bodies involved in implementing shared cultural heritage: the National Archives of the Netherlands, DutchCulture and the Dutch embassies in partner countries. In these countries, efforts are being made to establish joint initiatives spanning several years with a view to addressing issues that require long-term action. We are working with training institutions to examine ways of introducing or expanding heritage as a standard discipline in educational contexts in the partner countries. The Agency is working towards reciprocity by making challenges and urgencies in the Netherlands a factor in determining whether a collaboration is worth pursuing, by approaching Shared Cultural Heritage projects as an international dimension of its national programmes and by involving external parties from the Dutch heritage field in all

projects. This enables the experience and knowledge gained through the Agency's Shared Cultural Heritage Programme to inform professional heritage practice in the Netherlands. The theme of mutual historical perspectives is to be developed in cooperation with the partner countries and falls primarily within the wider theme of Collections. Performance indicators have been set in order to determine the results and effectiveness of the Shared Cultural Heritage Programme.

More information

Would you like to know more about the Cultural Heritage Agency's Shared Cultural Heritage Programme? If so, please contact Jinna Smit, Programme Manager for Shared Cultural Heritage, at j.smit@cultureelerfgoed.nl.

More information on the other bodies involved in implementing Shared Cultural Heritage policy is available on the websites of the National Archives of the Netherlands, DutchCulture and the Dutch embassies in partner countries.