

Museum advice in the province of South Holland: a broader heritage approach



The new role of museums

(as community players and brokers)

Museums have their origin in collections which were brought together for various reasons: e.g. to study a certain theme or to show off power and influence. In the early years of their existence museums contributed to popularizing knowledge and science. Later, they also tried to bring up people to well-informed civilized citizens. In our time a lot has changed. Education, presentation and promotion have become vital parts of the museum profession. Museums do not only present collections, but also present themes and give opinions. They have stepped into the world and give their view on social and political trends.

This is also what makes museums interesting and worthwhile in our time. People visit museums because they search for knowledge, opinions, inspiration, experience or just recreation. In order to fulfill these wishes, museums have to enter the world, they have to go into the community and seek cooperation. The time of the museum as an Ivory Tower is over.

An example of a project in which a museum worked closely with the community is the project called 'The sweaters of Loes', set up by Museum Rotterdam.

The new role of local government/the provinces (as facilitator)

In the past museums played a role in educating people. That is why the government authorities took the responsibility to support museums and set up new ones. Due to the increased level of education of the lower classes this reason has disappeared. Another change is the emergence of the information society. Almost everyone can get access to all sorts of knowledge from all over the world and get in contact with anyone else.

Therefore, local authorities in the Netherlands now withdraw themselves more and more from supporting museums and culture in general.

When governments support museums now, they use different arguments to subsidize them: museums stimulate the local economy, museums connect people from different cultures, museums enhance tourism. The province of South Holland has stopped supporting museums as well. However, provincial support is now given to institutions for cultural heritage in line with town and country planning. In 2013, the province decided to a policy of supporting seven so-called 'cultural heritage lines'. These lines often comprise historically grown environmental structures which have to be brought into more coherence. Examples are: the Roman Limes, the 'Atlantikwall', the 'Waterlinie' (a defensive inundation-zone) and the canals where horse-drawn barges in the seventeenth to the nineteenth century transported people and freight according to schedule.

Within each line the province has brought together organizations, stakeholders, in order to set up projects which enhance the line. These stakeholders can be: historical associations, museums, organizations in the field of nature conservation, local authorities and local companies. The stakeholders together determine which projects they find worthwhile executing. The chosen projects receive a 50% subsidy from the province. The stakeholders need to provide for the other half themselves. This bottom-up approach is new. One of the projects is the *Passport for children* in which they can collect stamps at each visit of a country house or estate.



Another spearhead of the province's policy is supporting volunteers working in the field of nature conservation and heritage. The Heritage Centre (Erfgoedhuis Zuid-Holland) and the Foundation Landscape South Holland (Zuid-Hollands Landschap) work together to support, facilitate and train these volunteers. This is done on a regional level, so that groups can get to know each other and exchange is stimulated.

An example of an activity for these volunteers is the provincial Volunteers' Day organized yearly.

*The new role of the museum advisor
(as a heritage advisor)*

Until 2007 the Heritage Centre of South Holland had a special department focusing on museums. The museum advisors gave advice to the 220 museums in the province on a wide range of themes: preventive conservation, registration, presentation, PR and marketing. In the meantime this department has broadened towards heritage and its perception and it is mainly concerned with the province's policy, the earlier-mentioned heritage lines. Indeed, these pertain to activities in the whole range of cultural heritage: museums, archives, monuments and archaeology sites. The museum advisor has become 'heritage advisor plus'. As such he plays different parts: professional expert, broker, product developer and project leader.

The 'plus' also involves the course of the Heritage Centre itself, especially the approach to the Foundation Landscape South Holland. Both organisations now share the same building, for close contacts on the shop floor. The Heritage Centre seeks to generate more sources for its own income; it is now 40% and it is increasing. An example is a wealthy fund, donating € 200.000 for the training of volunteers for a four year's period. Where the province withdraws, we see a Maecenas stepping forward!

The heritage advisor becomes a true multi-tasker, connecting, acquiring, working across the borders and knowing where to find the information. Is this sufficient to survive? We will tell you at the forthcoming EMAC Congress.

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The link of our Prezi presentation

http://prezi.com/6m3f7tvf0-id/?utm_campaign=share&utm_medium=copy&rc=ex0share

The YouTube film of the sweaters of Loes Veenstra:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pul1Ja8gWBg>