

## **Workshop Material Culture                      29 November 2006**

Moderator: Lodewijk Wagenaar

Secretary: Johan van Langen

### **Session 1**

Ghana – Monuments are relics for the people who are not among us anymore – so they are not just for the benefit of present days.

USA – de memories linger on – we have been cut off way to long – there is mutual interest. To educate people to people what the Dutch experience was about, many things are the result of Dutch presence.

Brazil: Holland is a special case, we are separated as well – all of discussions are ethnical – race-issues. How can we begin to dialogue between what has being discussed about the Dutch? Continuity of Dutch language, maroon-communities, much material on the maroons in Brazil has been written by the Dutch. Divide between utopia (shared histories) and the practice of asymmetrical disputed heritage - I prefer to use cultural heritage.

Lodewijk Wagenaar: What about the mutuality in streets on the Dutch Antilles?

Janga: The islands are a melting pot – scope remains wide open, now there are a lot of immigrants from Latin-America, so we have to deal with all these cultures. Dutch is not the common vehicle, there is no Dutch cultural domination, the day-to-day culture, food, dance, etc is Caribbean, not Dutch.

Aruba : We have some in common with the other islands (language), common is the political structure, It is important to keep mutuality, especially in the new situation that the islands are falling apart.

Bonaire: The Antilles are part of the Dutch realm. We should not treat them as a strange part of the Kingdom.

Statement of Lodewijk Wagenaar:

- Preserving and conserving are conditional for presentation (linked with monuments – archaeology – museums) and tourism

Janga: Yes, and as a way for identity (building)

Monteiro: Identity demands / politics of specific social groups – this will lead to a heterogenic agenda, in stead of Nation building or preserving for tourism, we react on questions of specific groups, such as Indians, not on national demands.

Gehring – Presentation as a money maker, in order to do so you have to preserve and you need to educate the people. Tension in preservation and developing (building offices, parkingplaces).

Da Silva: The Dutch presence was quite strong – they always have stories about the Dutch, they built this and that. We don't have exhibitions, we don't have excavations. This discussion has a meaning for us.

Balkanisation of history (Every ethnic group desires its own history)

Janga: you have more elements in your history – their contribution is also being recognized, it's a way to link people with their own history ; one may lose everything when no 'value' is

connected with heritage. Showing the historical background and the income generating power of the old inner city (of Curacao) made people interested in it.

Lodewijk Wagenaar: What do you need to achieve the specific goals, except for money and staff?

Janga: Public support (the local governments) is important – this is missing. They do not value the monuments.

Galindo: Language connection, we have to find tools to bring this to a higher level, for instance by translations. The climate is bad for the conservation – there is no universal policy to deal with this. We are the representatives of our countries, Transformations are needed – Take copies of the material – these should be available to all of us.

Janga: What is the connecting thread? We are all connected, influenced, many connections between us, with Surinam and the Antilles.. We need new techniques to achieve our goals.

Bonaire: We have to find common aspects which show we are unique, and interconnected, elements such as language, built heritage, our food and related material culture

Dubissette: Designing the tools, finding the similarities.

Hefting: Once in Brasil a person asked me why I was doing all this.

Gehring: People told me that no Dutch past still is to be seen. Albany very different compared with New England.

How to give meaning to the built heritage? How to find a shared aspect? To convert this from abstract issues (history) to meaningful and practical things – how to develop a tool for this? What is the need – one should start with this: giving meanings to things.

Janga: Research – tell the history of the buildings/ for example built by local architects. Translated to a popular version, Open Monuments Day – use the schools for special projects, it is quite a process to establish and to use the awareness. You are part of a bigger World (compared with Ghana, South Africa).

Menteiro: I agree completely, specialists are necessary to transfer this into general knowledge. Use and criticize colonial history. Project this memory into an Atlantic project. It gives all the monuments a different kind of appeal and force.

USA: The more educated people are, the more they will be attached to and interested in their heritage.

Bonaire: Transferring into an economical context – keeping up the forts for a tourism project.

Improving living conditions by restoring / use of local universities to avoid a Eurocentric approach. The history is very academic – after the a new vision you can profit from it, we need a conservation scheme.

Conference should be finalized with a statement or a declaration.

In this conversion process a important thing is necessary the learning of Dutch.

## Session 2 - Successes and Failures

What was a successful project related to the Material culture?

Guyana: Successful in 1980s we thought of having a national monuments, that symbolises our drive – we went to the general public, the public was very enthusiastic, many responses.

The monument was made in UK, transported to Guyana, a success.

In that same period we tried to establish a national culture centre. The water management of the area went wrong. the canals did not do their job, the area was flooded. This was because they damped the canals and installed mechanical pumps.

Brazil: An fortunated man bought old Dutch paintings, drawings and gravures. He created a beautiful collection. Three years ago an exhibition of his collection was held and connected with that a successful workshop was organized.

Ghana: The restoration of the fortresses was a success. There was emotional attachment, support from UNESCO, USA and the Dutch government.

Not to successful was the immaterial field of research – it was hard (or impossible) to collect information on the castle-slaves, they did various jobs and were often released, tracing them is hard, social mobility within the colonial society (in the Dutch fortresses) is unknown.

Researchers would like to put a tracer on that – find things in biographies.

Recommendations:

- 1) Clear policy
- 2) International & local
- 3) Content management (beheersstructuur)
- 4) Expertise
- 5) Clear purpose
- 6) Funding
- 7) Legal structure / legislation

Historical museum – Foundation closely linked with the government

Other building a failure because they had no specific purpose. Also landscapes should be part of the protected heritage.

Saint Martin: Slave house and other building had been moved from their original places (where they stood for more than 200 years) to the salt plates, where they were destroyed by an hurricane.

Suriname: A success was fort Zeelandia in Paramaribo – in 1972 the museum was opened, there had been some problems with the humidity (located so close to the river).

The cemetery Oranjetuin is not a successful project, The government is not very interested. The gravestones are not conserved and it has become a wilderness.

USA: There is no money to restore old buildings or roofs. The battle is an internal war between commerce and heritage. Sometimes “commerce to preserve” is needed, and another question is: what is there to be preserved? An failure was the “restoration” of part of the harbour in New York. It was a commercial (almost a Disneyland-version) restoration with mainly commercial purposes. The companies that were located near the harbour are leaving one by one, because of a decrease of visitors.

Venezuela: The Dutch had a big influence on the architecture in West Venezuela, especially in the town of Coro. The way of building houses on Aruba and Curacao was copied by the inhabitants of that region. Shell was also very active – How to preserve these buildings, also modern Dutch building.

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### **Proposals of the two previous workshops (combined):**

To develop a solid project plan with conditions.

Recommendations (or Projects are doomed to fail in case one of the following facts is missing:

- 1) Clear policy
- 2) Local support (international support) – local awareness
- 3) Content management
- 4) Expertise
- 5) Clear purpose
- 6) Funding
- 7) Legal structure
- 8) Continuity of the project

Continuity as well. The project / management plan should be a business plan – Renovation because of getting a nice office. Aruba investment bank without any support.

### **WHAT AWAD SHOULD DO:**

- 1) Set up a guide of how to protect – set up an inventory of legal support, often laws already exist. This project should be an informative collection – in case of a quarrel with the local government, a member could collect information on this field.
- 2) Set up an informative panel, to create Atlantic specialists' committees to specific subjects – And send a newsletter every 2 or 3 months, AWAD newsletter. It is important to generate knowledge to prevent failures.
- 3) To establish cooperation - providing the standards, protocols that can be shared across the borders, here are the tools to make a survey - a provider of tools.
- 4) This project uses international standards
- 5) Criteria of how to work together
- 6) Promote awareness
- 7) To develop a international network to cope with the problems of funding
- 8) Combine commerce and cultural heritage.

Inventory or a glossaria of monuments (to some people they have an emotional appeal, other monuments have other appearances or purposes). What are the selection criteria – Awareness. Concept of restoration. We don't know much about expertise, locations of forts, I think it is of great importance to create a world of Atlantic specialists, sharing information, a newsletter or weblog to keep in touch could be.

### Session 3 –

**Guyana:** updating of the laws of tangible heritage – that has been overlooked, - it is not easy to get enforced the laws. The selling of antiquities is not prohibited.

**Aruba:** We don't have much time to lose. The laws are old - Curacao has new laws, but has the same problems.

**Statia:** People knew vaguely that it was not allowed to take objects away from sites. they call it the grocery store (in the 1980s). Recently, a medical doctor was caught with more than 500 objects.

**Bonaire:** They found human remains, did nothing to prevent the keep this intact.

**Brazil:** Good laws, bad practice.

**Ghana:** How to convince the policy makers that this is important (the laws are worked on)?

**USA:** Protection is limited.

What the countries have in common is the lack of:

- 1) Political awareness
- 2) Protective laws
- 3) Enforcement

Do international mutual projects fit into your national heritage projects?

Guyana: we do have a 5-years plan, education programme, but it is not set in stone.

Brazil: has many international orientated institutes

Ghana: has experience with international projects and organisations.

#### GROUP 1

Path 1 – documentary “Indigenous peoples and the WIC (including the Societeiten van Suriname and the Societeit van Berbice)” 1621-1791. Broader than elite awareness – in launching documentary in all the participating countries. Funding through AWAD or from the AWAD shareholders club, like the ABN AMRO, companies that are in way the successors of the WIC. What is missing in this proposal is the role of the private companies.

#### GROUP 2

Lloyd – Sharing our monuments: Set up a committee in each country (academics, architects, perhaps NGO) – meetings twice a year. Generate popular awareness - Essay competition on schools. Newsletter for the academic Newspaper articles

Community participation – A portion of the generated money – regenerate a percentage will go back to the monuments.

#### GROUP 3 -

The Dutch forts in the Atlantic World -

To maintain the forts,

The AWAD – could be a platform to inform the local authorities

Continuity is important

PASSING ON information to the local people.

landscape (fortress)

## **PRESENTATION LLOYD & GRANT**

Sharing our Monuments  
Stimulate awareness by education

Project 1 - Film – The Dutch presence and the impact on the indigenous peoples. Especially in the impacts of military fortifications. Film will also document the reconstruction of various forts/batteries across the Dutch Atlantic World.

Project 2 - Publication – Coffee table style book (with images). Book will also document the reconstruction of various forts/batteries across the Dutch Atlantic World.

Project 3 - Reconstruction of forts by locally trained persons who then become stakeholders in these and future restoration projects .

### Methodology

1 . In each country a committee will be established. this committee shall consist academics, specialists, NGOs, cultural representatives and members of the public sector.

2. Each committee will be responsibility for generating public awareness through essay competitions, photographic and art competitions among various age groups, Those selected will be published in the final document to be presented. this area will attract the private sector input – through the sponsorship of the various competitions.

From each country, a representative would be selected and they would form a general council, meeting once every six (6) months and via the internet to submit progress reports.

The publication will be produced in French, Spanish, English and Dutch

Money generated through the sale of this publication will be given as a grant for restoration project in various countries, based on the submissions by heritage preservation agencies. Monument organizations and military organizations will be persuaded to participate at all levels.

Periodically articles will be published in the print and electronic media internationally and locally to sensitize the populace.