

1. Introduction to 'Protecting and Developing the Dutch Archaeological-Historical Landscape' (PDL/BBO)

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As chairman of the steering committee of the programme 'Protecting and Developing the Dutch Archaeological-Historical Landscape' I am honoured to introduce the publication that marks the end of the programme. Or perhaps I should say its transition to a new state, because the 2008 symposium and this volume, which is intended to position our national discussions in the context of their European background, may now be continued in a network provided by the European Science Foundation and COST.

This would be a very useful development because obviously the issues we discussed during the 2008 symposium are not national at all, or at best there are some particularly Dutch aspects to the problems and challenges that affect archaeological heritage management everywhere. The latter may well be the case because the Netherlands is one of the most densely populated countries in the world in addition to being economically strongly developed. That means that the pressure on the use of space that is evident in the entire western world, and is indeed becoming evident in the central areas of the new economic powers elsewhere, is particularly strong here. While elsewhere there are still vast open spaces or at least there is some room to negotiate, the space that is available in the Netherlands to accommodate the historical and archaeological values in competition with other needs of society is extremely limited in comparison.

Fortunately, this does not imply that the cause of preserving and enhancing the remains of our past that create our identity and that are so important in many other ways is a hopeless one. It may be somewhat more difficult than elsewhere, but on the other hand our Dutch history, thanks to the need for resilient systems of water management, has provided us with both rather tough legislation developed over several centuries and a planning system that create a strong backbone for public policies. These, of course, have first to be developed and put in place and, to cut a very long story short, our symposium here can be seen as a step in that ongoing process of becoming aware of the inadequacy of an existing policy, defining a better one, ideally through research, and putting it in place.

I was a member of the Council of Europe committee that wrote what later became the Valletta Convention (Valletta 1992) and I remember I was rather pleased that we had finally found a better response to the threats that modern development posed to archaeological heritage. I knew it would require quite a fight to get all its provisions implemented in Dutch law, though like everybody else at the time I seriously underestimated how much time would be required. But even when this fight was still going on it became clear that much more was needed. On the one hand we were busy trying to get the convention implemented, while on the other hand, archaeological resource management, or cultural resource management in general, was at the same time being redefined as 'the management of change'. How to deal with the ongoing process of change in the urban and rural and marine landscapes to ascertain the survival in some form of important historical elements? That became the question. And of course it all had to be 'sustainable' as well, the new buzzword that became fashionable in the 1990s when the message from the Brundtland Commission Report on 'Our Common Future' had sunk in.

Sometime during this period the Council of Europe started work on a new convention that would add another dimension to the Valletta Convention, i.e. the Florence Convention adopted in 2000 and which is more commonly known by its proper name, the European Landscape Convention (Florence 2000). We shall come to speak of this development in the course of this book, because obviously the concept of landscape offers an appropriate framework for archaeological heritage management. Initially its relevance was underestimated, certainly in the Netherlands where the process was handled by the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Nature Conservation, not by the Ministry of Culture. I do not mean to imply anything negative about either Ministry and I know the same thing happened in many other countries. However, this shows how relevant the sociology of decision making and the civil service can be and, more or less parallel to all that, we were doing some exercises here locally on how archaeological remains could be integrated in the planning process in such a way that they would actually be taken into serious consideration. The problem was not that there was too much opposition but rather that, even where much good will existed, integration did not really work very well. The first exercises in this respect were not particularly encouraging, especially because of the general invisibility of archaeological and some of the historical values. The need to rethink existing relations within the cultural historical disciplines and the way they could be better tied into environmental planning and development became a central issue. And because there was indeed a lot of good will, this then led to the programme in the context of which we are here together today. It was set up by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research NWO and supported by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, as well as the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality, the Ministry of Housing, Spatial Planning and the Environment and the Ministry of Transport, Public Works and Water Management.

Now I would not like you to assume that all this went as smoothly as would perhaps appear from what I have just said. The establishment by NWO of a programme committee and a steering committee in 2000 was preceded by long years of hard work to get the programme established and to persuade the various ministries to participate in its financing. Even though the spirit of the time was definitely favourable, it took the perseverance of a man like Professor Tom Bloemers to actually pull this off. We have been very fortunate in that for most of the period between 2000 and 2007 the steering committee consisted of dedicated individuals from each of the ministries, who together have made a significant contribution to shaping the programme by ensuring that it would be, and would remain, relevant to the policies of those ministries. From a viewpoint of a value free research that might not perhaps seem to be such a favourable circumstance, but I disagree: we intended to connect practice and theory, knowledge and action, so it was vital for the programme not that some researchers would get their pet projects financed, but that there would be practical results that were of use to policy making so the programme would really make a difference. If it has, or will, is of course for posterity to judge.

NOTES

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REFERENCES

Florence, 2000: *European Landscape Convention*. Florence, 20 October 2000, Strasbourg (Council of Europe).
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