PARTNERSHIPS IN CULTURAL HERITAGE

Jos van Beurden

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The international projects of the KIT Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam

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Table of contents

Preface 7

1 The challenge of imbalance: TM's international cultural policy 9
Eastward bound – Development approach – Testimony to contact – International regulations – International cooperation – TM and the Dutch government
Boxes: Five cities, five stories 10
Restitution and museum ethics 14
Joint exhibitions 17
South African family stories: a group portrait 18
Consultant in Zanzibar 21

2 Bits and pieces: Dutch international cultural policy 23
Culture and development – International cultural activities – Measures at home
Boxes: Examples of culture and development programme projects to 2001 24
Examples of HGIS international cultural projects 26

3 Collection management or protection: the introduction of Object ID 33
Greater protection – Getty project – Digitalising Object ID – TM in a hurry – Reactions in the South – Introduction in practice – Prospect of Object ID
Boxes: Object ID checklist 33
Outline of Object ID training 38
Museums trained or supported by TM to introduce Object ID 38

4 Tailor-made: cooperation with municipal museums in Jakarta 45
Joint effort – Master plan – Preventive conservation – Back to basics – Looking back – Historical ties of Indonesian and Dutch museums
Boxes: DKI museums in Jakarta 46
Follow-up in Yogyakarta 50
Bidesia: migration and oral tradition 52

5 Increasing museums' choices: other activities 53
Spin-off – Defining TM's role – Partnerships – Feedback
Boxes: Summer University 54
Vietnam as example 56
Beninese mobile exhibition 58

Conclusion 61

Preface

Recently one of our partner museums in Europe, the Museum für Völkerkunde in Hamburg, Germany, celebrated its 125th anniversary. Reflecting on the present situation of ethnographic museums in Europe, my colleague Wulf Köpke underlined the need for such institutions to redefine their role. He referred to the kind of information that our museums were used to presenting about 'others', to the academic traditions 'stored' in our museum practices, to Eurocentrism and changing expectations and attitudes among the museum visitors, as well as to past constructions in which strict divisions were drawn between art, folk art and ethnography.[1] Many of the issues he raised on the occasion of this festive event resonate with the experiences and practices of KIT Tropenmuseum in Amsterdam. Like every European ethnographic museum rooted in the colonial past, the Tropenmuseum faces the challenge of addressing these problems and developing a new profile.

KIT Tropenmuseum has the advantage of being embedded in a broader institution, the Royal Tropical Institute (Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen, KIT). KIT has gone through all the stages involved in developing from a colonial centre of expertise (from 1910) to becoming a major development institution in the fields of agriculture, health and culture (since 1950). The Tropenmuseum, together with KIT research and training departments, and its theatre and information and library services, has repeatedly developed incentives to link its presentations, exhibitions and collection policies to the changing relationships between North and South. In this process, the museum has been able consistently to link its work with cooperation and an exchange of views with partners abroad.

Towards the end of the last decade, KIT Tropenmuseum embarked on a new, active policy in the field of international cooperation, supported by the Dutch government. Two senior curators, Carel van Leeuwen and Pienke Kal, joined forces with our present head of Public Programmes, Paul Voogt, and the head of the Curatorial Department, Susan Legêne, to draft such an international programme, and many staff members enthusiastically joined in. Their efforts are described in the publication that lies before you. It is a first report on the trials and errors of this new approach. We invited an independent

[1] W. Köpke, B. Schmelz (Hg.), *Hamburgs Tor zur Welt. 125 Jahre Museum für Völkerkunde Hamburg*. Hamburg 2004, p. 23.

journalist/expert to help us summarize our endeavours in order to provide us with a review of our work, and to enable our partners, funders and others involved to respond to the results.

I wish to thank the author, Jos van Beurden. He had to write his account mostly on the basis of the information we provided, and he has held up a mirror to our face. One of his strong recommendations, put forward in his conclusion, concerns more solid monitoring, evaluation, quality assessment and feedback procedures, not so much as to check the work of our partners but mainly to improve our own performance. This is a recommendation we will certainly act on.

What we aim for in our international projects are equal partnerships. We have experienced how difficult this is in our world, with all its inequalities. At the same time the projects undertaken have been an enriching experience. We sincerely invite our partners in the South to respond to this presentation of our past endeavours. Your comments will help us to promote and provoke national policies that enable cultural institutions to maintain sustainable relations in this area of culture and development.

Lejo Schenk
Director KIT Tropenmuseum

1 The challenge of imbalance: TM's international cultural policy

KIT Tropenmuseum was originally established to display art, culture and products from the Dutch colonies. Some three decades ago its focus shifted to issues in the so-called developing countries. Today, the museum attempts to present its collections in a historical and anthropological context. This first chapter describes the international situation in which the museum currently operates. It discusses the views and policies of the museum concerning international projects and its relations with partner museums.

Eastward Bound

The exterior of the impressive, neoclassical, colonial-style building of Amsterdam's Koninklijk Instituut voor de Tropen (Royal Tropical Institute or KIT) has remained almost unchanged since the building opened in 1926. However, the Tropenmuseum (TM), which it houses, has experienced many transformations. These will be familiar to regular visitors. For the 2004 exhibition *Urban Islam*,[1] for example, the central light hall was divided into five sections representing five cities: Paramaribo, Marrakech, Istanbul, Dakar and Amsterdam. These formed the basis for a discourse on the diverse nature of one of the world's major religions, the second largest in the Netherlands, which has given rise to a significant public debate.

Urban Islam deals with the role of Islam in daily life and youth culture. It features both aesthetic objects and ordinary items of everyday use. In a virtual theatre presentation Amsterdammers from different religious and cultural backgrounds express opinions about issues relating to Islam. Visitors are challenged to respond to these statements. 'The exhibition attempts to persuade visitors not to generalise', says Susan Legêne, head of TM's curators. 'By presenting young Muslims from five cities across the world on equal terms, it challenges the problem of the traditional idea of "we Westerners against the others", with all its inherent notions of inequality and hierarchy dividing old Europe from the other continents.'[2]

Taking the stairs to the first floor, visitors find *Eastward Bound: Art, Culture and Colonialism*. This multimedia spectacle embraces four semi-permanent exhibitions: a thematic display about Holland's colonial past, and three collection displays on New Guinea, South-East Asia and Indonesian Textiles. *Eastward Bound* opened in 2003 and is set to remain for the next ten years. 'In

[1] December 2003-September 2004

[2] Communication with S. Legêne, TM's head of the Curatorial Department, 9 March 2004.

those ten years we hope that every Dutch schoolchild will have had an opportunity to see the exhibition on Dutch colonialism. In addition to books, films, television programmes and other media, the museum enables them to understand the colonial past as an ongoing influence on today's society and international relations.'[3]

Five cities, five stories

Paramaribo, capital of the former Dutch colony of Suriname, is a multicultural, multi-faith melting pot, where mosque and synagogue can exist side by side. In Dakar, with its overwhelming Islamic majority, each Muslim is a member of a brotherhood with its own religious leader. In Marrakech Islam is the state religion. In Istanbul religion and state are divided. In each of these cities, Muslims choose their own lifestyle. Many in the Netherlands have roots in Morocco and Turkey. Amsterdam's Muslims, comprising eleven percent of the population, relate their religious identity to various sources, from the Arabic verses of the Qur'an to electronic messages on Internet. For more information, visit www.urbanislam.nl.

The Senegalese artist Papisto Boy explains the painting made for the Urban Islam exhibition in the Tropenmuseum. He was invited by the Amsterdam Art Fund, 2004. (Photo: Irene de Groot)

[3] Communication with S. Legêne, 9 March 2004.

TM drew on input from like-minded experts from South-East Asia, various Western countries and the Netherlands to create *Eastward Bound*. The new presentation invites visitors to view the museum's collections with a fresh eye. Curators made a thorough search of the depot collections and selected the finest pieces for display. The richly decorated canoes and ritual objects from New Guinea, for example, are works of art. They are shown in such a way that the focus is on their beauty and their purpose, while information is of course also provided about their historical context and provenance.

'When rearranging the displays we interrogated the traditional ethnographic canon. This divorced objects from their social and temporal context, and was essentially a product of imperialist ideology. It emphasised difference and distinction, reflecting former political relationships. For example, while the documentation of Indonesian objects in Dutch ethnographic museums rarely mentions Islam, most objects in Middle Eastern collections are labelled Islamic, from religious and ritual objects to everyday utensils and textiles. We have now begun to re-examine our objects and to place them in their historical and ethnographical context. Where were they found? How old are they? Who collected them, when and why?'[4]

A door on the first floor leads to a special department. Only youngsters aged between six and twelve can enter. A poster on the door declares *Exhibition Paradise & Co*.[5] This exhibition about Iran features a thousand-and-one objects, stories, poems, sounds, flavours and creative hands. One item is a beautiful modern triptych by Farah Ossouli showing old Persian stories by the poet Ferdosi. Children are introduced to book illumination and the art of hospitality. It is a popular place, visited by children on school trips and individually from all over the Netherlands. A key element of the exhibition is a special website www.kids-at-iran.nl, which enables Iranian and Dutch schoolchildren to communicate with each other and to get to know their respective cultures using images as well as language. TM's children's museum, relaunched as TM Junior, will run this exhibition until February 2006, involving pupils from two primary schools in Amsterdam, while Kanoon, the partner organisation for the cultural education of children in Iran, does the same with children there.

Development approach

The three exhibitions *Eastward Bound, Urban Islam* and *Paradise & Co* typify the present role of what is one of the Netherlands' leading anthropological museums. TM's history goes back to 1864, when the Maatschappij ter Bevordering van Nijverheid (Dutch Society for the Advancement of Industry) founded a museum of colonial products in the city of Haarlem. In 1910 the museum moved to Amsterdam, where it became a department of the newly founded Koloniaal Instituut (Colonial Institute), the present Royal Tropical Institute or KIT. At that time Indonesia, Suriname and the Netherlands Antilles

[4] S. Legêne, 'Eastward Bound: Auto-Ethnography, Empathy and the Concepts of Authenticity', paper for Workshop Identity Documents, Cape Town 12-13 March 2004. Communication with the author, 9 March 2004.

[5] This exhibition runs from September 2003 to March 2006.

were Dutch colonies. Of these only the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba remain part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands today. The Indonesian archipelago was an especially significant source of objects for the museum's galleries and depots.

In the 1970s the discussion about the Netherlands' colonial past opened up and intensified. Progressive political and liberation struggles in South-East Asia, Southern Africa and various Latin American countries appealed to the imagination of many in the Netherlands. Newly independent states attracted the attention of the public and politicians. Foreign aid, through multilateral, bilateral and private institutions, increased substantially and became a matter of public debate. In a world divided between the wealthy, advantaged countries of the North and the impoverished, disadvantaged countries of the South, the museum abandoned its exclusive focus on the former colonies and embraced the entire South. In 1971 the museum reformulated its policy as 'providing information about the life and work of people in the tropics and subtropics, the way it has changed and the consequences of this, and the relationship between societies there and here'.[6]

This new approach was based on a visualisation of the current stage of development of these countries, or rather their underdevelopment. The museum's objective was to raise public awareness and support for cooperative development.[7] In addition, 'people, rather than the art of palaces and temples, were given centre stage, along with the changes and developments taking place in the developing countries concerned.'[8] Imitation slums, huts, shops, sounds and smells were exhibited as well as informative texts, helpful illustrations, maps and figures. New presentations about the various regions of the South were designed showing ethnological objects in combination with more recent everyday items. Despite this new focus, the distinction between 'us' and 'them', between North and South, remained. With hindsight, the tone of many of these exhibitions was often at best didactic, and sometimes paternalistic.

It was not long before this concentration on poverty and development issues began to wear thin. The newly independent countries had matured and acquired their own policies and agendas. Some leaders and professionals began openly to oppose the dominance and patronisation of the North. Increasingly intense political, economic and cultural contacts bridged the divide between 'us' and 'them'. The arrival in the Netherlands of large numbers of migrants from less advantaged countries also helped change public perceptions. Defining relationships with other countries in terms of development no longer sufficed. Displays of precious African, Asian and Latin American art were no longer the exclusive domain of ethnographic museums in the Netherlands and other Western countries. They were now shown in art museums alongside exhibitions of autonomous modern art from the South. At auctions high prices were paid for cultural objects from these regions.

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6 Tropenmuseum, *Collectienota 2003-2007: Erfgoed en Toekomst; een werkdocument*. Amsterdam, 2004 (KIT Publishers, Bulletin of the Royal Tropical Institute, no. 355), p. 11.

7 'The Tropenmuseum and the Colonial Heritage' Position Paper, March 1998, p. 7-11.

8 H. Leyten, 'Non-Western Art in Anthropological Museums', in: Leyten H., and Damen B., *Art, Anthropology and the Modes of Re-Presentation*, Royal Tropical Institute, 1992, p. 19.

It became clear that those who had been regarded as underdeveloped, whose problems and lack of development had been explained in exhibitions, were often also the proud creators and owners of rich cultures. The material products of these cultures required a different approach. The reassessment of these objects and deconstruction of the colonial or poverty-oriented Western interpretation became part of the process of redefining TM's role and public profile. In the resultant fresh look at the collection it was understood that some sections – painted tree barks from the Papua region, nineteenth-century photographs, colonial libraries, coins of the Dutch East India Company (VOC) etc – were in poor shape. An investigation by the Instituut Collectie Nederland (Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage or ICN), the Dutch national expertise centre for management and preservation of moveable cultural heritage, concluded in early 1999 that thirty percent of TM's 200,000 photographs were in bad condition, that almost all book collections and some 6,000 objects required better preservation and storage facilities and that valuable and rare objects like coins or beads had suffered from poor conservation. In fact by then improvements had already begun.

Testimony to contact

With an additional grant from the Dutch Foreign Ministry ('Heritage Extra Project'), the museum was able to intensify efforts to improve the conservation of its holdings. As TM rediscovered its core collection the need to re-examine its colonial past became paramount. Work on this colonial heritage involved more than just historical interest. The colonial heritage at KIT Tropenmuseum was also part of the historical heritage of cultures that had been forced into a colonial relationship with the Netherlands and other colonial powers. This heritage was as important to the former colonies as it was to the former colonialists.

This idea became an integral part of TM's policy. After all, TM's extensive collections of material culture and photography testified to 'centuries-old contacts between the North and the South'. The museum resolved to break through 'their supposed timelessness, and to place them in a historical context. In the past, collecting had varied from receiving gifts, exchange or trading objects to military violence, pressure and extortion.'[9] TM began to rearrange the different sections of the museum and to give them a more modern place. The semi-permanent exhibition *Eastward Bound* was one of the results.

With these innovations TM redefined its role as a 'treasury for future generations' and 'a generator of culture at the cutting edge of cultures', and its aim to offer an open forum to people and institutions. As the mission statement explains, the museum 'promotes knowledge and understanding between Western and non-Western cultures'. TM's role in this new phase has become more that of 'a broker and builder of bridges' between 'here' and 'there' and of a 'provider of specialised knowledge'.[10]

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[9] Communication with S. Legêne, 9 March 2004.

[10] Communication with P. Voogt, head of TM's Public Programmes department, 16 December 2003.

View of the Indo-Javanese display in the permanent Eastward Bound exhibition in the Tropenmuseum. Behind the sculpture of the yoni and lingam, one can see a Buddha head from the Borobudur, excavated in the nineteenth century. (Photo: Irene de Groot)

Restitution and museum ethics

When museums in countries of the North wish to cooperate with museums in the South, the issue of restitution inevitably crops up.[11] In 2002, 18 major European and North American museums, including the Rijksmuseum in Amsterdam, issued a manifesto stating that although they strongly rejected the ongoing illicit trade of art, antiquities and archaeological objects, they did not intend to return treasures they had acquired in the past to the countries of origin. Those treasures 'have become part of the museums that have cared for them, and by extension part of the heritage of the nations which house them'. The declaration (linked to the debate on the Greek Parthenon Marbles at the British Museum) aroused many reactions.

A Buddha head at the Rijksmuseum, for example, originates from the Borobudur temple complex in Indonesia. Borobudur is now on UNESCO's World Heritage List. Judging from the declaration of the 18 museums, the Rijksmuseum is not intending to return it. KIT Tropenmuseum, one kilometre away from the Rijksmuseum, also has a Buddha head and other objects linked to Borobudur. They were collected in the nineteenth century, while the Batavian Society of Arts and Sciences in the Netherlands East Indies also donated antiquities in 1934. Does TM hold the same position as the Rijksmuseum? Director Lejo Schenk: "As far as we are concerned, the archaeological finds from Borobudur, which are shown in the Eastward Bound exhibition, are part of the world's heritage. In principle, objects like these could be returned to Indonesia, but under certain conditions. Indonesia has to submit a request, and has to explain why the objects should return, and also assure us that they will be safe and accessible for the public."[12] In other words: good cultural governance.

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11 S. Legêne, 'Cultuur & Kennis – Bijdrage aan POP discussie', paper, 1 April 2002.

12 Schenk made this statement during a debate in TM on 1 February 2003. It was published in the Dutch daily *Trouw*.

International regulations

Redefining TM's role in the Netherlands led to a reconsideration of the museum's position in the international arena. This related to both collection acquisition policies and international cooperation. Acquisition policies concern both *what* the museum proposes to collect, and *how*, which also involves the museum's international regulations.[13] The global debate on acquisition ethics received a major impetus around 1970, when the University of Pennsylvania Museum in Philadelphia issued a clear statement against the looting, smuggling and acquisition of unprovenanced cultural objects, and the acceptance of the UNESCO Convention against illicit import, export and trafficking in cultural objects. The new approach was reflected in the 1986 Code of Professional Ethics of ICOM (International Council of Museums), and in the Netherlands in the 1994 Declaration of Ethnographic Museums. The latter resolved to contribute to the fight against illicit trading in cultural objects by refusing to accept items of cultural heritage through purchase, acquisition or loan, or as exhibits, if any doubt existed regarding their provenance.

For many museums a gap remained, and sometimes still remains, between the declarations, conventions and codes, and practice. Colin Renfrew mentions museums in the US, Japan and the Netherlands, which until recently ignored the new ethical approach.[14] KIT Tropenmuseum had to come to terms with its consequences too. Some objects in the 'treasury for future generations' were acquired under the colonial regime. A case in point is the collection of objects from Lombok, donated by officers who had taken them during the fierce struggle for domination of the island. These were obtained long ago, as were objects such as the Buddha head from the Borobudur (today on the World Heritage List). The change in attitude in the global cultural sector since 1970 will not change the legal ownership of these objects, because the declarations and convention are not retroactive.

Yet the ethical question remains. Even in the late 1980s TM was still accepting tainted acquisitions. It was around then that the museum bought a Tau Tau death figure, originating from the Toraja in Sulawesi, and five Koma statuettes from Ghana. 'We should not have taken these ritual objects with such a vague provenance', the museum now admits. Koma statuettes have been on the ICOM Red List of African antiquities at risk since 2000. TM informed the authorities in Ghana that it would facilitate their return if desired.

It took time to internalise the new ethics. Curators were inclined not to ask too many questions about provenance when purchasing objects from art dealers, but also when accepting unconditional legacies. In some cases this caused tension and led to serious discussions among TM's staff. Since 1994, however, the museum has striven to apply the same stringent policy adopted by institutions such as the University of Pennsylvania Museum and the British

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13 For an in-depth discussion of the museum's acquisition policy, see: *Collectienota 2003-2007: Erfgoed en toekomst; een werkdocument*. KIT Tropenmuseum, Bulletin 355, 2003.

14 C. Renfrew, Loot, *Legitimacy and Ownership*, Duckworth, London, 2000, p. 72-73. Referring to the Netherlands Renfrew mentions the Rijksmuseum voor Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities) in Leiden.

Museum. Every potential addition to the collection, whatever the circumstances, must have a legitimate provenance, proving that the object was outside its country of origin before 1970, the year the UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing of the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property came into effect, or was exported with a legal export permit. If an art dealer or a generous benefactor cannot show sufficient provenance, the museum must refuse the object.[15] According to TM's head of the curators Susan Legêne this has been accepted by all the staff for several years. The ICOM code and the principles of the main international cultural heritage treaties, such as the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict and its two Protocols, the 1970 UNESCO Convention and the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects, are now no longer paper tigers. The acquisition of a Tau Tau figure or Koma statuette would be unthinkable now.

TM has taken certain steps to respond to ethical questions more pro-actively. A Collection Commission has been appointed from among its own professionals to oversee new acquisitions.[16] In addition to studying whether objects complement the museum's key collections, it also examines whether ethical issues relating to provenance, for example, are raised. TM is aware of the importance of improving accessibility of information about its objects, and is currently compiling a digital register and documentation system of all its objects, a task which will be finished in 2007.[17] TM also aims to extend its collaboration with partner museums in the South through exchange, loan and even transfer of ownership.[18] Under certain conditions KIT Tropenmuseum is prepared also to restore objects.

International cooperation

Like the Dutch government's international cultural policy, 'the guiding principles of TM's policy of international cooperation are the need to exchange resources, and artistic and creative potential, as well as a vision for the role of culture in development processes', according to Susan Legêne. Well-developed national and regional, public and private museums with a concept of their role in society are a key aspect of the museum's vision. They bolster state formation, support cultural heritage awareness and strengthen national identity. They can also help explain a country's history, and national or global developments. Moreover, strengthening the cultural heritage sector can lead to socio-economic improvements. This applies to countries in the South and in the North alike.

Partnerships between museums in the North and the South are not equal partnerships. There is an obvious and serious imbalance. Often, museums in the North have larger collections of artefacts from the South than museums in the South themselves. Museums in the South have relatively few European treasures. Many are understaffed and in financial need. Due to the rapid

[15] Tropenmuseum, *Collectienota 2003-2007*, p. 64.

[16] Idem, p. 73, 74.

[17] Idem, p. 64.

[18] Idem, p. 57.

urbanisation of the South, the rise of a prosperous upper class in some Southern countries, and increasing interest among art dealers, collectors and museums in the industrialised world, the new museums have problems securing valuable, scarce 'old' objects for themselves. This in part reflects the former colonial situation, as well as current differences in infrastructure, money and networks.[19]

Joint exhibitions

- With the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi and the Centre for International Cooperation of Vietnamese Studies of the University of Hanoi on Village Life in the Red River Delta (1995/1996)
- With the African Window Natural Cultural History Museum of Pretoria on South African Family Stories (2003-2005)
- With the Karta Pustaka (Dutch Library) in Yogyakarta on Indonesian batiks and textiles (planned for 2005/6)
- With the Manav Vikas Sangralahaya (Museum of the GB Pant Institute) in Allahabad and IMWO in Paramaribo on Bidesia folk culture (planned for 2006)

Museums in the South are certainly interested in international cooperation. This is prompted by a need for funding and expertise about collection management and protection, as well as a desire to curb illicit trade in cultural objects. International cooperation should be 'stronger' and 'more regular' in order to prevent 'illicit traffic in cultural property', said Nguyen Quoc Hung of Vietnam's Ministry of Culture and Information.[20] 'We would love to make an inventory of the collection of our museum and of some regional museums', assured deputy director Hab Touch of the National Museum in Phnom Penh.[21] His colleague Samuel Sidibé, director of the National Museum in Bamako, shared these concerns. For him an inventory policy is also a priority: 'European and American museum professionals can help carry out this inventory, which may be seen as a basis for further fruitful international cooperation'.[22]

Aware of the existing imbalance, TM tries to base partnerships on professional equality and commitment to a common cause, and to handle 'the questions which the equality issue raises in our asymmetric world, in a transparent and pragmatic way'.[23] This is not purely altruistic. KIT Tropenmuseum has its own

[19] The issue was discussed in Singapore during a meeting of ASEMUS, the Asia Europe Museum Network, in March 2004. See: F. Wardani, 'Imbalance Twixt Asian, European Museums', in: *The Jakarta Post*, 18 March 2004.

[20] Nguyen Quoc Hung, 'Preventing the Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property in Vietnam', paper for seminar on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property in South-East Asia, Bangkok, 24-26 March 2004.

[21] Interview in Phnom Penh, 19 January 2004.

[22] S. Sidibé, 'Fighting Pillage: National Efforts and International Cooperation', in: H. Leyten, ed., *Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property: Museums against Pillage*. KIT, Amsterdam, 1995, p. 33.

[23] Communication with S. Legêne, 19 April 2004.

South African family stories: a group portrait

In 2002 South African and Dutch researchers, exhibition makers, photographers and artists concluded joint preparations for an exhibition called *South African Family Stories: A Group Portrait*. They followed nine families, visualising the fate and fortunes of these families during the twentieth century through old photographs, artworks, original documents and household items. Their stories provided moving views, from various perspectives, of the impact of apartheid on South Africa's history.

In Amsterdam the exhibition attracted a large number of visitors and received positive reviews. The exhibition subsequently moved to Pretoria's African Window National Cultural History Museum, where it opened in March 2004. It was the result of intense international cooperation, supported by several funds and private companies, including the Dutch HGIS Fund. For the Tropenmuseum, the support of the South African Ministry of Sport, Tourism and Culture for the exhibition in South Africa, was a major reward. A catalogue accompanied the show in English and Dutch, produced by KIT Publishers and Kwela Publishers.

From left to right:
Bie Venter (coordinator), Markus Toerien (film maker), Cedric Nunn (photographer) and his daughter Cathy working on the Nunn family story – one of the nine stories portrayed in the exhibition and book, South African Family Stories, 2003. (Photo: Paul Faber)

interests too. International cooperation through exchanges of objects and exhibitions, and by sharing expertise and networks, helps enrich and revitalise the museum's own collection and focus on new contemporary topics.

Where possible, the museum attempts to extend partnerships beyond the usual arrangements for research and loans, to include capacity building in the professional heritage sector in the South. This is achieved in various ways, for example, through training seminars and scholarships (see chapters 4 and 5). TM has developed the software system Object ID for collection protection and management purposes (see chapter 3). The museum ensures that its Amsterdam exhibition programme maintains an international character and response. This has been achieved, for example, by involving professionals from partner museums in rearranging its semi-permanent exhibitions and compiling joint exhibitions. For these exhibitions each partner provides objects on loan to the other, while TM takes responsibility for financial matters. TM also organises visitors' programmes linking national and international areas of interest, by inviting professionals from partner museums to attend summer schools (see chapter 5). TM participates in discussions with the Dutch government on international cultural issues.

TM and the Dutch government

The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs is the main source of funding for KIT Tropenmuseum's work in the Netherlands and its international projects. Since 1999 this relationship has been organised in an 'output finance' structure. Three programmes are discussed in greater detail in the following chapters. The budget for these three programmes, implemented between 2000 and 2004, was € 1,500,000.[24] KIT Tropenmuseum is the only ethnographic museum in the Netherlands with such an extensive international programme. According to the museum's director, "This is also thanks to the fact that the museum is part of the KIT Royal Tropical Institute with its vast expertise in implementing and realising international projects on a broad range of development issues. No other ethnographic museum finds itself embedded in such a favourable institutional setting."[25]

It is sometimes thought that this international work is a new and crucial source of income for the Amsterdam museum. When invited in 2000 to join the Object ID project, Samuel Sidibé, director of Mali's National Museum, suspected that while TM made it appear that it was doing them a favour, he was having to fit in with the Dutch museum's new business plan.[26] When TM presented the same Object ID project during the Protection of Cultural Heritage in South-East Asia Workshop in Hanoi in April 2001, the audience also first had to be convinced that TM and was not trying to sell its software as some

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[24] Object ID: via the Culture and Development Programme € 754,000; DKI: From the HGIS funds (Homogeneous Group on International Cooperation) a.o. € 225,000; Institutional Development programme via the Culture and Development Programme € 534,000.

[25] Communication with Lejo Schenk, 19 May 2004.

[26] Communication with S. Sidibé, 2 March 1999.

sort of commercial venture.[27] A similar suspicion is raised every now and then at the Netherlands Foreign Ministry. 'Today, KIT Tropenmuseum, prompted by the demands of its donor, operates less from a sense of idealism and a pure focus on content than it might have fifteen years ago. It is involved with business. There is nothing wrong with this as such, although it makes monitoring and evaluation by an external partner more important.'[28] TM's head of Public Programmes, Paul Voogt, welcomes monitoring, adding that it is necessary to put this into perspective: 'TM receives around nine million euros annually in output subsidies. The international work is interwoven with the other activities. The income from international projects is a minor fraction of that amount. With our small staff we would not be able to handle much more.'[29]

Since, for most of TM's international projects with partner museums, additional external funding is needed, a donor may have a significant influence on the choice of the activities to be funded. For example in 1999 the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation limited the number of countries in which TM could introduce the Object ID object registration system. The ministry was only willing to pay for the fourteen countries that had been selected as focus countries for bilateral aid. As a result, TM found itself with rather a mixed bag of countries with which to collaborate on Object ID.

This is just one example of the relationship between TM's international programmes and Dutch government policy. Staff at the Foreign Ministry's cultural department and TM's staff maintain good contacts. Naturally, TM tries to influence the government's Culture and Development Programme, both in terms of finance and content. Early in 2000, staff from the ministry and TM discussed the museum's role in the programme. TM expressed its wish to provide Dutch embassies in a number of developing countries with information about possibilities for projects to be funded from the programme and to contribute to keeping culture 'on the development agenda'.[30] In May 2004 the museum was able to present its policies and views in this respect.

Today, TM's international policies are based on a wish to distinguish between tailor-made technical 'capacity building' projects and broader cultural projects promoting sustainable development. Capacity building projects provide training, museum management support, conservation and documentation policies. The broader issue of culture and development involves projects relating to topics such as relationships between migrants and their country of origin; cultural identity and non-material (intangible) heritage; strengthening cultural awareness as a contribution to conflict prevention or community development, supporting sustainable tourism policies. Whether TM has had a real impact on policy formulation is doubtful, since the Culture and Development Programme does not have a clear, focused policy but consists

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27 P. Voogt, 'Report Workshop on the Protection of Cultural Heritage in South-East Asia, Hanoi, 9-13 April, 2001'.

28 E-mail communication with M. Mulder, Press, Culture and Education Counsellor, Netherlands Embassy Jakarta, Indonesia, 18 June 2004.

29 Communication with P. Voogt, 18 March 2004.

30 Report of meeting with DCO and KIT, 26 January 2000.

mainly of an assortment of projects and various bits and pieces. Certainly, TM 'has been filling a vacuum with relatively good projects',[31] however, and 'TM is an inspiring partner with good ideas and good networks',[32] as two of the ministry's staffers noted.

Participants in the Zanzibar Museum Exhibition Development and Training Programme, 2004. (Photo: Mubiana Luhila)

Consultant in Zanzibar

In an attempt to improve performance, in 2002 the House of Wonders, the Peace Memorial Museum and the National History Museum of Zanzibar asked TM to review their plans and provide comments. Zanzibar had been fairly isolated since 1996, due to the political situation there. The EU and its member states had cut diplomatic ties. As a result, TM noted, the museums were far more self-reliant than many museums in countries with strong ties with donors.[33] TM proposed 'a phased, step-by-step and small-scale approach' to improvement, and the nurturing of the museums' self-reliance. It arranged for Zanzibari museum professionals to receive training under the Programme for Museum Development in Africa in Mombassa, and internships at the National Museums of Kenya. TM's role is to help set up the project, bring the parties together, and provide a final evaluation.

[31] Communication with Inspector A. Slob of the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department of the Dutch Foreign Ministry, December 2003.

[32] Communication with F. Dorsman, Deputy Head International Cultural Policy of the Foreign Ministry's Culture and Development Programme, 10 March 2004.

[33] P. Voogt, M. Reijmers, 'National Museums of Zanzibar, Identification mission, 7-11 August 2002'.

2 Bits and pieces: Dutch international cultural policy

Dutch international cultural policy is especially relevant for KIT Tropenmuseum. This chapter discusses the two government policy and budget principles on which international cultural projects are funded, and which are reflected in KIT Tropenmuseum's international activities. The problem of coherence in Dutch international cultural policy is also examined. The chapter describes the increasing public interest in international cultural exchanges.

Culture and development

No government puts international cultural policy at the top of its foreign policy agenda. No minister for development cooperation makes it a priority. If culture figures are on the foreign policy agenda, they are generally a tool to promote political and economic interests rather than an aim in itself. If culture is part of foreign aid and is regarded as essential to development, there is often more talk of policy than coherent implementation on the ground. The Netherlands is no exception.

The Dutch government has developed two policy and budget guidelines for international cultural activities. One, based on collaboration between the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science and the Foreign Ministry, concerns international cultural activities. The other deals with cultural projects within the framework of 'culture and development'.

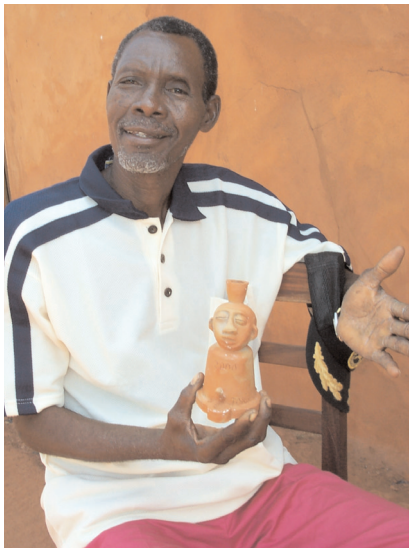
In 1981 the National Advisory Council for Development Cooperation (NAR) introduced the concept of culture as a specific part of development.[34] NAR noted that development activities 'are components of an overall transformation process in which cultural conditions and the consequences of what appear to be purely technical activities ... cannot be ignored'. Following this advice, in 1986 Eegje Schoo, (Minister for Development Cooperation 1982-1986) appointed the first cultural expert to the staff of the Directorate General for International Cooperation of the Foreign Ministry.

Jan Pronk (Minister for Development Cooperation 1973-1977 and 1989-1998), the leading champion of culture as part of development policy in the Dutch cabinet, defined culture in his 1990 policy paper *A World of Difference* as 'the typical quality or the entirety of the ways of thinking and living of a community, including the material and immaterial products of that community. Through

[34] S. Legêne and E. Postel-Coster, 'Isn't It All Culture?', in: J. Nekkers and P. Malcontent, *Fifty Years of Dutch Development Cooperation 1949-1999*, The Hague, 2000, p. 282 ff.

Examples of Culture and Development Programme projects up until 2001[35]

1. Museum for Popular Art, La Paz, Bolivia
2. Hubert Bals Fund for Film Producers in Developing Countries
3. National Academy for Visual Arts
4. Government of Yemen for several Cultural Heritage Projects
5. Royal Tropical Institute for Object ID and Regional Programme to Strengthen Institutional Development of Partner Museums in the South (chapters 3 and 5)
6. Strengthening of Libraries and Documentation Centres in Eastern Africa



Above: collection in the store of the Musée Historique d'Abomey, one of the fourteen museums involved in the Object ID and the Regional Development Programme to Strengthen Institutional Development of Partner Museums in the South.
Right: the Beninese artist Cyprien Tokoudagba, from Abomey, participated in the project. In 2004 the Tropenmuseum commissioned work from him, which he made in Amsterdam.
(Photos: Elisabeth den Otter, 2001)

[35] Ministry of Foreign Affairs/IOB, *Culture and Development: The Evaluation of a Policy Theme (1981-2001)*, The Hague, 2002, p. 80.

these ways of thinking, meaning and direction are given to the actions.'[35] He noted further, 'In Dutch development cooperation, culture is not seen as irrelevant or as an obstacle for development but as a basis for sustainable development. Economic and technological development cannot be considered separately from the cultural context'.[36] That same year Pronk set up a Culture and Development Programme within the Directorate-General for International Cooperation.

Culture was rarely discussed in subsequent policy papers. In 1995 the Dutch ministries of Foreign Affairs, and Education, Culture and Science hosted a conference on the World Commission on Culture and Development's UNESCO report, *Our Creative Diversity*. According to the Foreign Ministry's Policy and Operations Evaluation Department the impact of the conference on policy formulation was 'negligible'. It was the 'end of an era in which the culture and development policy had received some extra attention'.[37]

The debate on the role of culture in development was contracted out and put safely 'at a distance from the ministry'.[38] Two funds were set up, HIVOS Culture Fund in 1995 and the Prince Claus Fund for Culture and Development in 1996. HIVOS Culture Fund supports cultural organisations associated with film, poetry, visual arts, performing arts and literature.[39] The Prince Claus Fund, named after the culture-conscious husband of the Dutch monarch, encourages and supports innovative cultural activities in Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean that reflect a contemporary and original approach to the themes of art in the disadvantaged countries of the South.[40] Both funds receive annual funding from the Foreign Ministry: HIVOS Culture Fund gets around three million euros and the Prince Claus Fund around 2.3 million euros. Both funds exercise more or less autonomous policies. Although they have received a generally positive press, the Prince Claus Fund was criticised for not sufficiently encouraging debate in the Netherlands about culture and development and for confining its activities to the international scene of intellectuals and artists from the South, while HIVOS Culture Fund was criticised for focusing on professional artists and failing to link culture and development.[41]

Jan Pronk's successor, Eveline Herfkens (1998-2002), paid little attention to culture and development. Her policy of restricting the number of countries receiving Dutch bilateral aid had a negative impact on cultural projects. Herfkens's focus countries were asked to define their bilateral priorities sector

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36 J. Pronk, *Een Wereld van Verschil*, The Hague, Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken, August 1990, p. 264.

37 Idem.

38 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/IOB, *Cultuur en Ontwikkeling: de evaluatie van een beleidsthema (1981-2001)*. The Hague 2003, pp. 38-39.

39 Idem, pp. 40 and 58.

40 See www.hivos.nl. HIVOS is one of the co-financing agencies in the Netherlands.

41 See www.princeclausfund.nl.

42 See: R. v.d. Berg, 'Rozen met doornen: Vier evaluatie rapporten', in: *Rozen in de Woestijn, Verslag Conferentie over Cultuur en Ontwikkeling*, Prince Claus Fund, The Hague, 6 September 2002, p. 19. The Prince Claus Fund has organised several public debates.

Examples of HGIS international cultural projects

1. Equipment and know-how to rescue flood affected archives in the Czech Republic
2. Youth theatre and dancing performances in the US and Canada
3. Poetry International annual festival in Rotterdam
4. Major exhibition in 2005 on 60th anniversary of Indonesia's declaration of independence in museums in Jakarta and Leiden
5. TANAP Project: Cooperation with a.o. Sri Lanka, India, Indonesia and South Africa on management of Dutch East Indies Company (VOC) archives
6. Training of seven DKI museums in Jakarta (see chapter 4)
7. Exhibition on Dutch architecture in Warsaw, Poland
8. Rotterdam film festival: project about 11 September 2001, the Twin Towers and the Iraq War and its cultural consequences
9. Joint Dutch/South African exhibition project *South African Family Stories: A Group Portrait*
10. Improvement of depot facilities and museum staff training at Suriname Museum in Paramaribo

The staff of the Suriname Museum in Paramaribo discuss maps, books and objects during a collection conservation training in March 2004. (Photo: Martijn de Ruijter)

by sector. Each were required to select two to four sectors as targets for Dutch foreign assistance. Most had policies and urgent financial needs for health, education, water, infrastructure and good governance, and none of the countries considered culture to be a priority sector. For Dutch aid to be diverted to culture and development activities these had to be categorised under another sector. Staff at the ministry's department of culture were at a loss to know what to do.

In its evaluation of the Culture and Development Programme, the Policy and Operations Evaluation Department concluded that 'by the end of the 1990s, any explicit focus on culture had largely disappeared from development policy ... If culture were chosen as the basis for development cooperation, this would mean a departure from current practices.' In addition, earlier discussions and reformulations 'have had virtually no effect on the implementation of development cooperation'. Most attempts to include culture in development cooperation remained 'largely cosmetic'.[43]

In a letter to the Dutch Parliament the present Minister for Development Cooperation, Agnes van Ardenne (appointed 2002), endorsed the findings of the evaluation.[44] She confirmed that culture is a basis for sustainable development and that the Culture and Development Programme would be continued. The aims of the programme – strengthening cultural identity, promoting cultural self-awareness and understanding between different cultures – would remain unchanged. Implementation of the Culture Programme would leave room for 'the integration of a cultural dimension in projects' (culture as an instrument) and the strengthening of 'cultural identities via specific cultural projects' (culture as an aim).

In a letter to Parliament in May 2004 she reconsidered her statement that financial support to specific cultural projects in partner countries[44] would be restricted to the fields of arts, film and heritage. 'The existing program ... will be further intensified and can be broadened.'[46] She offered no indication how this intensification or broadening would be realised. Unlike budgets for most aspects of Dutch foreign aid, the budget for the programme has not been reduced. In formulating policy, the minister has used the concept of culture in a broad sense, without defining how her department intends to observe the cultural component in development activities more effectively. In operational terms and for specific projects she has applied a narrower concept. This is not unusual. In Britain, Norway, Sweden and Switzerland a similar distinction has been introduced.[47]

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43 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/IOB, *Cultuur en Ontwikkeling: De evaluatie van een beleidsthema (1981-2001)*, The Hague, 2002, p. 2.

44 *Beleidsreactie op IOB evaluatie programma Cultuur & Ontwikkeling*, letter to Parliament, 2 December 2002.

45 For a list of 36 partner countries, see www.minbuza.nl.

46 'Verandering in beleidskader programma Cultuur en Ontwikkeling' (Change in policy framework programme Culture and Deevelopment), letter to Parliament, 28 May 2004. The quote is from the amended version of the letter dated 25 June 2004.

47 Communication with F. Dorsman, Deputy Head International Cultural Policy, Foreign Ministry, 10 March 2004.

International cultural activities

In essence, the aims of Dutch international cultural policy have not changed much in the course of time. Around twenty years ago it was defined as 'the promotion of more understanding and better relations between people, groups and nations with diverse cultural backgrounds'.[48] Ten years later, after a major realignment of Dutch foreign policy, in which various aspects were streamlined, fraternity was still at the core of the Dutch cultural policy: 'Cultural cooperation leads to understanding between the nations and is beneficial for both sides. It involves all forms of exchange in the fields of art, education, science and welfare, as well as sport'.[49]

In recent years, governments have paid increasing attention to international cultural policy. 'Culture has by definition an international dimension', wrote the government a few years back. 'We have always been inspired by dialogue with foreign cultures and have, in turn, inspired others beyond our national frontiers.'[50] This increase has coincided with growing public interest in the Netherlands in these kinds of activities. There are several factors behind this trend.[51] Various Dutch cultural products have gained international appreciation. The architecture of Rem Koolhaas, for example, the paintings of Vermeer, Rembrandt and Van Gogh, or the modern choreographies of Rudi von Dantzig. Dutch films and documentaries have won major international prizes. Novels by Dutch authors have been translated into English, German, French and other languages in growing numbers.

European integration has played a part in this. It has challenged Dutch society to redefine its identity. As contacts with other nations in Europe increase, a growing need is felt to define typical Dutch qualities and characteristics, and to present these to the outside world. Some in the Netherlands consider European unification a threat to national identity; others see it as a potential for enrichment, although conscious of the problems it brings. The expansion of the European Union in May 2004 resulted in a remarkable increase in cultural exchange between the Netherlands and Eastern and Central European countries.

Also significant is the changing composition of the Dutch population. Around two thirds of population growth in the Netherlands is due to the expansion of the country's non-Western communities. The largest non-Western groups are from Turkey, Suriname, Morocco and the Netherlands Antilles.[52] While their arrival has caused friction and problems during the last three or four decades,

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48 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/IOB, *De Kunst van het Internationaal Cultuurbeleid – Evaluatie 1997-2000*, The Hague, 2001, p. 35.

49 Idem, p. 36.

50 Ministerie van OC&W, *Cultuur als confrontatie: Uitgangspunten internationaal cultuurbeleid 2001-2004*, p. 1.

51 Ministeries van OC&W en Buitenlandse Zaken, *Internationaal Cultuurbeleid: De besteding van HGIS-gelden*, The Hague, 1999, p. 5.

52 Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, *Allochtonen in Nederland 2003*, Voorburg/Heerlen, 2003, p. 11.

it has also led to a new wave of artistic creativity. Novels by writers with roots in Morocco and Turkey are bestsellers, and musicians have gained popularity among Dutch youngsters. This also inspired the Tropenmuseum when organising the *Urban Islam* exhibition.

In 1997 the ministries of Foreign Affairs and of Education, Culture and Science introduced a special budget for international cultural projects, provided by the government's Homogeneous Group for International Cooperation (HGIS). Promotion of Dutch artistic products and preservation of joint cultural heritage were defined as an aim of Dutch international cultural policy.[53] Initially, four countries were prioritised for projects to preserve mutual heritage (mostly related to colonial history and commerce): India, Sri Lanka, South Africa and Indonesia.[54] The government also began to increase its cultural input in a number of Dutch embassies.[55] This policy was extended, especially to Ghana, Suriname, Russia.

An internal review in 1999 and an evaluation in 2002 by the Foreign Ministry's Policy and Operations Evaluation Department concluded that HGIS funds had provided 'a serious impulse for the international profiling' of the Dutch arts and 'an increase of the number of international cultural activities'. Culture had become one of the pillars of Dutch foreign policy. The Dutch government had confined its role to funding and facilitating Dutch institutions involved in cultural activities abroad.[56]

Measures at home

Despite support for activities relating to culture and development, exchange of art and preservation of cultural heritage, Dutch governments have been reluctant to implement international regulations to protect endangered cultural heritage and curb the illicit trade in art and antiquities in the Netherlands. Yet most organisations funding the improvement of conservation of Dutch cultural heritage also have to deal with the problem of theft, smuggling and the other ways in which collections and objects disappear.

Illicit trade in cultural objects from poor and vulnerable countries by dealers, collectors and museums is rife. Considerable damage is caused as a result to the source countries. And this has been increasing for several decades. War and civil conflicts are an important factor. In some cases development projects, such as dams, have played a role. Growing numbers of affluent people, combined with a rapid surge in international and intercontinental travel, has led to an increase in demand for art and antiquities. While this is not the place to

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53 Ministerie van OC&W, *Cultuur als confrontatie: Uitgangspunten internationaal cultuurbeleid 2001-2004*, p. 1.

54 Idem.

55 Dutch embassies in Berlin, Budapest, Djakarta, London, Madrid, Moscow, New York, Ottawa, Paris, Prague, Pretoria, Rome and Tokyo.

56 Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/IOB, o.c., p.3/4. Ministeries van OC&W en Buitenlandse Zaken, *Internationaal Cultuurbeleid: De besteding van HGIS-gelden*. The Hague, 1999, p. 8.

describe the extent of this serious global problem in detail,[57] clearly the Netherlands is involved in this illicit trade, and as a destination and transit country rather than as a source country. Numerous antique South-East Asian and Chinese artefacts and objects from West Africa find their way to the port of Rotterdam and Schiphol airport, which should never have left their countries of origin. The Netherlands is also a transit country for stolen national treasures from *chateaux* and churches in France, while major robberies have taken place in Dutch museums too.[58]

Apart from the 1972 Convention Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the Netherlands has either failed to implement the relevant treaties, or has only done so belatedly. The last minister to explicitly and extensively express concern about the theft of cultural objects from the South and about the need to accept the relevant international conventions, was Jan Pronk. At the opening of the *Niger Valleys* exhibition in the Rijksmuseum voor Volkenkunde (National Museum of Ethnology) in Leiden in 1994 he remarked that 'the attitude of recipient countries is of great importance ... For many years, the call for international regulation fell on deaf ears in many parts of the West, including, I am ashamed to say, in the Netherlands'.[59]

The Dutch cabinet ratified the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict, but it was only in March 2004 that a law was proposed to implement the Convention and its two Protocols. So a request made in the 1990s by the Greek Orthodox Church of Cyprus for the return of four sixteenth-century icons which had been illegally removed from a church during the Turkish invasion in 1974 and had been acquired by a couple in the Netherlands, was turned down because it could not be proved that the objects had been acquired in bad faith. Had the Netherlands implemented the Hague Convention and the accompanying Protocols earlier, the four icons would have been returned.

In July 2004 the Netherlands Government undertook in a letter to Parliament to ratify the 1970 UNESCO Convention on the Means of Prohibiting and Preventing of the Illicit Import, Export and Transfer of Ownership of Cultural Property.[60] Delaying ratification had left the Netherlands behind most other European countries. Recently Britain, Switzerland, Belgium and Sweden (only Belgium has a smaller art market)[61] ratified the convention, which France had done in 1997, and the largest art market, the US, in 1983. Following ratification, the US reached bilateral agreements with countries where cultural heritage is in danger and where the principles of good cultural governance are maintained.

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57 See e.g. J. van Beurden, *Goden Graven en Grenzen: Over Kunstroof uit Afrika, Azië en Latijns Amerika*. KIT Publishers, 2002. See bibliography for numerous other sources.

58 See Museum Security Network www.museum-security.org.

59 J. Pronk, 'Fighting Poverty is Important for the Safeguarding of Cultural Heritage'. The speech was printed in H. Leyten (ed.), *Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property: Museums Against Pillage*, Amsterdam, Bamako, 1995, 13.

60 Letter to Parliament, 19 July 2004, re UNIDROIT Treaty.

61 TEFAF, *The European Art Market in 2002: A Survey*. Helvoirt, 2002, p. 22.

The Dutch letter further announced that the Netherlands would not ratify the 1995 UNIDROIT Convention on Stolen or Illegally Exported Cultural Objects. It had signed the latter in 1996, after customs in the port of Rotterdam had discovered two *apsaras* from the Angkor region in Cambodia and eleven old Buddha heads from Ayutthaya in Thailand. They were on their way to a well-known art dealer in the Netherlands. Since both the Angkor and the Ayutthaya regions are mentioned on the UNESCO World Heritage List, there was general indignation. The government objected however to the broad definition of cultural objects, the reversal of the burden of proof of good faith and the long period of limitation as set in the UNIDROIT Convention. Instead the government resolved to prepare a prohibitive order on importing or holding cultural objects, which have been stolen, illegally excavated or smuggled from other countries.

Dutch customs, police and cultural heritage inspectors have had difficulty in stopping the flow of stolen and smuggled objects, as was shown in an analysis of over a hundred cases of suspected illicit import of cultural goods.[62] Since the discovery of the Cambodian *apsaras* and the Thai buddha heads, Dutch customs and cultural heritage inspectors have backed the UNIDROIT Convention as an efficient instrument to curb the illicit trade.[63] With so few instruments and facilities, the number of discoveries depends too much on the personal commitment of officials of customs, police and cultural heritage inspectors.

It has often been said that Dutch foreign policy is a constant struggle between the cleric and the merchant. The former is concerned with global ethics, shared values and equal partnerships. Whenever financial support for the protection of cultural heritage is needed the cleric has the upper hand, especially for distant projects. For the merchant, free trade, and free movement of people and objects are paramount. Cultural objects belong to all mankind. Borders are less important. The merchant deftly sidesteps the cleric when commerce is under threat, refusing to accept measures, which might limit free trade. As a result, Dutch international cultural policy lacks coherence, vacillating between ethics and commerce. KIT Tropenmuseum, with its base in the Netherlands and its international orientation, faces the challenge of helping to strengthen coherence in Dutch international cultural policies.

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[62] See also: E. Tijhuis, 'The Illicit Trade in Antiquities from South-East Asia and China', paper for the seminar on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property in South-East Asia, Bangkok, 24-26 March 2004, p. 9.

[63] See e.g. interview with Chief Inspector of Cultural Heritage Charlotte van Rappard in the daily *NRC Handelsblad*, 8 March 2002.

3 Collection management or protection: the introduction of Object ID

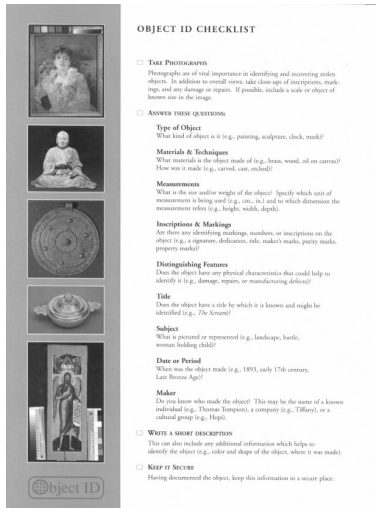
This chapter discusses Object ID which developed as a tool for collection protection. It explains how KIT Tropenmuseum developed a digital version and introduced it in museums in fourteen countries in the South. The chapter discusses reactions in the South, the ups and downs of the introduction of Object ID and concludes with recommendations.

Greater protection

Who could have imagined in the 1960s that the technological revolution that the US Pentagon was developing to prevent a Soviet takeover or the destruction of America's communication systems in the event of a nuclear war, would eventually help museums and others involved with art and antiquities compile inventories of their collections and improve security?

Object ID checklist

- Take photographs
- Answer the following questions:
  - Type of Object
  - Materials and Techniques
  - Measurements
  - Inscriptions and Markings
  - Distinguishing Features
  - Title
  - Subject
  - Date or Period
  - Maker
- Write a short description
- Keep the information in a secure place


OBJECT ID CHECKLIST

☐ TAKE PHOTOGRAPHS
Photographs are of vital importance in identifying and recovering stolen objects. In addition to overall views, take close-ups of inscriptions, markings, and any damage or repairs. If possible, include a scale or object of known size in the image.

☐ ANSWER THESE QUESTIONS:

Type of Object
What kind of object is it (e.g., painting, sculpture, clock, mask)?

Materials & Techniques
What materials is the object made of (e.g., brass, wood, oil on canvas)? How was it made (e.g., carved, cast, etched)?

Measurements
What is the size and/or weight of the object? Specify which unit of measurement is being used (e.g., cm., in.) and to which dimension the measurement refers (e.g., height, width, depth).

Inscriptions & Markings
Are there any identifying markings, numbers, or inscriptions on the object (e.g., a signature, dedication, title, maker's marks, purity marks, property marks)?

Distinguishing Features
Does the object have any physical characteristics that could help to identify it (e.g., damage, repairs, or manufacturing defects)?

Title
Does the object have a title by which it is known and might be identified (e.g., *The Scream*)?

Subject
What is pictured or represented (e.g., landscape, battle, woman holding child)?

Date or Period
When was the object made (e.g., 1893, early 17th century, Late Bronze Age)?

Maker
Do you know who made the object? This may be the name of a known individual (e.g., Thomas Tompion), a company (e.g., Tiffany), or a cultural group (e.g., Hopi).

☐ WRITE A SHORT DESCRIPTION
This can also include any additional information which helps to identify the object (e.g., color and shape of the object, where it was made).

☐ KEEP IT SECURE
Having documented the object, keep this information in a secure place.

bject ID

It was not long before museum experts discovered the potential of the new technology. In 1978 Robert Chenhall and Peter Homulos wrote in *Museum* 'that the widespread availability of computer technology has made it feasible to think about creating adequate records for the millions of objects stored in museums'.[64] They, and many others, hoped to use the new technology to improve museum management. This entailed the development of global standards of cataloguing to enable information on cultural objects to be exchanged. Chenhall and Homulos devised a list of basic categories with which to identify an object and provide adequate information for internal museum reports.

Around this time the pillage of archaeological sites and the smuggling and theft of cultural objects was also increasing. This forced professionals in the museum sector, academic world and art trade to establish new measures to fight the growing threat to cultural objects. UNESCO conventions provided some improvements, but much remained to be done.

Throughout the 1980s the museum community and others in the cultural sector continued to work on defining the core information about cultural objects needed for better collection management, security, exchange of information about objects between museums and development of joint projects. A major effort to systematise standards was made in 1991, when some 120 professionals of the AFRICOM network met in Ghana to discuss standards for museum collections in Africa. 'Tested over three years on the collection of six pilot museums and continually readapted', these standards soon proved their effectiveness, both within each museum and in exchanges between museums. The extensive AFRICOM *Handbook of Standards Documenting African Collections* was designed for handwritten cataloguing.[65] The AFRICOM Handbook was welcomed as 'one of the most important museum documentation standards of recent years'.[66]

Getty project

In July 1993 the Getty Art History Information Programme (AHIP) met with representatives of the Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Council of Europe, ICOM, UNESCO, INTERPOL and the US Information Agency to discuss the role of documentation in the protection of cultural heritage and the possibility of an international collaborative project to define minimal documentation standards.[67] At the end of the meeting AHIP was asked to list the core information needed to identify a cultural object and to propose ways of encouraging documentation. Unlike the AFRICOM Handbook, which was a tool for collection management, the AHIP list was intended to stop the illicit trade in cultural objects and to protect collections. The list had to be comprehensible for non-experts too.

64/ Cited in R. Thornes, *Protecting Cultural Objects Through International Documentation Standards*, The Getty Art History Information Program, Santa Monica, 1995, p. 14.

65 ICOM, *Handbook of Standards: Documenting African Collections*. Paris, 1996.

66 R. Thornes, *Protecting Cultural Objects in the Global Information Society*, The Getty Information Institute, 1997, p. 17.

67 Idem, p. 1.

To ensure that all the relevant parties would remain involved in the project and that it would not be allowed to languish amid the usual disagreements between museums and the art trade, AHIP took a decisive step. It distinguished five groups involved in the recovery of stolen art.[68]

- Museums and galleries
- Documentation centres without curatorial responsibility
- Law-enforcement agencies and customs agencies
- The insurance industry
- The art trade

AHIP invited each group to discuss individually the categories of core information needed to identify cultural objects. 'By avoiding confrontations between communities which usually had opposite positions and each community just discussing amongst themselves, all communities went farther in their conclusions than they would have done in the presence of other communities. Each norm in the list got the approval of at least 80 percent of each interested community. At the end, they all turned out to have agreed upon the same types of core information.'[69] The entire consultation effort and the compilation of the list of core information took three years. The result was a checklist, which was impressive in both its simplicity and its thoroughness. The list of nine norms, a description and a photograph was compatible with the majority of the art theft bases, including those of INTERPOL, New Scotland Yard, the Italian Carabinieri, Trace and the International Art Lost Register.

Digitalising Object ID

Object Identification, or Object ID was presented at a major conference in Amsterdam in May 1997, and was widely applauded. Lyndell Prott, chief of UNESCO's Cultural Heritage Division and well-known pioneer in the fight against the illicit art trade, praised the sheet for its 'fantastic simplicity'.[70] It was soon translated into Arabic, Chinese, Czech, Dutch, French, German, Hungarian, Italian, Korean, Persian, Russian and Spanish. UNESCO's General Conference later endorsed Object ID as the international standard for describing art, antiques and antiquities.

Representatives of all the groups involved attended the launch of Object ID. Almost all, however, came from art-market countries of the wealthy, advantaged North. Most already had more sophisticated documentation standards for cultural objects, although Object ID was generally compatible with these existing systems. Experts from the countries of the South were conspicuously absent. The only person invited from the South cancelled at the last moment. Shaje'a Tshiluila, general director of the Institut des Musées

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[68] Thornes, *o.c.* 1995, p. 17.

[69] Interview with R. Thornes, AHIP official responsible for Object ID, 24 October 1997.

[70] Communication with L. Prott at the Protecting Cultural Objects in the Global Information Society conference in Amsterdam, 27-28 May 1997.

Nationaux de Zaïre, had to return quickly because mutinying soldiers were looting her museum in Kinshasa.

One of the topics discussed at the conference was the digitalisation of Object ID. In discussions between AHIP, the Dutch Cultural Heritage Inspectorate, KIT Tropenmuseum and the National Ethnological Museum in Leiden the idea had emerged 'to stage a pilot project that should develop low-budget software for a core registration system for museum objects, develop training material for the use of the software and to involve two pilot museums in the South to build up the core of their collection information systems with this software'.[71] The software had to comply with the specifications of Object ID and with the AFRICOM *Handbook of Standards*. The data entry process had to be well structured and self-explanatory. Digital images had to be incorporated. In case of theft the system had to be able to generate records of the missing objects in an Object ID format. The Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs supported the pilot project financially.

Since the Leiden Museum had a longstanding relationship with the National Museum of Mali and TM with Champa Museum in Danang, Vietnam, these two museums were selected for the pilot. By February 1998 the system had been installed in both museums. A number of bugs in the software were encountered and repaired, and in the autumn of 1998 a more stable version was installed.[72] Champa Museum, a branch of Danang's Provincial Museum, had barely enough office space for the computer equipment. Moreover this could not be sufficiently protected. Work therefore proceeded at Danang Museum. On average, some 20 objects were registered a day, using the new method. In the National Museum in Mali one team took digital photographs of the objects. Another team collected the information and entered it into the database. By late 1999 over 3,000 objects had been registered. Since less additional information was included in Mali than in Vietnam, and the National Museum already had more information to hand, the daily average in Bamako was 40 objects. Despite various technical difficulties and delays, both pilots were successful.

TM in a hurry

In December 1999 TM was invited by the cultural department of the Dutch Foreign Ministry, to formulate, within two weeks, one or two large cultural programmes for a number of national museums in developing countries that would be interested in Object ID and other aspects of institutional development.[73] By then Object ID had been widely accepted among international agencies, in the art-market countries of the North and some countries of the South. This sudden invitation was linked to the decision by Eveline Herfkens (Minister for Development Cooperation 1998-2002) to restrict

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71 J. Taekema, 'Pilot Project Core Data Registration Museum Collections Mali and Vietnam', paper for the Protecting Cultural Objects in the Global Information Society conference in Amsterdam, 27-28 May 1997.

72 Communication with J. Taekema, 9 October 1998.

73 Some other institutions were encouraged to provide tenders with project proposals.

the number of recipient countries and to limit the number of sectors for bilateral development aid to four. At the cultural department it was clear that few recipient countries would apply for Dutch development aid for culture. Nevertheless, money was made available for interregional programmes and projects involving more than one country.

TM grabbed this opportunity to build up its international cultural activities and to improve the technology of the digital version of Object ID. Two programmes were formulated: Object ID, and Regional Programme to Strengthen Institutional Development of Partner Museums in the South (see chapter 5). Included in the Object ID programme was a digital helpdesk and a proposal for a virtual platform for participant museums. National museums were identified and contacted via Dutch embassies in the countries concerned. TM emissaries were sent to most of these museums to find potential partners and make quick assessments. Minimal technical requirements for Object ID were a telephone line, a local Internet provider and suitable electricity supply.

With hindsight both Carel van Leeuwen, who coordinated TM's international cultural projects, and Pienke Kal, later the staffer most involved with Object ID, admitted that the Ministry's call for proposals might have been managed better.[74] However, as head of curators Susan Legêne noted, 'without this Foreign Ministry initiative the professional set-up of the museum's international work would have proceeded much slower'.[75] The options proved surprisingly plentiful and opened up many new opportunities. The haste with which the project was formulated is clear from Van Leeuwen's letter of 23 November 1999 to museums in developing countries. Both a short training course, and the hardware would be free, he wrote. 'The only obligation is that some members of personnel follow the necessary training course ... Applications must, however, reach us by 26 November 1999', i.e. within three days of posting. Of course, TM's staff had envisaged that it would have to rush to meet the deadline of the tender.

Reactions in the South

In most countries the proposed introduction of Object ID was welcomed. Problems occurred in some countries, however. In Ethiopia the ministry of culture and the Dutch Embassy disagreed about which museum should participate in the project. The embassy proposed the museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES) of Addis Ababa University, with which it had had a long relationship. The Ethiopian authorities opted for the National Museum, which did not have good contacts with donors. Eventually the National Museum was selected for Object ID, while the IES was offered support in drawing up a strategic plan. This last project was transferred to the second proposal submitted by TM, the Regional Programme.[76] In Zambia the switch from the National Museum in Lusaka to the country's oldest and largest exhibition centre, Livingstone Museum, proceeded more smoothly.

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74 Communication with C. van Leeuwen and P. Kal, 15/16 December 2003.

75 Communication with S. Legêne, 22 June 2004.

76 Communication with P. Schothorst, 8 March 2004.

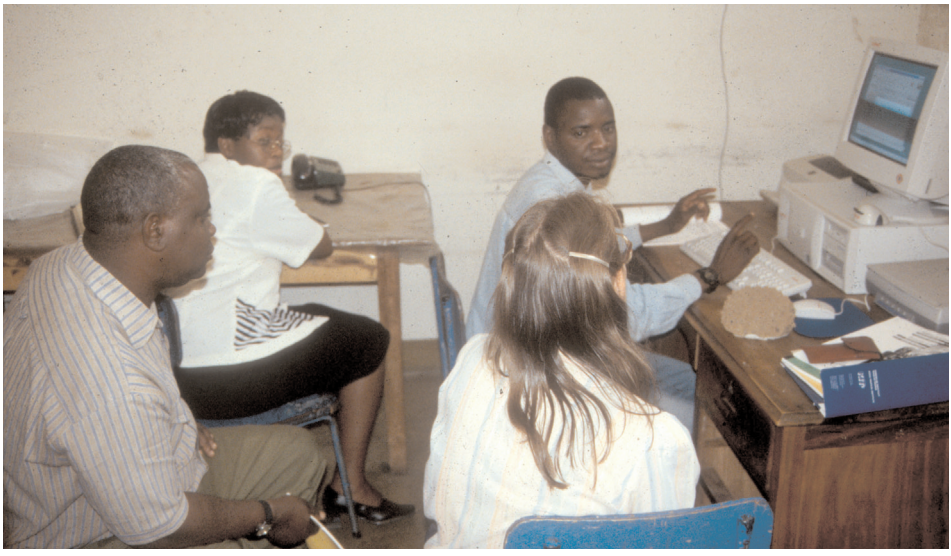
Outline of Object ID training

The project started with the improvement of existing Object ID software. Participant museums were provided with computer hardware and software. This was accompanied by a two-week training course by two KIT staffers, a curator and a technician. Object ID involves analysis of the museum's collection documentation system; discussion of collection categorisation strategies, theory and practice; instalment, implementation and trial runs of the textual part of Object ID and digital photographs of the collection. A helpdesk and a website provide support. After 6 to 12 months, a one-week monitoring and support mission was organised.

Museums trained or supported by TM to introduce Object ID:

- Bangladesh – Bangladesh National Museum, Dhaka
- Benin – Musée Historique d'Abomey
- Bolivia – Museo Nacional de Arquelogia, La Paz
- Burkina Faso – Musée National du Burkina, Ouagadougou
- Egypt – The Coptic Museum, Old Cairo
- Ethiopia – National Museum of Ethiopia, Addis Ababa
- Ghana – Ghana Museums and Monuments Board, Accra
- India – Crafts Museum, New Delhi
- Mali – Musée National de Mali, Bamako
- Mozambique – Museo Nacional de Etnología, Nampula
- Sri Lanka – National Museum, Colombo; Museum in Polonnaruwa
- Tanzania – National Museum of Tanzania, Dar Es Salaam
- Vietnam – Vietnam Museum of Ethnology, Hanoi; National History Museum, Hanoi – Cham Museum, Danang.
- Zambia – Livingstone Museum

Getting to know the Object ID software and systematics during a training in Livingstone, Zambia, September 2000. (Photo: Paul Faber)



The choice of countries was problematic too. In Mali, the National Museum, which had been one of the two pilot museums in 1998, was in the process of expanding its registration system to include other West African museums. Director Samuel Sidibé was surprised to learn from TM's representative Nico Vink early in 1999 that only two other West African countries, Burkina Faso and Benin (both on Herfkens's list), were to be included in the Object ID project. The TM consultant did not feel particularly welcome. 'Maybe TM's offer was more supply driven than demand oriented.'[77] Sidibé had remarked that he preferred 'an approach in which museums throughout Francophone West Africa could benefit and set up a regional object registration system so that they could warn each other immediately in case of theft or smuggling. We needed to hold a regional workshop on it.'[78]

TM was forced to confine its offer to the three Francophone countries of Mali, Burkina Faso and Benin, and one English-speaking country, Ghana. With financial support from the Dutch Embassy in Bamako, Sidibé organised the interregional workshop later in November 2000. The National Museum in Burkina Faso was more amenable to TM's proposal but 'the problem there was that the museum had a large museum terrain and a wall around it, but no exposition halls. The stores were poorly organised. Possibly the museum was more in need of means to fight the white ants, which were damaging their objects, than a system to register them properly. Although ... the illicit trade in art and antiquities in Burkina Faso was quite intense. To curb it, the introduction of Object ID could be helpful.'[79] For the museum staff it must have been poor consolation to be offered Object ID training, after their request for funding for a museum building had been turned down by the European Union.

Apart from the other West African countries, TM would also have liked to include more South-East Asian countries in the project. Because of the rampant theft of cultural treasures from Laos, Cambodia and Myanmar, these countries were in serious need of a registration system. However, none of these countries were among the fourteen on Herfkens's list. In 2004 the impressive National Museum in Phnom Penh was still interested in Object ID, while TM was still looking for funds to introduce Object ID in Cambodia and Laos.[80]

Introduction in practice

In each museum Object ID was introduced during the first visit of a TM curator and a KIT IT expert. The reports of these missions reveal a remarkable difference in quality. Some are to the point and businesslike. Others cite numerous irrelevant details (journey to Schiphol Airport, taxis, restaurants, etc) suggesting an unfamiliarity with international work. Working in an

77 Communication with N. Vink, 17 December 2003.

78 Communication with S. Sidibé, 2 March 1999.

79 Communication with N. Vink, 17 December 2003.

80 Communication with deputy director Hab Touch, 29 January 2004.

international project proved a learning experience for many TM staffers just as it was for the trainees.

While Object ID had been designed to protect collections against theft and illicit trade, many of the museums also wanted to use it as a tool for collection management. Most museums urgently needed to document their collections. New Delhi's Crafts Museum, for instance, was particularly outspoken and 'scarcely interested in the story about art theft ... It wants its 22,000-object collection to be put into the computer as quickly as possible ... Most important for them is the search function (which is not yet functioning well!)'[81] Many of the museums wanted Object ID to be extended, and made suitable for collection management.

Another initial observation revealed different levels of familiarity among staffers of various museums with Microsoft Windows. In Bolivia, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia the museum trainees had familiarised themselves with Windows starting on Object ID.[82] In other museums, such as Cairo's Coptic Museum, it was so new that training focused more on Windows than on Object ID.[83] Differences were also evident in infrastructure. Some museums had air-conditioned rooms for the equipment, while in Benin the project started in 'a separate structure with an earth floor, no windows but shutters and a corrugated iron roof, with a ventilator but no air-conditioning'.[84] In Ethiopia the introduction of Object ID was hampered by the weak electricity supply – 'Days went by without electricity, which meant no computer work – while a telephone line was only available at the end of the two weeks' introduction and installation'.[85] This had apparently been overlooked during the hasty appraisal and initial contacts with Ethiopia.[86]

In Bolivia, Object ID was originally intended for Museo Nacional de Arqueologia. Following a major robbery at a colonial-period church, the director-general of the Vice-Ministry of Culture explained the seriousness of thefts from churches, and the plan was adjusted.[87] The director general, Museo Nacional and TM concluded that the introduction of Object ID 'should not serve one museum, but more museums and include churches. Therefore the Vice-Ministry should control the project and the equipment.' Registration began with parts of collections 'that run a major risk of international art robbery and illicit trading'.[88] The seven participants who attended the Object ID introduction in La Paz, came from six different institutions.

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81 B. Meulenbeld, 'Verslag India: Crafts Museum, Delhi, 4-15 September 2000'.

82 F. Fontaine, Mission Report Bolivia, 14 June-27 August 2000; J. Boers, Mission Report Sri Lanka, 17-29 July 2000; F. van Leeuwen, *Verslag van een Object ID implementatiemissie in het Nationaal Museum in Addis Abeba, Ethiopië*, 22 October-2 November 2001.

83 F. van Leeuwen, 'Verslag van de introductie van Object ID in het Koptisch Museum in Cairo, Egypte, 29 November 2000'.

84 E. den Otter, 'Report Object ID Benin, 24 November-8 December 2000'.

85 P. Kal, 'Cultural Heritage and Object ID', in: *ICOM/ASPAC, Protection of Cultural Heritage in South-East Asia, Workshop Proceedings, Hanoi, Vietnam, 9-13 April 2001*, p. 76, 77.

86 Communication with P. Schothorst, 8 March 2004.

87 The threat to archaeological objects and colonial or religious art is clearly reflected in the ICOM Red List for Latin America, 2004.

In general, most museum staffers responded positively to Object ID. They appreciated the improved software, which was convenient and free of the pre-1999 bugs.[89] 'Object ID is a good tool to work with. It has been good to move from manual to computerised registration of the objects', explained Emanuel Lucas, curator Ethnology and History at the National Museum of Tanzania. 'It minimises the physical use of the collection. In its present form it is more for protection of objects and curbing illicit trade than for documentation.' [90]

These initial implementation and training sessions were followed by a second phase comprising a five-day monitoring mission and the installation of a software update. TM developed a new version of the programme containing an additional window, requested by various museums for collection documentation, and eleven fields for information about the acquisition and actual location of objects. TM also provided additional training. The English manual was translated into French, Spanish, Portuguese and Vietnamese. In fact the Vietnamese translation was provided by museums themselves. TM sent a second software update in July 2003. The helpdesk and www.kit.nl/objectid website continued to be available.

Many museums spent considerable time taking pictures and describing objects. In most cases there was only one staffer able to work with Object ID. 'I am the only one in the department of Ethnography and History who has been taught to use Object ID', remarked Emanuel Lucas. 'Until August 2002 I registered around one thousand objects, one fifth of the objects in my department. Then I left for twenty months for study in the Netherlands. During that time nobody continued the registration job. After my return I will propose to put a team together with the specialists of other departments of the museum to speed up the registration and to work as a team. We should make a manual and prepare training materials for those who once will replace us.'

Prospect of Object ID

As was mentioned above, none of the museums or countries, which were later to benefit from TM's introduction of Object ID, were present at the 1997 conference to launch the programme. Most of the cultural sector and art trade participants were already using more sophisticated systems to manage and protect their collections. Was Object ID, despite the international praise, too simple? 'Not for museums with small and medium-sized collections', according to Pienke Kal. 'The National Museum in Jakarta, for instance, should immediately opt for a full registration system like The Museum System (TMS). However, the twenty or so regional museums in the province of Yogyakarta with smaller collections would certainly benefit from Object ID.'[91] TMS is one of several general museum software documentation systems. It was developed

88 F. Fontaine, Mission Report Implementation of Object ID programme in Bolivia, 14 June-27 August 2000.

89 P. Kal, *Eindrapportage Project Object ID*, 10 July 2003.

90 Communication with E. Lucas, 25 March 2004.

91 Communication with P. Kal, 18 December 2003.

by Gallery Systems in the US. Museums use it all over the world, including TM and other museums in the Netherlands, as a tool for collection management. Mali's National Museum director Sidibé agreed with Kal. He would have preferred the more extensive TMS. Mentioning different systems raises the question of whether the two systems are compatible. Kal: 'There's more involved than just pressing a button. TMS is a sophisticated programme, although it also has a light version, which is easy to use. Object ID could be made compatible with other programmes'.

Object ID's introduction did not always match the anticipated results. For security reasons the mission to Bethlehem had to be postponed several times and had yet to take place in autumn 2004. In Cairo's Coptic Museum the initial training was a success. 'Participants were very motivated and eager to learn.'[92] This was in November 2000. But a monitoring mission in April 2002 recommended ending support. 'Equipment had gone missing or was broken. Files were lost. The staff was not allowed to use the telephone, Internet or e-mail. Only one of five trainees was allowed to spend time on Object ID. The computer has been put in an overcrowded room where dozens of people are present every day. To work in a concentrated manner is impossible.'[93] No information is currently available about the situation in Burkina Faso.[94] For museums in other countries the continuation of the Object ID project depends on direct contact. 'If something goes wrong there is usually no local helpdesk. Phoning the TM helpdesk is expensive. To explain a bottleneck by e-mail is complicated.' In fact TM's helpdesk is rarely consulted, nor is the website, which has never functioned as a joint platform for the participating museums. Often, a successful implementation depended on the enthusiasm of one individual.

English is another difficulty, especially in countries with no tradition of English from colonial times. The Vietnamese museums solved this problem by having the relevant texts translated into Vietnamese. Language can play a crucial role in the protection of collections. Object ID is available in English, French and Spanish, the manual in many more languages, but if an object is lost, and an international alert has to be sent, English is the most efficient language.

Vietnam and Mali, where pilot projects were first set up in 1997, are among the countries in which Object ID has borne most fruit. A third, mentioned by Pienke Kal, is Sri Lanka. 'It has been most successful in Sri Lanka, where the infrastructure and the backing of some high ranking staff in the Ministry of Culture have been conducive. Museum staff remained enthusiastic. There was good cooperation. Sri Lanka was itself after a central computer system for management and protection of its cultural treasures.' In Vietnam and Mali interest has remained high as well. 'The director and staff of Ho Chi Minh City's

92 F. van Leeuwen, 'Verslag van de introductie van Object ID in het Koptisch Museum in Caïro, Egypte, 29 November 2000'.

93 M. Shatanawi, *Missie naar Caïro*, 29 July 2002.

94 Communication with P. Voogt, 18 March 2004.

History Museum would love to introduce it. The Vietnamese ministry of Culture wishes to have it for pagodas in the north.'

Object ID implementation and training have now developed into a well-run service. TM would like to provide the software free of charge to whoever wishes to use it, as long as it is not for commercial purposes, and to contact other initiatives around the world that provide variations on Object ID. The museum has approached UNESCO and ICOM about developing Object ID into open-source software and 'not only publish the application, but also the source code of the software on the Internet.'[95] For this, an international cultural heritage organisation would have to act as moderator.

[95] P. Voogt, 'Object ID, Looking Back and Forward', paper for the Seminar on Illicit Traffic in Cultural Property in South-East Asia, Bangkok, 24-26 March 2004.

4 Tailor-made: cooperation with municipal museums in Jakarta

In 1999 KIT Tropenmuseum and seven municipal museums in Jakarta initiated a bilateral project for training in collection management and preservation. This chapter discusses the project's four phases between 2000 and 2002, and the adjustments made in the process.[96]

Joint effort

Batavia, as Jakarta was known under Dutch colonial rule, had an impressive town hall with a bell tower. It was built in 1627. Under Dutch rule it housed the administration's offices, law courts and prison cells. Prince Diponegoro, who fought the Dutch for five years, was imprisoned here in 1830. Today, the old town hall houses a History Museum. Its collections include many colonial items. The relationship between the colonists and the indigenous peoples was invariably fraught. The huge fortunes made by Dutch merchants from coffee, indigo, sugar cane, spices, rubber and oil inspired Belgium's crown prince to form his own African colony in Congo.[97] It was a group of Dutch merchants who founded the Tropenmuseum in the city of Haarlem.

In 1996, Soedermaji Damais, director of the History Museum, presented a proposal to TM for a joint exhibition of Batavian silver acquired by Dutch officials, merchants and other wealthy individuals during the colonial period. The suggested show was linked to the 470th anniversary of the foundation of the city. Some of the objects were to come from the museum's own collection, others from private collections in Jakarta. 'The director wanted cooperation from start to finish,' recalled Pienke Kal, 'from concept design to packing and transport of objects,' while the entire process of realising the exhibition would provide a 'training experience for museum staff in Jakarta'.

The Dutch Embassy in Jakarta suggested applying to the new HGIS fund, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science resource

[96] Unless mentioned otherwise, the chapter is based on. (1) P. Kal, 'Museological Cooperation between the Service for Museums and Conservation of the DKI Jakarta and the Tropenmuseum Amsterdam, A Project Proposal', April 1998; (2) 'Masterplan ter verbetering van Behoud en Beheer van zeven stedelijke musea (DKI-musea) in Jakarta, Indonesia', KIT, Amsterdam, April 2001; (3) various progress reports, and (4) regular communications with Pienke Kal, curator for South-East Asia and project leader, during the writing of the chapter.

[97] H.W. v.d. Doel, *Het Rijk van Insulinde: Opkomst en ondergang van een Nederlandse Kolonie*, Amsterdam, 1996, p. 91.

DKI museums in Jakarta

- Museum Sejarah Jakarta (Jakarta History Museum): carved wooden furniture, china, 18th-century maps and prints and portraits of Batavia's Governors General, the history of the city.
- Museum Seni Rupa dan Keramik (Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics): located close to the History Museum: 19th-century and contemporary paintings, including a self-portrait by Indonesia's famous painter Raden Saleh.
- Museum Wayang (Puppet Museum): previously a church, then a warehouse and now a museum located near Jakarta History Museum with a rich collection of theatre puppets, musical instruments and *wayang* stage equipment.
- Museum Tekstil (Textile Museum); in 1975 this house, the 19th-century property of a wealthy Frenchman, became a museum with a wealth of textiles and batiks.
- Museum Bahari (Maritime Museum): VOC warehouses with traditional shipping outfits, navigation equipment, models of wooden boats.
- Museum Taman Prasasti (Park of Stone Inscriptions): cemetery containing the often inscribed tombs, many replaced upright, of key colonial leaders.
- Gedung Joang '45 (Museum of the Revolution): meeting point of freedom fighters and other militant Indonesians in the days leading to the declaration of independence on 17 August 1945; shows the resistance against the Japanese occupation forces and the independence struggle against the Netherlands, 1945-1950.

The renovated store of the Jakarta History Museum, 2002. (Photo: Pienke Kal)

Plenairy session in the DKI training programme in Jakarta History Museum, 2002. (Photo: Pienke Kal)

for joint cultural heritage and similar projects. Pienke Kal, TM's South-East Asia curator and a silver conservator, visited Jakarta and formulated a project proposal with the director and staff of the History Museum and Jakarta's municipal authority (DKI). Its four elements involved training of museum staff; restoring museum objects; an exhibition in Jakarta, Amsterdam and possibly two other European cities; and a catalogue.

Early in 1998, HGIS informed Jakarta History Museum and TM that a grant for a joint exhibition and catalogue would not be available, but that they would finance a collection management programme. Moreover, not one but seven museums, all of which under the jurisdiction of Jakarta DKI, would be involved in the training and restoration, since this involved 'structural support' to the Jakarta and Indonesian museum infrastructure. As Pienke Kal commented, 'All museums showed interest. Their directors were enthusiastic museum professionals. I knew most of them and their main staffers from previous visits.' Apparently, the donor's wish and the recipients' needs matched sufficiently.

The seven DKI museums were all located in colonial buildings, four of them in Kota, the oldest part of Jakarta, home to many old colonial structures, several canals and traditional drawbridges. The History Museum is by far the largest museum and some of the other museums are located close by. At the start of the DKI project, the seven museums shared a single restoration workshop. Although all the collections consisted mostly of historical objects, they varied considerably, from fine art of high aesthetic quality (such as the silver collection and paintings) to objects of historical significance (such as colonial furniture).

Master plan

In January 2000 memorandums of understanding for a three-year cooperation between KIT Tropenmuseum and Jakarta's Municipal Department for Museums

and Conservation were signed. The project proceeded in four phases. Four Dutch museum specialists worked with staff at each museum to survey the state of collection management and preservation. Each museum building, its environment, climate and lighting, the condition of the collections and their registration and documentation were described and analysed. These seven surveys were combined in a single master plan. This showed that most collections had lagged behind in preventive as well as active conservation. The available expertise fell far short. Preventive measures, such as dusting and proper storage were inadequate. Around half of all the objects required active conservation by specialists in metal, wood (for colonial furniture), ceramics and glass, paper and photographs, leather and oil paintings.

The master plan was first written in Dutch, rather than English, and afterwards translated into Indonesian. Language posed a serious problem, therefore, although one of the criteria for participation in the training project had been fluency in English. 'Most participants were rather weak in their command of English, therefore DKI provided translators from their own staff. From our side only project leader Pienke Kal spoke Bahasa Indonesia and she discussed with the translators when they did not accurately translate what we were teaching in English', a member of the Dutch team recalled.[98]

Preventive conservation

The course emphasised practical training. Much could be done to stabilise and improve conditions at the DKI museums with some good housekeeping and prompt first aid for cultural objects, however limited the expertise. Yet staff at the museums and the restoration department wished to be able to employ state-of-the-art treatment. Some had stated in the weekly reports they were asked to write by their trainers that their basic knowledge about collection preservation and collection management was insufficient. This had not been foreseen in the project proposal. Meeting this need would, however, have meant that the team 'would have run out of resources too quickly'.[99] DKI therefore arranged and funded an additional phase. The Tropenmuseum team then continued the training course.

Project leader Pienke Kal noted that the failure to account for the limited expertise of Jakarta's museum staffers in the proposal had been due in part 'to the fact that during visits to the museums she only met with the general director and department chiefs, and not with ordinary staffers'. There was a cultural complication too. 'I could have studied the staffers' capacities beforehand, but then their directors would have been less cooperative. It is not done in Indonesia to be too open about weaknesses.' Kal used her contacts with the museum directors 'to create a climate of trust'. Without that, 'no training would have been held at all.'

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98 Communication with M. de Ruijter, furniture conservator, 20 March 2004.

99 M. de Ruijter, 'Picking Up the Pieces: the First Steps in Collection Management for Seven Museums in Jakarta, with Emphasis on the Colonial Furniture in the Musium Sejarah Jakarta', in: *Proceedings, Sixth International Symposium on Wood and Furniture Conservation*, p. 24.

Upgrading therefore became the keyword for the second phase and the programme was adjusted. The initial proposal that staffers at each museum would receive three weeks of practical training was changed to a single on-the-job course in passive and preliminary active conservation for 28 professionals from all seven museums, the Conservation Laboratory of Jakarta and the DKI Jakarta Service for Museums and Conservation. This lasted five weeks.
In this and the following course, the Indonesian version of the master plan proved a useful textbook. It dealt with every aspect of preventive conservation. Participants studied various theories, writing conservation proposals and implementing them in groups, working in the storage depots of the Jakarta History Museum as well as the Maritime Museum. Training sessions in preventive conservation were interspersed with lectures on museology and collection management, including registration and documentation of collections. The History Museum offered an opportunity to put all this into practice since it wished to reorganise its four-hundred-square-metre depot according to the principles of depot organisation and preventive conservation.[100]

Back to basics

A three-week workshop and training in active conservation had been planned for the third phase. A conservation specialist in organic materials joined the team of trainers for the workshop. However, during the second phase on preventive conservation, trainers and participants had realised that training in active conservation would present a difficult task. Considerable knowledge about the characteristics of materials would be required. It was therefore decided to switch the focus of this third phase to pest and damage control, recognition of damage and its causes and basic characteristics of materials such as metals, wood and textiles. Meanwhile, the reorganisation of the History Museum's depot continued, including the development of a registration system for object location. 'Some of the participants had never cleaned or moved objects themselves, since they always had to leave this to the museum's cleaners', Pienke Kal recalled. The programme was not just about training for skills and knowledge, it was about a change in attitude and ideas.

Six conservators were selected from the 28 participants of the two courses to go for four weeks to the Netherlands to attend restoration workshops in the autumn of 2002. This was the fourth phase. Three participants were staffers at Jakarta City Conservation Laboratory. The other three were from the Museum of Fine Arts and Ceramics, the Maritime Museum and the Textile Museum. Before departing, the DKI organised a language course to improve their English. Instituut Collectie Nederland and Reinwardt Academie's restoration department helped organise their training in the Netherlands. In the first week the group remained together for a refresher course on museology and preventive conservation, studied during the first two phases of the project. The participants subsequently visited various restoration studios in the Netherlands where they acquired practical knowledge about various materials and restoration techniques.

[100] The training traject was supported by Instituut Collectie Nederland as well as the Reinwardt Academy of Museology in Amsterdam. Both institutions participated in the steering committee for the whole project.

Follow-up in Yogyakarta

Early in 2004, responding to a request from the Barahmus museum society, TM organised a three-week training course on preventive conservation. Barahmus brings together 26 museums in the province of Yogyakarta. These include provincial, military, university and private museums. Although this project was a spin-off of the DKI project, it was accepted as the final project of the Regional Programme to Strengthen Institutional Development of Partner Museums in the South (chapter 5). In six days, the TM project leader and a conservation expert visited all 26 museums to help assess the condition of the buildings and collections. While the DKI master plan provided a model for this survey, the Yogya survey was more limited, offering insights into the strengths and weaknesses of each of the 26 museums to help fine-tune the training.
The survey report, combining text and digital photographs, was used as teaching material in the following two weeks of training on the basics of preventive conservation at Museum Sono Budoyo, the provincial museum of art and crafts in Yogyakarta. Three participants, each with their own specialisation and after a brief training course either in Singapore or Bangkok, also acted as trainers.

Participants of the Yogyakarta Museum Training Course, during a collection registration and documentation training, and a survey of the collection on display in the museum, 2004. (Photos: Pienke Kal)

Looking back

Most of those involved felt the project to have been successful. It had enabled DKI museums 'to make a start on proper collection management. They have learned basic preventive conservation and collection management skills and can now proceed independently.'[101] Martijn de Ruijter, one of the team of four that drew up the master plan and a trainer in the last three weeks of the project, was convinced that the results would be lasting. 'I just learned that staff members, who followed our training, are now training their own colleagues.'[102] A key lesson of the DKI project was that project leaders needed the time and opportunity to tune courses to the needs of the participants as these become apparent.

Another lesson involved continuity. New knowledge can only emerge if the materials are repeated and participants are encouraged to put them into practice. TM learned lessons from the DKI project too. As De Ruijter commented, 'In future we should restrict ourselves in offering solutions and encourage the trainees to think of solutions themselves'.

Historical ties of Indonesian and Dutch museums

Relations between Indonesia and the Netherlands have often been problematic. In the early 1990s, for instance, the Indonesian government cut development cooperation ties with the Netherlands following serious criticisms by the Dutch Minister for Development Cooperation concerning human rights in Indonesia.[103] Museums in both countries are, however, keen to cooperate. This reflects their complementary collections, dating back to colonial times, and the potential benefits of sharing knowledge and expertise. More recently, the Indonesian authorities have supported their museums. The possibility of friction between Indonesia and the Netherlands did not disrupt the DKI project.

The DKI project was a successful match between the needs of municipal museums in Jakarta and the expertise that KIT Tropenmuseum can offer. A long-standing relationship, regular visits and commitments on both sides have helped the project yield positive results and visible improvements.[104]

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101 Communication with M. de Ruijter, 29 March 2004.

102 Idem.

103 See: P. Malcontent, 'The Shadow Minister of Foreign Affairs', in: J. Nekkers and P. Malcontent, *Fifty Years of Dutch Development Cooperation: 1949-1999*, The Hague, 2000, pp. 209-226.

104 Communication with M. Mulder, Dutch Embassy, Jakarta, 18 June 2004.

Bidesia: migration and oral tradition

In the last decades of the nineteenth century, when the abolition of slavery left European planters in dire need of labour, many poor migrants from Bhojpur in North-East India found work in Mauritius, Fiji Islands, Suriname, British Guyana and Uganda. They left their villages to become indentured labourers. Their families at home called them *bidesh* (literally: foreigners, i.e. those gone abroad), and remembered their leaving in songs. The migrants developed their oral folk culture in new contexts, with songs and theatre, in which they expressed their longings and hardships. The GB Pant Institute in Allahabad initiated a discussion, documentation and display of this cultural memory of migration in India and abroad. A TM identification mission helped formulate a project to collect, document and exhibit these expressions of *bidesia* folk culture in India, Suriname and the Netherlands. This led to a three-part project – GB Pant Social Science Institute in Allahabad, the Institute of Social Science Research in Paramaribo, Suriname, and TM in Amsterdam – the results of which are expected in 2006/7.

Migrants travelling near Mathura in Uttar Pradesh. Historical picture in a Dutch photograph album from 1913/4. (Photo: Collection Tropenmuseum)

5 Increasing museums' choices: other activities

Through Object ID and the Regional Programme to Strengthen Institutional Development of Partner Museums in the South (both funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry's Culture and Development Programme), TM has become increasingly involved in international projects. This chapter discusses experiences and approaches, as well as the significance of partnerships with museums and institutions in the South, and introduces various projects.

Spin-off

Involvement in international projects was nothing new for KIT Tropenmuseum. Curator Carel van Leeuwen had been a technical assistant at the National Museum in Sana'a, Yemen for three years. And staffers had been involved in other, smaller projects too. In 2000, however, the hasty appraisals and visits preceding the introduction of Object ID enabled TM to widen its network, and discuss and better assess the needs of other museums.[105] Their concerns embraced the compiling of exhibitions and accessing specific target groups, storage and conservation policies and practice, as well as museum management and the diversification of sources of income.

TM responded by offering general workshops and training courses for new partner museums or tailor-made aid for particular museums, for example, on strategic planning. The latter was developed for the national museums of Zambia and Burkina Faso, and for the museum of the Institute of Ethiopian Studies (IES). Several other special projects were implemented. In Burkina Faso a four-day course on musical instruments was organised. TM also offered Object ID to museums in countries where it had already been introduced elsewhere, for example, to the museum in Polonnaruwa in Sri Lanka and two museums in Vietnam, the Museum of Ethnology and the National History Museum, both in Hanoi. In Vietnam a pilot project was suggested for the installation of Object ID in a pagoda. Pagodas are often difficult to protect and therefore easy targets for looters. This project would be the first experience with Object ID at a site such as this.[106] So far no funds have been found for implementation.

[105] 'Aanbevelingen uitvoerenden missies', 7 February 2001.

[106] Idem.

Summer University

In 1997 the Amsterdam and Maastricht Summer University invited TM to organise a course for cultural sector professionals who not only have an interest in the teaching but also in meeting each other. Participants had to pay their own fee and travel and accommodation expenses. TM organised courses on Cloth, Culture and Communication (1998), Mermaids, Hip-hop, Tattoo and Other Expressions of Popular Culture (2000), Ethnography in the Metropolis (2001) and Kids in Museums (2002). The museum subsidised the fees, and the travel and accommodation expenses of some participants from partner museums in the South. Susan Legêne: 'The Summer University enables us to reflect with one another about developments in our profession and to use the practice of our own museum as a starting point. So we make our own TM work visible and are open to critical reflections from outsiders'.

Participants of the Summer University 'Kids in Museums', August 2002. (Photo: Irene de Groot)

Defining TM's role

Since 2000, two factors have induced TM to become more precise in defining its role in international cooperation. One is the wealth of experience and contacts gained from the introduction of Object ID. In time, relationships with several new partner museums have matured. Strengths, weaknesses, needs and potentials of those involved have become apparent. While TM used to pass its own expertise to others, today, these relationships are more mutually beneficial.
At the same time, a change occurred in the general discussion about the North-South question. The World Bank and bilateral donors such as the Netherlands promoted the concept of ownership and good governance. They wanted countries of the South to have more say in their own development and to take more responsibility. While Western donors presented these concepts as new discoveries, they were not so new in the South, where most countries that had achieved independence since the Second World War had long been discussing these ideas. This new interest encouraged countries of the South to raise their voice and grab the initiative for their own development. The recent definition of development by the UN Development Programme, as 'a process of enlarging people's choices' reflects these views.

The ideas of good governance,[107] ownership and partnership, supported by KIT Tropenmuseum are closely linked. In its own field, the museum has a mission to increase the choices available to museums in the South. TM tries to do this in two ways. By brokering expertise and money, bringing together demand and supply, between North and South, and between South and South. This is known as capacity building and institutional development. Moreover, TM also attempts to find partner museums in the South, amenable to exchanging objects and expertise.[108]

Partnerships

Through its projects TM has developed good relations with various institutes for training museum professionals and providing advice in the South. Each has excelled in specific areas. For workshops at the Programme for Museum Development in Africa (PMDA) in Mombassa, Kenya, TM raised funds and invited professionals from partner museums, while PMDA organised and led the workshops. In October 2000, TM held a Conference on Institutional Development of Museums in Mombassa. The 35 participants were all directors and senior staff at TM partner museums. They came from twelve countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America. For some it was their first visit to an African

[107] Most countries of the South have been discussing good governance and other concepts mentioned here since independence. Although sometimes presented as new, they are not new at all. Nevertheless, they can be helpful tools.

[108] P. Voogt, 'Culture and Development – The Role of Museums': published as 'Kultur und Entwicklung – Die Rolle der Museen', in: *Museumskunde*, Deutscher Museumbund, vol. 66, no. 2, 2001.

country, which itself provided new insights.[109] They shared experiences and learnt from each other's solutions. They discussed common priorities for institutional development for the coming five years. Three TM staffers participated in the workshop.[110]

At two Burkina Faso workshops TM's role was that of broker and expert. In January 2001 the country's National Museum organised a Strategic Management Workshop in Ouagadougou, given by the École du Patrimoine Africaine of Benin, while TM had taken care of the finances. Ten museum professionals from five different Burkina Faso museums were trained during the first week in collection management, while in the second they studied how to manage a museum and develop a vision. In general, the participants were satisfied, some extremely so, especially regarding the second week.[111] In December 2001 a workshop was held on musical instruments in Ouagadougou. It was organised by Zibo Parfait Bambara, curator of the Museum of Musical Instruments, who had also attended the earlier workshop, while TM's Ethnomusicology curator, Elisabeth den Otter, led the training course. Her report shows how difficult conditions can be in the South. 'Since there were very few specialists on musical instruments in West Africa ... the participants spent much time on the checklist of musical instruments ... The organisation of the training course left much to be desired, due to a total lack of funds, problems regarding communication (no telephone, fax or e-mail), as well as a lack of support by the Directorate of Cultural Patrimony.'[112] Yet the workshop

Vietnam as example

In 1992 TM organised a museology course for Vietnamese museum directors in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City. A course for conservators and collection registrars followed in 1995. This led to the organisation of a joint exhibition on *Village Life in the Red River Delta*, first in Hanoi, then in Amsterdam. Prior to the opening, seven Vietnamese conservators from different museums were invited to the Netherlands for intensive on-the-job training. In four weeks they received basic training on various conservation techniques for materials widely used in Vietnam. The participants visited several ethnological and historical museums and laboratories, depots and national archives. In 2001 TM introduced Object ID to staff members of the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology and the National History Museum, in Hanoi.

[109] African museums and museum professionals maintain close ties. This impressed their Asian and Latin American colleagues. Young visitors are given priority in African museums. These museums have development presentation techniques. Unless money and training are needed, they do not involve Westerners. See conference report (Dutch).

[110] KIT Cultural Heritage, 'Report to TM Board on Conference on Institutional Development of Museums', 9 November 2000.

[111] Anne Ambourouè Avaro, 'Gestion stratégique des ressources, Ouagadougou, du 8 au 19 janvier 2001'.

[112] E. den Otter, 'Mission Report Training course on the collection, classification, and documentation of musical instruments, Ouagadougou, 18-22 December 2001'.

was a success, thanks 'to the enthusiasm and efforts of the participants'. They drafted a three-year action plan, which has so far yet to materialise.[113]

In its relations with the National Research Laboratory for Conservation of Cultural Property (NRLC) in Lucknow, India, TM limited its role to that of broker and bridge-builder, while trainers, teachings materials and workshop were provided by the Indian institute. TM had assessed the needs of the participating partner museums, secured funds and monitored the workshop. Although many museum professionals outside India have never heard of NRLC, the institute has more expertise about conservation in tropical climates than many institutes in the West. Participants from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka Vietnam and Ethiopia were given an overview of different aspects of conservation of various objects and materials. While the programme dealt with several subjects, 'which had been determined before the workshop' and were 'based upon the type of collection with which the participants had to do in their museums', the preparation of the workshop could have been better. 'The needs could have been assessed better' and 'preparation for such a workshop definitely takes six months, while stricter criteria should have been used to select participants'. NRLC informed TM afterwards it would like to hold more workshops for museums in tropical zones. 'They ask for our cooperation, since we have the contacts (and access to money).'[114] In turn TM discussed the possibility of holding a NRLC workshop for Dutch curators working in tropical countries. This resulted in a two-week seminar on the Culture of Conservation in December 2002 in Lucknow with metal conservators from India, one or two from other Asian countries and some from the Netherlands. While all worked with the same type of tropical metal collections, it was in different climatic circumstances. This proved a fruitful exchange of experiences, especially for the Dutch conservators.

Feedback

Participants writing in evaluation surveys and speaking in interviews immediately after these gatherings expressed a general appreciation for TM's efforts at breaking down the traditional dominance of the North and giving a role to expertise and organisational capacity in the cultural sector in the South. As Paul Voogt noted, 'In the new set up, the work is done by those who can do it best and at a reasonable price. We have learned which aspect of our expertise is particularly useful for others. For instance, our ability to make exhibitions for a large public and our children's museum. Other players, such as the Indian NRLC, have other expertise. We want to encourage South-South networks with other institutions, in which supply and demand in the South are brought together and where money from the North is channelled to the South. TM hopes to act in the Netherlands, and perhaps also in the European Union, as a pioneer in acquiring and managing international cultural projects.'

This definition of TM's role goes beyond the promotion of South-South relations. TM sees itself as an active partner in the global village and hopes to

[113] Communication with E. den Otter, 18 March 2004.

[114] P. Kal, 'Report Workshop Preventieve Conservering 27 Nov-2 Dec 2000 in Lucknow, India'.

Beninese mobile exhibition

In 1999 a government delegation from Benin visited the Royal Tropical Institute and was invited to see the exhibition *Man and Environment* in the Tropenmuseum. This resulted in an idea for a mobile exhibition about environmental issues for primary school children in Benin. A bus was turned into a mobile exhibition room and since mid-2002 it has been touring the country. Films, a switchboard, books and flyers fascinate children from remote villages, which often have no electricity themselves. Paul Voogt: 'It is a wonderful project. It works well, but requires a lot of input in terms of staffing.' It is uncertain whether it will be possible to finance the project after 2004.

Schoolchildren in Kafali, near Cotonou, Benin, visit the mobile exhibition *L'homme et son environnement* (Man and Environment), May 2003. (Photo: Paul Faber)

achieve serious partnerships with museums in the South, however unequal the access to collections, funds, information and networks. TM itself has a well-known interest in promoting these partnerships. 'Our interest in maintaining and intensifying those partnerships is that it helps us to become a better anthropological museum.'[115]

[115] Communication with P. Voogt, 16 December 2003.

Conclusion

This sketch of the recent development of KIT Tropenmuseum's home-based and international policies and activities raises several questions. One is related to continuity. Certainly, there is considerable continuity in the museum's history. TM's identity is closely linked to the colonial-style building that houses the Royal Tropical Institute, of which the museum is a part. Its holdings are based on a long history of collection, reflecting international relations since colonial times. In recent years, however, there has been a reinterpretation of the context of the collections and acquisition policies, a redefinition of the museum's role in the Netherlands, of the museum's relationship with partner museums in source countries and other international work. This conceptual break with the past, especially with the post-colonial development approach, and the present effort to professionalise the museum's performance both in its national and international activities, represent a new phase in the history of the museum.

Partnership is one of TM's central concerns. As is in all relationships between institutions in the North and the South, between parties with built-in inequalities, developing partnerships is difficult and complicated. Imbalance is unavoidable at first. The Object ID project is a clear example. It was initiated by a country in the North. It was prompted as much by funding in the North as demand in the South. The donors decided which countries in the South would benefit and which museums would be selected – some later proved unsuitable while others might well have been included if more serious consultations with partner museums had taken place at the start. The museums were spread over three continents, with communications taking place in four languages. It was a group that would never have formed of its own accord. As a result, the helpdesk and the website have never functioned as planned.[116]

Most institutions in the advantaged countries of the North resent being confronted by the inequalities in finance, capacity and scale. It spoils their game. I know from numerous conversations in the South that professionals in the development sector and the cultural sector would love to do without foreign aid and without foreign conditions. They prefer to deal with experts, whether from the South or the North, on an equal level. Yet today, attempts to achieve balance or equality are often under conditions set by donors and Northern institutions. Fortunately, professionals and professional institutions in the South are learning how to handle the inequality issue, while their colleagues in the North show an increasing sensitivity. Greater equality implies the need for long-term mutually supportive relationships.

[116] Other factors have caused this as well.

It is here that KIT Tropenmuseum faces its biggest challenge. One of the museum's roles has been to raise money to enable partner museums in the South to receive training and advice. In this it is dependant on one major donor.[117] At the same time, identifying needs, formulating policies, organising training courses places the museum by definition at the centre of a project. What would happen, if partner museums were simply given the funds and the freedom to spend it as they deemed fit? Would they want KIT Tropenmuseum to be involved? Or would they select another partner, for whatever reason? It is vital for the museum to organise its own quality control and critique. The recent Royal Tropical Institute initiative for an international advisory board with members from the South is a first step in creating the required transparency.

Yet TM clearly has the skills and good contacts to ensure that projects fit into set policy frameworks and budgets. Cultural activities, funded by the Dutch Foreign Ministry/Development Cooperation's Culture and Development Programme are the marginal projects of Dutch foreign aid. They are characterised by weak policy formulation, a gap between policy and operationalisation, as well as changes in political preferences by policy makers. The Dutch HGIS budget is more generous. One in seven HGIS commitments involves mutual heritage.[118] Cooperation between the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry for Education, Culture and Science works well. So far KIT Tropenmuseum has been able to identify and formulate projects that have been accepted both within the framework of Culture and Development and HGIS. Thorough and independent evaluations of its international activities and policies, in which partners have a strong say, will be crucial in the future development of these relationships.

At the same time, KIT Tropenmuseum must play a stronger role in political debates in the field of culture and development. Its serious interest in the preservation of endangered cultural heritage is expressed in the Object ID project. Its support for the relevant international conventions and codes of ethics has yet to lead the museum into serious discussion with the Dutch government on improving the coherence of its international cultural policy. Similarly, the museum should work out more explicit views regarding the role of cultural projects in issues such as conflict prevention, poverty alleviation, identity politics, migration and remittances. 'Culture and development' can be difficult to translate into bilateral or multilateral programmes: the museum should not hesitate to develop a broader perspective, together with its partners, based on practical experiences in the international heritage sector.

[117] So far, TM has scarcely been able to build up a financial reserve for international activities.

[118] Ministerie van Buitenlandse Zaken/IOB, *De Kunst van het Internationaal Cultuurbeleid. Evaluatie 1997-2000*, The Hague, IOB Evaluatie 287, p. 289.