

# Breaking barriers

## The Future is Heritage 2018

The path to intergenerational and intercultural participation in the European heritage field



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## **Abstract**

“You are the future!” is a commonly heard exclamation by cultural heritage policy makers aimed at young people engaged in the heritage field. Organizations like UNESCO and Europa Nostra try hard to involve young professionals in their policy. Likewise, cultural corporations like museums, heritage institutions and cultural policy makers are quite keen to involve youngsters as their audience



and as participators. Or so it seems. Young people are seen as the cultural heritage policymakers, museum visitors, employees and investors of the future. But what is the common view of the value of youth participation for young people now?

From the 19th of June until the 22th of June, The Future is Heritage Summit took place during the European Year of Cultural Heritage (2018). Young heritage professionals from all over Europe responded to the call for papers on how they viewed cultural heritage and its future in their country and Europe. The entire program of the summit was set up, developed and finalized by these young participants and in Berlin they literally took the stage. With a broad intercultural and European context, the young heritage professionals addressed topics in the cultural heritage sector and with this, they exchanged their thoughts and learned about each other's history and backgrounds.

The Future is Heritage Summit gave young heritage professionals a chance to share their thoughts and work. Without premeditation, the summit gave a stage to talk and listen professionally, to create a dialogue. The summit was there to get influenced and changed by what others had to tell. To charge the participant with new energy and to create a network. There were vivid discussions, interesting workshops and inspiring visits to museums and heritage sites in the city of Berlin. It was a tremendous success.

In this article, we explore the challenges we and other young heritage professionals experience in starting our careers in the European heritage field. We'll talk about how and why we organized The Future is Heritage, and how it was shaped through participating with young professionals. Also, we explore community participation in general. For those who didn't attend The Future is Heritage, we made an overview of our program. We conclude this article by talking about the aftermath of The Future is Heritage and our lessons learned by participating in this extraordinary event.

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## ***Meet the authors***

### **Wouter Hinrichs, Student in Archaeology at Saxion University of Applied Sciences**



“My name is Wouter Hinrichs, I am 21 years old and I am a graduate archaeology student at Saxion University of Applied Sciences in Deventer, The Netherlands. I feel very passionate about young professional empowerment in the heritage sector and I strive to create a place where this group will have a more prominent and equal voice within the work field. Besides that, I would like to innovate and modernize the ways that archaeological and cultural heritage is shared with the public. Heritage is something that shapes our joint

identity, something that is dynamic and evolves with time. Working on these subjects lights an internal fire of joy and motivation and I like to share this great passion of mine with as many people as possible.”

[LinkedIn](#)

### **Francisca Priem, Project Assistant at Erfgoed Brabant**

“My name is Francisca Priem and I’m 29 years old. Since completing a history teacher’s degree as well as a master’s degree in contemporary history, I’ve been working in various positions in the Dutch heritage field. Since 2017 I have been working at Erfgoed Brabant where I coordinate our youth panel Erfgoedbènde. Together we advise other heritage organizations about youth participation and we also organize events. Together with project officer Anne-Wil Maris (Erfgoed Brabant) I organized The Future is Heritage in Berlin, in June 2018.” [LinkedIn](#)





### **Jesper de Raad, Archaeologist at Laagland Archeologie**



“My name is Jesper de Raad and I am a twenty-seven year old archaeologist. I study archaeological heritage management at the Leiden University and I work for an archaeological excavation company in the Netherlands. Aside from my work I am active in various heritage projects focussing on the public awareness of heritage. I have a strong and sustained opinion about involving the public in the heritage sector and I get very enthusiastic sharing my passion. I love to meet people and have a good constructive dialogue concerning heritage management issues. Therefore, feel free to contact me

anytime you wish.” [LinkedIn](#)

### **Hadewijch Zwart, Web editor & Communications officer at Huygens ING**

“My name is Hadewijch Zwart (1993) and I am a young cultural historian and heritage professional. During my history bachelor (RUG) and my master Cultural History of Modern Europe (UU), I became interested the value and meaning of heritage in society. Currently I am employed by [Huygens ING](#), as the manager and web editor of [Historici.nl](#) and as the communications officer of the [Royal Netherlands Historical Society](#) (KNHG). In addition to that, I am a board member of [Young Historians](#), a publishing company specialized in and creating a platform for young professionals with an academic historical background. In my work and day to day life, I am very passionate about the involvement of young people in heritage and creating the opportunities for young historians and heritage professionals they deserve.”

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## ***Meaningful youth participation: how we organized The Future is Heritage***

**Francisca Priem**

2018 will forever be the European Year of Cultural Heritage. European member states and their people celebrated European heritage through researching the ties between heritage of their local communities and the bigger picture of the shared heritage of the European people. One of the key events this year has been the European Cultural Heritage Summit, organized by Europa Nostra, the Deutsches Nationalkomitee für Denkmalschutz and the Stiftung Preussischer Kulturbesitz from 18-24<sup>th</sup> of June in Berlin, Germany.

This year the three Dutch Provinces of Noord-Brabant, Gelderland and Overijssel took part in the summit by organizing a special program for young professionals, The Future is Heritage, together with the Dutch Centre for Intangible Cultural Heritage, Erfgoed Brabant and Erfgoed Gelderland. The program turned out to be a huge success: it hosted 70 people from 16 different countries, who during the four day summit shared their research and heritage projects on all kinds of topics and worked together on a statement about their views and beliefs on what the European heritage field should look like in ten years.

When these organizations started working on the preparations for The Future is Heritage, they quickly agreed that they would organize it in close cooperation with young professionals. Because of this, a thinktank was formed of Dutch young professionals in December 2017. This approach was very important to them, largely because they were frustrated with the way they saw young professionals being treated by organizations in the Netherlands but also in other European countries. In short: not only is it hard for this group to find a paying job in the field, most of them also encounter counteractions against them by older professionals. For some, it gets as worse as people straight up telling them they can't take part in discussions because of a lack in life experience. Some still experience this kind of subordination at the age of 35.

When a few delegates of the aforementioned organizations were present during the European Heritage Congress in Turku, Finland, they found the same indifference towards some of the younger participants of the congress: their contributions to the overall program were rushed, and some of the individual participants would just ignore the younger participants by walking out of the room when they started their presentation.

They decided to do something about it. Henri Swinkels, the regional Minister for Culture and Liveability of the Province of Noord-Brabant, shared his beliefs with the other Dutch provinces, and his colleagues in Gelderland and in Overijssel offered to help organizing an event that was especially meant for young professionals. Forming the thinktank was our first step, and next up was inviting others to participate, which we did through a Call for Proposals. We received a dashing amount of replies, which strengthened our predictions that a program like this was desperately needed in the European heritage field. This also opposed a challenge for us to come up with a way that the program could inhabit all of the wonderful proposals we got but also have enough time to exchange views. I believe we made it work in the end, and

I am also happy with all of the great comments we received on the program, not only from our participants but also from people within Europa Nostra's network.

Organizing this summit has been one of the most intense jobs I've ever had. But, it was also one that I'm the most proud of. It got me thinking on youth participation in general, and this is what I take away from it: throughout this whole process we worked closely together, and experienced deeply how great it can be when you regard each other as equals. Although there is quite a substantial age gap between the youngest team members and the eldest, I believe we actually profited greatly from this. It really is true that when everybody does their bit, they can work together and reach higher than they can on their own. This is the true gain in youth participation. It's not only about the youth being the future, it's about all of us being the present.

## ***Young Professionals and Cultural Heritage: an overview***

**Hadewijch Zwart**

Heritage is a way of dealing with the past today. Rodney Harrison defines heritage as “the series of mechanisms by which objects, buildings or landscapes are set apart from ‘everyday’ and conserved for their aesthetic, historic, scientific, social or recreational values”.<sup>1</sup> This used to be a definition of dealing with heritage as a part of community life in the mid-nineteenth century, focused on Western middle-aged white men and women. According to Harrison, in this period, the public was considered to be a passive group, consisting of interested people, politely listening to experts telling them about the importance of the piece of heritage they were looking at. A relatively top-down way of engaging audience with heritage. Nowadays heritage plays an important role within communities and their culture all over the world. It is an important aspect of the ways in which the community actively participates in heritage managing, policy and tourism.<sup>2</sup>

There is however one important issue that worries academics worldwide researching heritage and its role in society. In the end, mostly experts, not the local community or interested tourists are in charge of and have the final say in heritage management. The last twenty years, scientists in the field of heritage have addressed this problem. Besides warning for *musealization* and *disneyfication* of heritage<sup>3</sup>, they try to convince policymakers of the value of community engagement and participation in cultural heritage policy.<sup>4</sup>

The audience should be actively involved in heritage education, and also managing heritage. Heritage management should be bottom-up and play a part in day to day lives. This is how to keep heritage alive in the community. Since its foundation in 1972, UNESCO’s World Heritage Convention tries to unite people worldwide through heritage.<sup>5</sup> Like UNESCO, the EU tries to unite the European people through their involvement with heritage and promote the idea of a diverse, but still common European identity (unity through diversity).<sup>6</sup> Which can only be realized through community involvement and participation. The next step would be reaching and activating the youngsters of the communities to become involved too.

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<sup>1</sup> Rodney Harrison, *Heritage: Critical Approaches* (New York: Routledge, 2013), 14.

<sup>2</sup> Steve Watson and Emma Waterton, *Heritage and Community Engagement: Collaboration or Contestation?* (New York: Routledge, 2010), 3.

<sup>3</sup> B.J. Butler, “Heritage and the Present Past”, in Tilley, C and Keuchler, S and Rowlands (red.) *The Handbook of Material Culture* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications Ltd, 2006), 469.

<sup>4</sup> Laurajane Smith, “The discourse of heritage”, in: Laurajane Smith (red.), *Uses of Heritage* (London: Routledge, 2006), 34-36.

<sup>5</sup> UNESCO, “about us”, <https://en.unesco.org/about-us/introducing-unesco>

<sup>6</sup> Gerard Delanty, “The European Heritage: History, Memory, and Time”, in Chris Rumford (red.) *The SAGE Handbook of European Studies* (Thousand Oaks: SAGE Publications Ltd., 2009), 40.



## Youth participation in heritage

Children (up to 18 years old) and between 18 and 35 are regarded as quite difficult to reach or activate in the field of heritage. Nevertheless, both UNESCO and the European Union (EU) stress the importance of education and youth involvement. In 1999 UNESCO initiated the birth of a young heritage council. According to the official website of the forum UNESCO wanted to 'provide young people with the opportunity to present their concerns and ideas [...] and help shape the direction of UNESCO'.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly UNESCO made it clear that they were not only interested in ideas but also the participation of young people regarding the direction the UNESCO policy.

In the Faro Convention of the Council of Europe Treaty Series no. 199 (Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society) in 2005 the importance of heritage education on European level was made clear. Section III of the Treaty series (shared responsibility for cultural heritage and public participation) noted that the Council of Europe wants to "take steps to improve access to the heritage, especially among young people and the disadvantaged, in order to raise awareness about its value, the need to maintain and preserve it, and the benefits which may be derived from it".<sup>8</sup> In 2010 the European Commission laid out an 'EU youth strategy' which aims to "encourage young people to actively participate in society".<sup>9</sup> The European Commission made clear that its members saw culture as a driver for European Unity.<sup>10</sup>

## Youth participation in the European Year of Cultural Heritage

These UNESCO's European notions of youth and cultural heritage policy are reflected in the ideas of Europa Nostra. When the year 2018 was designated European Year of Cultural Heritage, Europa Nostra took its chance and reached out to young people to get involved in European heritage policy and meet and unite with other European young heritage professionals. With the slogan: 'you are the future of heritage', they called upon young people involved with heritage all over Europe. While this slogan feels very promising, there is an assumption hidden in the words used. The future importance of youth is emphasized, but unintentionally this statement undermines the actual active engagement of young professionals when they are still young.

Nevertheless, triggered by Europa Nostra's call for action, young professionals from all over Europe responded. Enthusiasm, creativity and wit were clearly already present within the minds and hearts of the European youth, but the opportunity for a spotlight and the resources are scarce. In the end, it seems there are young people yearning to get involved in heritage management all over Europe and over the world. Through them, other youngsters cannot be that hard to activate and engage as well. Europa Nostra's initiative shows that top-down heritage policy to engage youngsters is already met

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<sup>7</sup> UNESCO, "youth forum", <http://www.unesco.org/new/en/social-and-human-sciences/themes/youth/youth-forums/>

<sup>8</sup> Council of Europe Treaty Series - "No. 199 Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society", Faro, 27.X.2005, 5.

<sup>9</sup> EU, "youth policy strategy", [https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/youth/policy/youth-strategy_en)

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, "Culture" [https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/leaders-working-lunch-culture\\_en.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/commission/sites/beta-political/files/leaders-working-lunch-culture_en.pdf)

halfway by bottom-up impulses and inspiration of European youths. So instead breaking their heads in trying to reach out, heritage policy makers can simply open their doors and give young professionals the spotlight, resources and responsibilities they deserve.

## ***Meeting neighbours, making friends***

**Jesper de Raad**

### **Day One - Registration at the Dutch Embassy**

The opening day of The Future is Heritage summit was held at the Dutch Embassy in Berlin. It was setup to be an informal meeting between the participants and organizers. After a brief word of welcome, one of the employees gave a casual guided tour through the building. The Embassy was designed by the famous and controversial Dutch architect Rem Koolhaas in 2004. The glasswork which connects all the rooms within the building supports the openness and brightness of the building as a whole. This transparency and the story of the building was intriguing and raised various questions among the group. After the guided tour there was plenty of time to meet other participants in the Embassy's garden. The garden in combination with drinks and pizza's caused a calm and relaxed setting to talk about heritage. The secretary-general of Europa Nostra, Sneška Quaedvlieg-Mihailović, visited the informal meeting with a short and serious note, where after she joined the evening.

Later on the evening continued with the dance event: 'A Museum Night Out', in the Museum für Kommunikation organized by the European Cultural Heritage Summit. The enormous ballroom had enough space to dance and celebrate the start of the summit and meet new and old friends in the heritage sector.

### **Day Two - The Bauakademie**

The second day was organized in the Bauakademie, the formal building academy, is an area under construction. Whereby, the long deserted inner garden leaves the impression you are standing inside an open log hut with a jungle just outside.

At Home in Europe, Sharing Europe and Mission Europe.

For the summit the subjects were divided into three categories: At Home in Europe, Sharing Europe and Mission Europe. The smaller groups of around twenty people made it possible to have a highly interactive approach and enforce dialogue.

The three groups were:

- 1) At Home in Europe: Appropriation, identity, war, discussed heritage, cooperation, and remembering.
- 2) Sharing Europe: Exchanging, dialogue and sharing heritage within the borders of Europe.
- 3) Mission Europe: Who decides what is heritage, the repurposing of heritage and heritage law.

All sessions had one or two session moderators who were able to direct question from the audience or otherwise support the speaker. Each session started with an interactive and presentation or performance. Whereafter, two or three speakers gave a short presentation within their subject of expertise. In the these themed afternoons the presentation of the speakers were within their own fields of interest. The various questions, discussions and appreciations afterwards showed that both the public and the speakers learned a lot from the day presentations.

In the session I attended a young Dutch clog maker performed the manual handcraft, which is a protected intangible heritage profession in the Netherlands. The performance was followed by a presentation of a contemporary shoe-designer. Resulting in an interesting discussion about shoemaking as a profession. Where after, an academic PhD research about vernacular architecture was presented. Followed by an interactive workshop with the general question when does 'junk become heritage'. As much as the subject were divided they had something in common. They all discuss the subject 'who decide what is heritage or the repurposing of heritage'. It was not a surprise that the real discussions and sustainable connections between people were established well after the presentations themselves.

### Day Three - The Märkisches Museum



The third day was organized in the Märkisches Museum, which was founded in 1874 and is dedicated to the history of Berlin. The building itself is inspired by gothic architecture. In the morning the participants had have some time to recollect their thoughts on the matters that were discussed the previous day. The group dynamic became noticeable as the

participant greeted and talked to each other in various small groups. However, while choosing one of the three morning sessions new contacts were also made quickly. According to the participants choice the smaller groups led to more conversations, connections and discussions of the chosen topics interests. During the breaks more questions were asked and ideas were passed on. The interest of the participants were honest, interdisciplinary and international.

I moderated a morning session together with Jelle, a member of the crew. Our session had three presentations and the group had about ten attendees, the smallest group of the day. Because of the small size there was enough time to address the subject of the presentations in-depth. Most of the replies consisted of questions, suggestions or ideas. Both in the first presentation, about the fragile state of Dutch religious heritage as in the second presentation about the heritage management in the municipality of Oirschot the attending participants were, in a good way, interacting with the presenter most of the presentation. After the morning break the third presentation was given. The presentations subject was the redevelopment of various mayor heritage sites. Examples of heritage redevelopment projects of MeyerBergman were former Dutch palace Soestdijk and the Amsterdam Westergasfabriek. Both turning the interest of the participants considerably.

In the afternoon all the participants were part of a communal group. The general idea was to bundle everyone's creativity, ideas and wishes for the future and make one covenant Berlin Wallpaper and one testimonial texts. Pictures, which were made during the registration day, were put into a format to make a video. We, as young professionals, had something to show at the final policy debate the next day. Something both tangible as digital. Everyone was excited and participated in the making and the result was exceptional.

After finishing the videotext and testimonial the participants felt connected by their communal message. The relieve that young professionals were recognized and could influence the heritage sector was celebrated at Museumsdorf Düppel. Museumsdorf Düppel is a historic village, built on an archaeological site, on the border of Berlin. Music, conversations and a warm fire slowly turned the evening into night. While slowly everyone turned into excitement for the last task: the European Policy Debate of day four.

#### **Day Four – The Policy Debate**

The last day, was the official policy debate of the European Cultural Heritage Summit. In between the discussion panels that took place that morning, three selected participants of The Future is Heritage got the opportunity to each present a concluding point from the summit in relation to their own personal experiences. The reaction from the audience to these short, but very important presentations, was very positive. After the personal notes about heritage they presented the Berlin-Wallpaper and testimonial video to the influential policy makers on behalf of all the Future is Heritage Summit attendees. The audience was were very intrigued by what everyone involved with the future is heritage summit had created. Together we stood for our message of involving young professionals in the heritage sector. As well as we were able to work together, interdisciplinary and across-borders, for our beloved heritage.

## ***The message of Berlin: A personal perspective on the concluding points of The Future is Heritage summit***

**Wouter Hinrichs**

As part of the aftermath of the summit, it is necessary to look at it in an evaluating way. What were the true points of success? How did the participants experience the summit? These are examples of questions that will be answered in the next few paragraphs.

An important key point of success was the social interaction between the participants, the organization crew members and all others involved. Following the sessions that took place with the different presentations that were held, a lot of conversations started up. These conversations were foremost about the subjects discussed in the sessions. After a short while, people started to ask about each other's background and in what kind of sector they were working. Some important points that came up during these conversations were "what are the things that makes your job harder to do?" "How did you manage to make a project after such a hard process, work?" & "Is there a way I can help you through my network?". The participants engaged in deep conversations with each other and shared their stories and motivations in the heritage sector. By sharing their stories, experiences, highpoints and pitfalls, the participants flourished in a very profitable situation by learning from others and to get inspired.

On a personal level, I found this very pleasant. As a bachelor student in archaeology, a starter in the heritage sector, I found it very informational to hear so many stories from the other participants. It inspired me. Likewise, the contact with the other participants was very equal, which made me feel heard and appreciated. I was able to share my ideas and point of views with others on a respectful level.

The contact between me, and the other participants did not only took place on a professional level, but people also engaged with each other on a personal level. Now the summit has ended, a lot of us are still in contact with one another. Regarding to this, it can be stated that the summit in Berlin created a fantastic including and professional network of young professionals who work in or are engaged in the heritage sector in Europe.

Another aspect that proved to be a success, was the platform of The Future is Heritage itself! As a young professional, student, volunteer or enthusiast, it is often quite hard to share your ideas, experiences, projects or work ethic on a big platform. During our summit in Berlin, the platform gave this group of people a chance to share their ideas and talk with the other participants about the obstacles in their work and try to find solutions for these problems. Many participants shared their enthusiasm about being part of an international young professional summit and that they hadn't see a similar summit in their countries, or internationally, that had the same framework as The Future is Heritage.



Finally, one of the most important factors (maybe the most important factor) that made The Future is Heritage a success, were the participants. Everyone brought a certain quality that raised the bar. The mix of professional and cultural backgrounds made the summit also very interesting! The different approaches and perspectives on certain topics made the conversations about the presentations and the conversations with each other very diverse, but in this diversity, there was also a feeling of unity. Everyone present participated in the sessions and all other activities with passion and devotion! This created an energy that was highly motivational for everyone there.

It is important to look beyond the successes of The Future is Heritage and focus on what must be done in the future to make working in the European heritage sector as a Young professional, more easy and pleasant. Mainly in the final session, the participants sat down together to write down our joint, but also personal, conclusions on the Berlin-Wall paper. On this Berlin-

Wallpaper, there were a lot of positive messages about the activities and conversations that took place during the summit, but a lot of people also wrote down their view of changes that have to be made to make their work easier.

One of the main concluding topics that came out as a result of the summit on the Berlin-wallpaper was about payment, or more so, the lack of payment for work that is executed by young professionals. During the summit, a lot of the persons present shared their frustrations about minimal payment, or no payment at all for their work. Organizations and companies often tend to lure young professionals and enthusiasts to projects, expecting that youngsters will work on these projects from their passion and that there is no need to pay them for their work, or to pay them small compensations.

Another important point of consideration is inclusiveness. This is quite a broad term and can be applicable on several topics. However, cultural inclusiveness might be most important in this regard. Your cultural background shouldn't be a disadvantage in your work, instead, it should be celebrated and make people stronger. We, as a generation of young heritage professionals, want to include everyone in Europe and celebrate our cultural diversity. Not only does it help in creating a stronger Europe, it also enriches our own identity.



Finally, a topic that significantly came forward was unity and mutual respect between generations of professionals in heritage. There shouldn't be such a hard focus on age when working in heritage. A joint heritage sector could bring out the best in our work. For example, older generations can share their past work experiences and give advice to younger generations about pitfalls and things you should pay attention to, so younger generations can learn from their great careers. Younger generations can bring completely new ideas to the table with the different points of view from the world they have.

During the European High Policy Debate that took place on Friday, I was able to climb the stage together with many talented young professionals to share these perspectives, these values, these experiences but also the things we think that should change. I, personally, strongly believe that we, as generations together, can make these changes work. Conversation is very important and will always be very important. We should keep the conversation going with each other, instead of retreating in our own bubbles. Instead of walking alongside each other, we should walk hand in hand!

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