

DUTCH CONVERSIONS IN CONSERVATION. THE EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE YEAR AND ITS AFTERMATH IN THE NETHERLANDS

Marieke Kuipers

ABSTRACT “We have no more monument to lose, a future for our past” was the widely spread slogan in the Netherlands during the European Architectural Heritage Year (EAHY 1975). The EAHY 1975 was called *Monumentenjaar 1975* (M75) in Dutch and happily coincided with the national centenary of State involvement with cultural heritage as well as with the 700th anniversary of its national capital as a town. Amsterdam, proud of its 7,000 stately protected monuments, hosted the main EAHY conference in the ultramodern RAI Conference Centre at Europa square. About 1,000 participants proclaimed there both the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* and the → *European Charter of Architectural Heritage* (see appendix) and these events were extensively reported in the journal of the *Bond Heemschut*. With hindsight these texts were mainly an affirmation of the firmly rooted traditional conservation concepts, but in some associated Dutch reports the seeds of further public-private partnership and of future strategies towards “integrated conservation” were already present. The following four decades saw drastic changes in the practices and policies of *monumenten zorg* (monuments care) in the Netherlands, culminating in an increasing emphasis on modernization under the nowadays inverted motto *give the future a past*.

1. ESTABLISHMENT

The initial Dutch policy-makers of EAHY 1975 – from the first female Minister, Dr. Marga Klompé, of Culture, Recreation and Social Welfare (CRM) to the *Heemschut* delegate J.A. de Zwaan, also a board member of Europa Nostra – certainly shared the European aspirations of the campaigns to raise public awareness of the values of architectural heritage (An. 1970 and An. 1975). They also acknowledged the direct link with the previous *European Year of Nature Protection* (N70). Particularly Jan Korf, Chief Director of the *Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg* (RDMZ, State Department for Conservation) between 1967 and 1972, underlined this connection. He never ceased to decry the man-made threats of the *leefmilieu* (inhabited environment) and to appeal for a liveable future by means of careful planning and preservation (Korf 1975). In one of his many lectures in the country Korf stated that “any protection of the historic environment would be futile if there would not be made an end to the pollution of water, soil and air. If our generation will not regenerate the inner cities with strong hand and will not reconstruct the historical environment, our grandchildren will live in a dying Netherlands wherein nothing is sacred and nothing is safe anymore” (Korf 1970).

Two years ahead, the *Dutch National Committee Monumentenjaar 1975* (M75) was created as a private foundation (*stichting*) with the aim to orchestrate the activities that would take place in the Netherlands within the framework of the EAHY 1975, and, in the slipstream, the Dutch centenary of State involvement in cultural heritage. This foundation, arching over many subcommittees, was narrowly affiliated with the *National Contact committee Monuments protection* (NCM) that was just founded as the national umbrella organisation of about 700 private organisations for the protection and conservation of monuments; the intermediate between the two committees was Henk Vonhoff, formerly State Secretary of CRM (An. 1974; Beusekom 1996). Prince Claus was invited to act as the honorary president of the Dutch national

M75 committee, Dr. Ferd Grapperhaus as the chairman and Dr. Nico Bolkestein as the vice-chair (van der Wielen 1974b). Grapperhaus had been State Secretary of Finance in the preceding stage (1967–1971) and was chairman of a bank when he was installed in his honorary capacity (van der Wielen 1974d). Bolkestein was mayor of Deventer at the time (until 1975) and previously of Middelburg. In both cities he had stimulated the private initiatives to realise a careful renovation of the historic houses in the city cores that were heavily damaged during the war. Typically, most members of the Dutch (sub)committees of M75 were truly amateurs – lovers of heritage – rather than heritage professionals. They represented a host of public as well as private institutions in a wide range of branches varying from administration to tourism. In terms of class, however, they belonged foremost to the civilized establishment and it was hard to suppress the image of cultural elitism that was adhered to architectural conservation, even if the rehabilitation of the Jordaan district – originally built for the working class – was selected as one of the EAHY 1975 pilots.

The M75 committee was publicly installed in the newly restored Classicist *Slot* at Zeist and this sumptuous manor would afterwards serve again sometimes as a M75 venue (Fig. 1). It was not only chosen for its central location in the country, but also because the RDMZ had then just moved to a part of the adjacent premises of the *Hernhutter* ensemble at the Broederplein. Number 41 was externally heavily restored and extended to be reused as the national accommodation for monuments care after a disastrous fire. Since this remarkable relocation ‘Zeist’ would become almost synonymous with all sorts of engagement concerning architectural conservation on the national level (until 2009). In fact, the direct involvement of the RDMZ in the formation and organisation of the European heritage year was but relatively small though supportive while executing the regular work for the inventory, conservation and protection of monuments and townscapes (van der Wielen 1974a). The largest share was taken by the section for public relations (Rijksdienst voor de monumentenzorg 1975, 9 and 99–105).

Most activities related to M75 had a national if not a very local focus and hardly a pan-European orientation, although several Dutch parties participated in the exhibitions of *Europa Nostra* and the swelling stream of publications (exhibitions, festivities and media events frequently referred to the European



Fig. 1: Prince Claus of the Netherlands, honorary president of the Dutch committee M75, hands over the newly designed ‘monuments flag’ to distinguished mayors of Dutch municipalities at *Slot Zeist*, after the ceremonial start of the ‘monuments year’ on 18 December 1974; to his left Lord Sandys Duncan, president of *Europa Nostra* (Photo: Hans Peters/Anefo; Collection: National Archive, The Hague)

initiative in general (van der Wielen 1975b; van der Wielen 1975c). After all, the major objective was to interest and engage the local population for the cause of conservation. According to the insights at the time, this engagement could best be encouraged by inviting the public at large for visits, competitions in drawing or photography, lectures, demonstrations of traditional craftsmanship and other events on site (Fig. 2) and to buy the specially issued stamps for postal mail (Fig. 3).



Fig. 2: Collage of images related to EAHY activities in the Netherlands as published in the *Annual Report of the Netherlands Department for Conservation 1975*, Zeist 1976, 102–103 of the RDMZ; Left page: Poster of the exhibition Amsterdam Monuments City, unknown camera man, picture mounting of an Amsterdam streetscape, children's drawing of the Fish gate at Harderwijk, princess Beatrix and Prince Claus at a monuments exhibition; Right page: selection of children's letters addressed to the RDMZ for documentation on monuments, monuments exhibition, Princess Beatrix presenting awards to children, impression of the audience at the Amsterdam EAHY Congress in the RAI, the Monuments Map of the Netherlands spread in tens of thousands of copies to Dutch citizens; in the corners: children's drawing of the Dutch flag (from the RDMZ annual report in the author's collection)

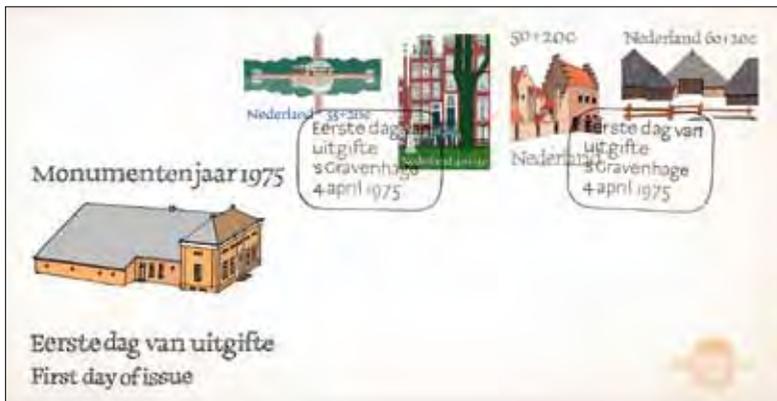


Fig. 3: Stamps of the Dutch EAHY of 1975 (Personal archive Ernst-Rainer Hönes)

The general idea of M75 was to broaden the scope from the single monument to the totality of the historic environment which was implicitly defined by the pre-industrial construction phases, roughly before 1850. As such, this broader spectrum was not new but it implied for the professionals a more intense collaboration between the conservation architects who were used to concentrate on the restoration of single objects and the urban planners who were basically more future and development oriented than focused on the past.

2. DUTCH PILOTS IN CONTEXT

Unlike other European nations, the Netherlands had no national protective legislation for the built heritage until 1961, when the first *Historic Buildings and Monuments Act (Monumentenwet)* was implemented after a long period of 'lawless' conservation of already acknowledged monuments and sites. From the start this long awaited act dealt with the assignment of both individual buildings and *stads- en dorpsgezichten* (townscapes) for protection against unwanted disfigurement and demolition. Pleas for urban conservation were already expressed by various voices since 1900, but the devastations caused by the Second World War and, increasingly, by the brash programs of slum clearance (*sanering*) and massive post-war transformations made the concerns about the future of the inner cities larger than ever. Sharply contrasting views for the best approach led to activist protests and heated debates pro and contra large-scale plans for modernist rebuilding, not only in Amsterdam but also, for instance, in the inner city of The Hague (Brinkgreve 1956; Kuipers 2011; Kuipers 2012).

Due to the loss of functions, impoverishment, unemployment and neglect, many historic towns were seriously in need of special measures to keep their heritage values continued in the ever changing environment. The justification for planological protection was mainly based on an aesthetic appreciation of traditional street profiles and especially the characteristic 'faces' (*gezichten*, like the *vedute*), that were made so familiar by the works of painters and photographers. The advocates of protection, often nicknamed *heemschutters*, praised the picturesque beauty and harmony between the historic buildings, trees and waterways in their small-scaled arrangements. They were the first who pronounced that also attention had to be paid to the direct environment of the single monuments and who appealed for a more restraint approach of urban renewal. Their on-going "struggle for beauty" was against conspicuous street advertisements, large-scale and high-rise office blocks and other disharmonious manifestations of modernization in the historic environment (Koot 1961). Thus, it was no coincidence that one section of the preparatory meetings of the EAHY 1975 addressed specially these threats of the visual qualities of the inner cities and the countryside. Some others, however, like Jaap Engel, chairman of the municipal *Jordaan committee of Amsterdam*, warned of the risks of gentrification and other social problems of integrated conservation because the original residents could not always afford the increased rents of the restored old houses (Council of Europe 1975a; Council of Europe 1975b). And *Heemschut* puts that Engel and Reint Laan, mayor of Zaanstad, had played an important role in the preliminary studies for the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* (van der Wielen 1975c).

In the wake of post-war rebuilding (*wederopbouw*), the initial idea of urban conservation was mainly focused on urban "repair" (*stadsherstel*) or rather the repair of the historic image (*beeldherstel*) of street fronts and alike. This kind of urban renovation strove to restore the urban fabric and its small houses, particularly those without the individual status of a state protected monument (Zantkuijl 1975). Often these minor monuments were still at risk because their technical condition was poor and the Ministry of Reconstruction and Housing and local departments stimulated urban renewal and extensions by considerable budgets, such in contrast to the limited grants for architectural conservation. The radical demolition of old districts for large-scale replacements and new infrastructure led to substantial counteractions, such as the emergence of private organisations for *Stadsberstel* and of diverse pressure groups who wanted to prevent further demolishing. The same was valid for the rural settlements where the vigorous mecha-

nisation of agriculture led to unwanted abandonment or heavy alterations of age-old farm buildings and the loss of dozens of windmills. Gradually the insight grew that culturally and historically valuable settlements deserved planological protection and that the authorities for conservation and planning had to join forces for a new policy that aimed at the 'rehabilitation' of (to be) protected townscapes by means of renovation or contextually sympathetic infills. At the same time, the urban conservationists became aware that also the future functioning of the historic settlements had to be taken into account. In other words, the protection policy had to switch from a mere focus on the historic image of the townscapes towards its functional structure and thus allow for some economy-related changes (Dun 1981; Dun 1997; Prins, Habets and Timmer 2014).

According to the *Dutch Monuments Act*, a protected townscape had to be designated by both the Minister of Culture and the Minister of Housing (and, since 1965 also of Physical Planning) in order to incorporate planology in urban conservation and vice versa. The administrative instrument for such 'integrated conservation' was a specially drafted land use plan (*bestemmingsplan*) for the protected area that included specific rules for future urban developments with respect for the heritage values. The intention was to apply a form of dynamic protection and not to 'freeze' the townscapes as if they were an open air museum. In practice, however, it proved difficult to find an appropriate balance between (physical) urban conservation and (functional) development without disturbance or 'museification', as, actually, had happened in Orvelte (Heyligerberg 1972; Niemeijer 2012).

Many consultations were required between public and private parties before the administrative procedures were effectively completed but when the preparations for the EAHY 1975 started, there were already dozens of townscapes protected from the preliminary working programme that counted over 300 eligible sites (Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg 1975, 118–119). Also the challenge of rehabilitation was broadly promoted and it was responded in various degrees of conservation and change. These were reflected in the three Pilot Projects assigned on the European level for the Netherlands to investigate the problems and possibilities of rehabilitation and reuse of architectural heritage: Amsterdam (the Jordaan district), Middelburg (the resurrecting town centre after two disasters) and Orvelte (a traditionally conserved Saxon village in Drenthe). On a national level, eleven municipalities (Brielle, Buren, Deventer, Graft-De Rijp, Harlingen, Heusden, Loenen, Maastricht, Nieuweschans, Thorn and Zierikzee) were earmarked as "shining examples" of public-private collaboration to safeguard their historic environments. Another seventeen municipalities received distinctions, just as a multitude of private custodians who had substantially contributed to the (traditional) conservation of historic buildings and neighbourhoods (Rijksdienst voor de Monumentenzorg 1975, 15).

3. DISSEMINATION AND DISCUSSION

In retrospect, it is difficult to say what the benefits of the EAHY 1975 precisely have been for the monuments care in the Netherlands (Figs. 4, 5, 6).

Firstly, because many activities were intertwined with the celebration of the national centenary, such as particular restoration projects, festivities, exhibitions and a lot of publicity in mass-media. Secondly, because the preparations showed that there were already political and professional tendencies towards a closer collaboration between the Ministries for Culture and Housing for the sake of 'integrated conservation'. The journalist Anton van der Vet concluded, providently, that if M75 had taught anything it was the need to draft and implement a sort of *Deltaplan* for the monuments care and all related social fields in order to create a future for the past in a liveable country (Vet 1975, 112–115) (Fig. 7).



Fig. 4: Poster for the EAHY 1975 with the text *The Council of Europe greets Amsterdam* by the Information Service of the Council of Europe (www.geheugenvan-nederland.nl)



Fig. 5: Cover of the Dutch report on congress of the EAHY 1975 at Amsterdam 21–25 October 1975, published by the *Dutch National Committee Monuments Year 1975*, Rijswijk, 1976 (Collection: Netherlands Agency for Cultural Heritage, Amersfoort)



Fig. 6: Post of the Dutch *Monumentenjaar 1975* (private archive J. Kirschbaum)



Fig. 7: Cover of the collected journal articles by Anton van der Vet *A future for our past, we have no more monument to lose*, 1976, Baarn: Bosch & Keuning (Author's collection)

Whereas the national M75 committee aimed primarily at popular education, publicity and dissemination of knowledge of the – foremost traditional – monuments and townscapes, the Dutch section of the Council of European Municipalities seriously sought discussion about the future of the historic environments. Hoping to advance an adequate policy for the care of monuments, the section appointed a special study group chaired by P. A. Wolters (then mayor of Middelburg) with the sociologist Dr. Nico Nelissen (then a lecturer at the University of Nijmegen) as reporter. As a basis for such discussions among municipal administrators in the Netherlands, three reports were composed within the framework of the EAHY 1975. They studied the actual relations between monument and society, inner city and rural area, respectively, and contained critical analyses of bottlenecks, risks and opportunities and a lot of data based on interviews and seminars (Nelissen 1974; Nelissen and Vocht 1976; Nelissen and Vocht 1978). The first report, already published before the official heritage year, ended up with no less than seventy recommendations to achieve a more active and social-spatially conscious policy for an integrated conservation of monuments and the historic environments by means of contemporary uses (Nelissen 1974, 67–69). These recommendations were obviously addressed to the Dutch authorities and policy-makers. The intention was to open their eyes for the relations between monuments, welfare and physical planning as well as to create a positive climate for larger investments in the revitalisation and (re)use of the built heritage. Some recommendations complied fully with the paragraphs of the later → *Declaration of Amsterdam* and the → *European Charter on Architectural Heritage*. On the one hand, the whole set of recommendations had a far broader scope since also suggestions were included for the selection of post-1850 monuments and sites for protection, involvement of citizens, monitoring, financing and more. But on the other hand, not any of the recommendations openly supported the challenge of architectural heritage conservation as a shared *European* cause. The same applied to the 51 recommendations in the report on the inner city, although the first attachment held the full text of the → *Declaration of Amsterdam* in Dutch (Nelissen and Vocht 1976, 209–210).



Fig. 8: Amsterdam, the remaining houses in the Nieuwmarkt district and the protest graffiti *no tubes but houses* in 1974 or 1975 (Photo: Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed, G.J. Dukker)

It was already difficult enough to come to a national heritage policy in the Netherlands and to achieve a better collaboration between the departments for monuments care and housing and physical planning. Most conspicuous were the controversies about the redevelopment of the Nieuwmarkt district at Amsterdam, where the demolition works for the new metro-line had prompted massive revolts and requests for a more social approach of urban renewal (Fig. 8).

Apart from the on-going discussions on financing, the emphasis grew on the social dimension of architectural conservation and on the need to integrate also non protected historical houses in the inner cities in a well-considered and coherent strategy of conservation and development. When, as a part of the M75 manifestations, the national centenary of cultural heritage involvement was officially commemorated in the Knight's Hall at the Hague, it was the State Secretary of Housing and Physical Planning, Jan Schaefer, who stressed the need to embed the monuments care in the broader setting of urban renewal and to keep the social aspects of living in mind (van der Wielen 1975a; Ministerie van CRM and Research Instituut Gebouwde Omgeving 1977, 110–113). On the same day, 26 June 1975, a practical brochure was circulated among the municipalities with guidelines and six instructive maps as models for drafting a protective land use plan, called *Hersteld verleden van dorpen en steden* ('Recovered past of villages and towns'). For this purpose, the Ministry of Housing and Physical Planning and the Ministry of CRM had designed a common programme for rehabilitation with substantial grants for the renovation of both legally protected monuments and so-called 'townscape defining and supporting' (*beeldbepalende* and *beeldondersteunende*) houses. In addition to these grants, also the Ministry of Social Affairs supported restoration and rehabilitation activities as employment projects for construction workers. Some other positive side-effects of M75 may be noted: the national budget for restoration works was raised in 1975, a wide interest in minor monuments had spread and in 1977 the RDMZ could extend its staff with a few specialists in response to the grown workload that resulted from external requests for listing, advise and education. So, at first sight, one could say that the EAHY 1975 had been relatively successful in the Netherlands, albeit not so much for the European dimension.

CONCLUDING WORDS: DAZZLING DYNAMICS

Nonetheless, the already signalled difficulties in the practices and policies of daily monuments care brought about new discussions and increasing criticism of the centralist organisation and cultural elitism. The criticism came from outside as well as from inside. For instance, the special of the monthly journal *Wonen-TA/BK* 1976 nr. 7 on monuments care considered M75 mainly as a closure of a certain period rather than an exemplary start of a newly inspired striving for a good built environment and appealed for a new debate on the future tasks of monuments care and urban renewal (*Wonen-TA/BK* 1976, 5). The report *Monumenten zijn ook bouwwerken* (Monuments are also buildings) delivered new facts and figures for such a debate and contained a confronting preface by the Chief Director of the RDMZ, Jan Jessurun, who observed a great divide between the quite closed circuit of the monuments care, where specialist architects and contractors worked almost exclusively in a local setting, and the competitiveness in the regular construction industry (Ministerie van CRM and Research Instituut Gebouwde Omgeving 1977, V). Provocatively, this report concluded that "in view of the actual staffing and budget of the RDMZ one could hardly expect that the objectives that are recorded in the 'Declaration and Convention of the Amsterdam Congress M75' could be realised" (Ministerie van CRM and Research Instituut Gebouwde Omgeving 1977, 91).

More criticism and discussions followed, expressing great concerns about the challenges of architectural and urban conservation (*Wonen-TA/BK* 1980 nr. 16-17-18). The National Institute for Physical Planning and Housing (NIROV) reported that in 1980 "little was left of the vibrant fervor" of the EAHY 1975 and that the intended outreach towards the public at large had not been achieved (Kruishoop 1981, 11).

However negative these statements may sound, they revealed a broad societal interest in the new needs of architectural conservation and the qualitative upkeep of the built environment. They evoked, together with other influences, increasing dynamics in the Dutch politics, financing, legislation and organisation of monuments care – too much to describe here (Derksen 1983; Nelissen 1996; Keesom 1997; Nationaal Restauratiefonds 2007; Nationaal Restauratiefonds 2010). Finally, they brought an end to the RDMZ as an almost independent *State Department for Conservation* and its staff was forced to move to the newly built office at Amersfoort that since 2009 has housed the newly created *Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed* (RCE, State Agency for Cultural Heritage). The move marked not just an ostentatious change of accommodation, but also a fundamental change in the policy of monuments care based on the policy paper *Modernisering van de monumentenzorg* (Modernization of the monuments care, abbreviated MoMo, 2009). Alongside a far stretching decentralisation of powers, the main focus is laid on the stimulation of reuse, simple regulations for monument owners and, for the municipalities, a timely indication of cultural historic values in spatial planning. In addition, the policy document *Visie Erfgoed en Ruimte* (VER, Vision Heritage and Spatial Planning) includes a new interest in World Heritage and aims “to connect the care for the cultural heritage with other spatial issues in the field of economy, safety and sustainability” (Rijksoverheid 2011; www.cultureelerfgoed.nl). This emphasis on connection instead of protection is the culmination of a long process that started with the prudentially formulated concepts of ‘integrated conservation’ in the EAHY 1975 conference papers and was further encouraged by the 1999–2009 “Belvedere” policy, that promoted the concept of “heritage conservation through development” (www.belvedere.nu/download/nota.pdf). Telling for the total conversion is the related 2014–2018 Vision document of the RCE with an image of the Victory Boogy Woogy painting by Piet Mondrian on the cover and the motto *Give the future a past* (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed 2013).

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