COLLECTINGNET

An international museum network for collecting issues

Collectingnet is an international museum network for collecting issues created at the conference *Connecting Collecting* at Nordiska Museet, Stockholm in November 2007. Collectingnet invites museum professionals and scholars to take part in developing the network into a vital association and mouthpiece of international cooperation.The Newsletter is published four times a year and distributed to members of Collectingnet, and is also available online at http://www.nordiskamuseet.se/Publication.asp?publicationid=4213&topmenu=143.We welcome contributions with reflections, conference/seminar reports, project presentations, specific questions you wish to raise, literature tips, invitations to cooperation or other themes. Please send your contribution to the next issue by **20 May 2010** to collectingnet@nordiskamuseet.se. You can also contact the editors personally: catherinemarshall5@yahoo.com, eva.fagerborg@nordiskamuseet.se

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From the editors

Welcome to this issue of *Collectingnet Newsletter*. With No 9 the newsletter starts its third year, and it will continue in this form for a while. Later this year it will be transformed to *COMCOL Newsletter*, the newsletter of ICOM's International Committee for Collecting (COMCOL). As we announced in the last issue, ICOM's Executive Council has approved the proposal to establish this new International Committee, which means that Collectninget has reached its first goal. We welcome our readers as members of COMCOL, the new international platform for reflections on the practice, theory and ethics of collecting and collections development.

Those of you who are already members of ICOM can simply join COMCOL by filling in an application form and send it by e-mail to ICOM's Secretariat. See http://icom.museum/join_int_committee.html for instructions and application form. If you wish to join COMCOL but not yet are a member of ICOM, the first step is to become a member, see instructions at http://icom.museum/membership.html.

Contents of this issue

Editorial note: This issue of Collectingnet Newsletter starts with an article by Peter van Mensch and Léontine Meijer-van Mensch that serves as a useful introduction to issues for COMCOL to develop further. Their article raises important questions about the fundamental aims of collecting in a world where objects abound, but where older curatorial vision and heritage strategies may no longer be the best guides to which objects should be collected. It is time to consider less tangible aspects of history and heritage and the role of institutions, collections and curators within them.

Collecting as intangible heritage

Peter van Mensch and Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

Despite the extreme diversity of museums as to content and appearance, there is one common denominator: the collection. Opinions may differ as to whether the collection belongs to the purposes or to the resources of the museum institution. In other words, is collecting an end or a means? In one of his last texts, Stephen Weil warned us not to confuse ends and means:

Where this confusion most typically surfaces is in the curatorial mindset that envisions collections as ends in themselves and not as means to be employed for some larger institutional end. Where these attitudes most frequently come into conflict is over decisions to accession or deaccession particular objects. The "collection as end" attitude may manifest itself in a curator's desire to shape the collection in pleasing ways, to give it a certain balance and harmony, as if the collection itself was an organic entity, itself the ultimate object to be contemplated. The "collection as means" attitude, by contrast, tends to question the degree to which any particular object may be of future use in carrying out the museum's programme. Except with respect to those institutions that conceive their missions to be primarily archival, the "collection as means" attitude certainly seems more consistent with a museum's public service role. A well-rounded collection may be desirable, but unless it is also a well-used collection it would no more be an indication of institutional worthiness than would be a well-fattened endowment or a splendid new building. (Weil 2006: 4)

The aim of this article is to explore the different general issues that result from Weil's point of view in order to create a framework for discussing these issues within the new International Committee for Collecting.

To what end?

The basic assumption of contemporary museology is that the collection is to be considered as means. This goes together with the assumption that the specificity of museums as cultural institutions is in the means rather than the end. A nice example of a contemporary mission statement is the one given by

Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums (Newcastle, UK): 'Our mission is to help people determine their place in the world and define their identities, so enhancing their self-respect and their respect for others'. This mission would function for any cultural institution. That's why Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums states that it wants to achieve its mission by giving people access to the 'museum and archive provision (...) for the significant and positive impact that it makes upon their lives'. But, interestingly, even in this addition to the mission statement the organisation avoids speaking about collections, instead it offers a range of learning experiences. Still, in the description it gives of its eleven venues the focus is on their collections; collections of archaeology, art, history and natural science, including stories as a form of intangible heritage.

The Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums example illustrates that the specificity of the museum is in their collections, tangible or intangible; collections that are used to achieve to a larger institutional end. In this sense, Jane Glaister speaks about 'the power of collections':

The power of collections should never be underestimated, but it does need to be far better understood. And understanding comes from knowledge, intelligent decision making and confidence. Museum and gallery collections give people pleasure and can evoke wonder and awe. They enable people to explore the world, and make other people, other experiences and other places real and tangible. They provide evidence and offer opportunities for research and learning. They can give status to ideas, people or communities, serve as memorials and validate groups' or individuals' experiences. They have a considerable economic impact, stimulating contemporary science, creativity and industry. They give people a powerful sense of place, identity and belonging, anchored in a fuller understanding of the past. (in Wilkinson 2005: 8)

However, missions such as the one given by Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums challenge traditional theory, practice and ethics of signification and

selection. They raise questions about control and ownership (legal and intellectual ownership).

Participative paradigm

The question 'what collection for what purpose?' involves the questions 'who decides?' and 'who participates in the decision making process?' In contemporary museology these issues are addressed by many authors using concepts such as participative collecting, community-led collecting, co-creation, co-curatorship, and social curatorship. Combining ideas of Christina Kreps and Laurajane Smith, one could say that the process of signification and selection should be liberated from the Authorative Heritage Discourse (Kreps 2003; Smith 2007). 'By identifying and naming the material and non-material elements that constitute their environment, people realize their right to their world and gaining control over it' (Kreps 2003: 10).

The contributions to *Collectingnet Newsletter* show that this so-called participation paradigm (Meijer-van Mensch 2009: 25) plays an important role in documenting the present. As Zelda Baveystock wrote, this type of projects has multiple objectives:

... they seek to collect material for the future, certainly, but they also aim to build relationships with people, giving current audiences a voice or a means of self-expression. In working with the museum, they seek to build up cultural capital by demystifying what the museum is about and why it collects the material it does; in other words, to make the *institution* relevant to people's lives as well as having the contents reflect them. (Baveystock 2008: 97).

This is, of course, true for collecting in general, but in their introduction to the proceedings of the Connecting Collecting conference at Stockholm, 15-16 November 2007 Eva Fägerborg and Elin von Unge make clear that in particular 'present day as a specific field of study within the museum sector (…) evokes new and shared questions' (Fägerborg and von Unge 2008: 7). Indeed, the contributions to the conference show that documenting the present challenges many of the traditional working methods and that the future of it requires joined action. Documenting the present questions the role of the artefact as key resource, it questions the role of the curator as specialist, it questions the traditional professional subdivision of the heritage field, and it even questions the role of professional heritage institutions as main custodians of 'contemporary heritage'. Documenting the present involves the combining of different strategies of documentation, it involves the participation of source communities, it involves collaborative and multidisciplinary efforts of the professional heritage field, and it

involves new institutional solutions, including the internet as framework for documenting.

Collection development

The Museum 2.0 approach is not only relevant for documenting the present, not even for documenting by collecting in general, the new paradigmatic approach extends to collection development as a whole. The term collection development is used to emphasize the dynamic nature of collections. It includes collecting and deaccessioning as two strategies for development, but it also includes documentation, registration, conservation and restoration. The integrated approach to these activities enhances the use value of the collection, i.e. the potential of the collection to support the mission of the museum.

In the *Collections for the Future report* (2005), it is stated that 'it is an established intellectual orthodoxy that audiences always play an active role in making meaning; meaning is not determined by the author or producer' (Wilkinson 2005: 14). The report advocates 'new intellectual approaches [to] invigorate collections'. It considers museums to have 'a responsibility to be open to all alternative perspectives' (Wilkinson 2005: 14). This involves a continuous reflection on the significance of the collection as a whole and its constitutive components, including a reflection on documentation and conservation-restoration practices.

Every museum has to balance between the historicity of its collection and the requirements of the present day mission. The composition of collections reflects a development of knowledge. Old collections are, in fact, accumulations of `fossilised world views', each one covering the next, like matruskas, the wooden Russian dolls. The most important instrument for adapting collections to (re)new(ed) missions has always been collecting. Collecting respects the historically grown composition of collections, and, at the same time, may contribute to the inner coherence and the distinctive profile of the collection.

On the other hand, however, unselective growth of the collection – in other words continued collecting without clear selection criteria – may have a negative effect on the quality and the accessibility of the collection. In some countries, such as the Netherland and the United Kingdom, museums associations developed guidelines for deaccessioning (Van Mensch 2009). There may be several reasons to contemplate deaccessioning. A practical reason is creating space in the storage rooms and providing relief for registration and conservation. This is a matter of quantitatively decreasing the collection. However, deaccessioning is not only a quantitative concept. Carefully selecting objects for disposal may

qualitatively increase the use value of the collection. It is clear that selection for de-accessioning requires a procedure as careful as selection for accessioning and should involve stakeholder participation.

Dynamic collections

An alternative to de-accessioning can be collection mobility. There are many different reasons for showing objects elsewhere for a certain period of time. For example, doing so helps to place objects in a meaningful historical context; it facilitates permanent displays in museums or other places like public buildings; it makes it possible to tell stories from a different perspective; and it encourages co-operation among various museums (*Lending to Europe* 2005: 17). Collection mobility is key to the concept of 'dynamic collection', as advocated by the Museums Association (Wilkinson 2005: 15). This concept can easily be connected with Laurajane Smith's statement that 'all heritage is intangible, and may usefully be viewed as a cultural process of meaning and value production' (Smith 2007: 4). As a consequence, Smith's definition of heritage is 'a cultural process or performance that is concerned with the production and negotiation of cultural identity, individual and collective memory, and social and cultural values' (Smith 2007, 2). This also applies to collections. It does so on two levels: firstly the objects that constitute a collection are heritage, secondly the collection as such is an artifact and may be viewed as a 'cultural process of meaning and value production'. Following Christina Kreps, one could say curation is a form of intangible heritage (Kreps 2009).

We think the viewpoints of Smith and Kreps are useful to the discussion of theory, practice and ethics of collection development. It belongs to the responsibilities of the museum professional to enhance the use value of the collection. Contemporary discussions concerning the role of the professional *vis à vis* source communities, show that collecting strategies themselves are time and place dependent cultural performances, open for debate. We are looking forward to such debate.

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Peter van Mensch
Professor of Cultural Heritage
Reinwardt Academie, Amsterdam
p.vanmensch@ahk.nl

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch
Lecturer of Heritage Theory and Professional Ethics
Reinwardt Academie, Amsterdam
l.meijer05@ahk.nl

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Call for Project-Partners:

Research/Collection-Project "Contemporary Children's toys in Europe"

Andreas Wenzel

Toys are the first objects by which a growing child connects to the world and to human society. They remain a prominent (material) agent of socialization until adolescence and beyond. Considering today's mainly industrialized toy production, many museums do not collect contemporary toys at all. We believe it is important to understand how toys reflect (prospective) social/cultural trends and to utilize this information in the formulation of collection categories.

Using mainly qualitative research methods such as interviews with children and parents we plan a comparative study in different European countries. Before applying for funding from a foundation we are looking for project-partners who are interested in cooperation in this field and who would like to establish a network of museums (toy museums, ethnological museums, museums of folk life, the corresponding departments of national or state museums) and scholars (in cultural anthropology, ethnology, social sciences, pedagogy, childhood studies).

We think museums can contribute to the project by
– providing a workplace for a researcher for some months
– participating in a preparatory symposium
– agreeing to incorporate the collection of contemporary toys into your overall collection strategy

– trying to raise additional funds e.g. for the accession of toys (the applied funding will probably only be for research)
– providing the infrastructure for an exhibition to display the outcome of the research

Scholars could probably contribute by
– participating in a preparatory symposium
– becoming a member of an advisory board (in case such will be established)
– supervising a doctoral thesis of one of the executing researchers
– organizing smaller sub-studies (e.g. with your students)
– writing essays for a catalogue or other publications

As of now, the project is still open for propositions, please bring in your ideas!

Timeframe (estimated):
probably 3 years starting from mid 2011, due date for draft proposal: May 2010, due date for actual application: end of 2010.

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For further information please write to:
Andreas.Wenzel@Landesmuseum-Stuttgart.de or
Andreas Wenzel
Fachabteilung Volkskunde
Landesmuseum Württemberg
Schillerplatz 6
D-70173 Stuttgart

A new cataloguing system and social media services for the Panama Viejo Museum and Monumental Site

Ana Luisa Sánchez Laws

In January 2010, I conducted a one-month internship at the Panamá Viejo Museum and Monumental Site in Panamá city, Republic of Panamá. The internship had as part of its goals to help in the restructuring of the current online strategy of the museum by exploring the use of social software and concepts from social media, aka web 2.0. Another related task was to restructure the existing online catalogue so as to also encourage more participation from the public

in the identification and classification of archaeological artefacts.

This short essay presents a description of the changes that were conducted. I start by contextualizing the work done with a short background of the museum and site. I then move on to explain the changes made to the website, and the purpose of the new tools and structure added, as well

as present a draft of the framework that I am developing for the gathering of analytics data to measure and understand the impact of these new services.

The Panama Viejo Museum and Monumental Complex

The ruins of Panamá La Vieja are the remains of the first settlement of the city of Panama founded in 1519. The Patronato Panamá Viejo, a non-profit organization of mixed composition with members from the private sector (Kiwanis Club of Panama and HSBC) and the government (Panamanian Institute of Tourism and National Institute of Culture), has administered the site since 1995. With the creation of the Patronato Panamá Viejo, earlier perceptions of the site as 'tourist attraction' that had dominated government plans changed into a systematic program of archaeological investigations. In 2003, the site of Panamá La Vieja was included in the World Heritage List as part of the already accepted site of Salón Bolívar and Historic District of Panama (see Sánchez Laws 2009).

The museum currently contains a large collection of colonial and Pre-Columbian artefacts that have been found through the research perfomed first by the Center for Patrimonial Investigations (under the direction of Prof. Beatriz Rovira) and later by the Department of Archaeology (headed by Dr. Juan Martin Rincón).

Previous state of the museum's website and online catalogue

The main website (http://panamaviejo.org) presents visitors with a map (made in Flash) of the site, a collection of reports of completed excavations, an overview of the recovery of the Cathedral Tower – one of the major restoration projects at the site – and a section on other architectonic interventions in addition to a catalogue of the artefacts.

Until now, artefacts had been displayed online in a static system that was too complicated for the curators at the museum to manage (conversation with Martin Ricon, January 2010). Updates to the main site were and will continue to be done once or twice a month through Velu Software, a web development firm. These updates have so far consisted of additions to the events section, where short notes about past activities are inserted. The website did not prioritise informing the community of upcoming activities, but rather serves to keep an archive of these activities.

Changes to the catalogue and addition of social media services

The goal of setting up a series of social media accounts and through them social media services for the public at the Panamá Viejo website was to explore the possibilities of enhancing contact with the public through these new technologies. A blogging system was installed in the server and linked to Facebook, Twitter, and Blip.tv accounts, as well as a photo-sharing group in Flickr. The blog (http://www.panamaviejo.org/pvblog) serves as a departure point for updates in the Facebook and Twitter accounts. In this way, Facebook and Twitter are currently being used to alert the public to new content on the blog, but are not so far used to start discussions or share other types of information. The reason for this partly derives from the fact that at the moment, access to Facebook is blocked at the Patronato Panama Viejo's offices, thus making it difficult for the Promotion Department to check on the status of this account. Another aspect of the publishing workflow is that the Promotion, Archaeology, and Architecture Departments have email accounts through which they post to the blog, and the blog is set up to alert the Promotion Department when a user leaves a comment. The objective of this setup is to minimize the amount of time required to update the blog and social network sites accounts. Since new content production is low, the choice has been made to maintain one blog that includes information from all departments. If content production were to increase, it would be necessary to reconsider the current structure and perhaps create a series of specialized blogs instead.

In relation to the catalogue, the new system, built in Drupal, aims at allowing user tagging of the artefacts (though in a controlled way through curator moderation) as well as making the update process more agile and easier for curators to manage. Previously, it was necessary to preprocess images before upload; the current system does this automatically. With the new system it is also now possible to cross-reference artefacts and publications that have been added as a new section of the catalogue.

Visits to the blog, social media accounts, and catalogue are starting to be tracked in order to facilitate comparisons with the traffic to the static website. The analytics framework is under development, and the methodology is not yet entirely clear, but the following is my current draft.

Analytics framework:

Tracking of
- Variation in number of profiles that link to a museum's profile during the monitoring period.
- Incidence of monologue, dialogue, or multilogue. May include museum's own participation in a dialogue as members of online communities.
- Category of information disseminated by museums and by stakeholders: such as information about events, about the institution, about collections,

surveys, labeling, metadata, and interpretive texts and highlighted collections, comments, discussions, requests for features, sharing of information on collections, suggestions for collection items, tagging, ranking, filtering.

- Patterns of dissemination: how many social media accounts does the museum use, changes in types of information distributed through different social networks.

- Control: issues at play when opening participation to a broader range of stakeholders in dialogues about the collections and practices of museums through social media and user-tagging, mechanisms of control and impact of these on equality of participation.

Methodology: Participant observation, content analysis, evaluation of the various web analytics sources from social media service providers.

Through this tracking, we hope to be able to start identifying patterns in the type of connections or "ties" (building on Granovetter 1973) apparent at

these services: latent (linked profile), weak (linked profile, infrequent contributions), strong (recurrent visits, contribution to dissemination and development), as well as in the incidence of breakup or strengthening of ties depending on changes in social media services features or discontinuation of services.

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Ana Luisa Sánchez Laws
PhD, University lecturer
Department of Information Science and Media Studies
University of Bergen, Norway
Ana.Laws@infomedia.uib.no

Chinese Regional Museums: Museum Change in the Social Context of China

Heng Wu

On May 18, 2008, the International Council of Museums (ICOM) announced the theme of the International Museum Day of the year: "Museums as Agents of Social Change and Development". Museums are changing. Societies are changing. What is the correlation between them? ICOM called for museums to be *agents*. What does *agents* mean? Are museums just witnesses to record and represent social change and development? Are they the targets or promoters of social change and development? Are they instruments of policies which drive social change and development? In my Ph D project I explore such correlations between museum change and social change with Chinese museums, regional museums in particular, as the case study.

Why Chinese museums and Chinese regional museums in particular?

Firstly, museum studies, since their inception, have included voices from various continents and nations throughout the world. There seems, however, to be a voice missing, or at least less heard, in the field – that is the voice of mainland China. As a nation with a quarter of the world's population and one of the world's most respected ancient civilizations, China's

voice is hardly heard in the international field of museum study.

Secondly, the concept museum is a diverse category. Museums in different parts of the world have different characteristics. Chinese museums in particular enjoy great differences from museums in the rest of the world, or at least museums in North America, Europe and Oceania, which are the predominant subjects of current museum studies.

Thirdly, museums are experiencing dramatic changes now in China. Economic development in the country has made it possible for both national and local governments to offer financial support to cultural undertakings and museums, at times ignored, have recently received major public attention and financial support. Museums are springing up at an unprecedented rate throughout the country. Museum practices, the disciplines of museology, and even the public sense of museums are also changing.

The study of Chinese museums, however, is admittedly such a wide field that it is not possible to cover all the levels and types in a single project. I

have therefore chosen a selection of regional museums as the focus of this research. The *regional* here is at the provincial level in the administrative division system. I apply the term *regional* rather than *provincial* to be precise and inclusive of the autonomous regions.

How was this research conducted?

The grounding research question I set for this project is: *How have regional museums in China changed and are changing with the changing social context in the country?* The social context here I defined as the social, economic and political environment in the country with priority given to issues of diversity. The "changing social context" is also referred to as "social changes" in the research.

Starting from the ground research question, I examined two aspects: museum change and social changes and used these as the basis for my research and analysis.

The examination of museum and social change and the exploration of the correlation between them are carried out at two levels:

A) The macro level: I briefly examined the general changes of Chinese museums in the past century, their birth, development and reform. I examined also social changes in China in the corresponding period, for example, the establishment of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the Cultural Revolution of 1966-1976, Reform and Opening-up from 1978. I brought these two together to explore how the social change seems to have influenced the development of Chinese museums in general.

B) The micro level: I examined the changes – not only the change of the museum (its birth, development etc.) but also the change of the representation made in the museum – of the selected six museums (Gansu Provincial Museum, Shaanxi History Museum, Yunnan Provincial Museum and Yunnan Ethnic Museum, Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region Museum and Guangxi Ethnic Museum) from four selected regions, and the specific social changes related to the museums and region in question, and through these I explored how the specific museum was influenced by the regional social context as well as the national one.

In a country like China where the political regime is still defined as socialist and where the Chinese Communist Party is the only party in power, museums, as a part of the field of culture, are strongly affected by the political and economic strategies and decisions by local and national government. I took therefore policy issues as the main approach: not only the national policies, but also the local policies; not only the political and economic policies, but also the cultural policies.

Findings and Conclusions

Through this research I found, in the case of China: A) Most – though not all – of the changes happening to the specific museum can be sourced back to policies either at the national level (for example, in the 1950s, the central government called for all the regions to have their own museums built; in the Cultural Revolution, the national policies related to museums and culture had direct effects on specific museums etc.), or at the local level.

B) The museum-influenced local policies generally found their sources in national policies or strategies, even though at times the national policies were not intentionally aimed at museums at all. For example, the nation's developing-the-west strategy launched in 2000 initially aiming at narrowing the gap between the western regions and the eastern regions promoted the local development of the western regions, which raised awareness and offered the financial ability of the local government to develop local museums.

C) The regional museum, the regional government and the central government normally keep a hierarchical relationship: the museum is subjected to the local government and the local government is subjected to the central government. Crossovers – for instance when the central government exerts direct influence on the museum – however, also exist.

D) While there is a clear correspondence between the regional museum and the national policy, it is important to note that the same national policy does not necessarily work the same way in different regions due to the regional government's interpretation and application of the national policies based on the specific situation of the region.

E) Regional museums are not just targeted by governments' cultural policies due to the demand to promote the cultural development of the region or the nation. Regional museums are, particularly more recently, often included into the regional government's strategies in terms of regional development.

So, my broad conclusions are that in China policy has a strong influence on museums in general but there are also differences in regions. Museums are not only the targets but also the instruments of policy (or of the government) and they are predominantly influenced by social change and to a lesser extent disciplinary changes.

Policy in the correlation between museum change and social change works like a middleman. The influence of social change on museums is actualized through the issuing and implementing of museum related policies. At the same time, museums are used by the (regional) government in policy making to promote social development. China is changing: from "closing-down" to "opening-up", from planned economy to market economy, and from "taking class struggle as the key link" to "taking economic construction as the central task". Along with these social changes, Chinese museums are changing: from a tool of propoganda to publicize the socialist construction and revolutionary achievements to a tool to "realize and guarantee the public's basic cultural rights and interests", from following the Soviet Union style to having their own characteristics with receiving influence throughout the world, from a neglected field shadowed by the nation's economic construction enthusiasm to a hot spot of the society.

The goal of this research is not simply to record these changes, but to map out the changing trends so as to explore the driving forces and influential factors behind these changes in a social economic and political dimension. I am well aware that there are many related issues and topics that this research has not covered, and many ideas and thoughts that I have not developed further, which if I had done may have helped address the research questions better and make this study more fruitful. These gaps, however, must remain for future research to fill in. I hope that the groundwork that I have laid here might be utilised also by others to further our understanding of general museum issues (such as diversity and museum relationships to policy) as well as this specific national context.

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Heng Wu
Ph D candidate
Department of Information Science and Media Studies
University of Bergen, Norway
Heng.wu@infomedia.uib.no

The City Museum Düsseldorf and the participation paradigm

Léontine Meijer-van Mensch and Hans-Peter Bartels

From 'self-documentary' to co-curatorship
The most famous 'self-documentary' project in the Netherlands is undoubtedly *the Memory of East* website. This website (www.geheugenvanoost.nl) was initiated in 2003 by the Amsterdam Historical Museum and is, until today a vibrant place of interaction. *The Memory of East* project is one of many projects of the first decade of the 21st century that intended to give people the opportunity to share their stories, providing a platform for the attribution of meaning.

A more recent Dutch example of participative museum work is the *Give & Take* project of the Zoetermeer City Museum (2009). In this project the inhabitants of the city of Zoetermeer were invited to donate an object that symbolized the feeling of 'being at home in Zoetermeer'. In a follow-up project *Zoetermeer's Room of Marvels,* the museum organized a series of workshops where museum processes and procedures were being discussed and reflected upon with professionals. Director of the Museum Jouetta van der Ploeg reported on the two projects in *Collectingnet Newsletter* No 5 and No 7. With this project the museum wanted to emphasize the shared responsibility between the museum and the participants in the process of 'making heritage'.

It is no coincidence that lectures and students of the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam participated in the Zoetermeer project. As future heritage professionals, students learn to be open to new definitions of heritage and new approaches for the care and communication of heritage. In *Collecting Newsletter* No 4 the curriculum of the Academy is described more thoroughly.

City Museum Düsseldorf
Sharing the conviction that the attribution of heritage is not only a responsibility of the museum professional, the City Museum Düsseldorf, Germany, invited the community of Düsseldorf to participate in a co-creation project, unique in the German museum landscape. Susanne Anna, director of the museum, stated to the press at the beginning of the project: 'The City Museum Düsseldorf is of and made for the people and it should open itself for the people who want to learn from each other'. The Reinwardt Academy and the Ruhr University Bochum were partners in the project. The Reinwardt Academy was asked to participate because of its experience with participatory projects – the Zoetermeer project was taken as a special example – and the Academy's development of theory in the field of the participation paradigm and heritage institutions.

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Entrance of Düsseldorf City Museum. Photo Léontine Meijer-van Mensch

For this project the museum's collection of 30,000 photographs was selected. In this documentation project the participants were not merely 'used' as volunteers, but accepted as co-creators of heritage. The key workers, with their specific knowledge of the history of the Düsseldorf topographical landscape, were the 'real' specialists. Due to the bombings during the Second World War and the grand scale urban development programs in the 1960's, large parts of the city changed in appearance. The mostly older key workers had vital knowledge about old Düsseldorf. For the students of the Ruhr University Bochum the project was a first introduction to museum work from a 'Museum 2.0' perspective and a way to learn more about the topographical landscape of old Düsseldorf. In a series of seven intensive workshops, from October 2009 till February 2010, the key workers and the students were trained to work with the photo collection as co-curators. During the workshops the staff of the City Museum Düsseldorf took the role of facilitator, rather than authority. During several workshops the students and key workers were put in intergenerational teams and got trained to professionally document and register the collection. Other workshops were devoted to conservation and restoration issues. A theoretical and ethical reflection on museum work was also part of the professional training. These reflections aimed at deconstructing professional traditions in museum work. In an additional excursion to Amsterdam museum staff, key workers and students visited the Reinwardt Academy and the Amsterdam Historical Museum. During the project the key workers and students, not the professionals, gave meaning to the collection. This process of signification will result in to two temporary exhibitions shown in the museum.

At the Reinwardt Academy the delegation from Düsseldorf and Bochum met with students from the Academy's master's programme, who presented their work for a participatory project on *Neighbourhood Shops* for the Amsterdam Historical Museum. Arjen Kok, senior researcher at the ICN

(Institute Collection Netherlands) gave a lecture on participatory collecting and the key workers from Düsseldorf had an opportunity to meet their Zoetermeer counterparts. This possibility to reflect with participants of a similar project, proved to be very special. Despite language barriers a lively interaction took place. The intergenerational setting of the group contributed to the success of the excursion to Amsterdam. For the mostly older key workers it was inspiring to meet and interact with young people and for the students it was enriching as well.

Reflection
Before the project started the expectations from all sides were very high. After an inquiry, held at the last day of the workshop, it turned out that the key workers and students were very positive: about 80 % considered it 'great', while about 20 % said it was 'better than expected'. The museum staff was positive as well, but had different opinions about the process and outcome of the project. According to the curator of the photo collection the project was a big 'adventure'. For the curator responsible for the key workers it was a 'normal' key worker project. The director of the museum was glad that the project worked out well and that her museum policy had succeeded. To her the project successfully foreshadows a new, more social and outgoing role for the museum.

Participants entering Reinwardt Academie. Photo Werner Preissiger

However, the ideas of what participation is, and should be, differed amongst the museum staff. For the director 'participation is when all people can work on an *equal* basis in the museum'. For the curator responsible for the key workers 'participation is an essential part of *democracy*', while for the curator of the photo collection 'participation is the successful opening of the museum to an interested public'. These different definitions on participatory work in museums could be seen as 'the less successful part of the project'. According to an anonymous employee 'not all the staff members stood behind the project, because

most of them simply didn't have any idea of what the project was meant for initially and why the museum had done it'. The key workers and students didn't know what to expect. From this perspective it is easier to understand the comment of the director and the curator responsible for the key workers who both stated that they were glad that the project had functioned, 'that was the best accomplished part of the project'. They both mention problems, but 'as a first time experiment it was okay'.

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Léontine Meijer-van Mensch
Lecturer of heritage theory and professional ethics, Reinwardt Academie.
 l.meijer05@ahk.nl

Hans-Peter Bartels
BA student of the Reinwardt Academie, currently working on his thesis on participation projects in museums.
j.bartels@ahk.nl

The New Collecting in The Netherlands and a workshop at the Reinwardt Academy

Arjen Kok

In the 21st century a new approach to collecting seems to emerge in The Netherlands. The essential characteristic of this New Collecting, as I would like to label it, is that the museum involves others, outside the museum, in its responsibilities and ambitions concerning collection development Basically there are three forms.

Collecting relations
In the first form the museum actively seeks the help and support of outsiders to reach its collecting goals. As Rijksmuseum Amsterdam director Wim Pijbes puts it: " we shouldn't collect objects, but relations that do the collecting for us." Several museums are reworking their profile in this direction. Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen in Rotterdam, for instance, is presenting itself as a collector's museum and has ambitious plans for a collection building in which the museum offers full professional collection management services to private collectors. This service has to provide the necessary revenues to finance the building, but it is also a good way to strengthen the relation with private collectors who have collections that require such services.

Collection networks
The second form of New Collecting is the collecting network. This form more or less evolved to overcome the limitations of smaller museums. A good example is SCEN, a collecting network around computer heritage. Several museums, corporate collections and private collectors are cooperating to support a common collection policy and meet regularly to exchange ideas and information. This way they take a collective responsibility for the large task to collect and preserve computer heritage, something that each individual institution or collector wouldn't be able to cope with. SCEN presented its achievements at the conference

'Preserving tomorrow's heritage today' in February 2009 in Amsterdam. (see *Collectingnet Newsletter* no 5).

Participative collecting
The third form is the most revolutionary and seems to demand fundamental changes in the traditional valuation processes in the museum. It is participative or participatory collecting, involving individuals or groups from the source community in collecting their heritage. Ethnological museums were in the late Eighties and in the Nineties among the first to invite source communities to cooperate in the interpretation and management of their heritage. Eco museums, the museum concept, created by Hugues de Varine and George Henri Rivière in the Seventies, that aims to revitalize a community by making the community the collection of the museum, can be seen as another example. In the past decade some museums in The Netherlands started experimenting with the participation of local source communities in exhibition and collecting projects. Jouetta van der Ploeg, director of the city museum of Zoetermeer, reported on her participative collecting experiment *Give&Take* and *Room of Marvels* in *Collectingnet Newsletter* 5 and 7. One of the challenging aspects of participative collecting is that the museum seems to hand over the responsibility for the decision what to collect to the non-museum professional, the source community.

Workshop collection development
Students of the Master Museology of the Reinwardt Academy in Amsterdam experimented with participative collecting in their personal assignment, after they had followed the workshop I gave in November and December last year. We studied and discussed texts such as *Museums and Source Communities*, edited by Laura Peers and Alison K.

Brown (2003) and Laurajane Smith's thought provoking book *Uses of Heritage* (2006). We looked at several projects that were organised by Dutch museums like *The Memory of East* (Amsterdam Historical Museum), an oral history project and website about a neighbourhood in Amsterdam, *Roffa 5314* (Historical Museum Rotterdam) about Hiphop youth in the south of Rotterdam, and *My The Hague* (The Hague Historical Museum) about citizens of The Hague, their object and their story.

Having studied this material, we tried to draft guidelines for participative collecting. Participative collecting is a new phenomenon for most museums and it requires an entirely different approach of the collecting process. So some help in the form of a guideline was considered a good idea. Each student suggested ten lines which we then tried to fit into a general structure that was created in one of the workshops.

One of the – for me surprising – questions raised in the debate was whether it was right to have guidelines at all. If your intention is to let the source community have their say about their heritage, then why should you try to control or support the process with guidelines? In the end it was decided that a paragraph about the nature of guidelines and how to use them would be added as a foreword.

Family as source community

The assignment was to collect five photographs with their own source community, their family. The students had to look into three aspects of collecting. They had to think about the policy of the museum: write a mission statement, an outline of a collection policy and the basic collecting guidelines of the museum.

Then the collecting itself in cooperation with the source community: get a digital version of the photograph, do the basic registration of the digital and original version and write a statement of significance of the object. Finally they studied the process and context in which the collection was created: related documents and stories, a report on the collecting process and reactions of the relatives. The results are revealing documents in a number of cases. Especially the third part of the assignment on the collecting process provided new experiences and insights. It clearly showed that participation can have a stimulating effect on creating meaningful collections. It can work as an eye-opener to heritage that participants were not aware of. In some cases participation in the collecting process, talking about what to choose and what the significance of the object is, seemed to strengthen the relationships and the identities of those involved.

A selection of the Participative Collecting / Family History Museum assignments will be accessible at the following address

http://www.scribd.com/users/Collectiewijzer/document_collections under the title Participative Collecting Family History.

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Arjen Kok
Senior researcher at the Netherlands Institute for Cultural Heritage
Arjen.kok@icn.nl