



SUMMARY REPORT

Roundtable

The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives

(2-3 September 2010, Amsterdam, The Netherlands)

1. The Roundtable, *The Cultural Heritages of Asia and Europe: Global Challenges and Local Initiatives* was held on 2nd and 3rd September 2010 in Amsterdam, The Netherlands. It was organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (AEF) in collaboration with the International Institute for Asian Studies (based in Amsterdam and Leiden, The Netherlands). The Roundtable brought together 19 experts from ASEM countries, including scholars, cultural professionals and heritage experts from relevant organisations.
2. The following issues were discussed at the Roundtable: (i) Evolving scope of the term 'heritage' in different contexts in Asia and Europe and for different stakeholders (including institutional and governmental organisations and civil society actors); (ii) Heritage ownership in relation to different stakeholders (including policy makers, communities, educators and other civil society actors); (iii) Institutional frameworks at various levels (international, national and local) and the role of civil society in heritage-related activities; (iv) Possibilities of reconciling market economies and heritage-related activities; (v) Maintaining the balance between preservation and modernisation in urban contexts; and, (vi) Recommendations on heritage for the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting (8-11 September 2010, Poznan).
3. The principle findings of the Roundtable were:
 - i. There is an urgent need to recognise the plurality of the notion of 'heritage' both within ASEM Member States and between Asia and Europe; in the latter context, the notion of 'shared heritage' needs to be addressed by ASEM Member States.
 - ii. There is a need to move from the notion of 'heritage' as an assemblage of objects and texts to a dynamic understanding of heritage as a process.
 - iii. The participants proposed the use of the notion of 'situational heritage' (i.e. including a diversity of stakeholders together with the plurality of their values) in order to resolve important omissions in earlier notions of cultural heritage created by the distinction between the categories of 'tangible' and 'intangible' heritage.
 - iv. Such an expanded understanding of 'heritage' (as outlined above) would incorporate the inherent multivocality of all representations of culture; and, the legitimacy of alternative modes of producing knowledge and representing the past.
 - v. Given that history is, by definition, unavoidably selective, there is a need to recognise both the existence of numerous groupings of social actors and acknowledge that such groupings and their needs shift over time.

- vi. There should be a more substantive response to the changing needs articulated by local communities at various levels and to the cultural aspirations of different generations.
 - vii. The most urgent priority is to allow legitimate forms of contestation and to facilitate the articulation of various stakeholders such as NGOs, local communities, educational institutions and local intellectuals, activists and micro-entrepreneurs.
 - viii. The participants particularly emphasised the need to recognise that hitherto underrepresented disciplines and professions have now productively entered the ongoing debate.
 - ix. Regional and local languages faced with extinction require particular attention.
4. The participants present the following recommendations for the consideration of ASEM Member States:
- i. To recognise, explore and support the potential and actual contributions of cultural practitioners, micro-entrepreneurs, and activists in cultural transmission and change.
 - ii. To acknowledge, sustain and provision platforms and networks for the interaction of different social actors as equals in the representation, transmission, governance and sharing of heritage.
 - iii. To develop heritage-related programmes, planning and projects on the basis of ethical principles that promote the concept of an inclusive, equitable society.
 - iv. To strengthen the effectiveness of cultural heritage management at different levels through participatory methods including through online technologies.
 - v. To include critical perspectives on heritage at all levels (local, regional, national and transnational) in educational curricula, comprising of both institutional and non-institutional knowledge.
 - vi. To encourage and support research and documentation that aids both the creation of shared knowledge and promotes collaboration among all interested groups in Asia and Europe.
5. Recommendations from the Roundtable will be submitted to the Fourth ASEM Culture Ministers' Meeting (8-11 September 2010, Poznan) and the ASEM8 Summit (4-5 October 2010, Brussels).

Amsterdam, 3 September 2010