



Zeeuwse Ankers
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Symposium challenges views on heritage and (nuclear) waste

What do museum collections, archives and archaeology have in common with nuclear waste? More than you might think. Heritage and nuclear waste trigger us to reflect on the same important question: to keep or to discard? Zeeuwse Ankers* and COVRA organised a symposium about this question on the 13th of April 2019. Several notable speakers highlighted the theme from different perspectives and in the afternoon the group had a guided tour through the COVRA buildings.

Around sixty people from various backgrounds attended the symposium at the COVRA facility in Nieuwdorp. The diverse mix of people brought about a good atmosphere and interesting discussions. Marc Kocken, head of department Heritage and Public at Erfgoed Zeeland and coordinator of Zeeuwse Ankers welcomed the attendants and introduced the programme of the symposium.

The symposium started with keynote speaker professor Cornelius Holtorf, renowned international specialist on heritage and the future. Holtorf was appointed to an UNESCO Chair on Heritage Futures at Linnaeus University in Kalmar (Sweden), in 2017. The Chair on Heritage Futures is concerned with the roles of heritage in managing the relations between present and future societies. His lecture, titled 'Cultural heritage, nuclear waste and the future: what's in it for us?', posed some controversial views on heritage and radioactive waste. Both sectors have much in common and could therefore learn from each other. Poisonous rubbish, for example, could prove a valuable resource in the future. Whereas cultural heritage could hold a threat to society. What can those two seemingly irreconcilable sectors learn from each other, when we contemplate about the future?

Thereafter, Jan Boelen, managing director of COVRA, informed the attendants about his organisation and its ideas about preserving rubbish that can not be discarded. Boelen also indicated the extraordinary fact that COVRA, next to nuclear waste, stores depot objects from museums in Zeeland in their facility.

Subsequently, the partners of Zeeuwse Ankers took turns to each discuss their ideas about the theme 'to keep or to discard?' from their own disciplines, with specific examples.

First up was Robert van Dierendonck, advisor of archaeology at Erfgoed Zeeland. He discussed the ritual sacrificial pit that was found near the Kievitshoekweg in Grijpskerke (Zeeland). Could we say that artefacts from sacrificial pits were once thrown away or secured for the future?

Runa Kuller, head of communication and public affairs at Het Zeeuwse Landschap made clear how heritage and landscape belong together. With the example of the restoration of the Kruisdijkschans in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, an entrenchment turned into country house, Kuller discussed the various choices to be made in conserving and managing such large cultural elements in the landscape.

After lunch, head of the knowledge office and collections department at the ZB | Planbureau en Bibliotheek van Zeeland, Anne Buteijn, described the collection of old newspapers in the ZB, that has been digitalized over the last decades. The digital database of newspapers from Zeeland is now the most frequently visited database on the ZB website.

Director of Stichting Landschapsbeheer Zeeland, Joan van der Velden, illustrated the history and management of the cultural landscape in Zeeland, by pointing out natural and cultural landscape elements, often with unique symbolism.

And what to do with bottles of volcanic ashes from the Kelud volcano on Java? Caroline van Santen, curator at the Zeeuws Museum, pleaded to preserve such rare museum objects.

Finally, Marc Kocken presented the book *Bewaren of weggooien?*, with contributions from partners of Zeeuwse Ankers and COVRA. Cornelius Holtorf and Jan Boelen received the first copies.

To conclude the symposium, the attendants went on an elaborate guided tour of the COVRA buildings, where nuclear waste and museum objects are harmoniously preserved side by side.

* Zeeuwse Ankers is a partnership consisting of eight provincial partners from Zeeland, concerned with heritage, nature and tourism. This partnership is subsidized by the Province of Zeeland.