



Preservation through development  
Helsinki, October 27<sup>th</sup> 2014, Annemieke Traag

Thank you all for coming to Suomenlinna. Not only to visit this unique place, but also to celebrate three years of At Fort. As chair of the New Dutch Waterline board I am honoured to be lead partner of this European project. The main aim of this project was to explore solutions for successful approaches and methods to give fortified heritage a sustainable future.

The concept 'preservation through development' has been adopted by the At Fort project and derives from the Dutch Belvedere principle. Belvedere is the Italian word for a 'beautiful view'. A Belvedere is a point from which to expand one's viewpoint and to look ahead. It is an offensive approach from a defensive tradition of heritage conservation. It stimulates a focus on the opportunities cultural heritage could provide for spatial planning and regional development. For a sustainable and economically healthy future of military heritage, preservation through development proves to be a winning concept, as the partners of At Fort have proven. It does however take courage from owners and authorities to make it happen. It requires a coordinated, integrated and systematic approach.

To give you some examples of how it could work out, just watch the slides behind me of the redevelopment of the New Dutch Waterline.

By making the legacy of our military history accessible it becomes valuable public space. Especially in the Netherlands, where most areas are urbanised and privatised, 85 kilometres of continuous landscape is priceless.

Our ambition includes not only protection, restoration and maintenance of the different elements. Above all it requires a vision on how to develop the Waterline as a recognisable spatial unit worthy of a World heritage status. By adding new functions, one can strengthen sustainable preservation and become less vulnerable in case of major operations such as industrial or infrastructural works. The focus has been on the built heritage, the fortresses. This is where new economic developments are relatively easy conceptualized within the limits of authenticity and integrity. The hard part is how to keep the New Dutch Waterline recognisable as a whole. Not just the 60 fortresses, but the dikes, inundations planes and over 1500 small elements as well.

The time of preserving heritage just for preservation is long gone. A broad based, multifaceted group of activities that uses our built heritage not as an end in itself but as a means to a broader and, frankly, more important ends. Around the country that has meant historic preservation as a means for downtown revitalization, attraction for tourism, job creation, housing, education, and others. As a provincial executive of Culture, it is my job to keep it on the agenda of my colleagues of Infrastructure, Economic development and Spatial planning. This way historic preservation becomes the irreplaceable variable in any effective urban or regional strategy.

Looking at the different At Fort partners, we are a mixture of authorities, entrepreneurs and citizens with one common ambition. Diminishing budgets force us to work together more efficiently. We strongly rely on the input of volunteers for the daily activities on the fortresses and the maintenance of both built heritage and the surrounding landscape. It is therefore of the utmost importance to enhance local ownership. This can be achieved by enclosing heritage in the minds, hearts and hands of authorities, experts and visitors. This doesn't mean however that the government can let go. The government stays owner and guardian of the long term ambition and should act accordingly.

Well, that's all for now. I am happy to see the authorities of all At Fort partners here today. Your enthusiasm and inspiring stories confirm my belief we are on the right track with preservation through development. Keep up the good works and I am looking forward to future cooperation.