



MARITIME FORUM

"The common European Maritime Heritage as a challenge for Communication" (3.9)

Event date:

19/05/2010 - 16:45 to 18:30

This workshop will be dealing with the relevance of maritime heritage for European history and culture by defining the cornerstones of an integrated maritime policy and identifying examples of projects. It will furthermore be looking at ways to implement those projects from the point of view of museums/exhibitions, tourism and cultural policy.

PROGRAMME

Wednesday 19, 16:45-18:30

Room: Teatro Sala Casona (Laboral)

Chair: Prof. Dr. Jürgen Elvert, *University of Cologne*

Speakers: Ronald Vopel, *European Commission*

Prof. Dr. Jürgen Elvert, *University of Cologne*

Prof. Dr. Michael North, *Greifswald University*

Dr. Tinna Damgård-Sørensen, *Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde*

Dr. Thomas Overdick, *Schiffahrtsmuseum, Flensburg*

Three key messages

- Due to its history, Europe is the maritime continent.
- Therefore, the knowledge of Europe's maritime heritage is an important asset in terms of a common identity and the emergence of a public European we-spirit. Very often European maritime heritage is reflected in places of memory which only have to be identified as part of a common maritime heritage.
- To foster a vivid heritage, a European-wide cooperation between the actors is essential

Summary of the interventions from the panel

Ronald Vopel, Brussels:

The Case for a European Approach to Maritime Heritage

The presentation underlined that Europe is the maritime continent. Europeans have spread all over the world; the heritage is not only a national, e.g. British or French, but also European. The public awareness of maritime topics will grow due to the discussions about the safety of the seas as prerequisite for world trade and the seas as a food- and energy-source. The setting up of the Russian flag on the arctic seabed also shows potential conflict-lines of the future as the ecological catastrophe following the explosion of "Deepwater Horizon" drastically reminds us on the importance of a balance between commercial and ecological interests.

The underlining of the maritime heritage is suitable to point out the actual relevance of maritime topics. To elaborate the European dimension of maritime past an appropriate European label should be introduced. Another way of pointing out the European dimension is a target-oriented support of cooperation-ventures. Its economic potential, e.g. for the tourism industry, is significant.

Jürgen Elvert, Cologne

The common European Maritime Heritage as a challenge for communication

Some important and/or significant examples for the common European maritime heritage were given, ranging from the discovery of the European continent in ancient mythology and history to today's dependency of Europe's economy on sea-trade as well as the growing importance of maritime tourism, e. g. with regard to cruises following the tracks of the Hanseatic League or other regional European trade-networks that have led to the foundation of harbour-towns thus forging a variety of comparable maritime sceneries. Another example was related to the European overseas expansion since the late 15th century, leading to the export of European civilization and forms of political and societal organisations which are, to a large extent, still visible today. Grotius' theory of a *mare liberum* and the idea of drawing a three-mile-zone have significantly influenced international law since. Thus, the seas have not only been a place of war, peace and trade in the past, they have also been part of Europe's maritime heritage. The question today therefore is how to integrate the common European maritime heritage into the whole chapter of European maritime affairs and how to raise the awareness of the existence of such a common maritime heritage in Europe.

Michael North, Greifswald

The sea as *lieu de memoire*: The Sound and Gibraltar

Straits are not only of importance in the present for international commerce. They have a rich history and have therefore to be considered as lieux de memoires. To explore the maritime history is important for understanding the European past. Two significant examples were given: The Sound as the access route between Baltic Sea and the Atlantic, and the Strait of Gibraltar. Both have international relevance, due to the fact that many nations have sailed it. The conquest of Kronburg or the many battles in the Gibraltar-area reflect the political, strategic and commercial importance of these access routes.

Tinna Damgård-Sørensen, Roskilde

In the wake of the Vikings: Communicating a trial voyage with A viking longship

The director of Roskilde's Viking Ship museum was in charge of the *Sea Stallion Project*, a Viking long ship, built at the museum's own ship yard with traditional Viking tools. In 2007 and 08, the ship carried a crew of 60 women and men on a historical cruise from Roskilde to Dublin and back. With 12 knots, the ship performed surprisingly well, even without pushing it to its limits. Related to the voyage were the crew's social experiences with warm welcome ceremonies and a huge and positive media coverage. The *Sea Stallion* became more and more a national symbol for both Ireland and Denmark. Why became the cruise a big success? The answer to this question can be found in human nature: Mankind is fascinated by its past, it has a strong will for localisation and a strong exploratory will. Community spirit is still of importance, still in times of individualisation and self-staging.

Thomas Overdick, Flensburg

How to communicate the Maritime Past?

Flensburg's maritime museum is part of the city's historic port, harbouring a multitude of voluntarily run maritime heritage organisations. Places like this are of great importance for reflecting, preserving and communicating features of a common European maritime heritage. The potentials of this approach have not been fully exploited, as there is a great need to rethink the traditional concepts of maritime museums. Building a lasting relationship with the audience, a museum for people has to be created. Story telling and the "hands-on"-concept seem to be agents for this. As many have lost their connection to the maritime world, a reconnection is important.

Many museums lack a strategy to maintain its existence. The costs are exploding and topical complexity is hard to be mirrored. Collaboration and networking between museums are possible ways of how to cope with this challenge as well as public private partnerships for securing financial funding.

Discussion: Key questions and messages from the floor, as well as responses given by the panellists.

Lucy Blue, University of Southampton:

Ms Blue emphasised on the 3000 years amount of maritime history. From an archaeological point of view, this period means a big potential. An integrated thinking for developing this heritage is necessary. Priorities need to be shifted in favour of this development. For too long, they have been neglected. The maritime heritage needs to be exposed to the public eye. But, the about-face should not lead to a romanticising or musealization of the past. To connect the maritime heritage to its present and its future should be a top-priority on the European Agenda.

Links

[1] <https://webgate.ec.europa.eu/maritimeforum/en/node/698/ical.ics>