Participation in climate adaptation: the importance of culture and heritage

Three best practices from the Kingdom of the Netherlands

Unesco
Nederlandse Commissie

Climate change is one of the biggest challenges currently facing our society. On the one hand, global warming must be stopped; one the other, we have to find ways of adjusting to a changing climate. This adjustment, also called climate adaptation, is not the task of the government alone. The involvement of citizens, businesses and organisations is essential. Moreover, climate adaptation is not just a matter of implementing technical measures. It requires a different way of thinking. Culture and heritage can be effectively used to facilitate this participation in climate adaptation.

Citizen involvement in climate and energy projects is the subject of much discussion. Last year, the Dutch media reported extensively on concerned citizens protesting the arrival of wind parks or solar farms in their vicinity. Many people feel that the drastic changes in the landscape that the energy transition entails are imposed from above without being consulted. At the same time, citizens are actively working on climate adaptation themselves, for example by installing green roofs to reduce summer energy demands and greening their gardens to retain groundwater.

The 2019 Netherlands' National Climate Agreement emphasises the importance of citizen participation: without it, climate adaptation will not be effective. Earlier this year, the Dutch government asked an independent committee chaired by former ombudsman Alex Brenninkmeijer to investigate how citizens can be more effectively involved in climate decision-making and what is the best way to organise this.
It is important for citizens to have a stronger voice in climate action. They are able to propose solutions that are locally appropriate and sustainable.

In a paper published by the Netherlands Commission for Unesco on the role of heritage and culture in climate adaptation prior to this, we already stated that climate adaptation is not just a question of finding the best technical and administrative solutions but is above all a human and cultural process. It follows that this merits more investigation.

How can heritage and culture be used to mobilise communities in climate decision-making? In what ways do they make climate action more democratic? How can culture and creative design be used to facilitate and stimulate citizen participation? And how can culture and the arts inspire citizens to put changes into effect themselves? Some answers to these questions can be found in the three best practices from the Kingdom of the Netherlands presented below.[1]

*[1] This is the second paper by the Netherlands Commission for Unesco with examples of best practices regarding the role of heritage and culture in climate adaptation. In 2020 the Netherlands Commission presented its **first paper** (with four examples), as well as a **background paper** and a **statement** on culture and climate.*

Nieuw Drassig Land: cultural heritage engages citizens in local climate approach[2]

/ Key words: cultural history, local vision, residents' cooperative, citizen engagement, locally tailored solutions for climate adaptation.

Human beings are inextricably linked to the landscape through residence, agriculture and rituals. The place where we live or where we come from determines our identity, but also how we view other peoples and the world. In the centuries-old Nijbroek polder, such cultural-historical values were the starting point for a vision of the area's future. Citizens were closely involved in the creation of this vision, which has led to structured forms of participation that the residents organise themselves, working together on locally tailored solutions to spatial problems such as climate adaptation. All of this contributes to broader support for spatial planning.

Nijbroek, which literally means 'Nieuw Drassig Land' (new wetlands), is a medieval polder situated between the Veluwe region and the IJssel River in the municipality of Voorst. The layout of the polder, which follows a centuries-old pattern with specific dimensions for parcels of land and ditches, is still largely intact. The area is home to a close-knit community of some 700 people. The polder always enjoyed a high degree of autonomy. It had its own water board, administration, jurisdiction and church parish. The dikes around the polder form a clear boundary between the polder and the surrounding region. The community's identity is reflected in the local cultural landscape and, in turn, this landscape shapes the community's identity.

Vision of the future

A few years ago, spatial pressure from external sources and the growing need to tackle various problems such as climate change, energy and liveability made it important to map out the wishes for the future of the polder. In 2018, therefore, a procedure was set up with the help of Open Kaart, a design studio specialised in the co-creation of local processes, to develop a local vision in conversation with the inhabitants of Nijbroek. This vision offers guidelines for the area's future development and management, and provides frameworks for making policy decisions focused on liveability and sustainability.

[2] *For the description of this best practice, the authors spoke with Hanneke Stenfert, architect at Open Kaart.*

The participatory process consisted of six meetings in the village hall. Some one hundred residents and members of local organisations discussed what goes on in the community, expressing their concerns and identifying what is needed for a sustainable future. Residents felt, for example, that (affordable) housing and high-quality facilities are important. A great amount of attention was given to the area's unique history and landscape, with experts being called in to contribute their knowledge. The centuries-old use of the land and its interwovenness with the community formed the starting point for defining a set of values and principles that were the guideline for creating a vision of the future for the polder.

Cooperative

One of these values is the polder's time-honoured autonomy. Being conscious of such values helps people to understand the importance of preservation. It contributes to their awareness of the cultural-historical, ecological and social characteristics of the region they live in and helps in reinforcing those aspects. Local ownership, for example, is essential in areas like Nijbroek, where the land is largely privately owned. The conceptual plan for the Nijbroek polder was developed in collaboration with the residents not only in order for them to form a picture of the future, but also to give them tools for taking the first steps in that direction. After forming this vision, in the autumn of 2019 the residents organised themselves into a cooperative that aims to turn the plan into concrete action. The cooperative has meanwhile developed a number of initiatives. One of these was to give an abandoned farmstead a residential allocation. The new shared grounds contribute to the liveability and scenic aspects of the polder. Investigations are being made into whether part of the property can be used as a solar panel field to make Nijbroek more self-sufficient in sustainable energy. Also being explored is the idea of a forest garden, which ties in well with the cultural-historical landscape. Small groves, which formerly provided coppice wood, are a distinctive feature of the polder.

A second initiative to emerge from the vision-making process focuses on improving local biodiversity and the greening of agricultural land usage. Landowners have the possibility of obtaining municipal and provincial subsidies in order to plant vegetation, such as hawthorn hedges and fruit trees. The hedges and trees attract birds, bees, insects and small mammals, and establish ecological links in the region. This also preserves and restores the cultural-historical value of the centuries-old landscape. By now, the residents' cooperative has further worked out fifteen concrete plans.

Climate-adaptive polder

An important part of a sustainable future for the polder is the climate challenge: the polder must become more climate-adaptive in order to withstand heavy rainfall and prolonged drought. The Nijbroek polder is a good example of how a regional and national climate policy can be translated into local priorities and actions, by taking the residents' concerns and questions into account. The Valley and Veluwe Water Authority, the municipality of Voorst and the cooperative decided to work together as a team to look for locally tailored solutions. Not only that, they look for forms of climate adaptation that are appropriate for the community, its history and landscape. This initiative became known as the 'Nieuw Drassig Land' project, in which farmers and citizens are working together with the water board and the municipality on smarter water level management, from ditch to pumping station.

In line with the established vision, a decision was made to take the natural and cultural characteristics of the polder as the starting point for solutions. Funding from the Heritage Deal gives this heritage-inclusive approach to climate change an extra boost.[3]

Not only is an approach with an eye to the role of heritage appropriate in the local context, it also gives local groups or individuals more ownership of the climate challenge. The cooperative's interest in the polder's historic small bridges is one example of this. Stonework culverts are characteristic of the water system. In the past, these were often replaced by concrete versions. Preserving and restoring the traditional stonework culverts is an issue that is close to the hearts of residents.

A total of two kilometres of nature-friendly banks ('climate mantles') will also be constructed along the polder. Instead of a standard design, this will be a Nijbroek variant, in which the weirs around the polder will be modified to hold more water so as to facilitate recovery from drought. The design also includes the planting of 'climate groves' based on cultural-historical knowledge: the age-old seedbed method of planting trees helps to retain water and enhance the landscape. New groves derived from genetically local material can be planted according to this cultural-historical practice.

[3] *To learn more about the Heritage Deal (Erfgoeddeal in Dutch) visit the official website: https://www.erfgoeddeal.nl/projecten*

Intangible forms of heritage, such as historical practices, are not all that contributes to local climate adaptation. So does built heritage used in new ways. In nearby Terwolde, the culturally and historically valuable Baron van der Feltz pumping station is being restored and expanded to improve water management in the polder. Whereas pumping stations in the past were mainly used to drain water, the increasing occurrence of drought in the Netherlands has created a need to retain water. The remodelled pumping station will be able to respond to both situations and contribute to the area's climatological resiliency. The former steam-driven pumping station adjacent to it, dating from 1918, will be given a new allocation, which will be discussed in consultation with the residents of Terwolde and stakeholders.

Cultural heritage encourages resident participation

The Nijbroek project is an example of how cultural heritage and cultural-historical knowledge can be used to involve citizens in spatial development challenges such as climate adaptation. The project shows that this strengthens people's support and acceptance of alterations in their immediate surroundings. The community's strong ties to the landscape made a heritage-inclusive approach possible here.

The Nieuw Drassig Land project is also a good example of making climate adaptation appropriate for a local situation. Concepts such as historic culverts, climate mantles, climate groves are tangible enough to arouse the interest of residents. They make the local approach to climate adaptation tangible, so the threshold for citizens to get involved is low. As such, culture and heritage can contribute to local solutions based on climate actions that citizens care about. The consequences of climate change and the need to take action are mainly felt locally, in the places where people live and work, their own environment in which local stories and values are embedded. Connecting those stories and values with the climate issue encourages local solutions that originate from the community – solutions that are appropriate for the area and can therefore count on support. When culture and history are taken as the starting point in an area-oriented approach, the values that are locally important become clear. These values help in shaping future adaptations to the surroundings.

Figure 1. Open Kaart organised a participatory approach to planning the future of the Nijbroek polder. Photo: Rufus de Vries.

Further reading

Website of the Nijbroek polder residents' cooperative (in Dutch).

'Connected by the land', brochure about the future vision for Nijbroek Polder (in Dutch).

A new water museum? An additional 750,000 euros available for refurbishing the Nijbroek polder and Terwolde pumping station.

Article in De Stentor, 18 February 2021 (in Dutch).

Lab Reyeroord+: the use of creative design in climate-related participatory processes[4]

/ Key words: city lab, creative design, co-creation, citizen engagement, design sprints

The City of Rotterdam is making its Reyeroord neighbourhood 'future-proof'. Using creative design, it is involving residents in the search for solutions to local challenges such as the energy transition for the neighbourhood, flooding, drought recovery and greening. The collaboration with creative 'city makers' includes residents, entrepreneurs and other parties who are working together to design a sustainable future for the neighbourhood.

Reyeroord city lab

Reyeroord is a neighbourhood in the southern part of Rotterdam that was built in the 1950s and 1960s. In 2018, the City of Rotterdam started an experimental approach to make the neighbourhood ready for the future. Lab Reyeroord+ was set up to provide a space for innovation and experimentation and

[4] *For the description of this best practice, the authors spoke with Mercedes Leipoldt, area coordinator for IJsselmonde, and Eline van Weelden, advisor and strategic designer, both from the City of Rotterdam.*

to develop new expertise and ways of working. This city lab is an experimental place where the municipality, creative designers and residents work together on formulating an area-oriented approach to the various tasks facing the neighbourhood.

Climate adaptation is one of the most important challenges. Homes need to be made more sustainable, and the area regularly experiences flooding during heavy rains. In the city lab, people are testing what works and what does not, and what is the best approach for realising a future-proof neighbourhood. Lab Reyeroord+ was initiated by the City of Rotterdam in collaboration with Noorderwind, Stichting Tussentuin, Zeewaardig and Studio voor de Stad, and received a grant from the Creative Industries Fund NL.

Eliminating flooding and transitioning away from natural gas

The sewer system in the Reyeroord neighbourhood is outdated. Needed maintenance provided the impetus to start working with co-creation and the participatory city lab. In the coming years, Reyeroord's sewer system will be replaced, which in combination with a new water storage facility to alleviate flooding should make the neighbourhood more climate-adaptive.

In the new sewer system, waste-water and rainwater will be separated. The rainwater will be led to an open storage area and from there flow into ditches in the neighbourhood. This will ease the sewer system's peak load during heavy rainstorms. The rainwater will replenish the local water level, while the waste-water will not pollute the ditches because it has been diverted. The open water storage will be located in the park in the middle of the neighbourhood, thereby enhancing the park and contributing to people's enjoyment of it. Neighbourhood residents will be involved in discussions from the outset to determine its exact positioning. Moreover, Reyeroord has been designated as one of the first Rotterdam neighbourhoods to transition away from natural gas in the future and replace it with residual heat from the Port of Rotterdam. When the streets are dug up to replace the sewers, heating pipes will be laid at the same time.

Co-creation: dreams and action

The above plans were made with input from various parties; their exact implementation will be carried out in close coordination with residents and entrepreneurs. A good deal of attention went into mapping out the daily life in the neighbourhood and what residents think is needed. And this goes beyond water management alone.

The first step in the participatory process was to ask residents about their dreams for the neighbourhood. This helped the city to understand the underlying cultural values of the Reyeroord community and what the aspirations of the residents are. The residents indicated, for example, that they consider attractive surroundings and greenery in the neighbourhood very important. Talking about such things did not prove easy, however. The residents found it difficult to imagine dreams for the neighbourhood and put them into words. In order for them to dream really big – and thus bring about major transitions in Reyeroord – it became clear that the participatory process first had to be broken down into little pieces: small projects that could be realised in the residents' immediate surroundings. This was the start of experimentation at the neighbourhood level, in Lab Reyeroord+.

One of their dreams was to create a meeting place in the anonymous green area between the neighbourhoods of Reyeroord and Hordijkerveld. Its contours took shape through a participatory design method called 'placemaking'. Stichting Tussentuin guided this process, working with the residents on the spot to investigate its possibilities and creating the design step by step. To give the meeting place a structured form, they organised an activity every Thursday. An approach like this arouses curiosity amongst people living in the area and gets them involved.

The result was the Oeverloos community garden, situated in a green area of the neighbourhood where there is a lot of water. Water storage, biodiversity and an attractive place for relaxation, recreation and enjoyment were the starting points for this. Because the residents were involved in creating it, they have a stronger sense of ownership. A clear programme was drawn up to stimulate their involvement: gardening together, making jam, doing odd jobs, walking the dog or a photo exhibition. The process of making this together laid the foundation for the next step: co-creating a vision for the larger area of greenery in which the garden is located.

Design sprints

The major challenges for the neighbourhood in the coming years – replacing the sewage system, the energy transition and solving the problem of flooding – are large-scale, still far off, and so abstract that citizens can sometimes find it difficult to form a clear picture of them. Therefore, 'design sprints' were introduced in order to work in small steps on projects that residents could identity with and wanted to participate in. A design sprint is a short, intensive burst of effort to tackle a complex local problem and come up with concrete solutions together with residents. Small local experiments help the stakeholders discover the best approach. Sprints lead to rapid innovation and

enable citizens to come in contact with each other and work together. In three days' time, the participants found a solution for a particular problem. They also tested this immediately by designing a concrete prototype.

Three climate-related design sprints took place in Reyeroord. One of these was the three-day 'water sprint'. The problem at hand was how the neighbourhood could best deal with flooding as the result of heavy downpours. The prototype that emerged from this was the 'rain barrel fence', a special rain barrel built into a fence. Rainwater that otherwise would have disappeared into the sewers could now be used for gardens. The rain barrel fence was deliberately placed on the street side of residents' private gardens. The reasoning behind this was that the presence of such an element in the public domain stimulates citizens to think about it and discuss it with one another. After the first fence was installed, other residents became interested in adopting one as well. In short, this triggered a movement to take action and think about upscaling the approach to flooding.

Sprints thus do not take months or years, but are meant to deliver concrete results for the neighbourhood immediately. This has a strong inspirational effect. Although the result may not always seem worth mentioning from the city's point of view, it can be of great importance to citizens. This approach increases awareness, stimulates resident involvement and promotes citizens' trust in cooperating with the municipality.

Voyage of discovery

Lab Reyeroord+ shows how citizens can be involved in a low-threshold manner in climate adaptation issues that affect their own neighbourhood. The use of creative design facilitates co-creation processes and improves citizens' confidence in cooperating with the authorities. The knowledge, practices and physical heritage that are already present in the community are the starting points for co-creation.

Creative design often leads to better solutions and fewer blind spots: the creative approach taken by designers helps people to look at complex issues from different angles. Not only that, the methods and techniques of creative design serve to counteract assumptions and prejudices. When municipalities and residents create new designs together, it strengthens mutual trust. The result is an equal partnership, which is the basis for further collaboration and the tackling of larger issues. People experiment with what works and what does not. As a result, Lab Reyeroord+ is not merely a physical place but above all a voyage of discovery toward a sustainable, future-proof residential neighbourhood.

Figure 2.
The Oeverloos community garden is a green meeting place created together with residents in the Reyeroord neighbourhood.

Photo: *Coöperatie Tussentuinen*

Further reading

Magazine on the broader approach taken by Reyeroord+ and an article on the sprints (in Dutch).

Between Tradition and Transition: An exploration of the innovative Reyeroord movement,

By Hans Joosse and Arwin van Buuren (in Dutch).

More Resident Participation, Less Bureaucracy: What can we learn from Rotterdam's innovative Reyeroord+ movement? (In Dutch).

Digital walk through Reyeroord city lab (in Dutch).

The arts, culture, heritage and dealing with climate threats in the Dutch Caribbean[5]

/ Key words: climate disasters, the arts and culture, resilience, historical identity, participatory approach

Climate change is leading to more extreme weather and increasing natural disasters such as floods or hurricanes. These climate disasters have a major impact on communities and their heritage. At the same time, however, heritage and the arts can provide comfort in times of crisis and increase people's resilience and strength. Culture can also be a support in climate adaptation. Traditional knowledge and practices can help communities adapt to climate threats. Moreover, artistic expressions such as theatre, music or storytelling play a role in people's perception of climate change. The stimulation of imagination helps make the climate issue understandable and tangible, which results in greater support for action.
Culture is a means of imparting knowledge about climate change, encouraging social adaptation after climate threats and strengthening the resilience of communities. This is further explained in the research project Island(er)s at the Helm, based on examples from the Dutch Caribbean.

[5] *For the description of this best practice, we spoke with Francio Guadeloupe, chair of the Island(er)s at the Helm research project, cultural and social anthropologist and development sociologist, University of Amsterdam and the Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies (KITLV).*

Resilience after climate disasters

Francio Guadeloupe, chair of the Island(er)s at the Helm project, was president of the University of St. Martin (USM) when Hurricane Irma swept across the bi-national island of Sint Maarten and Saint Martin in 2017, leaving a trail of destruction in its wake. From one day to the next, everything was different. Guadeloupe studied the residents' reactions to these huge changes and saw remarkable things. When faced with the discontinuity caused by a hurricane, which can easily be seen in the devastated surroundings, for example, people in fact look for continuity. Heritage and cultural expressions proved to offer that continuity.

First of all, there was the continuity of what is called the 'soundscape', the perception of sound that evokes a sense of recognition, traditions and the surroundings. Radio stations on the island were important in continuing this familiar soundscape after the disaster. They played the same kind of music that could be heard on the radio in the days right before the arrival of the hurricane, such as hip-hop, bachata, soca, calypso. Radio thus played a major role in evoking a sense of continuity. It sent a message that, despite the devastation, people had survived and life went on.
Food, a central element in the heritage and culture of communities, also provided comfort after the disaster. But how can food, which is strongly determined by culture, bring people together in a multi-ethnic society like Sint Maarten? Guadeloupe discovered that the connecting factor was the island's Chinese restaurants. These are places that all of the communities on the island frequent. Chinese food can be seen as something that has been embraced by each culture and serves as a connection between the different ethnic, religious and racial communities.

The Chinese restaurants accordingly functioned as places where people from different backgrounds came together and ate together after the hurricane. Moreover, the restaurants also became places for people to talk about the effects of the disaster and collectively assimilate their loss and grief. Guadeloupe concludes that Chinese restaurants are vitally important for community spirit, solidarity, participation and resilience in the Dutch Caribbean.

Culture offers consolation and resilience. This was experienced around the world after the outbreak of the Covid19 pandemic. On the Caribbean islands, too, many art projects sprang up after Hurricane Irma, enabling people to seek each other out and

express their feelings. Various NGOs and organisations funded free courses for residents. Children took dance and gymnastics classes and expressed their experiences, for instance by painting pictures.

Climate awareness

The arts also help raise awareness of a society's history and identity. In the Dutch Caribbean, the arts helped people become aware of climate solutions that traditionally had been available on the islands and embrace them as valuable again. Historic architectural and construction techniques for ho buildings were typically more hurricane- and climate-resistant, while modern construction techniques have paid considerably less attention to the specific climate and weather conditions on the islands. The arts and the sharing of stories can help people have a better understanding of how their ancestors dealt with the environment and their special techniques and customs for doing so. This strengthens the residents' historical identity, making them have a greater appreciation of traditional climate solutions and more likely to apply them.
The arts also lead to better communication about climate change and more participation by citizens. Rather than engaging citizens in discussions about climate problems, musicologist and researcher Charissa Granger stages art performances with them. This creates a common understanding among the participants about the issues at hand. When people make art together, they can pass on knowledge that is embedded in traditions and customs.

Participation in Spaceless Gardens

In order to become more adaptable and resilient to climate threats such as hurricanes, the islands need to become more self-sufficient in the area of food production. A community garden project called 'Spaceless Gardens' has been established on Sint Maarten. Agriculturalist and publicist Denicio Wyatte is the driving force behind the project, which aims to involve residents in cultivating the land and producing and harvesting traditional crops. By working together, people share knowledge about growing fruits and vegetables that has long existed on the island (and is in danger of being forgotten). Moreover, the gardens provide opportunities for discussing social cohesion in the community. The Agri\Cultural Training Program teaches residents how to grow fruit and vegetables in their own gardens. They learn how to start a small business that can earn them a living. They also learn how to promote a healthy way of eating.

According to Wyatte, what is needed on the islands is a change of mindset about the agricultural sector. Farming has been ignored for a long time, and as a result the islands have become dependent on imported food. Along the way, traditional knowledge of the land, indigenous crops, and special farming techniques have partly been lost. The recovery of this knowledge will enable current and future generations to use it again.

Part of such knowledge is an awareness of the importance of a commons: all members of the community can use this communal (agricultural) land and its resources. Particularly in times of natural disaster, when private property can be destroyed, the existence of a commons is essential. On the mountainous island of Sint Maarten, for example, fruit trees were traditionally grown on the mountainsides, which no one owns. In the past, residents could turn to the fruit when hurricanes and heavy rainfall flooded the lower-lying areas and destroyed crops. This custom contributes to the imperviousness and resilience of communities and therefore is still relevant.

Multi-ethnic and participatory approach

The Island(er)s at the Helm research programme offers a local perspective on the cultural heritage of the six islands that constitute the Dutch Caribbean: Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten (countries in the Kingdom of the Netherlands) and Bonaire, Sint Eustatius, and Saba (special municipalities of the Netherlands). The programme's point of departure is that culture, language and population are very diverse in the Kingdom. This is strikingly demonstrated in a work of art by Aruban artist Vanessa Paulina, which shows different ethnic groups coming together and flowing into one another. This heterogeneous perspective can lead to culturally-based solutions for climate adaptation, building as it does on local traditional knowledge.

Island(er)s at the Helm takes a participatory approach, with researchers actively involving local residents and organisations. The idea of the researcher being the only expert is outdated: participation brings in local knowledge and expertise that is valuable for coming up with climate solutions. In the Dutch Caribbean, according to Guadeloupe, this form of co-creation is also called 'jollification', the jolliness of working together.

Figure 3. Mi Anker (2008), a work by Aruban artist Vanessa Paulina, is a composite of different ethnic backgrounds that flow into one another. ***Photo****: Vanessa Paulina.*

Further reading

Article on the website of KITLV/Royal Netherlands Institute of Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies

Co-creating sustainable and inclusive solutions for social adaptation to climate challenges in the (Dutch) Caribbean.

Website with information about Spaceless Gardens

News Article

Conclusion

How do heritage and culture contribute to citizen engagement with the climate challenge? The best practices described above reveal a number of surprising roles and effects.

The example of the Dutch Caribbean shows how heritage and culture help to increase **awareness and a willingness to take action** among residents. Cultural expressions such as art, theatre and music are powerful means of **communicating**. They make the climate issue tangible and create a sense of urgency. What's more, they help make citizens aware of their personal role in the transformation that is needed for climate adaptation and stimulate behavioural change. Culture also contributes to the **resilience of citizens**, particularly after natural disasters such as hurricanes, and can promote **collective recovery**. This culture-based approach is a way to **pass on local historical knowledge and traditions** and integrate them into approaches to climate action.

The Nieuw Drassig Land case demonstrates how the cultural-historical logic of an area provides the foundation for a local response to national and regional climate challenges. Culture and heritage help in creating **locally tailored solutions** for climate actions that **citizens care about** – actions that are compatible with an area's social structures and (historic) landscape, so that **citizens have more of a sense of ownership** and become more involved.

Finally, Lab Reyeroord+ is an example of how **local policy is made in co-creation with residents nowadays.** And how **creative design and the creative industry** contribute to this. In many neighbourhoods and cities, it has long ceased to be the case that citizens stand on the sidelines whilst the government designs their everyday surroundings. Co-creation helps provide different perspectives and brings together important knowledge and experiences that are present within a society. This leads to policies with fewer blind spots. Creative design is increasingly being used to facilitate the process of co-creation between citizens, businesses, organisations and governments. The power of design exemplified by creative and spatial designers encourages **citizen participation and the democratisation of climate action.**

With these descriptions of Nijbroek, Reyeroord and the Caribbean islands, the Netherlands Commission for Unesco aims to share best practices that are inspiring. In doing so, it wants to call attention to giving heritage and culture a stronger role in the approach to climate adaptation and involving citizens in this process. The Commission is convinced of the importance of this heritage-inclusive and culture-based approach to local climate adaptation, in which the participation of residents, organisations and businesses is indispensable.

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