Agenda 2026

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Study on the Future of the Dutch Museum Sector

NEDERLANDSE Museumvereniging

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Foreword

"Prediction is very difficult, especially about the future." Niels Bohr

Museums deal with the past, but are they in control of their own future? In the two centuries since the emergence of museums, responsibility for them has gradually passed from well-to-do citizens to the government. For the past two decades, the government has been taking small steps to return that responsibility to museums themselves. Now more than ever before, as they gradually start to develop independence and some have to survive without government subsidies, museums must consider what the future has in store.

Society is undergoing extensive changes and museums constantly ask what these changes mean for them. The rise of the internet, geopolitical shifts, breaks in ecological trends or demographic facts - all these global developments and more have a direct or indirect impact on all aspects of what museums do. The changes that the world is undergoing will affect each museum differently. This means that Agenda 2026 will not apply to every museum in equal measure. This document highlights the most important developments that the museum sector as a whole is highly likely to face. In addition, it assesses the potential significance of these developments for the sector and explains how they will set the agenda of the Netherlands Museums Association between now and 2026, when the association will mark its centenary.

Agenda 2026 is an exercise in reflection, a sharing of collective wisdom and an outline of what can be seen approaching from afar. It is also an invitation to join the debate, particularly about the potential ramifications and the conclusions that can be drawn.

This document has been produced with the co-operation of a variety of people and organisations, and we would like to thank them all for their contributions. Without them, we would not have been able to arrive at this view of the collective future of the museum sector.

So bring on the future, we will be ready!

Siebe Weide, Max Meijer and Marieke Krabshuis
September 2010

Introduction

Agenda 2026 is an exercise in reflection on the future of the museum sector. The following steps were taken to produce the document.

First of all, desk research was conducted to identify developments and trends. Those initial findings were then subjected to further refinement. Four relevant processes that influence each other yet are autonomous (demo-graphics, ecology, geopolitics, technology) were set off against four social domains in the Netherlands that are relevant to the museum sector: society, economy, spatial planning and politics. The trends that emerged were then evaluated during brainstorming sessions.

During these brainstorming sessions, representatives from the museum sector and related social fields addressed these trends in greater detail based on a number of questions. Are the trends recognised? How relevant are these trends considered to be to the future of the museum sector, and how predictably high or low are they considered to be? The sessions resulted in an initial classification of the trends based on relevance and predictability (see fig. 1).

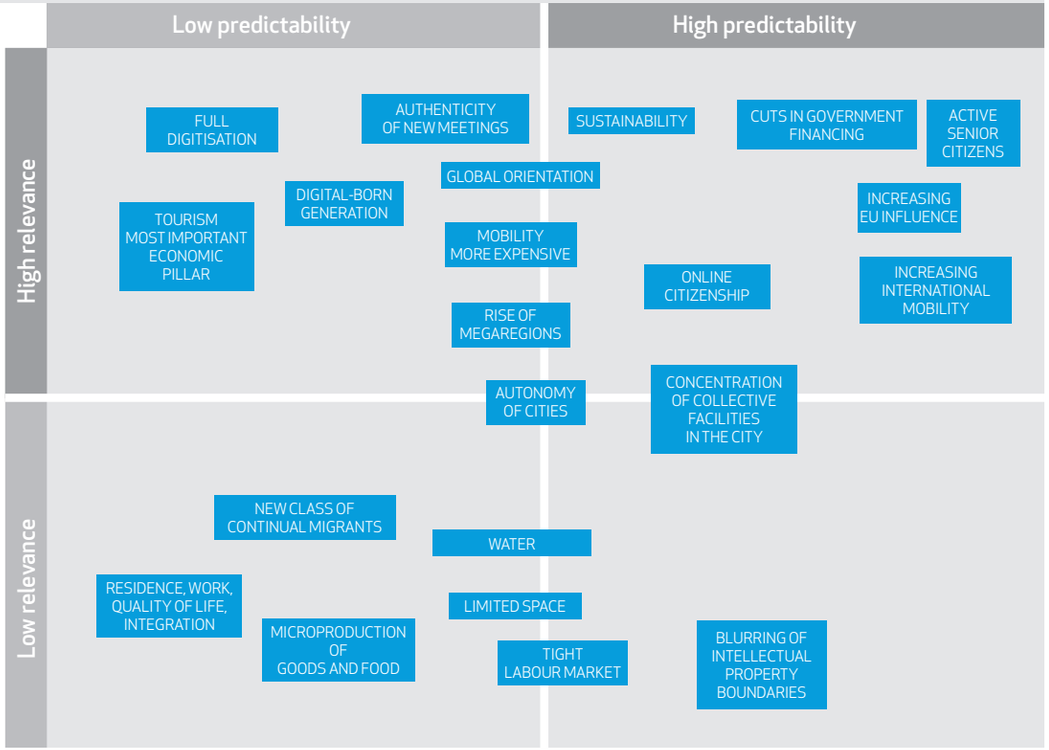


Fig. 1 Trends according to predictability and relevance, version 1

The trends on this graph are divided into four categories. Each category requires a different approach:

1) Trends with high predictability and high relevance approach ▸ initiate
2) Trends with low predictability and high relevance approach ▸ actively monitor
3) Trends with high predictability and low relevance approach ▸ passively monitor
4) Trends with low predictability and low relevance approach ▸ ignore

In accordance with this approach, only the trends with a high degree of relevance are included in the process from this point onwards. These trends were subsequently grouped as there was a great deal of overlap. They were then handed over to experts (trade specialists, academics, R&D specialists). This resulted in some of the trends being allocated a new position in the graph. Some trends proved to be declining in predictability as they developed. Trends were also moved on the relevance axis as they proved to be relevant at the macro level but much less relevant at the meso level. These adjustments resulted in the adjacent graph.

This shows that the six trends central to Agenda 2026 are:

1. Retirement of baby boomers
2. Growth of international cultural tourism
3. Cuts in subsidies
4. Development of the Randstad* metropolitan area
5. Digitised society
6. Greater European influence

* Randstad is an area that includes four major cities: Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht and The Hague.

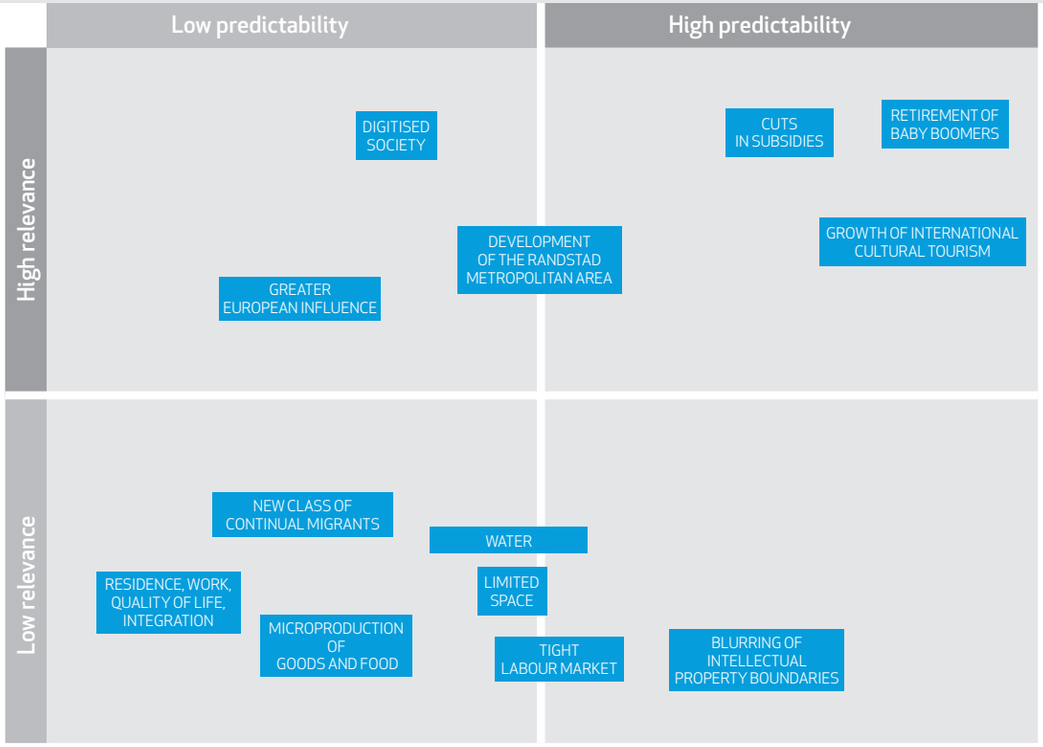


Fig. 2 Trends according to predictability and relevance, version 2

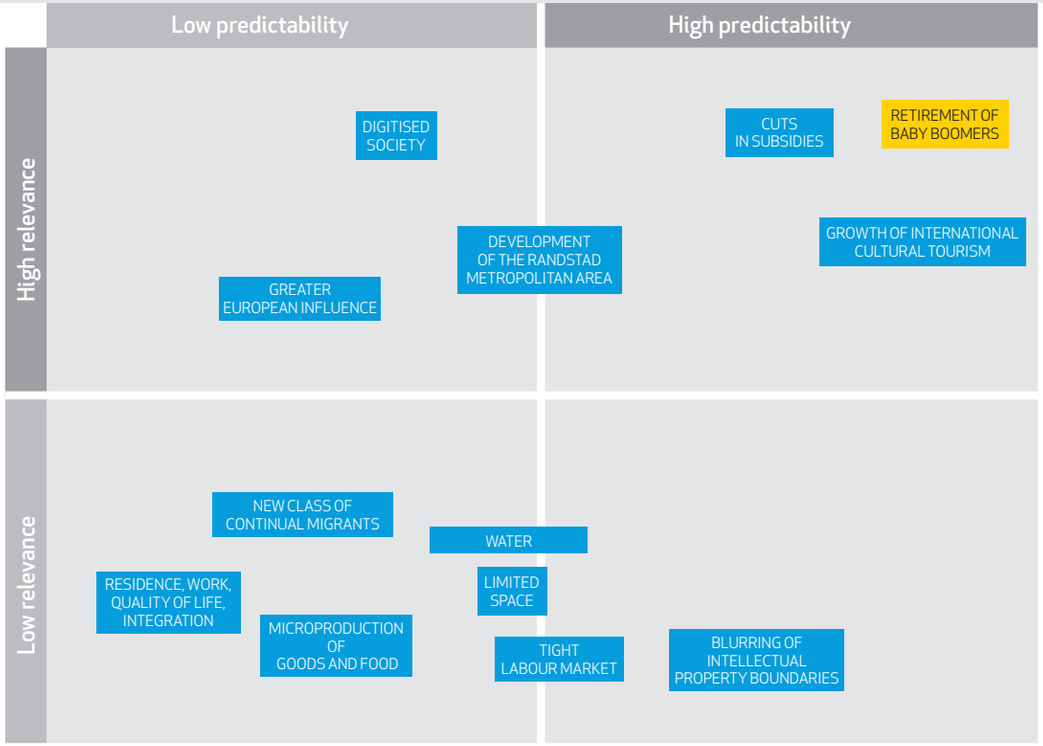
These trends are discussed in the chapters of the same title. A description and explanation are given for each trend. Each chapter will then address the position of the trend within the overall picture. Every trend description will be concluded with the possible consequences for museums. Chapter 7 describes the main conclusions.

1. Retirement of baby boomers

Trend

In 2026, the population of the Netherlands will be 17.3 million, 0.7 million more than in 2010. Although population growth will be slowing, the population will have changed significantly: by 2026, the population will have significantly aged. In 2010, 15% of the population was 65 years of age or older. By 2026, this figure will be nearly 22%. The large group of baby boomers who will retire between 2010 and 2030 is generally healthy, has a high life expectancy, is relatively well-educated and well-off and will remain active until a very advanced age. The age group just below the baby boomers will retire later, at an age of between 65 and 70. The flip-side of the increased life expectancy is an increase in the number of care recipients who make use of a differentiated care channel from informal care to institutionalised care.

Recreation, extended learning and attractive ways to occupy time are of great importance to the baby-boomer generation. As a result, the baby-boomer generation will be the most important market segment for service providers in 2026.



Position

Population aging plays the lead role in all relevant trends. All accepted sources assume an increase in average life expectancy, no increase in migration, and a declining birth rate. Via both empirical evidence and models, increased population aging in the Netherlands (and neighbouring countries) has been clearly established as fact. This offers significant and promising prospects for the museum sector.

Effects

However, it cannot be assumed that this target group will naturally gravitate towards museums. Their tastes and preferences make them a discerning target audience, and the leisure market is becoming increasingly multifaceted. As a result of this, it is far from guaranteed that visits to museums will be included on this groups to-do list. The market is increasingly becoming a displacement market, in which museums are constantly having to defend their competitive position in relation to other providers of information, knowledge, experiences and relaxation. An attractive range of exhibits is equally as important as optimal facilities. Accessibility, parking facilities and the museum's bar, restaurant and shop are just as important to the positioning of the museum as the exhibitions, presentations and collections.

A growing target group with a large amount of time, money and interest in cultural and museological activities will generate a great degree of potential for the museum sector. Small, medium and large museums will all benefit from this trend.

In addition to the greater visitor potential, the baby-boomer target group also offers a potentially larger group of museum supporters by way of volunteers, museum friends or donors of money or relevant objects. All museums can benefit from reinforcement and professionalisation of museum-friend policy (relationship marketing). Recruitment of volunteers and/or supporters seems to be primarily beneficial to museums with specific content (special-interest/themed museums) or regional bonds, i.e. small and medium-sized museums.

The effects on collection policy are more difficult to predict. A proportion of the museum exhibits relate to eras that the baby-boomer generation experienced either first-hand or via their parents. Examples of such historical topics include the Second World War, the end of the colonial age, the rise of the welfare state, technological development, automation and mobility, depillarisation and secularisation. This generation spans the divide between living memory and history. They are also the last generation of people who both possess such items and can give first-hand accounts of their usage, making them interesting suppliers of wisdom and objects. This may influence collection policy and help to rekindle interest in these 20th-century objects (capitalising on the nostalgia of the baby boomers).

However, the development of collections targeting the baby boomers may have drawbacks for museums and heritage centres. For example, it can result in excessively one-sided marketing and product development, which in turn can lead to a disproportionately large number of visitors from that particular target group. This can affect the image of the museum and reinforce the belief that museums are for older people. This can discourage the middle age group (35-65 years) from visiting museums and completely alienate the younger generation (35 and under). It is therefore important to invest in the younger target group and the visitors who will follow the baby boomers.

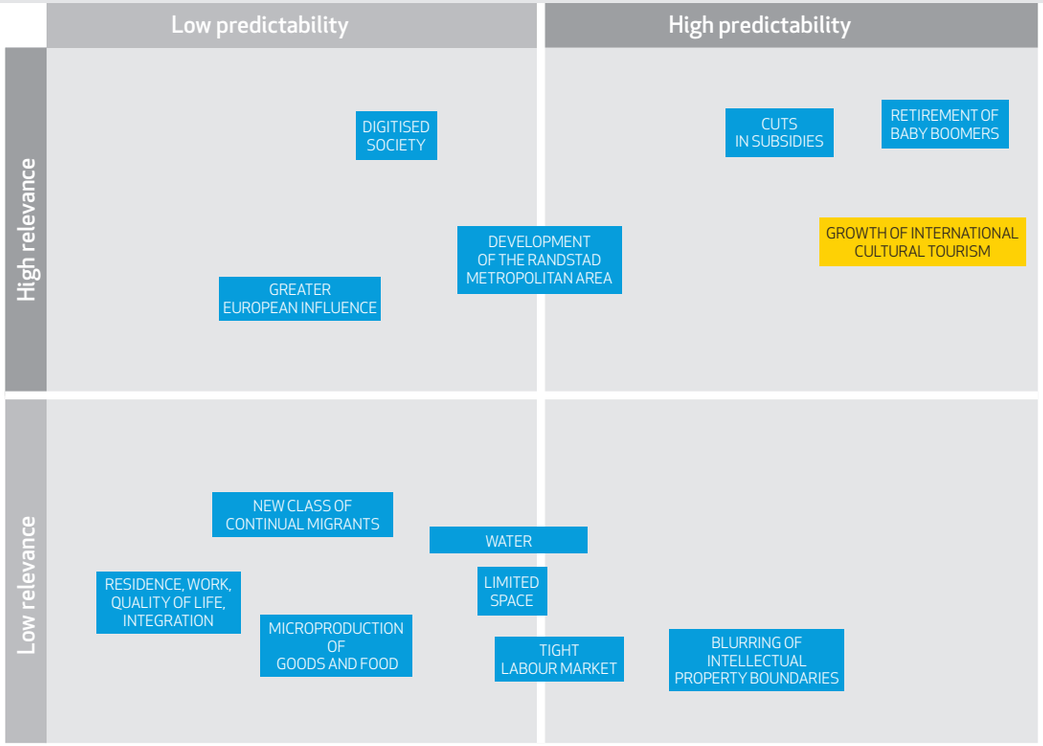
Another possible downside is that museums are beginning to resemble each other more and more with regard to both their content and the services provided. Museums must avoid going the same way as European shopping areas, with more or less the same shops and the same products on offer wherever you go. This makes the cities less unique and results in uniformity and monotony.

2. Growth of international cultural tourism

Trend

In 2009, a total of 10 million tourists visited the Netherlands. By 2020, this figure will be in excess of 14 million. The number of incoming European tourists will have risen from 8.1 million in 2009 to 11.4 million in 2020. A significant proportion of this growth will arise from the increased global population aging and the corresponding change in consumption patterns. The fastest growing group of incoming non-European tourists consists of Asian tourists. This group, despite the often-high expectations in connection with the Chinese, who are particularly fond of travelling, accounts for a relatively modest 8%.

Although a growth of 4 million tourists may seem quite modest, it can lead to substantial growth in the number of museum visits per year. After all, culture is a key factor in attracting tourists to the Netherlands. The Netherlands possesses a wide range of high-quality cultural and museological attractions, offering a great deal of diversity within a small area. In 2009, 41% of foreign tourists visited a museum during their stay and 50% visited a landmark and/or a historical site. 11% of visitors indicated that these cultural activities were the main reason for them visiting the Netherlands.



Position

The general assumption is that the number of incoming tourists is set to increase. The predictability in the mid-to-long-term is also high. The relevance seems to be the highest for the major museums in the Randstad area. As a result, the growth of international tourism is significantly lower on the relevance axis than factors such as retirement of the baby boomers and fewer subsidies.

Effects

In the product-market combinations developed by the tourism industry and the NBTC (Netherlands Board of Tourism & Conventions), culture and heritage are important factors in positioning and profiling our country, The flagship museums in the Randstad megaregion benefit the most from the growing number of incoming tourists. Amsterdam is a major tourist destination for both European and international tourists. Tourists use Amsterdam as a base of operations, with many starting or finishing their visit there. Outside Amsterdam and the Randstad, this development will be most beneficial to museums in border regions and museums whose image and exhibits are particularly specific to or representative of the Netherlands. Other museums will not benefit significantly from this trend as they are much less able to make use of the Randstad regions gravitas.

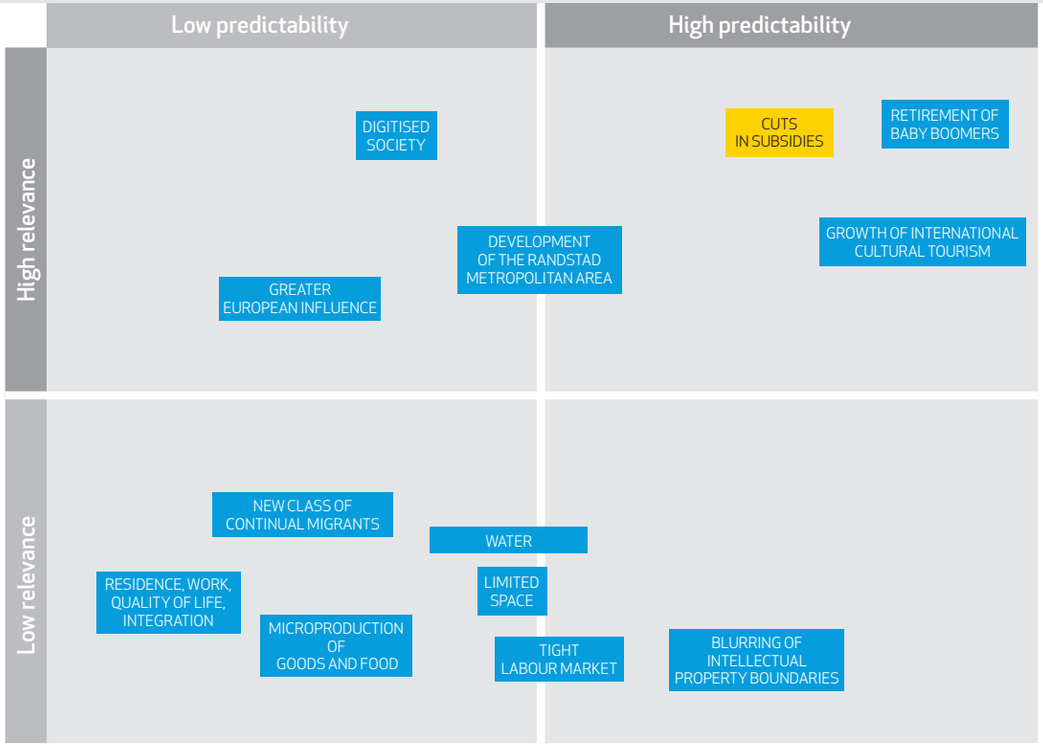
As part of local and regional cultural-historic chains, small and medium-sized museums in the border regions will probably benefit from the baby boomers from neighbouring countries. Members of this target group frequently take short city trips and mini-breaks. A proportion of these tourists are less interested in visiting tourist areas that they have already visited during previous visits, and are looking for more appealing, specific and in-depth experiences in order to really get a taste for the particular region they are visiting.

3. Cuts in subsidies

Trend

The national debt caused by the credit crunch and the budget deficit caused by the economic crisis have compelled the government to make unprecedented structural cuts in expenditure. It is expected that these cuts, which will be implemented between now and 2015, will be felt at all levels of government, including the budgets of central, provincial and municipal government.

The pressure on the government to make cuts will continue to increase even after 2015. This will be due to the need for disciplined budgeting in order to facilitate the further economic integration of the Eurozone. The aging population will also be a major factor, because the growth in the number of senior citizens and rising life expectancy will place major demands on the care sector. At the same time, investment in education must continue in order to maintain the position of the Netherlands on the world stage. These payments cannot be financed by extra taxation. Due to pressure on wages and increased pension demands resulting from population aging and the shrinking and aging labour market, economic growth is currently in a fragile state. In a nutshell, governments will have to be extremely stringent and they will be increasingly obliged to demonstrate the legitimacy of their financial transactions.



There is no reason to believe that the culture or heritage sectors will be spared from these cuts. A recent survey showed that the average inhabitant of the Netherlands believes that cuts could be made in the area of culture and the arts. Museums can choose to defend against cuts by emphasising the value of museums to the economy (via tourism) and education. Furthermore, museums may increasingly play a role in the care sector. For example, museums can serve as a venue for day trips. However, on the other hand, the potential extra earnings that population aging generates for the museum sector can be used as an argument for increasing cuts.

Position

The governments austerity measures will have a major effect on the sector and they are therefore high in relevance. Predictability in the short to mid-term is high, although there is uncertainty in the long-term. The course of this trend is dependent on the state of the economy, which makes it less predictable than the respective demographic and the globally prominent retirement of baby boomers and growth of international culture-tourism trends. The political climate, which by definition is temporary, is of equal importance to the predictability of this trend.

Effects

The pressure on state finances may well provoke discussion of the government's role regarding museums. A variety of outcomes are possible:

1) When cuts need to be made, then the government often uses decentralisation. Central government delegates tasks to provinces or municipalities, usually following efficiency measures. The consequence to the museum sector is that government subsidies and national art collections will become decentralised. Task switching is also a possibility. In such cases, national museums and national art collections become the responsibility of provinces/municipalities and vice versa.
2) In extreme circumstances, the government may even completely withdraw support for museums and collections, leaving the museums with full responsibility for their collections, buildings and capital, as is the case in the United States of America.
3) Finally, the government may choose to partially fund museums and also to lower income, wealth and corporation tax in order to enable greater contributions to museums from individuals and businesses.

If this trend continues, it will result in permanent economising of the museum sector, with possible contraction as a consequence. This can affect the size, scale and number of museums. Institutions that are best able to justify their right to exist and have greater public support will have the best chance of surviving government cuts. This will primarily include the large, established museums with a strong brand and market position, and smaller museums with strong basis of support who can fall back on private donations and volunteers. We expect the broad, medium-sized museums and regional museums to bear the largest brunt of the reduction in subsidies. They often have a relatively high cost structure, a broad yet unspecific profile and a single main subsidiser. In order to compensate for the reduced government funding, museums will have to maximise their income.

Whatever happens, the collection policy will be more carefully thought out, giving attention to collections with a national context. The need to harmonise acquisition and possible relocations of collections/parts of collections with the Collection Netherlands (Netherlands Cultural Heritage Agency) goes without saying. Alternative sources of financing and alternative acquisition constructions (shared ownership, buying out of successions duties, Public-Private Cooperation constructions etc.) will increase in importance, as will new income-generating concepts, such as rental/sale of parts of collections, profitable services and knowledge marketing. Larger institutions or clusters of institutions can offer specialist knowledge and specific back-office tasks to third parties (museums and other parties), such as collection management and conservation.

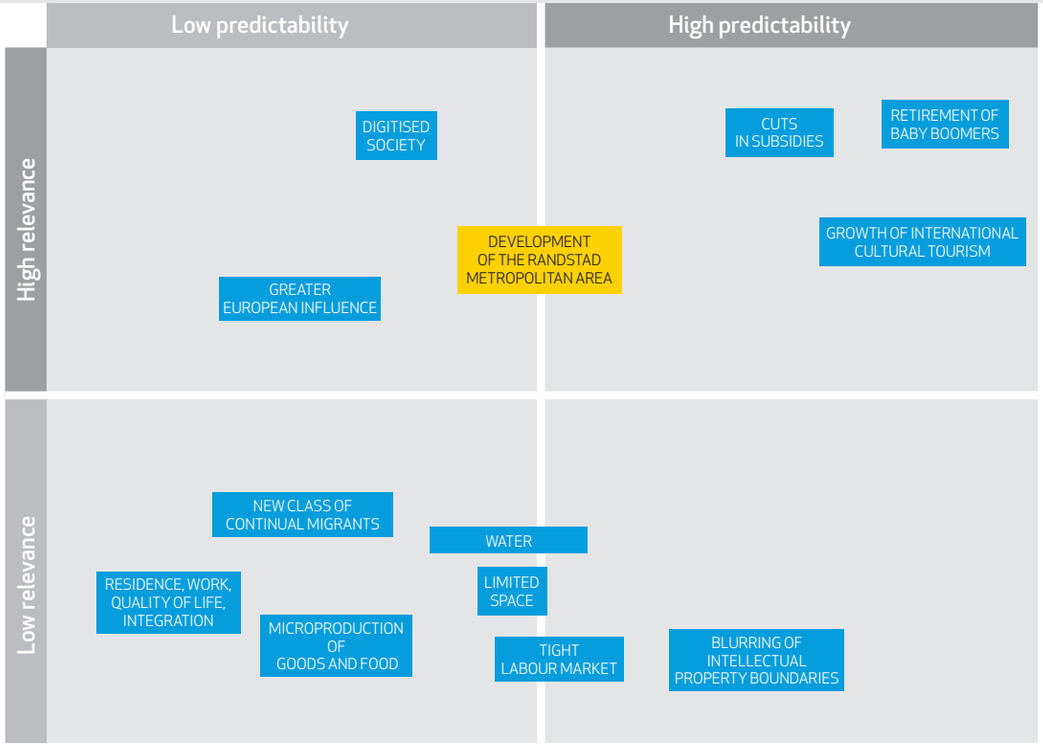
4. Development of the Randstad metropolitan area

Trend

The Randstad region will continue to grow in the coming decades, while rural areas will shrink. By 2025, there will be eight million households in the Netherlands, 800,000 more than at the start of 2007. The number of households will undergo particularly significant growth in the north-east of the Randstad area. 240,000 extra households will be created in Almere, the Greater Amsterdam region and the province of Utrecht. The south-west of the Randstad will develop less rapidly. The regions of Groot-Rijnmond and the agglomeration of The Hague will both grow by around 40,000 households. Noord-Brabant and Gelderland will also experience growth, but the areas of East Groningen and South Limburg will shrink.

In 2026, will the Randstad be one unbroken metropolitan area with a single consolidated and sophisticated infrastructure, or will it have broken up into a North Wing and a South Wing? Whatever happens, there will probably be some type of administrative integration that will manage the growing demand for space and boost the economic position of the region in relation to other increasingly competitive European megaregions.

The situation in the Randstad also applies to a lesser extent in other urban agglomerations such as Brabantstad, Arnhem-Nijmegen, Parkstad Limburg and Netwerkstad Twente.



Position

The position of the development with regard to relevance and predictability is somewhat diffused. It is likely that the Randstad area will develop in line with the trend described earlier and that this will have an effect on the cultural and museological sector. However, what these effects will be is more difficult to predict.

Effects

The development of the Randstad metropolitan area has two contradictory effects on museums in this region. One effect is that due to the importance of cultural facilities in ensuring a pleasant living environment, the growth of the region will increase the number of such facilities. Furthermore, in the competitive struggle against other European regions, high-quality cultural facilities serve as a significant image-booster. It reinforces the business-development climate and attracts foreign tourists. For this reason, art and culture are included in the Randstad Urgent programme, which is being carried out by the government and the four major Dutch cities (Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Utrecht, The Hague).

The other effect is that administrative integration can result in more critical and rational assessment of the cultural inventory, i.e. what can be joined together, what can be cut back on, what will contribute most to the success of this region etc. If the identity of the city is slowly becoming superseded by the identity of the region, would it better to display the local history by means of several city museums or a single regional museum? The new Ruhr Museum in Essen is an example of this development. Although it will not particularly escalate in the period up to 2026, this discussion may come up and influence policy-making decisions.

In shrinking regions, cultural facilities may decline. Independent cultural institutions will close down if the population of the area declines beneath a critical minimum value. It is possible that as a result of mergers, clusters of cultural institutions will arise. This may result in new platforms for crossovers between performing arts, sculpture, heritage, education and provision of information.

In the shrinking areas, this may provoke a counter-movement in which local communities come together to protect local or regional cultural heritage. It is possible that this counter-movement will result in an increase in the growth and appreciation of specific local and regional quality. Positioning based on regional nature and culture can reinforce an area's reputation as a destination for day trips and short domestic holidays. In order to reinforce the position of regional museums, the museums themselves can develop initiatives aimed at generating more critical mass. Examples of such initiatives include collaborative ventures and mergers.

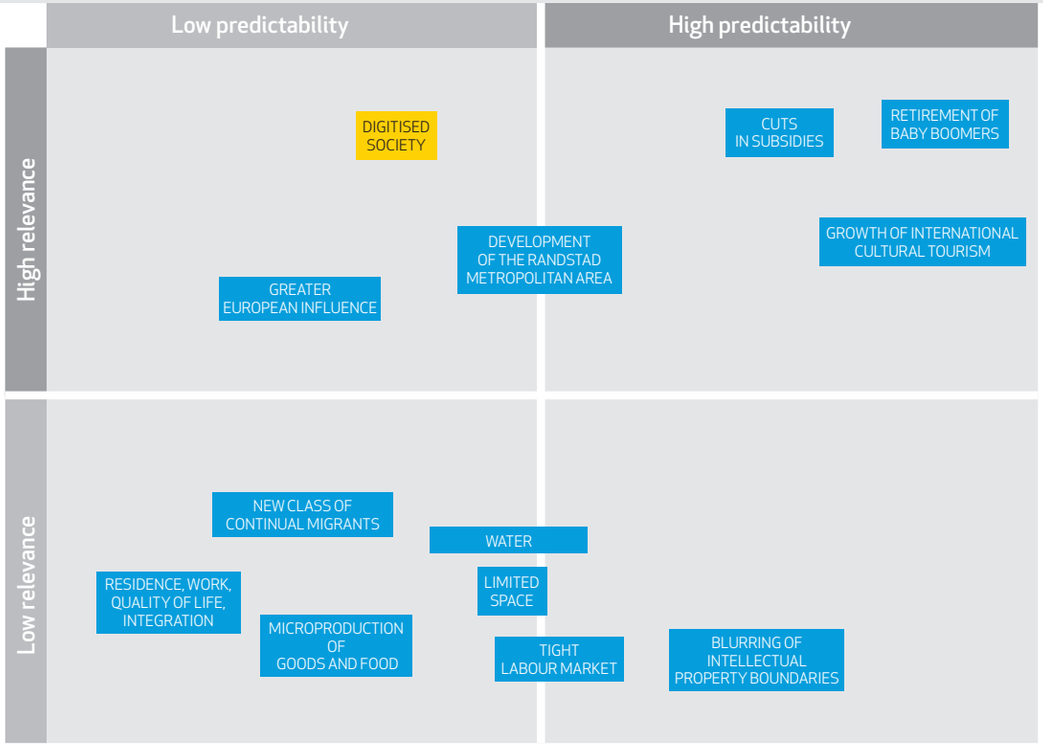
The effects on museums in the Randstad are clearer than for museums outside this region. A limited number of museums within the Randstad will achieve or consolidate their status as an international flagship museum. A smaller number of museums will even be recognised as part of the International Super League of Museums. These museums will attract a large proportion of the total visitor numbers and income from subsidies and sponsorships. In short, strengthening of the Randstad results in strengthening of the major museums in the Randstad. The effect on medium-sized and small museums is less clear. The effects on museums outside the Randstad area is uncertain. Here too, the best survival chances are enjoyed by special-interest museums, museums with specific content, themes or media strategies who position themselves clearly and conspicuously, or museums that can fall back on the support of their local community.

5. Digitised society

Trend

By 2026, we will be living in a digital society. Knowledge development, information storage, education and entertainment will be fully digitised and integrated. The users and managers of knowledge and information will make extremely flexible use of these new methods: formal and informal systems/platforms will reinforce each other and cross-media applications will be widely available. The blurring of the classic divide between knowledge managers and knowledge users (which the 2.0 mindset has already somewhat dispelled) will result in new forms of co-makership. Users of new media are not bound by time or location, and the divide between the real world and the virtual world will have been greatly blurred by developments such as augmented reality. The worldwide availability and accessibility of the internet will offer practically unlimited opportunities to share knowledge and content. This will result in new virtual productions and exhibitions with new forms of ownership, copyright, authenticity, public outreach and income.

Up to now, new media has played more of a supporting role (as representatives of and pointers towards the real thing). In the future, new media will increasingly take over the role of old media, although the old guard will not be completely pushed off the stage.



To future, digital-born generations, the almost completely digitised knowledge and information sector will be completely natural. Anybody who wants to survive in this environment will have to position him/herself digitally and virtually. Traceability and recognisability will be key to positioning.

Position

It is evident that this trend will be of great relevance to the museological sector. Traditional museums almost perfectly represent the concept of old media. The museum's building renders it location-bound and the collections contain authentic and unique exhibits. This makes museums almost the polar opposite of new media, in which location and authenticity do not play a part. Due to the rapid developments in new media, which directly affect the value of museums, processes and products, digitisation rates highly on the relevance axis. However, the large degree of uncertainty regarding the extent to which and the direction in which new media will develop, in addition to whether or not they will supplant old media, means that digitisation has a relatively low predictability score.

Effects

In addition to their role as real-time institutions, museums will also be able to profile themselves in the digital domain with the same exhibits but a new, interactive product range. This means that employees and resources that are now primarily used for product development in time and location-bound presentations/productions will have to be spread across new product combinations. When calculating the effectiveness and efficiency of the deployment of employees and resources, much more attention will be given to the reach and the effect of new media. This implies that new performance agreements and indicators will have to be developed.

The digitisation and connection of the collections will require advanced standardisation of systems. The market-dependence of external facilitators will therefore be further increased.

The new digital media create a permanent demand for content. Museums and other heritage institutions manage content that will be intriguing to the younger generations, such as analogue, authentic and unique collections. By 2026, all of the collections of the large and medium-sized museums will have been digitised and made available via the internet.

Digitisation and new media will increasingly dominate the agendas of small, medium-sized and large museums. The flexibility described earlier enables the systems and hardware to be deployed at all levels. The new opportunities result in new processes that must be developed and implemented in museological organisations. Expertise, competencies, systems and resources will be needed to do this. This will require each institution to be of a certain scale. Smaller institutions will lack the competencies and financial resources to continually innovate in this area, meaning that large and medium-sized museums will be the main beneficiaries of the digitisation drive.

Digital developments have come on in leaps and bounds over the past decade and look set to continue at the same pace in the future.

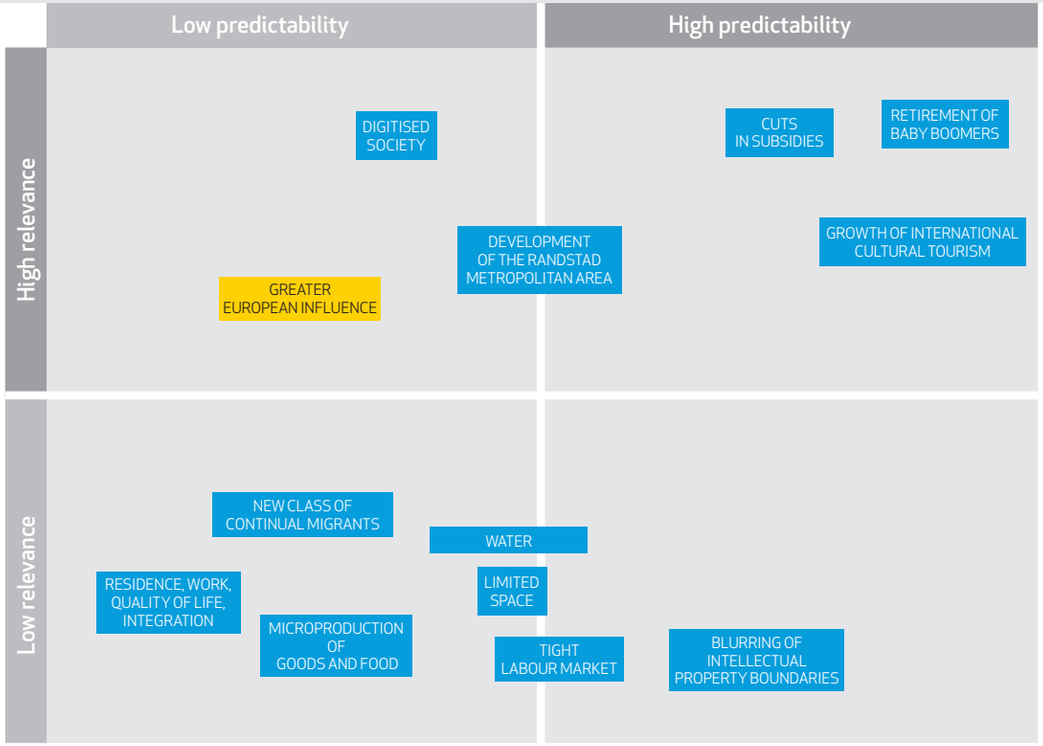
6. Greater European influence

Trend

Despite the fact that support for the European Union is declining in the Netherlands, and despite the recent financial turmoil in the Eurozone, it is a fact that the EU will play an increasingly major role in setting the agenda. For the time being, the number of regulations from Brussels will increase. This will by definition limit the policy-making freedom of member states in practically all policy domains. Currently procurement procedures and regulations are already determined by Brussels. No doubt, other areas will follow and be increasingly set at a European level in the future.

Although the EU traditionally focuses on economic matters, attention is also paid to culture and regional identity. However, the specific policy instrumentation is somewhat intentional and quite 'soft' for all but a few of these treaties. The EU wants to maintain and encourage diversity and help make all forms of cultural expression accessible to all. This objective is recorded in the Maastricht Treaty (1992).

In addition to subsidies for regional development, the EU also has a modest range of policy instruments in the field of culture and heritage. Objectives include presenting and protecting European cultural heritage, encouraging the international mobility of professionals in the cultural sector, promoting the international movement of works of art and cultural projects, and stimulating intercultural dialogue. In addition to this, the EU also runs the European Capital of Culture programme. Finally, the Malta treaty is of importance to archaeological museums.



Position

How the EU will develop over the next few decades is relatively unpredictable. For a long time, continuation of the current EU community seemed to be most likely. However, the recent crisis regarding the euro has forced further integration of economic politics, resulting in a reduction in the autonomy of member states. If federal forces within the EU bring about a change of course, then the direct influence of the EU will certainly increase. However, the degree to which this influence will increase is currently difficult to determine. For this reason, the issue of Greater European influence is lowest on the graph.

Effects

Although the Lisbon Strategy (2000) - which aimed to make Europe the most innovative knowledge-based economy in the world by 2010 - was unsuccessful, it was certainly not abandoned. As part of this plan, the EU sought to digitise cultural heritage in connection with the emphasis of Europe's rich cultural history as a unique selling point. Examples of such activities include the European database and the introduction of a European heritage standard. It is conceivable that this policy development will be continued within the next 15 years.

Depending on the direction in which the EU develops, we may see the development of supranational museums. However, this would be more feasible in a federal Europe than in the current community-based Europe. These museums would be large, newly developed museums with particularly international themes in the field of society, history, art and science, viewed from a European perspective.

A more psychological effect of the European integration is manifest by the previously mentioned cultural dimension of the European debate. In addition, maintenance and reinforcement of classical regional/national identities and heritage goes hand-in-hand with the creation of new forms of identity. Museums and other heritage institutions will play an important part in this debate.

7. The Dutch museum sector in 2026

In this chapter, the trends illustrated earlier will be tested with regard to their effect on the Dutch museum sector. The effect on the following six possible factors are investigated for small, medium-sized and large museums: number of museums, number of exhibitions, diversity of the exhibitions, budgets of the institutions, number of visitors and diversity/age of the visitors.

Large museums

The number of large museums will remain virtually unchanged. Although the economising government may try to cut the number of museums, the pulling power of the Randstad may well provide a reason to maintain the number of museums. A transfer of functions and tasks within/between the government and/or museums may lead to a more effective structure, but it is unlikely to have an effect on the number of museums. It is possible that new configurations of museums (possibly in combination with other heritage institutions) will be created in order to boost their position. This will involve medium-sized museums expanding to become large museums.

Income generation will become a more important priority in the running of museums in order to supplement shrinking government subsidies. The retirement of the baby boomers in our country and neighbouring countries will lead to an increased demand for exhibitions with a higher turnover ratio. This will require the museums to be more dynamic in their organisation and to ensure high mobility of collections. EU policy will facilitate this. It is possible that exhibitions and the larger European museums will start to resemble each other as they all seek to take advantage of the same growth market (senior cultural tourists). This may harm the diversity of the audience.

By means of far-reaching integration into the digital domain, museums can address other target groups, and in particular, the digital-born generation.

The increasing demand for justification of government support for museums will focus attention on specific programmes that support education, care and other social matters.

Medium-sized museums

The number of medium-sized museums is likely to decline. It is expected that the most dynamism will be evident in museums of this scale. The pressure on medium-sized museums to grow in order to participate in the growing domestic and international culture-tourism sector will result in a new wave of redevelopment and modernisation. Such developments are particularly expected in urban agglomerations such as the Randstad. The risk of uniformity remains, due to the focus on the baby-boomer generation. For these museums, investment in digitisation will be relatively expensive, which will make it more difficult for them to develop a solid, unique and recognisable position with regard to digital media, which in turn hampers their ability to reach the digital-born generations.

Not all medium-sized museums will be capable of taking this step forwards. As mentioned earlier, expansion by means of mergers may be an option to some of these museums. Others may wish to further specialise themselves or develop new specialisms. Reinforcement of the museum's connection to the city or region in which it is located is another effective and frequently used strategy. These museums can also gain a great deal of legitimacy by establishing education as a core activity. The more important the legitimacy issue becomes, the more medium-sized museums will be forced to make difficult decisions. It is therefore not unthinkable that a number of medium-sized museums will close.

Small-scale museums

The number of small-scale museums is likely to decline. This category of museums are facing a very tough time indeed. Only the strongest museums with distinctive profiles, products and a strong basis of support will survive. These museums are under pressure on all fronts. Although the retirement of the baby-boomer generation will benefit these museums with regard to the number of visitors, volunteers and museum friends, they are less likely to be capable of adapting to the developments in the museum sector and hence less able to keep the public satisfied. Due to limited resources, digitisation is not always an option for these museums. They are also less able to implement new technology.

Small-scale museums will have to choose whether to profile themselves as authentic, old-fashioned museums or as exciting contemporary museums. Any attempts to combine these two profiles are unlikely to succeed. Smaller museums must take full advantage of social networks and communities, establishing a clear profile that reinforces and fuels a feeling of collective ownership.

Sector (summary)

The overall situation in 2026 will be a sector with an expanded range of large, mainly Randstad-based museums with a much greater degree of relevance to the international positioning of the region, the country, and even Europe. On the other hand, the small-scale segment of the museum sector will have been trimmed down, and will consist exclusively of the stronger museums with either an authentic, old-fashioned profile or an exciting, contemporary profile.

However, the medium-sized museums will have undergone the most far-reaching development. In this segment, roles will have been transferred, mergers will have been conducted and a number of museums will have closed. This segment will decline in number, but increase in importance.

Colophon

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