INTERNSHIP REPORT

Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York
Press and Cultural Affairs

By

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PREFACE

From September 2017 until February 2018 the Consulate General of the Netherlands in New York allowed me the great opportunity to do an internship at their cultural department. As Junior Cultural Officer I got the opportunity to get a look behind the scenes of international cultural diplomacy.

During my three years as an American Studies bachelor students at the University of Groningen I gained insight in both the cultural and the political background of the United States. However, the question in which way my own government played a role in the cultural diversity of the United States remained undiscovered. I specifically planned a six month period in between my studies so I would have the opportunity to gain experience outside of my degree. I had been watching the website of the consulate for a long time to check if any internship vacancies were available. By applying for an internship in which I would promote the differences and similarities between both the United States and the Netherlands, I would be able to get a better understanding of both countries. The location of this internship was of interest of me as well. New York is a place where many aspects of American society meet, as well as an interesting case study concerning culture and history. Traces of its Dutch foundation are still noticeable on street corners and in everyday life.

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1. **THE ORGANIZATION**

The internship took place at the cultural department at the Consulate General of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in New York. To have a better understanding of the department and the consulate itself, it is essential to position the consulate and its task in the governmental structure of the Netherlands.

The consulate is part of the international diplomatic representation of the Netherlands abroad, executed by over 140 consulates and embassies worldwide. The primary and perhaps most well-known function of an embassy and consulate is aiding Dutch citizens abroad through assisting with travel documents, arrests and accidents. It also provides travel documents for foreigners interested in traveling to the Netherlands. Besides aiding Dutch citizens, consulates and embassies are part of the bilateral relations between the Netherlands and the host country. Certain countries, such as the United States, are significantly larger than other countries or have multiple cities or regions of interest. In that case, consulates operate under the authority of an embassy in a remote location. In the United States, the embassy is located in Washington D.C., and the consulates are located in Chicago, San Francisco, Miami and New York.

Bilateral relations include both economic and cultural partnership between countries. The consulate general in New York had a major focus on startups looking to expand to the United States. At the same time, the Foreign Investment Agency of the Netherlands found investment opportunities for American companies who are considering to expand their business to the United States. The department I was a part of, Press and Cultural Affairs (PCZ), focuses on the cultural relation between the United States and the Netherlands. Through Dutch Culture USA, PCZ promotes Dutch art and culture in the United States. Categories include visual arts, architecture and design, performing arts, film, literature, shared
cultural heritage and Dutch old masters. The focus areas and strategies are decided through international cultural policy, as it is drawn up by the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry of education, culture and science (OCW). International cultural policy focuses on the following objectives:

- helping leading Dutch institutions achieve international standards, by making considered choices within the basic cultural infrastructure;
- strengthening the international market position of Dutch artists and institutions;
- strengthening Dutch economic interests by emphasizing cultural, trade and economic ties;
- cultural diplomacy: using art and culture to benefit foreign relations.

The Netherlands focuses on certain priority countries. The United States is one of the major focus countries within international cultural policy. Especially in the field of creative industry and shared cultural heritage, the government is able to increase bilateral relations.

Within the consulate, Dutch Culture USA facilitates cultural partnerships and the exchange of knowledge in the fields of innovation and creativity, including educational and residency programs. Through online promotion an communication, Dutch Culture USA contributes to the visibility of Dutch artists amongst Americans. By maintaining a nationwide event calendar, Americans are always informed about a Dutch artist performing near them. This list is also used by the Dutch government to measure success in international cultural policy. At the same time, the consulate supports both established and up and coming artists who are performing in the United States. This support takes place through increasing the visibility of artists by promotion online and through local connection, but could also include support with small grants. The budgets are intended for activities initiated by American organizations in partnership with Dutch artists or institutions.
2. **INTERNSHIP DESCRIPTION**

As a Junior Cultural Officer I was responsible for a variety of tasks. Besides the tasks that were assigned to me as an intern of the cultural department, it was common to assist other departments where necessary. The following is a brief overview of the duties I had to perform.

1. *Monitoring Dutch cultural activity in the United States*

Other than various departments of the consulate who focused on the New York region, the cultural department focused on all of the United States. Once a week we would meet with our cultural team to discuss new projects and see which ones were of interest to our social media and funding possibilities. The cultural team was presided by Jan Kennis, cultural attaché to the Netherlands and head of the cultural department. Robert Kloos represented visual arts, architecture and design, Vera Kuipers was responsible for performing arts, film and literature and Tessa Dikker spoke for shared cultural heritage and Dutch old masters. With me was one other intern, Inge Gerrebrands. Throughout the week, the cultural officers would send us cultural activities that their contacts informed them of or that they had found themselves. Inge and I would compile this information in a list, in which we would fill out as many details about the activity as possible. Besides being a helpful oversight for the consulate, this list is also used by Dutch Culture, a strategic advice agency for international cultural cooperation supported by the Dutch government. Our list helps shape their insights in international cultural activities through a list called Buitengaats, which is included in the attachments.
2. *Visibility through website and social media*

As mentioned earlier, one of the most important tasks of the consulate is increasing the visibility of artists in the United States. Other than various departments of the consulate who focused on the New York region, the cultural department focuses on all of the United States. During our weekly meetings we would look at our cultural agenda, to see which projects were of extra importance for our social media. These projects included the ones we supported through grants, well known artists or returning artists whose project are aimed at building a durable relationship with partners in the United States. Our first task was writing a blog entry on our website, www.dutchcultureusa.com. This included contacting the artists involved to ask for more information or press releases concerning the event, as well as images or other visual material we could use to make the information on our website as comprehensive as possible. Usually we would aim to write at least 2 blog posts a day, which meant we had to plan when we would contact the artists or representatives. In order to do so, we maintained a social media calendar, in which we would plan which projects we would promote on which day. With every blog posts I had to create a corresponding posts for Facebook, Instagram and Twitter as well. As soon as the event came near, we would draw attention to our blog entry through more tweets and Facebook posts. However, not all projects received an entry on our website. In this case we would promote the events via twitter and Facebook separately. With over 7100 followers and almost 11.000 tweets since 2010, the Dutch Culture USA twitter account is a very active medium. Promotion would also include live tweeting when we would visit events ourselves. Besides maintaining our own Dutch Culture USA account, I was responsible for maintaining the cultural content of the general consulate Facebook as well. In a weekly meeting with the economic department, we would create a social media calendar for activities concerning the New York region.
3. Monitoring American Media for articles concerning Dutch Culture

By actively following American new papers and websites, I was tasked with finding articles about Dutch cultural activities. Through reading newspapers, activating Google alerts on specific keywords concerning Dutch culture and by receiving input by the cultural officers, I maintained a list of press articles. This list was useful for many different purposes. First, it gave us an insight into activities that were most interesting for the American press. This could include the most popular artist, project or cultural discipline as a whole. Second, the list served as an input for our social media calendar. For example, positive reviews by a prestigious newspaper such as the New York Times are a good promotion for Dutch culture. Third, these insights helped us measure the success of Dutch culture abroad. The direct and long term effects of funding for cultural activities is difficult to measure, since a specific output cannot be defined. However, positive press about Dutch artists helps to shape an image about the Netherlands abroad, which can be measured through the media. For this purpose, I was tasked to look at the press lists from 2014 until 2016 and create a press analysis. The results were very interesting, and showed an increase of articles concerning Dutch culture over the years. In 2016 alone, we found 1090 articles, of which 105 by the New York Times.

4. Supporting events

Perhaps the most interesting part of this internship was going out of the office and experiencing cultural activities in New York. After promoting and supporting the events, I would have all the knowledge and background information to look at an event differently. The consulate would also organize receptions after certain events, in order to network or incorporate events into a larger program. An example was a delegation from the city of the Hague, who went on a political and cultural mission to New York. With the group we attended performances of Nederlands Danstheater at the New York City Center, as well as a
cooperation between The Royal Conservatoire The Hague and Juilliard School of Music at the Lincoln Center. Other receptions included Toneelgroep Amsterdam at Brooklyn Academy of Music, and the European Literature Festival with Tommy Wieringa.

5. Specific projects

Besides the assignments Inge and I were both responsible for as interns, there were certain tasks I was responsible for by myself as a part of research projects. Besides the earlier mentioned press analysis, I looked into the departments funding and budget decisions over the past three years. Since there was a lack of oversight about specific projects, their costs and their results, the assignment was to create a more comprehensive list, compiled of data from memos per project. By looking into every project with more detail, I was able to learn more about the decision making process within the department. Since every project received a reasoning behind the funding, the criteria for grant recipients became more clear. After compiling all the information from the memos, I was able to see which discipline received the most funding, how much of the total projects costs are covered by the consulate on average and which region or city received the most amount of grants. This information is helpful for the consulate in future budget decisions and for evaluating the incorporation of international cultural policy over the last three years.

Besides the budget statistics, I also collected statistics from our social media platforms to include in evaluation reports for both the consulate and for the Hague. These statistics include the amount of posts, follower increase, popularity and content of posts and region of audience.
3. EVALUATION

1. Learning objectives

At the start of my internship I created the following learning objectives.

- Gain insight into international policy making

Through actively working every day with international cultural policy I gained insight in the process of international policy making. Especially my assignment to gather information concerning budget decisions forced me to understand the way international policy from the Hague influences the way the cultural department in New York makes it decisions. By attending weekly meetings with all of the consulate, I was able to learn from the work of the economic department and the Consul as well, which gave me a better understanding into the way the entire consulate functioned as an instrument towards better bilateral relations.

- Be able to provide content for social media targeted to an American audience

My daily activities consisted of writing posts towards an American audience. By assuming the average American has no background knowledge of the Netherlands, the posts required a broader explanation concerning history and background. Through the press analysis and social media statistics I was able to see which posts worked best for our audience. By applying this to the tone of voice of the posts I was able to reach a more targeted audience.

- Gain a broad understanding on the cultural diversity and activities within the United States, in particular New York

By meticulously maintaining a list of activities in the United States and pursuing more information about the cultural activities itself, the Dutch cultural diversity became more clear to me as the internship progressed. However, the cultural diversity of New York was something that was hard to read from statistics. Although the shared cultural heritage part of the internship provided insight into the strong cultural connection to the Netherlands, the
actual diversity of a city like New York can only be learned by living in the city itself. By living in different areas of Brooklyn and commuting to Midtown Manhattan every day, I was able to experience American diversity in a different way.

- **Gain a solid understanding of the role of diplomatic missions within an international network**

The Press and Cultural department of the consulate had a unique position within the international embassy network. Contrary to the economic department, we operated throughout all of the United States instead of the New York region. This meant we were both under the authority of the embassy in Washington D.C., as well as the regional focus of the consulate. By maintaining contact with Washington and through the cooperation with other departments, the role of the diplomatic missions became more clear to me. As a consulate, we actually represented the Netherlands in everything. From the Dutch Design interior of the consulate to presence at Dutch performances, everything was aimed to show the host country what we stand for as a country. Through helping Dutch citizens find their way in the United States and supporting them where necessary, the consulate functions as a small part of the Netherlands within the United States.

- **Learn the role of culture as a tool and goal of international diplomacy**

By stressing the similarities through a common history or a common appreciation for arts and culture, the consulate can accomplish a mutual sense of respect and appreciation. By becoming more aware of the Dutch history that is still evident in the streets of New York, we can accomplish a broader understanding of the Netherlands amongst Americans. At the same time, culture is an important goal of international diplomacy. The cultural industry provides many jobs in both the Netherlands and the United States. Supporting this sector will secure job opportunities and the possibility for artists to expand their projects overseas.
2. **Functioning within the consulate**

The cooperation within the consulate was outstanding. With a small team of around twenty employees, we all relied on the help of other colleagues. Since all except one colleague were Dutch, the consulate felt like a small part of the Netherlands in the middle of New York. The easy working environment enabled me to ask questions and learn by doing. At the same time the work load was high. I would start every day at nine, and would usually work until six thirty or seven. Most of the nights I would attend an event following our work day. Although many hours were dedicated to the work and the workload could feel overwhelming at times, the content of my assignments made me appreciate the work I was doing. It allowed me to go to events that I would normally not be able to attend or would attend by myself. An example is the Peter Stuyvesant Ball, an annual fundraiser black tie event at the Plaza Hotel near Central Park. Attending such a high society event was a learning experience by itself.

By working with another intern, I learned how to divide specific tasks in a team. Since the two of us were responsible for our tasks, it was crucial to work together in order to get everything done in time. This would sometimes result in trying to finish assignments too fast, in order to start the next one as soon as possible. Since we were able to check each other’s work, we were able to correct mistakes that we made in the process.

3. **Living in New York**

One of the greatest learning experiences of this internship was living in New York for six months. Since the arrangements for this internships were made in a hurry, I did not have much time to look for an apartment. The housing market in New York is very competitive and the prices are high, which made it challenging to find a suitable place to live. My first residency was a room in a student house in Bedford Stuyvesant in Brooklyn. Although the area I lived in was not the best, it was a valuable experience. I lived across the street from the Marcy
Housing Projects, a social housing project that has been known for a history of violence and drugs in the past. However, nowadays it is an interesting example of gentrification in New York. People from different races and religions all lived in the same neighborhood, which created a vibrant cultural experience. A predominantly black community was living side by side with orthodox Jews and a Latino community. The contrast between my house and the office building in Midtown was substantial. The consulate was located on the 19th floor of the East Chrysler building, right next to Grand Central station, which was surrounded by the fast working culture of Manhattan offices. By taking the subway back and forth between my house in Brooklyn and the consulate, the contrast within the city was clearly emphasized.

4. CONCLUSION

This internship complements the theoretical background of my bachelor’s degree with practical working experience. My knowledge of the United States, both culturally and politically, helped me throughout this internship to better understand the processes within the consulate and the life in New York. Living in the United States during the 2016 election and experiencing election night in the same city as Clinton and Trump made the timing of my internship extra special. By working at the consulate I gained a better understanding in international policy making and the importance of culture in bilateral relations. Combined with my American Studies degree, it will help me pursue a career in international politics in the future.
5. ATTACHMENTS

• Blog and social media

http://www.dutchcultureusa.com/
https://twitter.com/DutchCultureUSA
https://www.facebook.com/DutchCultureUSA/
https://www.instagram.com/dutchcultureusa/?hl=en

• Buitengaats list 2016