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# Twenty years after Malta: archaeological heritage as a source of collective memory and scientific study anno 2012

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*A recent evaluation of the Dutch Monument Act shows that it serves its purpose fairly well. It was however not evaluated to what extent the new law and its associated heritage management system contribute to achieving the main goals of the underlying Malta Convention. In this paper a start is made with this. On the basis of various studies an analysis is made of to what extent Dutch archaeological heritage serves as a source of collective memory and scientific study twenty years after the Convention was signed.*

## 1 INTRODUCTION

This *Analecta* is a jubilee issue, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Faculty of Archaeology. During these fifty years, the archaeological world has changed tremendously. Many things that were dreamed of back then have become reality, but many other things that were cherished have been lost. One of the main forces behind most of these changes has been the signing of the Valletta Convention in 1992, with its aim to ‘protect the archaeological heritage as a source of the European collective memory and as an instrument for historical and scientific study’ (Article 1.1).<sup>1</sup> As it is this year the 20th anniversary of this convention, we will use the opportunity of this *Analecta* to evaluate to what degree we have so far reached its goal. At the time of the signing of the convention, many things were already organized or under construction, but several additional measures have been taken since in order to reach its goals.<sup>2</sup> Most of the organizational issues have been dealt with and have juridical power through the Monument Act, which was revised for this purpose in 2007. The only exception is the promotion of public awareness (Article 9); no formal or legal provisions have been made to achieve this goal.

A recent evaluation of this revised law, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, Culture and Science, shows that it serves its purpose reasonably well (Van der Reijden et al. 2011). What however has not been evaluated is to what extent the new law and its associated heritage management system contribute to achieving the main goal of the underlying convention, namely to better protect the archaeological heritage as a source of collective memory and an instrument for scientific study. As it is not guaranteed that this aim is met when the organizational matters have been dealt with

and the facilities have been created, we believe that this should be evaluated too. There are various ways to evaluate this, but we decided to interpret it as: to what degree does the archaeological community produce new knowledge, what do we do with this knowledge in the sense of professional dissemination, valorization, and public outreach, and does it affect public support for archaeology? Our analysis is partly based on our own observations and on the results of some researches we recently undertook, either as part of our (research) projects or as supervisors of the theses and internship researches of our master and bachelor students.<sup>3</sup>

## 2 KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

The issue of knowledge production provokes recurring debates in the Dutch archaeological community. Shortly after the revised law had come into force in September 2007, Professor Raemaekers (Groningen University) expressed his concern in the national magazine *Archeobrief* (Raemaekers 2008) that a lot of money is spent on research that yields no or hardly any new knowledge about the past. In addition he complained about the quality of the publications (mainly site reports), in the sense that they would hardly provide valuable new insights either. Also abroad people have the impression that the situation of knowledge production in our country is rather poor (*e.g.* Kristiansen 2009).

It can be questioned, however, whether most research is indeed of limited relevance and of poor quality. First of all, we have to take the purpose of the investigations into account and to make a distinction between research which is intended to write historic narratives and research which is intended to locate and value sites. Due to Malta it is common practice now in the Netherlands that building locations are investigated and valued prior to disturbing activities. On an annual basis between 2500 and 3000 of such field evaluations are carried out. It is estimated that 52 per cent of these valuations do not lead to further research (Theunissen and Deeben 2011, 38). This does not mean that these researches are useless. They simply make sure no valuable sites are being destroyed.

With respect to the quality of the work and reports, indeed the situation is not ideal (see also Van den Dries and Willems 2007). Quality assessment studies by both the

Inspectorate and the State Agency (*e.g.* Bazelmans *et al.* 2005; Van den Dries and Zoetbrood 2008) have demonstrated that regarding site reports there is ample room for improvement. However, if we put this in perspective, it is not as dramatic as it seems. It all depends on how you decide to look at these matters (see Van den Dries 2011). For instance, from the 2008 valuation of the 85 site reports, we could also highlight that 67 per cent of the reports was of sufficient or good quality (Van den Dries and Zoetbrood 2008). Moreover, the Inspectorate for Cultural Heritage recently concluded that although there are large differences between projects when it comes to quality – mainly because it relates much more to the capabilities of the individual fieldwork leaders than to the quality control systems of their organizations – they are generally positive about the quality of the work of the project managers that was conducted between 2008 and 2010 (Erfgoedinspectie 2011, 55). From another study by the National Agency for Cultural Heritage can be deduced that a sample of excavation and test pit reports shows that these researches add new knowledge of various subjects (Theunissen and Deeben 2011, 29-31). In the majority of the excavations (60%), the output is much larger even than the contractor expected (*idem*, 37).

In the context of evaluating to what extent the Malta Convention has added to the gain in knowledge, we should ideally compare the current situation with the situation prior to the signing of the Convention. Unfortunately not a lot of data is available from the pre-Malta period. However, the data that we do have does not seem to support the hypothesis that knowledge production has decreased. We know for instance that the pre-Malta practice has been stopped in which fieldwork results were often not analysed nor reported. Presumably half of the 8000 excavations that were executed between 1900 and 2000 have never been published (Hessing and Mietes 2003), while today everything has to be reported. We also know that the number of sites that are being studied has considerably increased, from an estimated number of 100 in 1990 to around 160 in 2000 and even 208 in 2008.

On the other hand, it has been noticed that the share of extensive excavations is very small – in 2009 it was found that only 14% of the excavations of 2006, 2007 and 2008 lasted longer than 40 days (Bazelmans 2011, 15). This could

create the impression that the new way of working does indeed affect the knowledge production negatively. However, if we look at the percentage of long and short excavations in a longer perspective (table 1), we can infer that long-lasting excavations were already in a minority long before the Malta principles were implemented in our legislation in 2007 and that their share has been decreasing since the 1990s.

Also a slightly downward trend in the duration of projects has been observed (*e.g.* Van den Dries *et al.* 2010, 62). This could also be interpreted as a sign that there is a reduced rate in knowledge production. However, a diminished duration of projects does not necessarily mean that knowledge production is dwindling. If for instance it relates to an increased efficiency due to technological improvements and computerization or to having better educated and skilled employees, a shorter duration may have no negative effect on the output. This ought to become clear if we would compare the volume of fieldwork projects in square metres, but unfortunately, such data is not available.

Seen from these perspectives, it cannot (yet) be claimed that knowledge production has diminished. Perhaps some aspects have developed less than we had hoped, but this is compensated by other aspects that have hugely improved. Huge progress has for instance been made in the way we select our researches. Nowadays this is a far more conscious process, led by informed decision-making. During the former era, which was dominated by rescue archaeology, research was highly dependent on lucky finds and on the availability of last-minute financial sources. Today, research is predominantly directed by research agendas and when heritage is sacrificed to building or farming activities, we at least know much better what exactly is being destroyed.

This does not imply that we do not have to be concerned. On the contrary, a serious concern for the future regarding knowledge production relates to the fact that the authority on the management of archaeological heritage has been decentralized; it is nowadays the municipal council – so non-specialists – who is in charge of taking decisions on the volume, aims and even the contents of research. This means that the academics have lost a large part of their supervision or guardianship over the archaeological resource. Consequently, the choices and selections made by these new

|                     | not indicated |      | 10 days or less |      | 11-30 days |      | 31-60 days |      | more than 61 days |      |
|---------------------|---------------|------|-----------------|------|------------|------|------------|------|-------------------|------|
|                     | number        | %    | number          | %    | number     | %    | number     | %    | number            | %    |
| <b>2010</b> (N=149) | 0             | 0    | 68              | 45.6 | 48         | 32.2 | 16         | 10.7 | 17                | 11.4 |
| <b>2000</b> (N=40)  | 11            | 27.5 | 10              | 25   | 9          | 22.5 | 5          | 12.5 | 5                 | 12.5 |
| <b>1990</b> (N=10)  | 1             | 10   | 4               | 40   | 3          | 30   | 0          | 0    | 2                 | 20   |

Table 1 Duration in days of the excavations in the Netherlands (source: Archis).

powers may no longer match the academic interests and priorities. That this has already started to happen is shown by one of our master students through her thesis research (Van Vuuren 2010). She discovered that selection policies of municipalities tend to favour the more recent archaeology. Several municipalities even exclude almost the entire prehistoric period (Van Vuuren 2010, 68-71). As the more recent archaeology is considered to offer the best potential for presentation purposes, this suits local interests and purposes of city-marketing best. Moreover, agendas like these hardly help to fill gaps in our archaeological knowledge. Hitherto this approach has only been applied on a small scale (in 2010, nine municipalities had such qualitative selection policies), but if this becomes the dominant approach, it surely will become problematic (Van den Dries and Van Vuuren 2012).

Another reason for concern is the increasing marginalization of the role of universities in the actual fieldwork. As they cannot compete in acquisition with the commercial sector, their share in fieldwork has been reduced dramatically, to less than ten per cent (see Van den Dries and Kwast in press). Since universities usually provide good-quality reports, which have the best citation figures (see below), this is not a good development for the production of archaeological knowledge.

3 KNOWLEDGE DISSEMINATION AND VALORIZATION  
What definitely has improved due to the revised legislation (and compliance control) is the publishing of fieldwork results. Nowadays 75 per cent of all projects is reported within two years after the field work was finished (Erfgoedinspectie 2010). This, however, has introduced a new difficulty, *i.e.* the ever-increasing volume of grey literature (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed 2009, 108). The hundreds of reports that are being produced per annum are clearly not optimally used for subsequent research. A Dutch student, doing a master degree course in Dublin, showed by a citation analysis of 3739 site reports that were produced in 2006, 2007 and 2008, that until 2009 more than 50 per cent of these reports had not yet been cited in any other report or publication (Helwig 2009). This not only was the case with reports on bore hole surveys, but also with excavation reports. Of these merely 38 per cent was cited. Notably, the reports of the universities were cited most (Helwig 2009, 19-20).

It may be impossible to keep track with so much information forthcoming, but it is also difficult to get hold of. The State Agency is obliged to provide access to these site reports, but an assessment by the State Inspectorate in 2010 (Erfgoedinspectie 2010) made clear that only 38 per cent of the reports from 2003-2006 was by then centrally registered and publicly available. Fortunately, many contractors publish

a large part of their reports on their websites, but this of course is not the best way as one may not know all the knowledge-producing parties and nobody can afford to spend a lot of time and energy to collect all these dispersed bits of knowledge. As of April 2011, the additional measure was taken that site reports have to be uploaded digitally – instead of being sent in hard copy – to the national archaeological information system (Archis).

This measure may improve the availability of new data, but it may not help to have it consumed and upgraded to syntheses. This is another difficulty regarding valorization. Our knowledge dissemination is almost exclusively restricted to site reports. It was calculated for the 2009 heritage report of the National Agency for Cultural Heritage (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed 2009, 111) that the annual number of synthetic studies (articles and monographs) and dissertations had declined from 25 in 2002 to 18 in 2006. A recent inventory of the National Agency has confirmed that this downward trend is continuing (Theunissen and Deeben 2011, 34). The number of dissertations went from ten in 2000 to three in 2010. This trend is striking, as it completely contrasts with the general Dutch trend of an increasing scientific output.<sup>4</sup>

This downward trend in archaeology could well be caused by the decreased staff size at universities and at the national heritage agency. Their research and financial capacity has been cut down seriously in the last couple of decades (Koninklijke Nederlandse Akademie van Wetenschappen 2007, 15). An additional cause may be that for many years all available research capacity was absorbed by developer-funded research (see for instance Van den Dries *et al.* 2010). Most archaeologists were very much preoccupied with writing site reports and with additional tasks and thus had less time for additional scientific publications.

For the future it is not expected that this will change for the better. The archaeological community could take more notice of the research results than it is doing now, but as long as there are no financial resources or other incentives available, it will remain difficult to conduct synthetic analyses on a scale that fits the demand for it. That additional funding can help to transform the bits of knowledge in the development-led excavation reports into comprehensive syntheses is shown by our British colleagues. The new synthesis of British and Irish prehistory is mainly based on grey literature (Bradley 2007), and the subsequent re-contextualization of the prehistory of Britain and Ireland, that is currently carried out by the universities of Reading and Leicester, is based on the unpublished excavation reports on sites in northern France, Belgium, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, north-western Germany and western Denmark.<sup>5</sup> These examples also show that development-led excavation reports do contain valuable knowledge.

#### 4 PUBLIC OUTREACH

The issues of knowledge production and dissemination are closely linked to the issue of public outreach. What does the public gain from archaeologists generating new knowledge about the past? Twenty years ago, just after she had signed the Malta Convention, the minister of Wellbeing, Health and Culture - Hedy D'Ancona - gave a speech at a student symposium in which she urged the archaeological community to further exploit its opportunities to generate publicity and to enlarge public engagement and participation (Archeologisch Informatie Centrum 1993).<sup>6</sup> The question is: did we do this?

Some archaeologists have an outspoken answer to that. For instance Professor Theuvs (then University of Amsterdam, now University of Leiden) recently said in a television documentary that “In the Netherlands presumably around 100 million euro is spent on archaeology annually. What does society get in return? Nothing.”<sup>7</sup> (translation by the authors).

Considering the available data, our answer is less negative. First of all, a lot of archaeological fieldwork is not meant to produce narratives of the past but rather to locate and value archaeological resources, as was discussed above. Moreover, in those cases in which excavations are conducted and in which indeed reconstructing the habitation history is the aim, the public interest is often taken into account. Ever since the 1960s and the emergence of “public archaeology” (McGimsey 1972), the archaeological community is very aware of the importance of public support and nowadays much effort is being put into educating the public and into public outreach activities. The issue is frequently the subject of seminars and other vocational meetings, and we even have a university chair on the public aspects of archaeology.<sup>8</sup> Consequently, the archaeological community is doing more than ever before. In the last twenty years at least 25 companies have specialized in public outreach activities and, together with the municipality archaeologists and provincial heritage centres, they have organized all kinds of activities, such as open days and exhibitions, and numerous public books, leaflets, websites, etc. are being produced.

The attention for public outreach can also be seen in several studies. In 2011, as partner of a European research project (‘Archaeology in Contemporary Europe’)<sup>9</sup> that was funded by the European Commission, the Faculty of Archaeology sent a questionnaire to all organizations active in Dutch archaeology (public and private), to map the profession and the work. From the responses – 62 organizations contributed – can be deduced that there is a lot of attention for public outreach activities (Van den Dries and Kwast in press). All governmental organizations except two (94%) consider it a very important task and also 64 per cent of the commercial companies disseminates findings to the

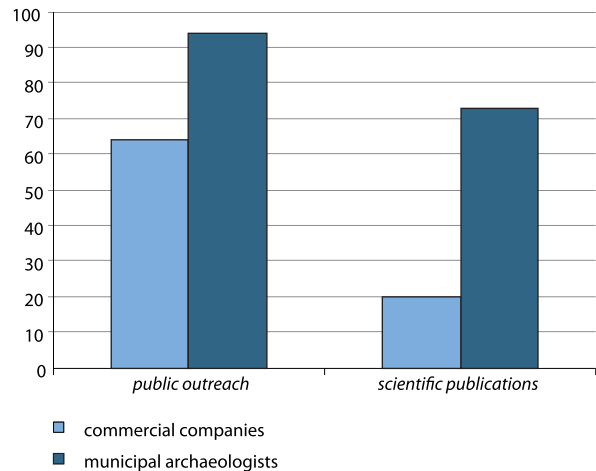


Figure 1 The percentages of Dutch companies and municipal archaeologists that indicated (in a questionnaire sent out in 2011 for the Archaeology in Contemporary Europe research project) to be active in public outreach activities and in the production of scientific output.

public. In fact, it seems that there is more output for the public than scientific output (fig. 1).

Apart from data on the attention of archaeologists for the public, there is also some data on the attention from the audience for archaeology. We know for instance that museums regularly draw huge crowds with unique and exotic exhibitions - in 2008 the terracotta army from Xi'an attracted over 353,000 visitors to the Drents Museum.<sup>10</sup> Also open days are popular - in 2003, four open days at the excavations of the Roman vessel at De Meern (near Utrecht) were attended by 30,000 people.<sup>11</sup> Moreover, archaeological finds and heritage related issues such as repatriation claims of objects and the demolition and looting during the recent Arab revolts are frequently covered by the media. Local newspaper journalists like to report on local research; nearly 85 per cent of the municipalities that filled in our ACE-questionnaire indicated that they use (local) papers to disseminate their findings. Finally, a serious interest of society in archaeology can also be seen in the engagement of local authorities. Although mainly inspired by financial considerations, they are increasingly interested in directing both the selection policies (Van Vuuren 2010) and the scientific goals of archaeological research on their territory.

It is however more difficult to explore whether the attention for and from the public adds to the use of archaeological heritage as a source of collective memory. Is this what the public wants and are they satisfied? We have some indications that this may not necessarily be the case. In 2010, one of our master students had questionnaires filled in by members of the public (109) and by archaeologists (21),

to find out in which way the audience wants to be informed about – or involved with – archaeology, and in which way the archaeologists want to inform the public (Lampe 2010a). She noticed a considerable discrepancy in the preferences of both groups. Whereas archaeologists tend to think of organizing open days (93%), of building small exhibitions at excavations, of writing newsletters and of making films as the best ways to engage the public, the public, on the other hand, seemed to be mostly interested in visiting a theme park like Archeon (55%) or a museum (49%), in watching a film (42%) and in participating in an excavation (39%). The audience is also interested in talking with an archaeologist (33%), but far less interested in reading about archaeology on websites (17%) or in playing computer games (13%). Interestingly, the least interest (12%) is in reading a book on archaeology (Lampe 2010b, 64).

That publications and exhibitions are not very popular was confirmed by another survey carried out by another of our master students among inhabitants (100) of The Hague (Wasmus 2010). He found that only a small part of the respondents in The Hague were interested in getting information through exhibitions (10%) or publications (11%). There was a preference for getting information on (local) archaeology from (local) newspapers or (local) television (53%). Second best were open days and information panels in the field or in the street (both 26%): when provided, such public information on the street was enjoyed by as much as 75 per cent of the audience (Wasmus 2010, 53). The majority (61%) was not interested in a guided tour at the local repository, and half of the participants (51%) indicated *not* to be interested in seeing how archaeologists do their job. Young people were the least interested in archaeology and in what is offered: they indicated they would not go to exhibitions or open days at all.

That books might indeed not be what the general public wants, is also illustrated by the sales figures of *Onder Onze Voeten* ('Under Our Feet' by Van Ginkel and Verhart 2009), which was published in 2009.<sup>12</sup> This is one of the largest public outreach projects of the last couple of years<sup>13</sup> and was intended to succeed the very famous and in 1981 extremely successful public book *Verleden land* ('Past Land' by Bloemers et al. 1981), of which 120,000 copies (!) were sold. Of this new book, which is truly a splendid and beautiful comprehensive piece of work that only costs 25 euro, only 9000 copies – of a total print run of 15,000 – were sold in 2011 (pers. comm. E. van Ginkel 2011).

That this time a similar success fails to occur may have to do with the fact that in contrast with the 1980s there is an abundance of (free) information on excavations and archaeology available, either through websites, booklets, press articles, open days, museum presentations, etc. There is also more attention at schools, through for example

ready-made lessons and packages for pupil presentations. The strong appetite for information that was there in the 1980s seems to have been satisfied or – in case there still is an appetite – it is now being satisfied through other means.

These experiences and findings should make us wonder whether we listen sufficiently to the needs and wishes of the public, or whether we sometimes are looking too much to our own interests instead of those of the public (Holtorf 2007). In the public survey in The Hague, 60 per cent of the respondents indicated to be satisfied with the information that archaeologists provide, but the remaining 40 per cent said that more results should be disseminated to the public (Wasmus 2010). In the study of Sophie Lampe, even 64 per cent of the participants said that Dutch archaeologists could present archaeology in a much more pleasant way (Lampe 2010a, 37). They indicated that there is quite an interest in doing excavations themselves. That community archaeology can be an effective means to increase participation is shown in the United Kingdom, where it involves at least 215,000 individuals (Thomas 2010, 15, 22), yet very few opportunities for community archaeology are offered in the Netherlands.

In other outreach domains, not all public groups are sufficiently served either. An analysis by a master student of the target groups that the seven main archaeological museums in the Netherlands engage with, shows that teenagers, young adults, middle-aged adults and migrant groups are currently underrepresented among the visitors (Van Kesteren 2010). As it is far more difficult to attract these groups, museums seem to put most effort in serving the easier target groups of school children, families and elderly people (Van Kesteren 2010, 42).

The group which Dutch archaeology seems to serve best are the organized volunteers. We have quite a substantial contingency of volunteers – estimated at around 4000 individuals in 2008 (Duineveld *et al.* 2008, 30), and with the implementation of the revised act – introducing the obligation to work according to the Dutch Quality Standard – there was a lot of concern that the role of volunteers would fade. Both the volunteers (*e.g.* De Grood 2003), and the Dutch archaeological interest organization (Stichting voor de Nederlandse Archeologie), and even external researchers (Duineveld *et al.* 2008) expressed their concerns. However, from a recent survey among all groups of the main organization of volunteers (Archeologische Werkgemeenschap Nederland, AWN) it can be deduced that 76 per cent of the regional groups has been participating in archaeological research between 2007 and 2010 (Van de Rijdt 2011, 116) and that more than half (57%) of them still conducts field work autonomously. It seems that they still have a valuable contribution to make to all kinds of research and other activities. Although there may still be some difficulties, such

as for instance the Dutch archaeological system unintentionally excluding volunteers in decision-making (Duineveld *et al.* 2008), at least the archaeological contractors, the local authorities and the National Agency are all willing to involve the non-professionals even better. In fact, at the beginning of 2012, the two branch organizations (Vereniging van Ondernemers in Archeologie, VOiA and Nederlandse Vereniging van Archeologische Opggravingsbedrijven, NVAO) signed an agreement with the AWN to stimulate the companies making use of the capabilities and knowledge of the volunteers.

As the above studies show that it differs per age group or target group how they want to be informed and involved, we apparently have to offer a broader repertoire of outreach activities and products, and to apply a more tailor-made approach. We have plenty of opportunities to provide creative and innovative ways of engagement, but hitherto we have mainly walked the conservative pathways. Often the excuse can be heard that we do not know our public very well and that we do not know what their needs and wishes are. This however is only partly true, as various larger and small studies of audiences are available. The main difficulty probably is that we are not always sufficiently skilled in this job. Most of us are trained as archaeologists, not as communication and marketing experts. In this, the field of heritage management may be of help; it increasingly provides the required skills and research results.

Apart from the needs of the public, the effectiveness of the outreach activities should be studied as well. Sometimes quite an effort has been made (also financially) but it does not seem to achieve its goals. This can be illustrated by an internship research of one of our master students. She evaluated for a public outreach company (TGV Teksten & Presentatie) two public, outdoor exhibits – one in a train station (Rotterdam Blaak) and one in a tram station (Grote Markt, The Hague) – that were placed there in the 1990s. In particular, she explored to what degree they are being noticed by the public and how they are appreciated. Two hundred questionnaires were collected and it turned out that at both locations quite a large number of people (almost 50%) had never noticed the exhibit, despite the fact that they all had been there before (Libert 2010, 37). However, those that did know about it – or once they were made aware of it – were very positive about the exhibits. As the only problem seems to have been that both displays were not very visible due to their remote location, out of sight of people walking the main routes, this can either be easily solved or taken into account in future projects.

Such studies can also help to put things in perspective. Sometimes people simply are not very interested in archaeology. This is clearly shown by an internship research that two of our students carried out for the National Agency

for Cultural Heritage. They interviewed 45 people visiting the Boshoverheide (Weert), where the largest prehistoric urnfield of our country is excavated. Already in 1987 the burial mounds were reconstructed, a path was created and an information panel was erected, and the national agency and the owner of the terrain, the Ministry of Defence, wanted to know how many people would come to visit these monuments and how many people actually realised that they are walking in a prehistoric landscape.<sup>14</sup> Surprisingly, it turned out that the majority of the visitors (73%) knew about the presence of the monuments and that 78% had noticed the information panel. However, not a single visitor indicated that the monuments were the reason for their visit (Elemans and Munawar 2012, 13-14). They simply came to walk their dog or to enjoy the ‘natural’ landscape of this heathland and drift dune area.

## 5 PUBLIC SUPPORT

Attention for the public may be less dramatic than Theuws presumes, but the question is whether all efforts affect public support for archaeology. There are various indications that some public groups are not very satisfied with the new heritage management approach, especially not with the amount of money that it involves. This was even discussed in parliament; in November 2010 – when the budget of the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Agriculture and Innovation was discussed in the Second Chamber – public attention was drawn to the costs of archaeological research by two members of parliament (of different parties) who defended the interests of the agrarian sector. It was said “As the costs of archaeological research are completely running out of hand, we request the government to make a proposal before the first of July 2011 to reduce the expenses for archaeological research.” (translation by the authors).<sup>15</sup>

Also in magazines, such as *Binnenlands Bestuur* (the main newsletter on domestic policy, management and administration for directors and civil servants that is weekly produced for 55,000 readers)<sup>16</sup>, negative opinions can be heard frequently. They often relate to the costs. All these expressions have in common that they typify archaeological research as *spielerei* which is considered a burden on society, in particular on local authorities, developers and farmers.

However, such complaints are not quite supported by the facts. First of all, the general picture is that archaeologists excavate all archaeology. The truth is, however, that a lot of selection is going on prior to any research. One of our master students showed with her thesis research that 43 per cent of the municipalities apply quantitative selection (Van Vuuren 2010). In accordance with article 41a of the Monument Act they often allow quite extensive exemptions to the obligation to conduct research (De Groot *et al.* 2011). This means that for a lot of disturbing activities there is still no research



required. Furthermore, far from everything that is discovered with field evaluations is excavated. The archaeological sector itself is very selective in its recommendations for further research, and also municipalities apply qualitative selection policies (Van Vuuren 2010). Consequently, the number of excavations that result from field inventories is only 1 out of 16 (Theunissen and Deeben 2011).<sup>17</sup> And this means that on an annual basis, only 37 per cent of the municipalities commission an excavation.

Secondly, the general picture is that archaeology is a huge burden for disturbers. But if we put the costs that are involved with archaeology in perspective, these are not very high. It is for instance interesting to compare it with the turnover of the other (complaining) stakeholders.<sup>18</sup> In 2009, the turnover of the building and construction sector was 87 billion euro, that of the archaeology sector was estimated between 70-80 million euro in 2008 (Van den Dries et al. 2010, 57), the year with the largest number of fieldwork projects ever. If this would all have to be paid for by the building business, it would amount to less than one per cent of its turnover. From the heritage report it is however known that in 2007, 58 per cent of the archaeological research was commissioned and paid for by the private sector (developers, builders but also ordinary citizens), the remainder by the public sector (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed 2009, 229), so it is far less than one per cent. Besides, the development sector probably does not necessarily carry these costs itself; presumably they are included in the prices the sector charges to its clients.

Likewise, the supposed burden on the agrarian sector can be toned down too. We know that 60 per cent of all valuable archaeological areas are located in rural areas (Rijksdienst voor het Cultureel Erfgoed 2009, 77)<sup>19</sup> and that ploughing is one of the most disturbing activities, but also that in the rural areas more generous exemption rules apply than in urban areas (De Groot et al. 2011). Moreover, excavations are mostly conducted in urban areas (Van den Dries and Kwast in press). As, again, probably only 58 per cent of this research is commissioned by private disturbers, including non-farmers like ordinary citizens and developers, only a relatively small portion of the costs is being paid for by the agrarian sector.

In relation to the turnover of the agrarian sector, 4.7 billion euro in 2010, the 14 million euro turnover that the archaeology sector earns with projects in the rural areas comes down to 0.3 per cent. That is when all rural research would be paid for by the agrarian sector. If they pay for only half the research, the costs are 0.1% of the total turnover. For the sector as a whole that is not much, although we do acknowledge that for individual farmers it may be a burden. They can hardly pass on these costs in the prices of milk and wheats.

Nonetheless, all stakeholder complaints surely reflect genuine feelings and such expressions probably affect public opinion as well. Does it mean however that there is little public support for archaeology? Also on this issue few recent data is available, but the studies by our students indicate that this may not be the case. For instance, developers seem to have a rather more positive attitude towards archaeological research than we might have expected. One of our students interviewed for her bachelor thesis five large developers (out of a group of 60) who are active in the area of Leiden. They all consider archaeology as an intrinsic part of development work, like the soil purification procedures, and they mentioned that it has the potential to generate added value for developers (Van Donkersgoed 2011, 57).<sup>20</sup>

From other stakeholders there seems to be quite some support too. The above mentioned survey in The Hague showed that a majority of the interviewees from the general public (68%) says that archaeology is important (Wasmus 2010), and in the research conducted by Sophie Lampe even 74 per cent of the participants said to be interested in archaeology (Lampe 2010b, 65). In comparison with the pre-Malta era, when 72 per cent of a representative sample of the Dutch population showed involvement with Dutch archaeology (Archeologisch Informatie Centrum 1996, 17), not much seems to have changed.

This does not mean that we could not do more to strengthen or even improve the relationship with other stakeholders. The developers for instance expressed clear dissatisfaction with what they get in return for the money they invest. They are not very interested in the scientific reports they receive – which the contractor is obliged to produce (Van Donkersgoed 2011, 50). They are mostly interested in new and important findings, which they can present to their employees and use for promotional purposes, *i.e.* things that can enhance their image (Van Donkersgoed 2011, 47). Their support and willingness to spend a large sum of money depends on the uniqueness and importance of the finds and what they can do with it. For them added value would for instance also be achieved if the research results would be used at (local) schools. It is in this respect noticeable that the developers found archaeologists to be hesitant about participating in public activities or sharing photographic material (let alone finds).

Moreover, the communication with stakeholders could be improved. Developers for instance mentioned that their main problem with archaeology is its unpredictability (in time and expenses) and that the need for the research is not always made clear to them (Van Donkersgoed 2011, 49). Thus, the sector itself could do much more to get more support for (the costs of) archaeological research. In any case, dramatic performances in the media highlighting the uselessness of our researches do not contribute to a positive image.

## 6 CONCLUSION

With this paper we aimed to discuss to what extent the current Dutch heritage management system has so far contributed to achieving the main goal of the Malta Convention, namely to better protect the archaeological heritage as a source of collective memory and an instrument for scientific study. In the past years various statements have been made in the media indicating that both the academic world and the public would be served badly by this new system. Our conclusion on the basis of this (yet limited) evaluation is that the available data provides no indications that this is true if we look at knowledge production and public outreach. Knowledge dissemination and valorization could surely be much improved. There is for example reason for concern about the role and influence of the universities in generating data, in directing research questions and in generating syntheses, which may be even further marginalized if no measures are taken to prevent this.

Although attention for public outreach has not been included in the legislation, much is happening. Still, there is much to gain if the needs of the various target groups would be served better. A lot of energy is for instance spent on the production of books and websites, but these seem to be outreach activities that a large part of the public likes least. Especially to reach out effectively to younger generations, we will have to explore new communication means, like the social media, and new ways of spending leisure time.

Regarding public support for archaeology, there were signals indicating that this may be dwindling. Studies show however that this may not be the case and that the support is not too bad. Nevertheless, we must remain cautious. There is no guarantee that the current relatively positive situation will last. Things may change rapidly due to the continuously developing circumstances around us, such as the global economy, political power relations and public opinion. We should therefore exploit all opportunities to root the public support more firmly in society. We are making it less expensive and easier to handle, but do we also make it more relevant and enjoyable? We should at least communicate better with all stakeholders and try to serve their various needs better. On the other hand, it is also important to put the complaints about archaeology in perspective. As these are not always supported by the facts, it is important that we postulate this message too.

For the near future we recommend that the archaeological community looks more critically at its own attitude and practices and that it asks itself whether enough is being done to gain public support by the way in which we use the archaeological resource as an instrument for scientific study and as a source of our collective memory of the past. It is also clear that a lot of work still needs to be done. We will

have to further study the public and its wishes, to evaluate the effectiveness of outreach activities, to synthesize the results of such studies, to disseminate the findings, and to learn to apply them. Fortunately, we experience that younger generations of archaeologists are very eager to work on these issues and the results of their researches, some of which were presented in this paper, demonstrate that it is worthwhile and rewarding to include such heritage management issues in the academic and vocational training.

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## Notes

1 [Http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/html/143.htm](http://conventions.coe.int/Treaty/en/Treaties/html/143.htm).

2 We have a legal system for the protection of the archaeological heritage (Article 2), with provisions for inventories, for the designation of protected monuments and for the reporting of stray finds. We guarantee the scientific significance of archaeological research work (article 3), among others by ensuring that it is carried out by qualified and authorised individuals (Article 3.ii). We implemented measures for the physical protection (Article 4) and in situ conservation (Article 4.iii) of the archaeological heritage. We have integrated archaeology in planning policies (Article 5) and arranged the financial support for research (Article 6). Finally we have taken measures to facilitate the dissemination of scientific information (Articles 7 and 8), as we have the obligation to provide excavation reports within two years after the field work is finished and to have all reports and documentation delivered digitally to an e-depot.

3 At Leiden University students can follow the master specialisation track 'Archaeological Heritage Management in a world context'.

4 An overview in the Dutch newspaper NRC Handelsblad of March 12 2011 showed an increase of journals, articles and PhD's (2,000 to 3,700) between 1997 and 2009.

5 See for more information <http://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/archaeology/research/projects/british-irish>.

6 The symposium was organised by the Leiden student organisation Johan Picardt on the subject of improving the position of archaeologists in society.

7 "*Het is niet uitgesloten dat er tegen de 100 miljoen euro aan archeologie wordt omgezet per jaar in Nederland. Wat krijgt de Nederlandse samenleving daar voor terug? Niks.*" From *Een Vandaag*, June 4th 2009 (<http://player.omroep.nl/?afIID=9606047>).

8 Since 2009, the University of Groningen has a special chair on 'archaeology and society'.

9 See [www.ace-archaeology.eu](http://www.ace-archaeology.eu).

10 [Http://www.gochinaassengroningen.nl/recordaantal-bezoekers-voor-het-drents-museum/](http://www.gochinaassengroningen.nl/recordaantal-bezoekers-voor-het-drents-museum/)

11 [Http://www.utrecht.nl/smartsite.dws?id=198287](http://www.utrecht.nl/smartsite.dws?id=198287).

12 Written by one of the main Dutch experts on public outreach and a very experienced museum curator.

13 It was financed with public sources from the NWO funding programme 'Oogst van Malta' (The Malta Harvest), see [http://www.nwo.nl/nwohome.nsf/pages/NWOA\\_6ZJCZF](http://www.nwo.nl/nwohome.nsf/pages/NWOA_6ZJCZF). The costs were at least 200,000 euro.

14 As part of the NWO funding programme Odyssee. See: <http://www.cultureelerfgoed.nl/node/2055> or <http://www.erfgoednederland.nl/odyssee/projecten/5.-de-boshoverheide/item10674>.

15 "[...] constaterende dat kosten van archeologisch onderzoek totaal uit de hand lopen, verzoekt [indiener] de regering, voor 1 juli 2011 met voorstellen te komen die leiden tot een forse reductie van de kosten voor archeologisch onderzoek [...]." Quote from request by Snijder-Hazelhoff/Koopmans on 24 November 2010 ([http://www.europa-nu.nl/9353000/1/j4nvgs5kkg27kof\\_j9vvikppop-jt8zm/viklovhp55zi/f=/kst32500xiii86.pdf](http://www.europa-nu.nl/9353000/1/j4nvgs5kkg27kof_j9vvikppop-jt8zm/viklovhp55zi/f=/kst32500xiii86.pdf))

16 [Http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/](http://www.binnenlandsbestuur.nl/)

17 In 2011 181 excavations were conducted in 418 municipalities (source: Archis).

18 It would be more interesting to look at profits, but such figures are hard to find. Only Quote Magazine indicated that the profit of the top-10 of Dutch construction companies was 159 million euro in 2009, which was a very bad year for this sector. This top-10 provided 27% of the total turnover. If they were also producing a quarter of the profit, the total profit may have been 636 million euro (4 × 159). If the archaeological sector costs 34 million euro (58% of a turnover of 60 million), that would be the equivalent of 5.3% of the total profit.

19 Due to the fact that 65% of the Dutch land is used for agriculture.

20 It must be stressed that these developers seem to have good experiences with the municipality archaeologist, the archaeological contractor of the Faculty of Archaeology (Archol BV) and with Leiden University, but this situation does not have to be the same everywhere and results may differ in other regions.

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