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Persistent traditions: a long-term perspective on communities in the process of Neolithisation in the Lower Rhine Area (5500-2500 cal BC)

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Acknowledgements

On September 5, 1977, about half a year before I was born, NASA launched its space probe Voyager 1. Some 36 years later, on September 12, 2013 it was announced that the vessel had left our Solar System. It had become the first man-made object to enter interstellar space on August 25, 2012, as I was nearing the completion of the manuscript of this thesis. Voyager's mission was and is one of scientific discovery, to investigate the outer reaches of our solar system and its planets, as well as the first exploration of what lies beyond. Many parallels with archaeology as well as this research and even myself can be drawn, but in general our contemporaneous voyages have been about exploring, research, and gathering and gaining knowledge, moving both in space and time. While Voyager has entered new territory on its mission, so have I.

On a different level it is evident that a mission like that of Voyager 1, as well as writing a PhD thesis, is never an individual undertaking. Success is dependent on many things and persons that directly or indirectly, professionally or personally contribute to, facilitate, shape and stimulate the achievement of the set goal. As such I want to express my sincere thanks to everyone at 'ground control'.

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Before a manuscript becomes a printed book many things happen to it. For the production or finishing of the many illustrations I thank Medy Oberendorff and Joanne Porck (Faculty of Archaeology) and Walter Laan and colleagues (Archol). Milco Wansleeben I thank for turning some of the raw data into understandable images. For checking the English text I wish to express my thanks to native speakers Alistair Bright, Hylke de Jong and Sasja van der Vaart. For the layout, design and production I thank Corné van Woerdekom and Karsten Wentink of Sidestone Press. I am also grateful to the 'Stichting Rijksmuseum van Oudheden' and the 'Stichting Nederlands Museum voor Anthropologie en Praehistorie' for their financial contribution.

Of course the actual experience of becoming an archaeologist as well as the good times shared with non-archaeological interaction is with those I started out with in Leiden in 1998 and that (I) joined along the way both within and outside my studies. With unintentional omissions I would like to mention Ivo van Wijk, Richard Jansen, Alistair Bright, Dennis Bruggink, Philip Bes, Margriet Stronkhorst, Liesbeth Schuurman, Roos van Oosten, Emile Eimermann, Iris Briels, Yannick Henk, Phil Glaubermann, Claartje Schamp, Erik van Rossenberg, Stijn Arnoldussen, Alice Samson, Zeno Wijtten, Daan Isendoorn, Hylke de Jong, Mirjam Bruineberg, Dianne van de Zande, Tatjana Ivleva, Sasja van der Vaart, Lucas Meurkens, Tom Hamburg, Quentin Bourgeois, Dimitri de Loecker, Eugene Ball, Leon van Hooff, Geeske Langejans, Laura Crowley, the Limburgian Society of Intellectuals in Exile (LGIB), huize Albert and many others. Special thanks go to the PhD lunch and coffee crew who had to endure my endless banter: Gerrit Dusseldorp, Eva Kaptijn, Arne Wossink and Welmoed Out.

While I believe you never really leave the Faculty of Archaeology, I found a new 'home' across the Rapenburg in 2008. At the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden, the National Museum of Antiquities, I was appointed as curator of the Prehistory department. In my application I wrote that I had nearly completed my PhD thesis. Unfortunately that status clung to me a bit longer than I had anticipated. I am therefore very grateful for the trust and support I received from the Museum, both professionally and personally. Although many have expressed their support and provided a listening ear I would particularly like to thank Wim Weijland, Pieter ter Keurs and Annemarieke Willemsen as well as my fellow curators. I wish to say that I find it a privilege to work in an institute with such a proud history, but at least as important, with such good colleagues and friends. I hope to continue to do so for a long time.

Finally I wish to thank my parents Roswitha and Lei Amkreutz and my brother Ruud for the great start I had growing up in St.-Geertruid, where de vuursjteenmijn, de Sjoen Grub and de Kaap are just a dirt road away. They always stimulated me to follow my dreams, which, given this context, eventually and unavoidably led to becoming an archaeologist. I also wish to thank them for their patience, for dealing with or ignoring my moods and for keeping my spirits up over the past years. In particular I also wish to thank Frederike Burghout for that, and even more so for showing me there is more to life than finishing a book.

Let us briefly return to Voyager 1. The power to operate its scientific instruments will run out approximately in 2015, but not so its mission. Voyager 1 will for a long time be the only man-made object to travel farthest from its place of origin, into unknown space. What is peculiar is that apart from it being a message in itself, it also carries one. It harbours a gold-plated audio-visual disc containing greetings

from Earth in many languages and music, as well as the sounds of animals such as whales. The disc is intended as a means of communication, a 'postcard' from Earth in case of an encounter with intelligent life. Instructions as to how to play the record and a needle are also included, in case no phonograph is available.

While we may consider Voyager's disc outdated already I feel it actually is not. Our drive for exploration is born out of curiosity, both for ourselves as well as others. As a result, we try to create a link, to reach out, and this may be both across space and time. As archaeologists we in particular do the same. We marvel at the finds we discover on the field or in our trenches, exactly because we appreciate them as 'postcards' from the past and we do our utmost best to decipher their message using both science and facts as well as experience and imagination. In a sense, making these connections across space and time is perhaps endemic to our human condition. While unlike Voyager's golden disc, most of the material witnesses we find were never intended to be found, I bet the thought must have occurred to our ancestors. I just hope that for the communities I studied this thesis to some extent does them justice.

Luc Amkreutz
Leiden 8 October 2013

't is een kwestie van geduld, rustig wachten op de dag'
Rowwen Hèze -Limburg- (1990)

Met dank aan/Many thanks to:

S·N·M·A·P

Rijksmuseum van Oudheden

Curriculum Vitae

Luc Winand Sophia Wilhelm Amkreutz was born on March 20, 1978 in Heerlen (Limburg, the Netherlands). During his youth in St.-Geertruid he was exposed to the well-known geology and archaeology from the area, in particular the Neolithic flint mines, from an early age.

He attended the Jeanne d'Arc college in Maastricht and graduated in 1997 (VWO). After obtaining a propaedeutic diploma in Dutch law at Maastricht University he moved to Leiden to study archaeology. He specialized in the Prehistory of Northwest Europe and graduated (*cum laude*) in 2004. His MA thesis dealt with the discovery, analysis and interpretation of *Linearbandkeramik* sites on the lower Meuse terrace. During his studies he participated in numerous excavations and surveys in the Netherlands and abroad (Belgium, France, Jordan and the Caribbean).

Between 2004 and 2008 he worked as a PhD student in the Leiden University research group 'From Hardinxveld to Noordhoorn – From Forager to Farmer', directed by Prof. dr. L.P. Louwe Kooijmans (NWO Malta Harvest programme). This dissertation is one of its results.

From 2008 onwards he has been working at the Rijksmuseum van Oudheden (National Museum of Antiquities) in Leiden as curator of the Prehistory of the Netherlands. He was involved in the new permanent exhibition 'Archaeology of the Netherlands' which opened in 2011. He also was part of the NWO Odyssey research programme 'The LBK revisited: 'forgotten' research into the bandkeramik occupation of the Low Countries'. While maintaining a broad scope on Prehistory in general, his research interests focus on Stone Age archaeology and the Mesolithic and Neolithic in particular.