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Digging holes abroad. An ethnography of Dutch archaeological research projects abroad.

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Chapter One: Introduction

1.1 INTRODUCTION

As a result of both the nature and history of international archaeological efforts, western academic archaeologists and institutions play a substantial role in the research, management and development of archaeological heritage around the world. Over the last few decades, this ‘archaeology abroad’¹ has increasingly had to abandon its ‘ivory tower’ position in order to investigate, negotiate and develop its position and role in global society. This has led to considerable changes and demands to the undertaking of academic research projects abroad. The way in which the conduct and discourse of research archaeology abroad relates to the values and interests of others in society, and the processes by which archaeologists negotiate and construct their role and responsibility within archaeological, heritage and broader social contexts, are the main issues under investigation in this study. Specific attention will be given to the relationship between ‘collaborative’ policies and approaches with actual field practice.

This study is contextualized within the ‘Archaeology in Contemporary Europe’ project.² It brings forward an ethnographic and discursive analysis of two Dutch archaeological research projects abroad undertaken by the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University – notably the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Santa Barbara Project in Curaçao. By focusing on the ways and extents to which these research projects are influenced by different policy and funding programs for distinct social contexts abroad, and by investigating the operational systems, social relationships and dominating values and discourses that determine project practices, this study explores *how* archaeological research projects abroad work in their social context. As an ethnography, my interest is therefore not so much in archaeological research outcomes, but rather in project processes.

As part of the ethnography, I will also reflect upon the role and responsibility of archaeologists in relation to the values and demands of others when working abroad. Taken together, I therefore hope that this research can contribute to critical debates in archaeology that call for a self-reflexive collaborative archaeology that actively and ethically engages with community concerns – in the sense of facilitating and engaging their wishes and values in processes of archaeological research, heritage management and collaboration.

¹ With ‘archaeology abroad’, I refer in this study to archaeological research and heritage management projects undertaken by European practitioners and institutions that take place in areas that lie outside the geographic metropolitan borders of European nation states, and outside the direct sphere of enforcement of their national cultural and archaeological policies. For a detailed discussion on this terminology, please refer to section 3.2.1.

² ‘Archaeology in Contemporary Europe’ (ACE) is an international research project funded by the Culture 2007 Program of the European Commission, in which the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University is participating. The author was responsible in this project for the research theme ‘European Archaeology Abroad’, which has led to an edited volume (Van der Linde *et al.* forthcoming) that entails a comparative analysis of the historical and contemporary frameworks of European collaborative practices in foreign contexts. This study is contextualised in this research framework, particularly in relation to the article ‘Dutch Archaeology Abroad’ (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming), which outlines the historical overview of Dutch practices abroad.

1.2 THE SOCIAL CONTEXT OF ARCHAEOLOGY

Investigations into the social context of archaeology have changed our discipline considerably – both as a topic of research, as well as through its influence on the conduct and discourse of the discipline. Although self-reflexive accounts of archaeology already appeared around the mid 20th century (Trigger 2008, 188), it was especially during the 1980's that investigations into the social context of archaeology took flight (see for example Leone *et al.* 1987; Shanks & Tilley 1988; Trigger 1984a; Ucko 1983). Since then, attempts to incorporate the social context more explicitly into the theory and conduct of archaeology – most notably by taking into account the values and interests of other groups in society – have been met with differing degrees of acceptance and rejection (Geurds 2007, 45).

The ways in which archaeology has dealt with, or was influenced by its social context has subsequently seen many forms. In line with the research undertaken by Kathryn Lafrenz Samuels (2008) on the central role of the concept of heritage value within archaeology, heritage management and society, I distinguish the following three interrelated themes within investigations of the social context of archaeology; a) multivocality and community collaboration, b) archaeological heritage management, and c) politics and power in archaeological decision-making.

The first process through which the social context of archaeology came into play, was within discussions on the interpretation of archaeological materials, most notably by means of the concept of 'multivocality'. This concept, which appeared from the 1980's onwards in post-processual and interpretive archaeology (see section 2.2), generally refers to the idea that people with different social backgrounds and interests will construct, or interpret, the meaning of the past differently (Hodder 2005). Questioning the idea that narratives about the past could be tested against objective data, and coupled with a concern for power inequalities and social injustice, this contributed to calls within the archaeological discipline in predominantly 'Anglo-American' contexts to better accommodate alternative, subaltern and multivocal perspectives into archaeological interpretations (Fawcett *et al.* 2008; Habu *et al.* 2008). Since then, archaeologists across the world have increasingly tried to take the values and interests of descendant peoples, local communities and other members of the general public towards the interpretation and investigation of the past into account, leading to concepts and methodologies such as 'public archaeology', 'community archaeology', 'indigenous archaeology', and, more recently, 'collaborative archaeology' (Hollowell & Nicholas 2009, 142).

Another process through which archaeologists have been confronted to deal with the values and interests of others in society, is that in the field of heritage management. Presently, it is probably safe to assume that the conduct and discourse of archaeology in western contexts has become increasingly governed and regulated by policies and theories of archaeological heritage management (Smith 2001; 2004). The implementation of the Malta Convention (Council of Europe 1992) in Europe, a result of the perceived need to mitigate the impacts of development on archaeological sites and materials, for instance meant that the undertaking of research-driven excavation projects by academic institutions became less apparent (Van der Linde *et al.* forthcoming). Not only did the emphasis on in-situ preservation in these policies mean that excavation projects guided purely by research questions at unthreatened sites became problematic, but the call for the inclusion of a developer-funded archaeology in the planning process also meant that governmental and research institutions in many western countries have had to abandon their monopoly on archaeological fieldwork. Presently, contract archaeologists in Western Europe are vastly outnumbering academic archaeologists, and many academic institutions have had to adapt to the demands of commercialisation, professionalisation, accountability and quality assurance.

Now that these ‘western’ theories and practices of archaeological heritage management are slowly being transferred to the global scale through scholarly debates, overseas policies, and international heritage agencies (Lafrenz Samuels 2008; and see for example Naffé *et al.* 2009), research traditions of European academic institutions are also becoming confronted with the concerns and practicalities of these heritage management policies when working abroad. The same can be said in relation to international commercial and extractive industries, which have increasingly started to incorporate heritage management guidelines in their own development activities – the ‘resource guide for integrating cultural heritage in communities work’ by the mining corporation Rio Tinto constituting a recent example (Rio Tinto 2011).

The social context of archaeology in the field of heritage management is however not solely limited to managing the processes by which the archaeological record is investigated and preserved. The past few decades, organisations such as UNESCO, the Getty Conservation Institute and ICOMOS have increasingly brought forward the idea that the archaeological process is just one element in an integrated and holistic approach to managing heritage sites and cultural landscapes in society, and that archaeological interventions should be intrinsically linked to other heritage management issues such as conservation, cultural tourism, education, urban planning and community development (Williams & Van der Linde 2006). Underlying most of these approaches and policies is the idea that not only the past, but also the definition and valorisation of cultural heritage is socially constructed (Smith 2006; Ashworth & Tunbridge 1996; Duineveld 2006; Van Assche 2004),³ which has contributed to calls to take the values and interests of other stakeholders into account as well – an idea perhaps most clearly brought forward by the Australian ICOMOS ‘Burra Charter’ (1999). In this sense, it should be noted that archaeological research practice and heritage management are part of the same process in terms of identifying and producing heritage values (Lafrenz Samuels 2008).⁴ In other words, archaeology is inherently linked to heritage-making and heritage discourses, which means that archaeological practitioners can no longer hide behind a notion of a value-free, neutral science.

Coupled with the emphasis within critical archaeology on the motivations and power of archaeological researchers in the interpretive process, this idea of archaeological interpretations as social constructions in contemporary discourses has strengthened the awareness that claims and narratives of the past are intrinsically linked to political and ideological influences.⁵ The third theme in archaeology along which social context can be approached, is therefore about investigations into the power and politics of the past. These include for instance those into the ideological, historical and political entanglements of archaeology with nationalism, colonialism, globalism or capitalism (see for example Diaz-Andreu & Champion 1996; García Diaz-Andreu 2007; Hamilakis & Duke 2007; Meskell 1998; Kohl 1998; Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Silberman & Small 1997; Trigger 2006), as well as into the hegemony of western values in archaeology and heritage management (see for example Byrne 1991; Cleere 1989a; 1989b; Smith 2006; Ucko 1995; and see Fienieg *et al.* 2008, 32-36).⁶ More recently, this has also included a focus on existing (unequal) power relationships in archaeological decision-making. The newly emerging field of ‘postcolonial archaeology’ has thereby actively called for ‘decolonizing’ the discourse and conduct of archaeology by challenging essentialism and colonial discourses in archaeology (for a recent overview, see Liebmann & Rizvi 2008), and by trying to break down existing power structures in the management and investigation of the past through applying community-based, participatory approaches (Greer *et al.* 2002;

³ See sections 2.4 and 2.5.

⁴ See section 2.3.

⁵ After Geurds (2007, 45).

⁶ These pages refer specifically to the contribution by the author in this book section.

Hollowell & Nicholas 2009; Moser *et al.* 2002; Marshall 2002), as well as through legislation such as ‘NAGPRA’, the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act of 1990 (Liebmann 2008b).⁷

All of the three above mentioned themes are of course strongly interrelated, and all have played an important role in developing new archaeological policies, theories and methodologies that aim to better accommodate the needs and wishes of other demands in society. As I will discuss below, there remains however a widespread discussion and disagreement over what exactly ‘community-based’ (Moser *et al.* 2002; Marshall 2002; Geurds 2007), ‘collaborative’ (LaSalle 2010; Geurds 2011), ‘ethical’ (Meskell & Pels 2005a; Scarre & Scarre 2007; Tarlow 2001; Zimmerman *et al.* 2003), or ‘postcolonial’ archaeology (Pagán Jiménez & Rodríguez Ramos 2008; Liebmann & Rizvi 2008) entails, and how it relates to actual practice. Nevertheless, it can be summarised for now that the three themes have illustrated at least that the social context of our practices matter. The way in which we deal with other peoples views, values and interests in the interpretation and investigation of archaeological pasts and materials, the way in which we integrate our archaeological narratives and practices with other demands in the heritage field and with processes of heritage-making, and the way in which we deal with power differences in both these processes; all remain as challenging issues when undertaking archaeological projects in society.

1.3 DIGGING HOLES ABROAD

Although most of the above-mentioned critiques and issues have been addressed and developed mostly within western contexts (and arguably primarily within the ‘Anglo-American’ contexts of Australia, the UK and the USA), they also form the framework along which the ethics and socio-political and cultural contexts of European archaeological practice in non-western contexts are currently investigated and understood. Indeed, challenges deriving from the social context of archaeology arguably become even more paramount and pressing when western academics are ‘digging holes abroad’. Differences in legislative frameworks, historical power relationships, education, language, religion, political infrastructure, living standards and/or cultural identity, especially when coupled with the issue of “who gets to interpret whose history” (Geurds 2007, 45) are some of the contributing factors to this. Another complicating issue that many archaeologists are faced with in such contexts, is when less-developed economies do not have sufficient legislative, financial and professional means to deal with the threats of looting, illicit trade and the increasing globalisation of development and tourism pressures on archaeological resources (Lilley 2011, 1; Breen & Rhodes 2010).⁸ When western academics are confronted with the legacy of former colonialist institutional frameworks, with newly developing archaeological infrastructures, and/or with communities in extreme poverty it is therefore also not uncommon for archaeological projects to become entangled with overseas cultural policies and aid programmes that see cultural heritage primarily as a path towards progress, applying concepts such as ‘sustainable development’, ‘poverty reduction’ and ‘capacity building’ (Cernea 2001; Williams & Van der Linde 2006; see Van der Linde & Van den Dries forthcoming and Fienieg *et al.* 2008 for examples of such European international cultural policies). Simultaneously, archaeology in such circumstances is increasingly confronted with the spread of heritage management concerns in the context of activities by international development industries and policies of international organisations such as the World Bank (Lilley 2008; 2011; Lafrenz Samuels 2010), which brings with it both dangers and opportunities with regards to ethical

⁷ See U.S. National Parks Service, National NAGPRA. Available at: www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra [Accessed July 02, 2012].

⁸ Such contexts – often, but not exclusively situated in postcolonial nations – have brought forward archaeological frameworks that have by some been described as ‘Third World Archaeologies’ (Chakrabarti 2001, 1191-1193).

conduct in relation to community involvement, economic development and capacity building (Van der Linde 2011).

Taken together, the total of demands, interests, needs and responsibilities that the social context asks of individual archaeologists working abroad is – admittedly – enormous. The need to balance ethical, moral and responsible behaviour towards other groups in society, towards the archaeological record and towards science,⁹ whilst simultaneously trying to make a living in a context of decreasing financial opportunities for purely academic archaeological research,¹⁰ can therefore be a challenge, to say the least.

1.4 CURRENT PERSPECTIVES AND THEIR RELATIONSHIP WITH DUTCH PRACTICES

I have already mentioned several policies, methodologies and critiques that have been brought forward in order to guide the practice of archaeologists in society. Below, I will discuss the relationship of these policies, methodologies and critiques with actual practice, in particular in relation to my personal experience as an archaeological and heritage practitioner in the context of Dutch archaeology abroad. In order to do so, I will continue this introduction by dividing the current critiques, policies and theories not only along the lines of the three above-mentioned themes, but also on the basis of their (often implicit) perspective on the relationship between social context and actual archaeological practice.

Critiques in the theme of ‘multivocality and community collaboration’ have traditionally focused on ‘improving’ the theoretical and epistemological frameworks of archaeology in order to better accommodate for alternative, subaltern and local views in the interpretation and investigation of archaeological pasts and materials. Together, these have brought forward a range of new archaeological paradigms and methodologies, such as ‘postcolonial archaeology’, ‘indigenous archaeology’, ‘community archaeology’, and more recently, ‘collaborative archaeology’. Critiques in the theme of ‘archaeological heritage management’ traditionally focused on improving and designing new policy guidelines, models and ‘ethical’ guidelines. These have led to a huge array of professional and ethical codes of conduct on how to interact for example with developers and/or descendant communities (such as those by the World Archaeological Congress (1990) and the Society for American Archaeologists (1996)), cultural policies (such as NAGPRA 1990), and charters and conventions (such as the 1999 Australian ICOMOS ‘Burra Charter’ and the 1990 ICAHM Charter for the Protection and Management of the Archaeological Heritage). Building loosely upon distinctions made between opposing views on the relationship between policy and practice in development sociology (cf Mosse 2005, 2-6; Van Gastel & Nuijten 2005, 85-87),¹¹ I label both these types of critiques as *instrumental perspectives*.

Critiques in the theme of ‘power and politics in archaeology’ are concerned mostly with differences in decision-making power, political uses of archaeological knowledge and interpretations, and with the hegemony of western values and perspectives in archaeological heritage practices. Such critiques often work from the idea that archaeology is ‘western’, ‘imperialist’, ‘nationalist’ or ‘colonial’ by nature, bringing forward works and critiques that expose the socio-political impact of archaeological research on local and descendent minority groups. Fundamental critical accounts in these include studies into the

⁹ As will be discussed in chapter 4, some archaeologists even feel this responsibility towards the people of the past, by trying to reconstruct the lives of past people as correctly as possible.

¹⁰ Decreasing financial opportunities for purely research-led archaeology abroad can be distilled for instance in relation to European archaeology abroad (see Van der Linde *et al.* forthcoming), and also in the Netherlands (KNAW 2007).

¹¹ See section 2.5.

hegemony of western values in heritage management (such as for example Byrne 1991; Cleere 1989a; 1989b, Hamilakis & Duke 2007; Trigger 1984b; Ucko 1995) as well as into ‘authorised’ heritage discourses that favour professional, governmental, objective and expert approaches to the past over subaltern and alternative heritage discourses and historical narratives (Smith 2006; Smith & Waterton 2009; Waterton *et al.* 2006).¹² These I refer to as the *critical perspectives*.

Many of these theories, policies and critiques that the above-discussed instrumental and critical perspectives brought forward, I learned about during my MA Managing Archaeological Sites at University College London (2004). When I returned several years later to the Netherlands, they also gave rise to my original ambition to undertake a PhD research on the ethics of Dutch archaeological practice in foreign social contexts. As a country without a specific national government institution that regulates and prescribes overseas archaeology directly, without specific enforceable codes of conduct in foreign contexts, without a strong tradition of post-processual archaeology and without a strong – if any – history of local indigenous resistance to archaeological heritage management (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming; Willems 2009), I easily (and perhaps naively I might add with hindsight) convinced myself that Dutch archaeology abroad must be devoid of a firm awareness of other interests and responsibilities in its social context – and that illustrating this, and developing a proper ethical policy would be sufficient to change this. However, I soon realised that the practices and intentions of many Dutch archaeologists working abroad were of course not devoid of an awareness of their impact upon socio-cultural and economic local contexts. In addition, I realised that none of the above-discussed codes, theories or critiques could be regarded as prerequisites for ethical relationships between archaeologists and others in society, and that the labelling of projects as ‘postcolonial’, ‘ethical’ or ‘successful’ was much more problematic than simply evaluating the degree to which policies were implemented. In short, the policies, theories and strategies behind archaeological research projects abroad did not seem to have a simple one-to-one relationship with practice.

As such, I felt that there were several assumptions and preconceptions behind the theories, policies and critiques that were produced in the current three themes in archaeology that investigated social context, and that they did not match my experiences and encounters with the actual practice of Dutch archaeology abroad. I also realised that these assumptions could lead to incomplete and/or incorrect understandings of the social context of archaeology when left unquestioned, and as such, even to difficulties when attempting to implement these perspectives in daily archaeological practice.

The first of these is the (often implicitly) assumed universal applicability and enforceability of many contemporary archaeological codes, laws and regulations (Tarlow 2001; Meskell & Pels 2005a).¹³ Whilst my experience of contract archaeology in the UK and in the Netherlands for example leaves me in no doubt that “codes of practice, however dreary and unreflexive, have helped extend professional practitioners beyond their comfort zone and denied space to the blatantly unethical”, there are many problems to be faced in advancing and enforcing such policies and codes beyond the national borders of their sponsoring organisations (Perring & Van der Linde 2009, 204-205).

Codes of professional conduct such as those by the Society for American Archaeologists (1996), the UK Institute for Archaeologists (2010 - revised), and the Dutch NVvA (2001), have mostly been developed to address the conflicts of interest that arise in the conduct of commercially funded

¹² I will look at these issues in more detail in section 2.4

¹³ In the coming two paragraphs, I draw on previous work by the author, published elsewhere during the course of this study; see Perring & Van der Linde 2009.

archaeological work by private and profit-making bodies (cf Lynott & Wylie 2000, 35). However, many of my Dutch archaeological colleagues working abroad had not (consciously) signed up to such codes,¹⁴ not in the least because they were not enforceable and obligatory outside the Netherlands. International codes such as the Code of Ethics by the World Archaeology Congress, first adopted in 1990 (World Archaeology Congress 1990), are also not obligatory for Dutch archaeologists to adhere to when conducting archaeology anywhere in the world. As Tarlow has pointed out, there are also problems within these codes when concepts and approaches are translated from one context to another: concepts of indigenism that might be progressive in some post-colonial circumstances can become reactionary in others, where they can be perceived as xenophobic and nationalistic (Tarlow 2001; cf Perring & Van der Linde 2009, 204). These issues make it not only difficult, and potentially dangerous, to universalise codes of ethics – but also worthwhile investigating what the impact is of current ethical codes on archaeological practitioners, and what the underlying values and concepts are behind these. In addition, heritage legislation such as NAGPRA 1990,¹⁵ and national charters such as the 1999 Australian ICOMOS ‘Burra Charter’, have been primarily developed in the USA and in Australia respectively, countries where postcolonial and indigenous issues play a role within the national and legal scope of these countries themselves. The same is true for the critiques on the entanglement between politics, power and decision-making in critical, interpretive and social archaeologies, which by and large have been developed under the influence of post-processual, social and critical archaeological movements in Anglo-American contexts. It is therefore worth exploring how these relate to archaeological traditions in north-western Europe, such as those by the Netherlands.¹⁶ Here, local indigenous issues do not play a direct role in legislation and theory, and legislation as such has rather been developed to deal with the relationship between archaeologists and developers, where heritage preservation is often seen as a responsibility of the state. One can wonder however if these are applicable guidelines when legislations are confronted with ‘postcolonial’ issues in social contexts abroad, where ethical considerations are often much more geared towards relationships between archaeologists and descendant communities, and towards accommodating calls for alternative conceptions and ownership of heritage as opposed to a ‘stewardship’ by the state.¹⁷ Such things matter, especially now that the European ‘Malta Convention’ (Council of Europe 1992) is also being transferred to for instance the African continent (Naffé *et al.* 2009), and to overseas territories of European nation states such as in the Caribbean – an issue that I will look at in much more detail in chapter 5.

A second assumption is the idea that archaeological practice is driven mainly by single heritage policies and discourses. However, in the case of the Netherlands, there is no specific cultural policy that directs and oversees archaeological conduct abroad; archaeological projects are often rather the result of a myriad of funding policies, institutional policies, and governmental policies in the field of culture, science and foreign affairs (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming). In addition, most of the above-mentioned critiques in the critical perspectives, often work from the basis that archaeology is western, imperialist and colonial by nature, and that field practice is the logical result of a single hegemonic discursive process. Both these notions seem to forego the role that individual practitioners play in designing, negotiating and determining practice; in reality, project outcomes are the result of negotiations between opposing, sometimes conflicting values, motivations and discourses between archaeologists and other stakeholders, often

¹⁴ This view was distilled through informal conversations with Dutch colleagues during the early years of my PhD research (2008-2010).

¹⁵ See U.S. National Parks Service, National NAGPRA. Available at: www.cr.nps.gov/nagpra [Accessed July 02, 2012].

¹⁶ For a discussion on ‘European Archaeology’, see Archaeological Dialogues 2008, Special Issue: Archaeology of Europe, the 2007 EAA Archaeological Dialogues Forum. *Archaeological Dialogues* (15)1.

¹⁷ See discussion section 2.4.

embedded within strict historical institutional and power relationships. Investigating the processes by which such negotiations and heritage discourses are shaped seems therefore worthwhile.

There is another problem related to the assumption that practice is driven by policy, and that is the idea that there somehow is a one-to-one relationship between theory and policy on the one hand, with actual practice on the other. As a result, ‘failures’ of archaeological projects (in terms of unethical behaviour, destruction of archaeological resources, or low quality science for instance) are often regarded as being the result of having the wrong theories, policies and regulations. But as any practitioner knows, successful implementation of a project is dependent on many other issues. From my own experience through working at archaeological sites in Mali, Palestine and Turkmenistan, I know that the (often rather vague) concepts such as ‘community archaeology’, ‘capacity building’, ‘sustainability’, ‘quality management’ and ‘joint partnerships’ are much harder to implement than theory or the best of intentions want us to believe. During my own fieldwork, I have also experienced how the power base in research, management, decision-making and benefits often continued to be skewed towards the outside researchers - to us, archaeologists from the Netherlands and the UK – despite our best of intentions to ‘decolonize’ our practices. Scarcity of available time, expertise and resources, but especially competing, more powerful demands to the archaeological process and miscommunication about each others expectations were the most pressing contributing factors in this. Our ‘failure’ to come to shared benefits and power in decision-making in these instances was therefore not so much a matter of having the wrong theory or policy, but rather one of implementation and competing demands and power struggles over the archaeological and heritage process. The way in which these ‘good intentions’ behind ‘community’ and ‘collaborative’ archaeology relate to actual practice, and the way in which these outcomes are influenced by the historical, political and funding frameworks of academic archaeology (La Salle 2010), are therefore topics worthwhile exploring in this study.

We could therefore also ask ourselves if the way in which projects are planned and represented in literature and project policies and reports, reliably reflect actual practice. In my initial research and experience, I came across Dutch projects that were actively advocating indigenous archaeologies and spending time and energy on conservation, training and education – without being driven by dedicated heritage policies and theories, and without representing their methods and theories as post-processual and postcolonial archaeology. On the other hand, I encountered an archaeological project that had been criticised for not giving enough attention to poverty alleviation – even though I knew that it was regarded and represented as an example of international collaboration and of ethical heritage practice by several Dutch governmental organisations. As such, it became clear to me that perceptions of success and failure could be conflicting and change rapidly, often despite a continuation of actual field practices.

Finally, I came to realise that binary oppositions and dichotomies such as western versus non-western, global versus local, processual versus post-processual, coloniser versus colonised, archaeologist versus developer and policy versus practice were often impractical when faced with the shades of grey of daily practice (cf Hodder 2008, 197-199). Local archaeologists who want to learn how to *do* processual and technical archaeology, instead of having to attend workshops and listening to western academics and consultants talking about participatory post-modern planning approaches; government representatives who actively limit our intentions to empower local archaeologists; communities in oppressed regimes who are not used to being asked anything and instead expect us to act as experts; archaeologists that are faced with a choice to combat destruction through working together with the military; local communities that expect us to address poverty issues whilst our funders are only willing to pay for research; or western archaeologists that are supporting imbalanced power structures in host communities because they are afraid of being accused of neo-colonialism - these are just a few examples of the complex social situations in which archaeologists have to negotiate their practices.

1.5 AN ETHNOGRAPHIC APPROACH TO ARCHAEOLOGICAL RESEARCH PROJECTS ABROAD

To summarise, I believe that the current perspectives on the social context of archaeology often look either to the future – by trying to devise better policies, better theories and better ethical codes, trusting that these are neutral problem-solving mechanisms that will lead to better practice (cf Van Gastel & Nuijten 2005, 86), or critically to the past, through “show-and-tell ethical confessionary books” (Doeser 2008, 131) that see western archaeological projects and policies in the context of a colonial and hegemonic order that automatically favours western values over other values.¹⁸

But even though all of these critiques, theories and policies have contributed to awareness, debate and orientating practice, they pay little attention to the complex relationship between project policy, discourse and practice.¹⁹ As a result, little attention is often being paid to analysing the underlying processes by which archaeological research projects are developed, negotiated and implemented in social contexts abroad, and to the impact of the motivations, interests and personal backgrounds of archaeologists and other actors on project outcomes. In this sense, it is good to remember that “ultimately, archaeology is practiced by individuals making their own decisions, evaluations and ethical judgements, and expressing the intentions and motivations for their work through interactions and relationships with other individuals and communities“ (Viner *et al.* 2008).

The difficulties to implement policies and theories, the huge array of competing demands that practitioners are facing when undertaking archaeological projects abroad, and a general belief amongst many archaeologists that too often, critiques constructed from moral theoretical high-grounds by ‘desk-based academics’ has overshadowed the best of their intentions, are therefore probably some of the reasons why some of my Dutch archaeological colleagues were initially acting reserved and defensively when I explained to them that my research dealt with the ethics and social context of archaeological projects.²⁰ Realising that there was a gap between the current archaeological perspectives on social context and my encounters with Dutch archaeology abroad, I decided that I would not try to develop new ethical guidelines, management models or new archaeological theory and systems of interpretation, as inherent in the ‘instrumental’ perspectives outlined above. Nor would I position myself solely within the ‘critical’ perspective, in the sense of evaluating archaeological project outcomes as being the automatic result of colonial, hegemonic and western processes of power (cf Mosse 2005, 2). Rather, I use in this study an *ethnographic* perspective towards archaeology (cf Castañeda & Matthews 2008; Edgeworth 2006; Hamilakis & Anagnostopoulis 2009; LaSalle 2010; Meskell 2005a) that investigates what archaeology does ‘outside academia’ (Smith 2004, 1), and that focuses on the “disjuncture of what we do and what we say we do” (Witmore 2006, 1). Primarily, this study therefore aims to investigate *how* Dutch archaeological research projects abroad work in their social context. Secondly, it aims to reflect on the role and responsibility of Dutch archaeologists in relation to the needs and wishes of others when working abroad.

¹⁸ The line of argumentation in this paragraph and the next was inspired by the work of Mosse (2005, 1-7) and Van Gastel & Nuijten (2005, 85-90) on the policy-practice nexus in western development aid.

¹⁹ With ‘project policy’ I broadly refer to project proposals and programs as developed by archaeological actors – as a specific reflection of a myriad of funding programs in the field of culture, research and foreign affairs, institutional policies, cultural and archaeological policies, ethical codes, management models, archaeological theory, and so on (see section 2.6).

²⁰ During the early phase of my research (2008-2009), I encountered several such cautious and almost defensive critiques during informal discussions with colleagues from Leiden University.

I have addressed these two research aims by undertaking an ethnography of Dutch archaeological research projects abroad. I explored the way in which the values and discourses of archaeological practitioners, institutions and policies relate to those of others in society, and how archaeological heritage policies, theories and aspirations relate to actual practice. In addition, I examined the processes by which archaeologists negotiate and construct their role, place and decision-making power within archaeological, heritage and broader social contexts, especially with regards to community involvement and collaboration.²¹

In particular, this study analyses and describes two research projects undertaken by the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University – one of them undertaken in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, and one of them in Curaçao, now an autonomous country within the Kingdom of the Netherlands, but before 10 October 2010 part of the Netherlands Antilles. Both of these projects can be placed within long but distinctively different geographical research traditions in the Netherlands (notably ‘Near Eastern Archaeology’ and ‘Caribbean Archaeology’), and both of these projects operate within different political, legislative and financial frameworks. In addition, the concept of ‘archaeology abroad’ is obviously different - whilst the project in Jordan could be described as ‘transcultural’ and ‘transnational’, such a definition is less suitable for Curaçao, due to the strong historical and contemporary political and cultural influence of the Netherlands. However, it is precisely because of these differences and nuances that these projects were selected as case studies, as I will discuss in more detail in section 3.2.1.

Within this ethnographic study, archaeological research projects abroad²² are considered as networks of interlinked and sometimes contested interests, values and discourses towards the investigation and management of archaeological ‘heritage’ sites between archaeologists and other actors in a broad spatial and temporal scale. By following for example the motivations of those who fund archaeological research in government offices in the Hague, all the way to the perception of benefits by a local imam in a village in Jordan, this study focuses on the processes by which different values and discourses are negotiated through space and time, and how through this, certain discourses are given prevalence over others. A central argument that will be developed is the idea that these interrelations can be made explicit through applying an ethnographic approach in which the concepts of value and discourse are brought forward as analytical tools. The concept of value will be considered as an appropriate analytic because it currently plays a central role in both the practice and theory of several interconnected fields of the archaeological discipline that are relevant for understanding the social contexts of archaeological conduct (cf Lafrenz Samuels 2008),²³ but also because a theoretical and conceptual exploration of value in relation to heritage discourses can help us bring to light the diverse and conflicting beliefs, motivations and perceived responsibilities of actors. It should be noted that discussions on values within this study do not refer so much to values in the sense of guiding principles on what is moral, ethical or just, but rather to value in the sense of those qualities that are ascribed by actors to archaeological materials, sites and projects (Mason & Avrami 2002, 15-16). The analysis of the way in which projects work in their social context will as such be inspired by looking at value-based stakeholder models in heritage management literature (see for example Avrami *et al.* 2000; De la Torre 2002; Truscott & Young 2000; Teutonico & Palumbo 2002).

²¹ For a detailed description of the research aims and questions, please refer to the end of section 2.6

²² For a description of ‘archaeological research projects abroad’, please refer to section 3.2.1. as well as to note 1 in this chapter.

²³ See section 2.3.

This research has been undertaken from an interpretive perspective, based upon a social constructivist view towards society, heritage and the past (inspired by for example Ashworth *et al.* 2007; Duineveld 2006; Van Assche 2004). It combines ethnographic research with a discursive approach towards heritage policies and processes, which is inspired by approaches in archaeology, heritage studies, development sociology, the anthropology of policy and political sciences, drawing notably on the works by Smith (2004; 2006), Mosse (2004; 2005), Latour (1996; 2005) and Hajer (1995; 2005).

Dutch research archaeology abroad, from the point of view of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, has been my point of departure – it can be considered as the ‘culture’ that this ethnography investigates, focusing in particular on the two case studies as mentioned above. The methodology has been based upon fieldwork, semi-structured and open interviews, written documents, and participant observation – which will all be considered as qualitative data in this study.

This ethnography will go further than mere description by building arguments on the basis of discursive analysis of archaeological project policies and practices and on the basis of an ethnographic analysis that is informed by sensitising themes and concepts, as inspired by instances of constructivist grounded theory (see Charmaz 2000; 2006). As such, this ‘reflexive’ account of archaeological practice will include an analysis of my own positionality in relation to “project members and the social dynamics and processes in which research is embedded” (Castañeda 2008, 48), as well as of the literature that influenced my argumentations. The latter will be investigated in chapter 2, bringing forward a range of issues and ideas that together inform the conceptual framework that will support the analysis throughout this study.

1.6 A CRITICAL AND REFLEXIVE ACCOUNT

I wish to stress that I took this approach not to *judge* whether the two Dutch research projects are ‘ethical’, ‘successful’, or even ‘(post-)colonial’; rather, I wish to understand *how* the project worked within wider social and political frameworks. It is therefore not my intention to provide an analysis that can be read as a negative criticism. In line with Mosse’s clarification of his ethnographic analysis of aid policy and practice (2005, x-xi), I want to clarify here that first of all, as an ethnographic study, my aim was not to provide a full historical evaluation of the two Dutch projects and their accomplishments, nor do I wish to provide a judgement of success. It should rather be regarded as a contribution to the understanding of the role of the personal, historical and institutional frameworks and discourses of academic archaeological projects in social contexts abroad, contributing to the field of archaeological heritage management and to the emerging body of work that deal with ethnographies of archaeology in particular.

This interpretive research is influenced by my personal perspectives and background. I accept that I might have influenced the activities, events and views of those actors that I worked with and interviewed as part of my research. I also want to stress, again in agreement with Mosse (2005, xi), that I do not question the sincere commitment, hopes and desires of the actors involved. Just as I, the actors in relation to the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project and the Santa Barbara Project might have made mistakes. Some of the actors have admitted such perceived mistakes as personal failures, but more importantly, I think most ‘mistakes’ could be regarded mostly in light of the discursive conditions and value-networks of Dutch archaeological heritage and research policies, and in light of the historical developments of the archaeological discipline and the institutional relationships that shaped the projects. I will delve in more detail into my ‘research-positioning’ in section 3.3.

1.7 RELEVANCE

Ultimately, this research seeks to inform critical debates in archaeology that call for a self-reflexive archaeological practice that actively and ethically engages with community concerns. As such, this study is relevant to the intersection of the emerging field of archaeological ethnographies with other areas of research that seek to understand the social context of archaeology, such as social archaeology, critical archaeology, interpretive archaeology, postcolonial archaeology and archaeological heritage management – most notably by focusing explicitly on the motivations, discursive practices and relationships of archaeological operators and other actors in society. In addition, it seeks to bring several disciplines together by borrowing insights from the fields of heritage studies, social anthropology, the anthropology of policy and development sociology, and applying these explicitly into an ethnographic and discursive analysis of archaeological practice.

As discussed above, it can also be noted that most ethnographic approaches towards understanding the socio-political contexts of archaeology and heritage management are at present mostly originating from Australia and the USA, with important, although still too few, contributions by non-western and/or indigenous scholars on the more local ramifications of western archaeologies. I hope that this research can contribute to this body of work by providing a view from the Netherlands against the background of continental European archaeology.

Another relevance of this study lies in the potential implications for the institutional and political ramifications of Dutch academic archaeology, and the subsequent impact this might have towards the scope, development and funding of archaeological research projects abroad. Although the translation of this ethnography into specific policy goals lies outside the scope of this study (see section 3.2.1), I will touch upon some of these issues as part of my conclusion in chapter 6.

1.8 STRUCTURE

What remains in this introduction, is to provide an overview of the general structure of this study. Detailed descriptions of the specific structure of the argument will be provided at the start of each individual chapter.

Chapter 2 will deal with the conceptual framework of this study. The first part of the chapter will examine how recent work under the header of ‘ethnographies of archaeology’ can contribute to an understanding of how archaeological research projects abroad work in their social context. The second part of this chapter will discuss the value of combining discursive analysis with ethnographic research, as a way to examine the delicate nexus between policy, discourse, practice and the agency of actors. The end of chapter 2 will tie the conceptual framework together, through describing the analytical tools and sensitising concepts that form the basis of an ethnographic practice approach towards investigating archaeological research projects abroad. This will also bring forward the specific research questions that will be addressed in the two case studies.

Chapter 3 sets out the methodological framework of this study by describing the research approach, methods and modes of analysis. This chapter will also deal with the scope and research design of the two case studies, describing in detail how they were approached, investigated and analysed ‘in the field’, and how they relate to the general research aims and specific research questions. The chapter ends with an investigation into the ‘positionality’ of the researcher. Chapter 4 and 5 will investigate how the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project and the Santa Barbara Project respectively worked in their social contexts, the description of which will follow the order of the research questions as outlined at the end of

chapter 2. As such, they will identify the values and discourses of actors in archaeological project policies with respect to research, heritage management and collaboration, investigate how archaeological actors negotiate these values and discourses in relation to those of others, and explore the influence of this process of policy negotiation upon project outcomes.

The conclusion in chapter 6 will return to the general research aims. As such, it will summarise and discuss the research questions and findings as to be able to understand how Dutch archaeological research projects abroad work in their social context. The study will end with a reflection upon the role and responsibility of archaeologists in relation to the needs and wishes of others in society, which will include a discussion on the value of ethnographies for future practices of archaeological research abroad.

