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

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Citation

Linde, S. J. van der. (2012, December 18). *Digging holes abroad. An ethnography of Dutch archaeological research projects abroad*. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/20406>

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Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



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

Issue Date: 2012-12-18

Chapter Three: Asking Foreign Questions

“I really enjoy these questions. Can I go now?”⁴⁶

3.1 RESEARCH APPROACH

3.1.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter sets out the methodological framework of this study. The research has been undertaken from an interpretive perspective, based upon a constructivist view towards society, heritage and the past. As such, it works from the epistemological assumption that complex social phenomena can only be understood within their context, and that the (co-)construction of meaning is the result of a subjective interrelationship between the researcher and its subject of research (Mills *et al.* 2006, 2). It challenges the ontological realism of positivist science, in the sense of opposing the idea that (knowledge about) the world exists of entities which are outside of human thought, analysis and perception, and that its ‘truth’ can be discovered by applying neutral, objective research methods (Oliver 2004, 28-30). Instead, the constructivist standpoint acknowledges the co-existence of ‘multiple’ realities – in other words, that different people with different social backgrounds, values and interests will understand and interpret their experiences of the world differently (Long 2003, 49).

This interpretive, constructivist standpoint lies at the basis of the issues and topics as discussed within the conceptual framework of chapter 2 – it can be identified within the multi-vocal approaches to the past (section 2.2), within the concept of the ‘multiplicity’ of archaeological sites, communities and heritage values (sections 2.2 and 2.3), as well as within the idea that heritage is a social construction within discourse (sections 2.4 and 2.5). Methodologically, this standpoint has led to a qualitative research approach in which the researcher becomes immersed within the social phenomenon under investigation (cf Trochim 2000).⁴⁷

As was discussed in chapter 2, an ethnographic approach seems therefore appropriate if one wishes to investigate how Dutch research projects abroad work in their social context, and if one wants to reflect upon the role and responsibilities of archaeologists in relation to the needs and wishes of others in society when working abroad. In order to be able to explore these general research aims, this study then takes the foreign research practices of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University as its point of departure, approaching this as the ethnographic ‘culture’ under investigation. Specifically, it does this by bringing two of its research projects forward as case studies which will address the specific research questions that were mentioned at the end of chapter 2 – these are the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and the Santa Barbara Project in Curaçao.

With these general remarks in relation to the qualitative research approach in place, the second part of this section will continue by discussing the methods used and the modes of analysis that have been followed. The subsequent section (3.2) will touch upon the scope and research context of this study, by delving deeper into the choice of case studies. This section will also deal with the research design of these two case

⁴⁶ Interview with a local farmer from Deir Alla at the Deir Alla Station for Archaeological Studies (Deir Alla, June 2009).

⁴⁷ Available at, and quoted from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualapp.php> [Accessed June 10, 2012].

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 will end with an investigation into the ‘positionality’ of the researcher (3.3).

3.1.2 METHODS AND ANALYSIS

With regards to the case studies, this study has applied other qualitative methods – notably semi-structured and open interviews (with over 100 respondents), participant observation (both as an academic researcher situated at the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, as well as part of the fieldwork seasons and/or visits of the case studies under scrutiny), and document analysis (including policy documents, academic publications, newspaper articles and magazines, correspondence, research proposals and websites).⁴⁸

This ethnography of Dutch archaeology abroad will go further than mere description by regarding these methods as yielding qualitative data that can inform an inductive development of arguments. This will be done by bringing forward a combination of ethnographic research with discursive analysis, following the approach as set out in section 2.6. In summary, such an approach combines a method of discursive analysis that regards discourses as existing of ‘practices’, with ethnographic research that investigates how social agents produce, transform and negotiate values, discourses and policies within archaeological research projects. The inductive analysis of this resulting qualitative data, is subsequently inspired by drawing upon the analytical use of ‘sensitising concepts’ as well as upon the specific research questions, as brought forward in the conceptual framework of chapter 2.

According to Blumer (1954), sensitising concepts should be regarded in opposition to definitive concepts or hypotheses, and as providing a “general sense of reference and guidance” to the researcher:

- sensitising concepts merely suggest directions along which to look. The hundreds of our concepts like culture, institutions, social structure, mores, and personality – are not definitive concepts but are sensitising in nature. They lack precise reference and have no bench marks which allow a clean-cut identification of a specific instance and of its content (Blumer 1954, 7)

In line with Charmaz (2000), the complete array of sensitising concepts, or ‘conceptual framework’, can as such be regarded as forming the background ideas against which the specific research methodology and analysis is formed. What this means, is that the literature review along the lines of the three major themes in chapter 2 has inspired and informed the type of issues, topics and questions in my methodology and inductive analysis, by bringing forward a wide range of concepts as ‘interpretive devices’ that formed the starting point for my qualitative study (cf Bowen 2006, 2-3). These sensitising concepts consist first of all of those concepts that play an important role in the social context of archaeology abroad, and that can help to investigate how archaeological projects relate to other demands in society. Important – often overlapping – concepts here for instance included ‘multivocality’, ‘community collaboration’, ‘heritage’, ‘expertise’, ‘significance’, ‘ownership’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘decolonisation’. Secondly, there are those sensitising concepts that were brought forward in order to investigate how projects worked in terms of processes – these include those concepts which were brought together in the framework of a ‘value-based’ management model, where the idea was put forward that the concepts of ‘value’, ‘actors’ and ‘networks’ could function as an interpretive device for illustrating the different motivations, interests and world-views of a range of stakeholders in archaeological projects processes. Another concept that can be included here

⁴⁸ This will be discussed in more detail in section 3.2.2.

is the concept of ‘discourse’, which, in combination with the conceptual framework of the value-based heritage management model and the discussion on ethnographic ‘practice approaches’ towards discourses in section 2.5, drew our attention to sensitising concepts such as ‘power’, ‘policy’, ‘practice’, ‘discourse-coalitions’ and ‘exclusion’.

Taken together, this qualitative approach explicitly draws upon both these types of sensitising concepts through a methodological process whereby data collection, research questions and methods are constantly re-informing each other as to come to inductive analysis of arguments. Although such an approach mirrors the traditional idea of ‘grounded theory’ (Glaser & Strauss 1967), it differs in several ways. Indeed, grounded theory acknowledges the continuing process of data formation and analysis, seeking to build theories inductively out of data derived from studying complex social phenomena (Mills *et al.* 2006). According to especially Glaser (2001), such inductive analysis however has to be undertaken without the ‘contamination’ of literature research prior to data collection as to make sure that analysis is free from pre-conceived notions and categories of analysis (Thornberg 2010). The later work of Strauss (see e.g. Strauss & Corbin 1998) distances itself from such a notion by proposing that literature research can be undertaken prior to the early phases of fieldwork provided it does not lead to overlooking alternative analytical categories. I adhere to such a view on the usability of literature research, by explicitly acknowledging the literature, experiences and sensitising concepts that informed my study as a whole through stressing the relativist and social-constructivist stance as outlined in section 3.1 – acknowledging the idea that reality, and thereby the arguments and theories advanced in analysis, are socially constructed by the researcher. Such an approach therefore mirrors, more precisely, instances of ‘constructivist grounded theory’ as it was brought forward most notably by Charmaz (2000; 2006).

Constructivist grounded theory advocates making the pre-conceived notions, concepts and experiences of the researcher and his/her literature review explicit, most notably by emphasising the continuing interaction between the researcher, his/her ‘research participants’ (that is, the actors and/or respondents that are part of the social phenomenon under investigation), data formation and analysis. Although my inductive analysis in this research is not pre-occupied with developing a ‘grand theory’ but rather by developing arguments in relation to the research questions that stay close to original research data, my research can be said to follow the broad frame of thought of constructivist grounded theory. This is because it lies at the basis of my combination between ethnographic research and discourse analysis, where the sensitising concepts as discussed above have guided my interpretation through treating them as elements and categories of coding, memo-writing and analysis (for a practical overview of the constructivist grounded method, see Charmaz 2006). Most importantly, such an approach acknowledges the call that the analysis should be presented as a written narrative in which the original statements and ideas of the research participants are made clear (Charmaz 2000). This approach, which deals with “the tension that exists between developing a conceptual analysis of participants’ stories and still creating a sense of their presence in the final text” (Mills *et al.* 2006, 7), ultimately acknowledges the influence of the scientific, cultural and social background of the researcher on the subjective interpretation. This issue will be discussed in section 3.3.

With these remarks in relation to the general research approach and methodology in place, I now wish to describe how the research aims, questions, methods and analysis came together in the design and fieldwork of the two case studies (see section 3.2.2). I will begin, however, the next section by delving deeper into the background, scope and relevance of the two case studies under investigation.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

3.2.1 CHOICE OF CASE STUDIES

This study deals with the socio-political, institutional and discursive contexts in which actors construct, negotiate and implement Dutch archaeological research projects in social contexts abroad. Because the Netherlands do not have a specific policy or national government institution that regulates and prescribes overseas archaeology directly (unlike for instance France, see Lévin forthcoming), and because most Dutch archaeology abroad still is (and was) undertaken by knowledge institutions such as universities and museums (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming), I will focus in this study on the ways and extents to which research projects are influenced by different policy and funding programs for distinct social contexts abroad. With ‘Dutch archaeological research projects abroad’, I refer to archaeological projects that are (primarily) conducted outside the national borders of the Netherlands, that are formulated on the basis of research questions and interests by Dutch archaeological scholars and knowledge institutions, and that can be placed within a historically defined research tradition that focuses on the archaeology of an area which lies outside the current European borders of the Netherlands in a geographic sense, and outside the direct sphere of enforcement of Dutch national cultural and archaeological policies and governmental bodies.

Accordingly, the two case studies have been selected on the prerequisite that they constitute projects that can be placed within different geographical research traditions and within different political, legislative and financial frameworks of Dutch archaeology abroad. As such, this research focuses on two research projects undertaken by Leiden University; one of them undertaken in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (with additional comparisons and field practices in the Palestinian Territories, see below), 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.

These case-studies are considered as relevant, and to a certain degree, exemplary for Dutch foreign research projects abroad since 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 (see Louwe Kooijmans 2000, 21; Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming)-, and both of these projects operate within different political, legislative and financial frameworks.

Although these projects are undertaken outside the current European borders of the Netherlands in a geographic sense, and outside the direct influence of Dutch national cultural and archaeological policies and governmental bodies, the nuances of the concept of ‘abroad’ are very different – whilst the project in Jordan can be described as ‘abroad’ in the sense of being ‘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 (see for example Van Oostindie 2008). However, it is precisely because of these differences and nuances that these projects were selected as case studies, since they bring forward different issues in the social context of archaeological projects.

The Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project in Jordan can be placed within one of the longest archaeological research traditions in the Netherlands, which originated out of religious, humanist and scholarly motivations in the late 19th century (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming). It can be characterised by a strong influence of scholarly actors and academic research and funding programs, which more recently has become confronted with the need to accommodate local community issues and national heritage management concerns, and with the need to integrate itself with foreign policies of the Netherlands in order to secure funding. In this respect, it is worth noting that the scope of the Deir Alla Joint

Archaeological Project has been influenced in recent years by the Tell Balata Archaeological Park Project in the Palestinian Territories – a project undertaken by the same Dutch archaeological actors, and one in which the author himself has also become involved as a result of this research (I will draw upon this more extensively in chapter 4).⁴⁹

The Santa Barbara Project in Curaçao constitutes a project in a former colony of the Netherlands where the archeological investigations have become confronted with conflicting actor perspectives over the need and practicalities of integrating itself within the overseas transferral of archaeological heritage management policies by the Netherlands and the Council of Europe. The project is funded by both the private as well as the research sector, and can be placed within a Dutch research tradition that originated in the early 20th century, with a more specific and extensive role for Leiden University since the 1980's. The position of Curaçao in relation to the Netherlands could arguably be described as neither completely 'foreign' nor 'national' (see section 5.2.3) – as part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Curaçao did not fall under the direct influence of Dutch national cultural policies, nor under foreign cultural policies such as the 'Common Cultural Heritage Policy'.⁵⁰

Several other arguments played a role in the choice of case studies. In order for the case studies to allow for an investigation of actor negotiations in the social context of archaeology, they had to constitute projects where a wide range of both global and local actors interact within the 'social interface' (cf Long 2003; see above). Also, the case studies had to constitute research projects that are confronted with the three major issues as brought forward by the themes along which the social context of archaeology has been identified in the introduction, and which were further investigated in the conceptual framework of chapter 2. To rephrase these slightly differently, these are the way in which we deal with the views, values and interests of communities in the investigations and interpretations of the past, the way in which we integrate our archaeological narratives and practices with other demands and with processes of heritage management, and the way in which we deal with power differences in both these processes. In order to investigate these issues, case studies were chosen that bring to the fore the different types of social relationships on which discussions of archaeological ethics and professional codes have traditionally been focusing (see section 2.4). As summarised by Aitchison (2007), this is on the one hand the relationship between archaeologists, the research process and developers, focusing on ethical concerns that arise out of the need to mitigate the impact of globalisation and development within contract archaeology (including issues such as quality control and accountability), and on the other hand, the relationship between archaeologists and local communities and project partners – which traditionally focused on repatriation, illicit trade and the treatment of human remains, but which more recently also includes postcolonial dilemmas such as the involvement of local voices, values and research partners in the management and interpretation of

⁴⁹ The Tell Balata Archaeological Park Project has been funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs in a 'priority country' for Dutch development aid, and is as such much more strongly situated in a discourse of archaeology as development as opposed to archaeology as knowledge – an important distinction that resonates strongly in the scope and conduct of the Joint Deir Alla Project as well (see chapter 4).

⁵⁰ Neither the projects in Jordan nor Curaçao fall under the Dutch 'Common Cultural Heritage Policy'. This policy framework, one of the priorities of Dutch foreign cultural policy, focuses primarily on the preservation and management of 'shared', or 'mutual' colonial heritage – a highly contested, sensitive and complex notion that can be criticised for inherently prioritising Dutch approaches towards heritage in opposition to local and non-western notions and wishes (Fienieg *et al.* 2008). The reason why this study does not include case studies in the 'priority countries' of this policy (including the former colonies Indonesia, Ghana, Surinam, India, South Africa and Sri Lanka) lies primarily in the fact that at the start of my research, no large archaeological research projects were undertaken under this policy framework by the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University. Only more recently, with established links between the Dutch Centre for International Heritage (CIE) and the Faculty of Archaeology, has the latter become involved with archaeological investigations as part of wider management programs in notably Sri Lanka and South Africa (please refer to the website of CIE: <http://www.heritage-activities.org/> [Accessed July 05, 2012]). Comparing the case studies of Jordan and Curaçao with these projects will undoubtedly be an interesting line for future research (for a critique on the Common Cultural Heritage Policy, see Fienieg *et al.* 2008).

archaeological materials (Aitchison 2007; Pels 2011).⁵¹ The project in Curaçao is an example where the first relationship, that between archaeologists and developers, plays a fundamental role – this will subsequently be held against the background of the way in which the project intersects and interacts with local community concerns and with the values and interests of other actors in the public domain. The Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project constitutes an example where the second relationship, that between archaeologists, research partners and local communities, plays the most crucial role – this will be held against the background of heritage management discourses, cultural tourism and development aid policies and, again, the values and interests of other actors in the public domain.

Finally, I want to stress that the choice of projects was also made on the basis of practical and pragmatic choices. Both case studies concern projects that are undertaken, at least partially, by academic scholars of the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, and with whom the researcher has close links. The choice for the Faculty of Archaeology could however be seen as exemplary for the exploration of Dutch archaeological research projects abroad by a knowledge institution, since it is the biggest archaeological research institution in the Netherlands with the longest and widest range of international research projects abroad. In addition, it should be noted that it was only natural for me to turn the ethnographic eye on the Faculty of Archaeology in Leiden – after all, as the place where I work with my colleagues, it was the faculty that primarily functioned as the context in which I have built a narrative of my experiences and observations about Dutch archaeology abroad. I will touch upon this issue in more detail in section 3.3.

This leaves me with discussing the way in which Dutch archaeology is transferable as an example of ‘western’ or ‘European’ archeology abroad. Whilst I endorse the use of the term ‘European’ in the sense of Gosden’s concept “around which orders of difference were created in the early years of the colonial encounter and then exported to other colonial countries in the form of notions of the west and western civilisation, where these latter terms have historical and cultural, rather than geographical, meanings” (Gosden 1999, 16), I rather refer to his as ‘western’ instead of ‘European’ archaeology in order to avoid confusion. In this sense, I use the term ‘western archaeology’ as referring to a body of archaeological practice, theory and policies that has a historical and cultural, rather than a geographical meaning – admitting that it has a strong origin in Europe, and that it has subsequently been exported and applied to former European colonies and/or non-western contexts (see also Ucko 1995 and Trigger 1984a; 1984b; 2006). As such, it is different from my use of the term ‘European archaeology’ – with this, I refer to the same body of archaeological practice, theory and policies, but limited to those originating from within nation states that are currently part of the Council of Europe.⁵²

As a European country with a colonial past and a strong tradition in archaeological research, archaeological heritage management and developing cooperation abroad (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming), the choice for the Netherlands as a case-study for western archaeology abroad is therefore deemed appropriate. The choice for the Netherlands as a case study for a European archaeology abroad, then, is further contextualized within the *Archaeology in Contemporary Europe* (ACE) research project,⁵³ from which this particular study originated. Within the ACE research project, a comparative study on the historic and institutional contexts of several European national archaeologies in foreign contexts is investigated, notably France, Germany, Poland, Belgium, Spain and the Netherlands (Van der Linde *et al.* forthcoming).

⁵¹ Thanks to Prof. Peter Pels for bringing my attention to this issue during a seminar for the MA Archaeological Heritage Management in a Global Context, Leiden University, 26 September 2011.

⁵² For a detailed discussion on the issues of ‘European archaeology’, see Willems (2009) and *Archaeological Dialogues* (2007).

⁵³ See note 2, chapter 1.

Consequently, this research seeks to build upon this comparative study of the historic and institutional context of Dutch archaeology abroad, by delving deeper into the way in which archaeological research projects actually *work* within contemporary socio-political contexts. At the end of section 3.2.2, I will return briefly to the scope and relevance of the case studies when debating their possible transferability to other research settings.

3.2.2 RESEARCH DESIGN AND FIELDWORK

This study has been designed to explore the two research aims by following the structure of the three research questions for the two case studies (see section 2.6). Below, I will present this research design by describing the ‘ethnographic path’ that I have undertaken, whereby it must be realised that actual fieldwork was often of a more fluid character in the sense of research methods, questions, data formation and analysis constantly informing and overlapping each other (cf Sanjek 1990). Fieldwork in an ethnographic sense was undertaken in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan (which included a visit to the Palestinian Territories) and Curaçao (which included visits to Bonaire and Aruba). These two case studies were contextualised and further investigated during ‘field’ research in the Netherlands, consisting of document analysis, interviews and participant observation – which were all undertaken as part of my position as a researcher at the Faculty of Archaeology in Leiden University (2008 - 2012).

Fieldwork in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan consisted of two research periods; the first as a researcher as part of the excavation season in the 50th year of the Deir Alla Archaeological Joint Project (May - July 2009), which consisted of extensive participant observation in the research process, document analysis and interviews. This was followed upon by a second field visit undertaken on my own (November 2009).

Fieldwork in Curaçao was undertaken from the end of May till early August 2010. Initially, I joined the Dutch co-directors of the Santa Barbara Project during meetings undertaken in the former Netherlands Antilles, which was followed upon by a longer period of document analysis and the undertaking of semi-structured and open interviews. Due to the overlap in field-season with the Deir Alla Archaeological Joint Project, I did not participate with and observe the Dutch archaeological team during their field-seasons of 2008 and 2009. Rather, my ethnographic emphasis of this case study was aimed at collecting information of relevant actors one year after the excavations at Santa Barbara had finished (2010), and to contextualise these findings within wider socio-political events that brought with it, in varying degrees, the arrival of Dutch and European archaeological policies to the islands of the Netherlands Antilles. Differences between these case studies in terms of research focus, positionality and relevance will be discussed in more detail throughout this chapter.

Both case studies started in the Netherlands with desk-based research into project documents, academic publications, media coverage, websites and background literature, aimed to provide a general idea of the chronology of events, social context, involved stakeholders and challenges and issues that had arisen as a result of the project’s implementation. This phase also involved the initial collection of project correspondence from Leiden University, which allowed for a more detailed understanding of the chronology of events and processes of project negotiation. This was then supported by the undertaking of ‘helicopter interviews’ (cf Hajer 2005, 306), entailing open interviews with several main actors that could provide an overarching view on the events and issues surrounding the implementation of the case studies. These actors consisted initially out of the Dutch directors of the projects, but also included several

‘external’ experts with a knowledge of the archaeological and heritage field in the specific research settings.⁵⁴

This phase was followed upon by more detailed document analysis (including project reports, institutional, cultural and funding policies, media coverage, academic articles and websites), allowing for the initial identification of discursive elements, attributed values, story-lines, key events as well as the ‘sites of discursive production’ (see section 2.5, and refer to Hajer 2005, 306). This analysis was supported by coding these documents along the lines of the sensitising concepts as mentioned in section 3.1.2, which provided a first insight into the main values and discourses of Dutch archaeological practitioners in project policies with respect to research, heritage management and community collaboration (research question 1).

This initial discursive analysis was investigated in much more detail throughout the fieldwork periods in the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan and in Curaçao. This started with similar helicopter interviews with the main partners of the research projects, as well as with several local anthropologists, journalists and government officials. The combination of these interviews with additional desk-based research ‘on location’ provided a first glimpse of the way in which the identified ‘Dutch’ values and discourses related to those of other stakeholders (research question 2).

These studies were then strengthened and deepened by ethnographic research, which included further document analysis, participant observation (although in differing degrees, see below) and the undertaking of open and semi-structured interviews. These interviews were held with a wide range of stakeholders and actors of the project and the archaeological site, including representatives of the main project partner institutions, amateur archaeologists, field workers, government officials, project developers, students, community members, religious representatives, tourists, teachers, local project staff, and so on. In general, an iterative approach towards the interview process was followed, whereby interviews were adapted in the field in relation to specific respondents and/or research issues (cf Rubin & Rubin 2005). Although initially my interviews were semi-structured along the lines of the major themes of research, heritage management and collaboration (see appendix), they soon became more open interviews, or sometimes rather spontaneous discussions as part of my position as a participant observant (see below). Primarily, this was because such open interviews (although structured on the basis of previous experiences with other interviewees) contributed to a more focused and fluent discussion.

Interviews with main actors of the project were as such initially geared towards increasing the understanding of the ‘causal chains’, a.i. ‘which led to what’ (Hajer 2005, 306), which was used as an opportunity to discuss the interpretation of key events in more detail. Another important element focused on the way in which actor’s original motivations and expectations related to their interpretation of project outcomes. In addition, most interviews were steered by the researcher to come to discussions on the way in which actors related to the archaeological site and the project as a whole, increasing the identification of their attributed values and discourses in respect to research, heritage and collaboration. Taken together, these interviews provided a more detailed understanding of the way in which the main values and discourses of Dutch operators related to those of other stakeholders, and what their role was in project negotiations and outcomes (research questions 1 and 2). It should be noted here that this research element included important interviews with those actors that were not part of the official project negotiations and partnerships, as to investigate the wider social impact of the case studies. This included a focus on community members, as well as other actors in the sphere of tourism, spatial planning, education and socio-economic development schemes.

Especially the semi-structured and open interviews that were arranged beforehand were recorded by a digital voice-recorder – although only when respondents had given their prior consent to do so. During

⁵⁴ These respondents will be identified as such throughout the case studies where relevant.

the interviews, notes were also taken as to identify the most important themes, issues and quotes. As it was foreseen that some interviews could only be completely transcribed after fieldwork, this allowed for the specific transcription of important quotes and issues as were deemed necessary for further research and interviews in the field. Informal discussions as part of participant observation were all worked out in the field, together with my first initial attempts at interpretation and analysis.

All interviews were embedded in ethnographic research where (participant) observation provided further insight into the social positions and personal motivations of individual actors. This part of the research allowed for a much better understanding of the agency and personal roles of actors in project negotiations, discussions and conflicts, drawing attention to the embedded practices of the project as a whole. The way in which project outcomes and policies were represented, discussed and utilised was further investigated by visiting a range of conferences, seminars and public events in Jordan, Curaçao and the Netherlands.⁵⁵ Together, this contributed to the investigation into research question 3, which focused upon the complex relationship between project policy and practice.

As discussed above, the combination of ethnographic research and discourse analysis was considered as providing qualitative data that could be interpreted inductively by following instances of constructivist grounded theory. The coding of data was supported and analysed by drawing upon the sensitising concepts (such as ‘research’, ‘multivocality’, ‘community collaboration’, ‘heritage’, ‘expertise’, ‘significance’, ‘ownership’, ‘empowerment’ and ‘decolonisation’, and by bringing the concepts of value and discourse forward as an analytical tools (see section 3.1.2). This led to the development of initial arguments and strands of analysis in relation to the three research questions, which were summarised in short memos (cf Charmaz 2006) – together, these provided a first glimpse of how archaeological research projects abroad worked in their social context (research aim 1). The second research aim, which deals with the role and responsibility of Dutch archaeologists in relation to the needs and wishes of others when working abroad, was only partly dealt with in this phase, as I would primarily deal with this issue as part of a discussion that drew upon data from both case studies (see below).

The general analysis of the two case studies were subsequently ‘tested’ by mirroring a process described by Charmaz (2006) as ‘theoretical sampling’. This included re-visiting my qualitative data as to look for potential supporting and conflicting arguments. This process also involved discussing the analysis with a range of external experts – most notably consisting of several anthropologists in both research settings,⁵⁶ as well as with several main actors as to increase their potential to object to what was said about them (Mosse 2005, ix; cf Latour 2000; see 3.3 for a more detailed discussion). This phase subsequently informed the refinement of research questions and analysis, as well as the collection of additional data.

In order to provide for an effective ‘sampling’ of my initial analysis and the collection of further data, a second, short fieldwork visit to Jordan was deemed necessary in November 2009 – primarily to be able to discuss my initial discourse analysis with the main actors of the Jordanian counterparts of the Joint Project. A second field visit to Curaçao was not deemed necessary – this was partly because its analysis could build upon the insights gained during the earlier fieldwork in Jordan, partly because additional data and commentary could be derived from interviews via Skype as well as during visits of several actors to Leiden University.

The last phase of the research design consisted of writing the ethnographic narratives of the two case studies. In this respect, it is worth stressing that the Deir Alla Archaeological Joint Project was undertaken prior to the Santa Barbara Project – together with my research positioning in relation to these case studies (see section 3.3), this contributed to a difference in research focus and emphasis.

⁵⁵ These are mentioned throughout the case-studies where relevant.

⁵⁶ Specific actors will be mentioned throughout the case studies where relevant.

My first phase of fieldwork at the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project can be characterised by a full period of participant observation as part of the Dutch research team. Throughout this period, I stayed at the Deir Alla Station for Archaeological Studies (DASAS), where I participated in surveying, excavations, finds analysis, field visits, meetings, coffee drinking, parties and even weddings. In addition, visits were made to governmental departments and foreign archaeological research schools in Amman, as well as to a range of archaeological museums, tourist sites and university departments throughout the country.

During the research project over 50 interviews were undertaken. My inability to speak or write fluent Arabic, added here to a stronger emphasis on the discourses and embedded practices of the main institutional partners and of middle and higher class Jordanian actors, all of which spoke fluent English. Such analysis also drew upon research reports, correspondence, academic articles and legislative documents that were available in English – or translated from Arabic in the field by my informant and research colleagues.

Data derived from interviews with local community members was mostly used for an ethnographic understanding of their social position, wishes and motivations in relation to the project. Most of these interviews were translated from Arabic in the field by my informant (a male English teacher from a neighbouring village with previous experience of translation in the Jordan Valley). This meant that my analysis in relation to community members focused not so much upon discursive formations, linguistic elements or story-lines, but rather upon the way in which the dominating values and motivations inherent in the official discourses by the project partners related to the values, motivations and practices of local actors. It also meant that less emphasis could be placed on detailed processes of project negotiation and representation, as internal correspondence and discussions between Jordanian actors could not always be analysed. I have tried to mitigate this by means of participant observation during excavation work, project meetings and social events, as well as through focused interviews with several key informants.

My fieldwork in Curaçao consisted initially of attending archaeological meetings, surveys, museum and site visits with the Dutch co-directors in Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire. This was followed upon by a longer period on my own, whereby interviews were held in governmental, institutional and commercial offices, hotels, schools, at people's homes, and – admittedly – at several local bars. I participated in local tourist visits, walking trails, golf activities, conferences, vocational archaeological surveys, beach visits, and visited many museums and archaeological sites around the island – although my focus was primarily aimed around the Santa Barbara Plantation. Further interviews were held, often spontaneously, with local community members throughout my stay at Willemstad.

For the case study of the Santa Barbara Plantation, the general use of Dutch language meant that I could draw to a larger degree on project documents, legislation and internal correspondences of all partners – the latter of which kindly provided to me by several local institutions and partners of the project. It also meant that I could interview all actors, including local community members, without a translator – although my inability to speak the vernacular language *Papiamentu* had an impact upon both my position as a researcher as well as upon the retrieval and interpretation of data (see section 3.3). Nonetheless, this meant that I could focus in more detail on processes of project negotiation, representation and discursive constructions than was the case at the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project. On the other hand, my ethnographic focus on understanding the impact of the excavation project one year after the field-season, meant that I could pay less emphasis on embedded practices in relation to the interaction between Dutch researchers and the local community. This interaction was therefore primarily investigated through interviews, as there was no participant observation during the actual excavation seasons.

In general, it can as such be noted that whilst local community views and values have been investigated as an important part of the social network of both case studies, this study shows a stronger emphasis upon the official, governmental and institutional partners and discourses of the two projects.

Apart from issues of field method and language, this emphasis is also the result of my position as a researcher at Leiden University. Before I will look at this in more detail in section 3.3, I wish to make a final remark in relation to the relevance of the two case studies.

In section 1.7, I have touched upon the general relevance of this study in relation to the intersection of the emerging field of ‘ethnographies of archaeology’ with other research fields that seek to investigate the social context of archaeology. At the end of this section, I wish to delve a little deeper into the possible generalisation of the analysis of the case studies to other research settings. First of all, it should be noted that though comparisons between the case-studies will be given in the conclusion, the research is not comparative in a strict sense. As such, my research could be aligned with the body of literature within postcolonial critiques of archaeology that call for investigating social context not through “homogenising the diversity of experiences”, but rather through a variety of case studies around the world, acknowledging that all cross-cultural and trans-national encounters should be placed within their specific historical and geographical particularities (Liebmann 2008a, 11). In relation to the inductive formation of arguments through a method of analysis that was inspired by constructivist grounded theory (see above), it should further be noted that “there always remains the possibility of extending and adapting the theory, so that it reflects more accurately the nature of newly collected data” (Oliver 2004, 31).

When debating the possible generalisation of the two case studies to other, or additional research settings, I find it therefore useful to refer to the concept of transferability – brought forward by Guba and Lincoln (1989) as one of four possible criteria for judging the value of qualitative research, and summarised by Trochim (2000) as referring to “the degree to which the results of qualitative research can be generalised or transferred to other contexts or settings”.⁵⁷ From such a perspective, the transferability of this study should primarily be regarded as the responsibility of the one who wishes to transfer, or generalise, the research results to another context (ibid.). Accordingly, I have tried to enhance the potential of transferability through a description of the research context and scope, by situating the two case studies within the historical and institutional frameworks of the Netherlands (Slappendel *et al.* forthcoming, and see section 3.2.1), and by framing the case study of the Netherlands within a European wide perspective elsewhere (Van der Linde *et al.* forthcoming; Schlanger *et al.* forthcoming). In addition, I have tried to enhance this by describing my own background and assumptions that were central to this research – this was done in sections 1.4 and 1.6, and will be further described in the following section.

3.3 POSITIONALITY

Depending on the setting of my fieldwork, I have constantly been positioned differently throughout my research. This changing ‘positionality’ has influenced the interactions with actors throughout my case studies, and coupled with my own background, has had an influence on the retrieval of data, the co-construction of arguments between researcher and researched (cf Charmaz 2006), and the final analysis. A few general observations can be made in this respect.

Throughout the course of this study (2008-2012), I have worked as a researcher at the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University, both as a PhD student as well as a researcher taking part in the Archaeology in Contemporary Europe project.⁵⁸ All this time I have been situated as a (participant) observant in relation to the undertaking of Dutch archaeological research projects abroad, being positioned mainly as a fellow colleague and researcher. This position allowed me on the one hand to take part in the

⁵⁷ Available at, and quoted from <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/qualval.php> [Accessed June 10, 2012].

⁵⁸ See note 2 of chapter 1.

case studies as an ethnographic researcher, a heritage specialist, a student and/or a field archaeologist (although in differing degrees), and on the other hand provided me with a degree of independency through which I could observe how the case studies were presented and discussed in meetings, conferences and seminars.

At the Deir Alla Joint Archaeological Project, I was an integral part of the Dutch excavation team participating in the fieldwork season of 2009. In the eyes of the academic counterparts of the Joint Project, I was often positioned as an anthropologist or heritage management specialist, both interviewing and documenting the voices and opinions of project stakeholders, as well as taking part in heritage meetings, workshops and discussions. In relation to ‘external’ Jordanian experts and government officials, I was sometimes regarded as an independent researcher that was part of a large-scale European research project, and in the eyes of the local community, I was probably just another member of the Dutch archaeological team.

As a white, middle-class, male researcher with strong ties to the Dutch project network, contacts were often easily facilitated with middle- and higher class government and academic officials, both male and female, whereby all interviews took place in English. This same network also allowed me to interview ambassadors, and even a member of the Jordanian royal family.

In relation to the local community, my general background and inability to speak fluent Arabic meant that I was often more regarded as an ‘outsider’, which made it more difficult to undertake interviews – especially with women. This was however mitigated to a certain degree through the fact that the local community of Deir Alla was used to Dutch archaeologists in the village, often strengthened by ties of friendship and trust that had grown over several decades. The interviews with community members were as such often based upon the contacts through local fieldworkers and the manager of the Deir Alla Station for Archaeological Studies, although this made it sometimes difficult to gain open and unbiased critique on the project – an issue that became especially clear when respondents would provide contrary or additional information as soon as the digital voice recorder had been put away. In order to get around this bias, I worked with a translator and informant of a neighbouring village (see above), which allowed me to speak to village members that were outside the normal ‘circle’ of the project team, and which allowed me to visit neighbouring villages and towns outside of the immediate impact area of the Joint Project. In addition, I revisited the Jordan valley half a year after the Dutch excavation team had left, which meant that I could speak more freely with respondents and collect additional data from stakeholders that were unavailable in the summer season.

At the Santa Barbara Project in Curaçao, my position and focus was different. In the initial phase of my fieldwork, I travelled with the Dutch project directors throughout Curaçao, Aruba and Bonaire, taking part in several meetings with partners of the Santa Barbara project. In the second, more extensive phase, I undertook a wide range of interviews with relevant stakeholders in Curaçao and Bonaire, through contacts mainly facilitated through the network of the Dutch archaeologists and local heritage institutions. As a Dutch researcher affiliated with Leiden University, this meant that I had relatively easy access to representatives of (non-)governmental organisations, project developers, and local academic networks. On the other hand, it also meant that I was initially seen as part of the Santa Barbara Project itself, although this identification became less during my research stay that was spent on my own.

Contacts with local community members were made primarily by following up contacts through persons who had been affiliated to the project, and by means of independent visits in the neighbourhood of Santa Barbara. Although, in contrast to Jordan, I could undertake the interviews without a translator, the necessity of speaking Dutch and not the vernacular language *Papiamentu*, meant that I was often even stronger positioned as a white, middle-class Dutch outsider – this was specifically the case when trying to

talk to young male adolescents, in which I not always succeeded. As such, a certain bias can be seen in my group of respondents, being made up primarily of adults and especially women. In addition, the “strong association of colour with class had implications for the ‘landscape of power’ in which a white researcher can be interpreted as some kind of authority figure, particularly in Curaçao” (Jaffe 2006, 20). The impact of my affiliation, age, gender and skin colour in relation to the colonial, cultural and social background of the Antilles, was therefore repeatedly discussed with several local anthropologists and journalists – whereby I was fortunate to draw upon some of their experiences and fieldwork (see e.g. Allen 2001; Sluis 2008). In this sense, it should be noted that the general issue of skin colour and social inequality has been taken into account in my analysis only indirectly – this will not be drawn upon explicitly in the text.

Now that I have touched upon some general issues in relation to my research positioning, I wish to focus in a little more detail on the way in which my own viewpoints and experiences might have influenced data formation and analysis. I have touched upon some of these experiences within my introduction (see especially section 1.4 and 1.6), but I wish to repeat that my study can be placed within the emerging field of ethnographies of archaeology that stress the importance of stakeholder analysis and that seek to contribute towards ‘postcolonial’ western archaeological practices (cf Edgeworth 2006; Castañeda 2008; Geurds 2007; 2011; Liebmann & Rizvi 2008). In addition, I place myself within the growing body of literature that investigates the discursive practices of archaeological heritage management, by distancing myself from an understanding of heritage as something static and monumental, but rather as an active process that has the power to change lives – including a range of activities such as “remembering, commemoration, communicating and passing on knowledge and memories, asserting and expressing identity and social and cultural values and meanings” (Smith 2006; 83). Finally, I support the conceptualisation of cultural heritage as a path towards progress and of ‘heritage as care’ (Rowlands & Butler 2007; Perring & Van der Linde 2009, Van der Linde 2011) – having actively supported and instigated demand-driven research projects whose primary aim was not the preservation of material heritage and the production of knowledge for future generations, but rather addressing the needs of contemporary generations through advancing concepts and methodologies such as poverty reduction, capacity building and empowerment (Williams & Van der Linde 2006). Of course, a reflexive ethnography also has to look into such preconceptions and motivations. Indeed, these concepts and discourses might hint at inherent western biases towards archaeology and heritage management, if we would accept that concepts as ‘poverty’, ‘empowerment’, ‘aid’ and ‘community collaboration’ in themselves can problematize the local and prioritise the role of a western researchers as experts and beneficiaries (see e.g. Shepherd & Haber 2011; Lafrenz Samuels 2010; La Salle 2010). Some of these issues will be dealt with as part of the case studies as well as the discussion in chapter 6.

Nevertheless, it can be noted that I started this ethnographic study with the hope that it could not only develop an explanatory argument of the way in which Dutch archaeological research projects abroad operate within their social contexts, but also that it could contribute towards a more self-reflexive and perhaps ‘decolonized’ form of Dutch archaeology that actively engages with community concerns – in the sense of facilitating and involving their wishes and values in the archaeological process and the management of archaeological resources (cf Rizvi 2008, 121).

The above lies at the core of my reasons to include the second research aim, which entails a brief reflection on the role and responsibility of archaeologists in research projects abroad. As this research aim will include a short discussion on the possible institutional and policy implications for achieving ethical, equal and collaborative archaeological heritage practices around the world, it will be dealt with to a large degree as part of the discussion in the concluding chapter. In this sense, this second research aim could perhaps be regarded as an example of my study being of a partial pragmatic nature. If an un-reflexive archaeology is

indeed ‘a threat to the past’ (Shanks 1997), then this reflexive ethnography could perhaps be regarded as a way to the future.

At the end of this chapter, I wish to make a final note on the credibility and validity of the study (see also 3.2.2), which relates to some of the ethical considerations surrounding ethnographic research. In this sense, I have tried to make sure that the research results are credible from the perspective of the individual actors that were the subject of investigation. As such, I have tried to increase the ability of actors to ‘object’ to what was said about them by providing them with opportunities to react during fieldwork to statements made by other actors, or to initial analytical observations by the author (cf Latour 2000; Mosse 2005, ix). Such a method was supported by following the line of grounded theory (see above).

All actors and interviewees have been informed beforehand of the general outline and future publication plans of this ethnographic research. I have however not circulated my final drafts for comments to the more than 100 actors that I interviewed. Although this might have increased the opportunity for actors to object even further, I have not followed this line – not only out of practical restraints of time and financial resources, but also because I felt that this might compromise the validity of the analysis in relation to the original fieldwork data.

Within the final narrative, I have chosen not to include the names of the respondents. Rather, I refer to the position, affiliation, employment, age and/or social background of actors where deemed relevant. Whilst the names of certain actors could be distilled through their affiliation and job positions, this general approach was chosen in line with my perceived ethical responsibility towards informants and respondents. On the one hand, this allowed for a detailed written account of project processes and actor negotiations, whilst on the other hand, it allowed for making certain claims and comments anonymous. Decisions as to which and whose comments to include anonymously, were done on the basis of my own assessment, whereby I have tried to minimise potential negative social impacts of the published research results. Other sensitive comments were either cleared before publication with respondents that had specifically asked for this, or not incorporated at all.

Taken together, the interpretation and narratives of the case studies should be regarded as being my own – an interpretive, coherence-giving account from myself as part of a reflexive ethnographic research.