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3-years later... a reassessment of the need for something 'in-between'

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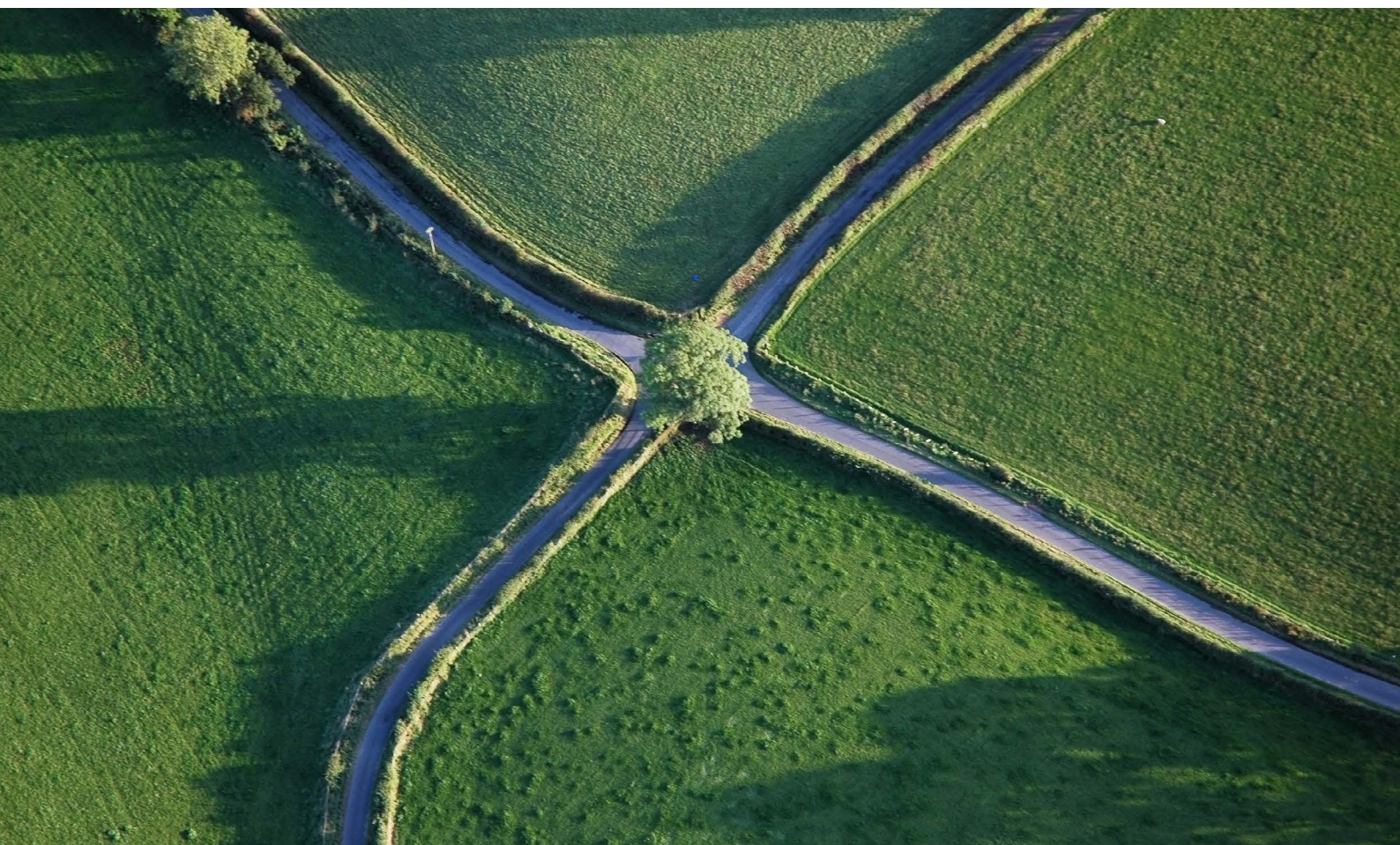
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INTER-SECTION

Innovative approaches by Junior Archaeological Researchers

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INTERESTS FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK
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EDITORIAL STATEMENT

3-YEARS LATER... A REASSESSMENT OF THE NEED FOR SOMETHING “IN-BETWEEN”

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Welcome to the 2017 issue of INTER-SECTION: Innovative approaches by Junior Archaeological Researchers. In this issue, we present a total of five papers written by archaeology students in close collaboration with their academic referees, reflecting the wide range of both research and teaching at Leiden’s Faculty of Archaeology from the BA to the MA level.

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Since the inception of *INTER-SECTION* as a peer-reviewed open-access publishing platform in 2015, the journal’s primary aims have not changed substantially. Yet, what has become quite apparent during these past years is that there is more need than ever for a journal “in-between” – to bridge some of the divisions between teaching (training vs education) and research (key role of fast-and-frugal publication) that have been created by the ongoing transformation of European university systems. Whilst we adhere to *INTER-SECTION*’s core agenda (Peeters *et al.* 2015, 4-5), these developments both motivate and necessitate reconsidering the colouring and meaning of the label “*INTER-SECTION*”.

After all, the journal has demonstrated not only to be an instrument for presenting the “wide range of archaeological discourses being studied and taught at Leiden’s Faculty of Archaeology” (idem, 5), it can in fact be argued now that *INTER-SECTION* has also proven to facilitate a

platform where students and staff can meet and collaborate, where education and research productively culminate, and where the curiosity and ambition of young researchers is fuelled by the experience and advice of experienced professionals. In a nutshell, we suggest that *INTER-SECTION* can now also be regarded as an important intra-faculty *glue* holding together what is, *grosso modo*, drifting more and more apart in Dutch academia. While there exists, in fact, a large agreement for the necessity to create and maintain an academic environment in which the boundaries between teaching and research, between the role of the “scientist” and that of the “student”, are kept fluent and can easily be crossed (e.g. Ministry of Education, Culture and Science 2015, 62-74; ISO 2015), universities are still struggling to implement and cultivate such environments. In practice, it often proves difficult to translate the important lessons-learned from successful best-practices and implement these in other curricula (AWTI 2015). Bottom-up efforts such as *INTER-SECTION* can precisely help to induce and sustain such flexible

and productive academic environments, if fuelled by willing students, teachers and management, as is the case at the Faculty of Archaeology.

In what follows, we invite our readers to return to some of these general issues permeating current academic policy and to reflect on them once again. This does not say, of course, that everybody needs to agree with the assessment of current academic state-of-the-art presented here, yet some of the raised issues, regardless of the taken stance or perspective, might help to reinvigorate a broader discourse on the matters touched-upon within our faculty – a discourse that is urgently needed since the overall trajectory of change appears to be irreversible.

Reassessment and Extension of Aims

During the last two decades, most European countries have witnessed a dramatic re-organisation of their academic systems, resulting in a radical transformation of how scientific research is done, perpetuated and ultimately communicated. Two interrelated processes can be identified to have driven this development: (i) the so called ‘Bologna Process’ based on the earlier *Magna Carta Universitatum* (1988) and the *Sorbonne-Declaration* (1998) with the aim of “harmonising the architecture of the European Higher Education system”, and (ii) the re-structuring of the scientific funding framework through the establishment of the *European Research Council* (ERC) in 2007. These two top-down adjustments have fundamentally redefined the relationship between teaching and research and the mechanisms and logic of publishing scientific results (cf. e.g. Hagner 2015). Effectively, (i) and (ii) have issued a somewhat ‘cruel’ tension between the political will to streamline and normalise university *curricula* on the one hand, thereby swinging away from humanistic ideas of ‘education’ (*Bildung*) towards the pragmatic notion of ‘training’ (*Ausbildung*)¹ – and, on the other hand, the tendency to primarily support cutting-edge research conducted by a small number of high-profile scientists, e.g. reflected in programs such as *Horizon 2020*.² The strong emphasis on training rather than education, in conjunction with the ongoing separation between teaching and research, has resulted in a situation where students become, ironically, more and more detached from real scientific practice while they are, at the same time, more and more expected to deliver exceptional, innovative and high-quality work in their BAs/MAs/PhDs and beyond to be able to compete for funding and/or positions on the next rung of the academic ladder.³ Essentially, this situation has created (a) an extremely competitive environment for prospective

researchers and fostered (b) ‘academic elitism’ (Closet et al. 2015) for which students, precisely because of the relatively manageable BA/MA curriculum, are often only poorly equipped.

INTER-SECTION pursues two interrelated goals which closely connect with these two aspects: first, it aims to bridge the gap between well-structured training and individual research by assisting students in publishing their work in an adequate scientific standard; it helps them to translate their ideas into an article-format, to develop the necessary skills to write in Academic English and to experience what it means both to be self-critical and to be criticised in the face of peers. Secondly, it aims to counterbalance the apparent fetish on excellency that prevails in the current system. *INTER-SECTION*’s primary goal is not so much to support those who are already well-supported, but rather to offer an opportunity for those who have shown great potential yet lack possibilities and courage or simply shy away from high-impact journals and their self-proclaimed elitism. On the one hand, our agenda hence reflects the conviction that most student research is valuable *in and of itself* – and thus deserves to be visible – and that most of the skills to author a good-to-excellent scientific paper can be acquired quite easily after all.⁴ On the other hand, *INTER-SECTION* wants to make room for a different vision of science than the one mainly propagated by institutions such as the ERC. This alternative view stresses that the scientific conduct, particularly in archaeology, must be conceived of as a *fundamentally collective* enterprise transcending one-sided teacher-student hierarchies⁵, and that, as a consequence, archaeological knowledge can only be substantially advanced when *wide-ranging horizontal rather than narrow vertical exchange and interaction* are promoted. This entails hearing the voice of students and being open to synergise with them. The respective vision of university and academic practices comes close to ‘and partly even extends’ what Jacques Derrida (2001) has famously termed the “unconditional university”.⁶

Addressing the gap between training and research also requires *new forms of engagement* between students and academic staff/researchers. *INTER-SECTION*’s referee system, where each student brings in her/his preferred referee to assist in conceptualising and writing the manuscript, can be seen as one such attempt. Ideally, this re-engagement results in close collaboration and supervision which not only improves the overall quality of the submitted papers, but also contributes to the formation of more intimate and significant student-staff interactions. In the long run, we hope that this

will help to set up a cooperative and co-inspiring climate in which the work of “Junior Archaeological Researchers” can impact and modulate research on the ‘senior’ level. To oversee a student’s thesis developing into a proper academic paper, in turn, can be quite rewarding for teachers. In the light of what has been learned while editing this journal for the last three years, we believe that this is perhaps the most significant contribution that *INTER-SECTION* can make on the faculty level.

Altogether then, counterbalancing an overly one-sided occupation with the “best-of-the-best” and providing a new and goal-directed platform for student-staff engagement throughout all stages of education and research can be defined as the primary concerns of *INTER-SECTION* as a journal “in-between”.

Issue Contents

The five articles featuring in this issue of *INTER-SECTION* reflect the methodological, topical and intellectual diversity of Leiden’s Faculty of Archaeology: Kim Deckers’ contribution derives from research conducted in Bioarchaeology and addresses questions within the scope of Human Origins; Bo Schubert’s paper is well-situated in the research framework of the Near Eastern group in World Archaeology; the work of Nienke Verstraaten tackles questions in the Archaeology of the Americas; Vivian van Heekeren’s paper bridges Bioarchaeology and the Archaeology of the Middle Ages and the Modern Period; and Eline Amsing’s contribution, last but not least, is an expression of current work in Leiden’s department of Archaeological Heritage and Society. In what follows, the individual papers will shortly be presented in chronological order.

Deckers’ article re-examines the now classic endurance running hypothesis in hominisation in the light of new fossil data. Based on the critical review of the available skeletal evidence and the careful consideration of possible anatomical consequences of increased running stress in early *Homo*, the paper concludes that advanced running capabilities were probably not more than a by-product of a more general trend to increase walking efficiency in early human evolution. By criticising the view that endurance running represents a direct adaptive response to evolutionary pressures in the human lineage, Decker’s investigation makes an important contribution to ongoing debates on the emergence of the genus *Homo* and adds to the recent reappraisal of evolutionary complexity and

the mosaic character of anthropogenesis in Human Origins research.

Schubert’s contribution studies the wall-reliefs from the Neo-Assyrian palace of Nimrud. The author advocates the necessity to spatially contextualise the depictions before placing them into a broader socio-political and/or ideological framework. Her paper, drawing on previous studies, integrates spatial, textual (inscriptions) and iconographic data to show that our understanding of wall-reliefs can often be considerably enriched when the function and architectural characteristics of the rooms that hold them are also taken into account. Schubert concludes that architecture, space and depictions show a patterned relationship and are well-orchestrated at Nimrud. Her paper is a welcome contribution to ongoing discussions on the role of monumental architecture in legitimising early kingship and how this role is reflected in the spatial organisation of palaces.

Verstraaten’s paper investigates the relationship between Zapotec cosmology and what could be termed Zapotec ‘material practice’ during the Classic Period. Her contribution takes on the difficult task to evaluate possible links between the relative spatial position of Cocijo effigy vessels and the cardinal directions of the Zapotec world in the context of Tomb 104 at Monte Albán. Verstraaten’s approach is well-grounded in the theoretical framework of the wider anthropology of the region, allowing her to examine Tomb 104 as a *microcosm* of Zapotec cultural performances. This holistic perspective enables the recognition of non-trivial continuities between practices, materials (their shape, position and decoration) and imbricated perceptions of the world, tearing down major Cartesian dichotomies (human vs non-human, material vs non-material). Verstraaten’s contribution represents an important reflection on the co-constitutive nature of material culture and past worldview(s), yet it also reminds us of the importance of situated ‘micro-analysis’.

Van Heekeren’s article tries to re-assess the relationship between large-scale changes in living conditions during the Industrial Revolution and the formation of osteoporosis as a symptom thereof. Using London as a case study, the paper compares nine Medieval cemeteries with a total of sixteen post-Medieval cemeteries to establish whether skeletal proxies for osteoporosis increase over time. The paper advocates state-of-the-art methods of identification and upholds careful statistical comparison of osteological datasets. The

results convincingly show that developments in identification techniques greatly enhance our ability to detect cases of osteoporosis in the archaeological record and that osteoporosis ratios seem to have significantly increased from Medieval to post-Medieval times. These findings enable the author to criticise earlier work and to demonstrate that biology, social conditions and lifestyle represent deeply entangled variables. Van Heekeren's paper issues an important research mandate and adds critical insights to better understand the relationship between the social organisation of life and human health in more recent history.

In the last contribution, Amsing addresses the question of heritage in the context of Dutch society and stakeholder interests. This is an important paper since it touches upon one of the central mission statements of Leiden's Faculty of Archaeology in recent years, namely to render the relationship between past and present a society-wide undertaking again. That Amsing's paper deals with two Dutch heritage projects, the *Archaeological Park Matilo* in Leiden and the *Castellum Hoge Woerd* in Utrecht, reflects these efforts. Amsing recommends more reflexive strategies for managing heritage 'on the ground' and in a more 'bottom-up' fashion. Her results indicate that small-scale strategies of community engagement, which pay attention to regional and local particularities, seem to achieve the most satisfying outcomes for all participants. This, in turn, suggests that processes of identity-formation and 'shared-ownership' based on heritage can be actively stimulated. Amsing's paper thus once again demonstrates that heritage cannot be adequately protected when local communities are excluded from the equation.

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First and foremost, we would like to thank our contributing authors, Kim Deckers, Bo Schubert, Nienke Verstraaten, Vivian van Heekeren, and Eline Amsing, for their enthusiasm, motivation, persistence and willingness to share their ideas and findings with us in this third volume of *INTER-SECTION*. This is also the place to thank the faculty staff who acted as referees for these authors. They have demonstrated our invariable commitment and it cannot be stressed enough that *INTER-SECTION* would not be possible without their invaluable and indispensable support. We are grateful to all anonymous reviewers who participated in the review process and provided comments and constructive criticism to improve the final manuscripts.

There are many more people, of course, who have contributed in one way or another to the successful publication of this volume and it goes without saying that we are thankful to all of them even though they cannot be named individually here. As always, a special word of gratitude goes to the members of the Board of the Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, to our Editorial Advisory Committee and to all others who support our work in Leiden and beyond. Furthermore, we are indebted to Dr. Geeske Langejans and Dr. Gerrit Dusseldorp who generously agreed to direct this volume's skill-course for academic writing, certainly enhancing the quality of the present collection of papers. We thank Andrew Sorensen for proof-reading and revising this Editorial Statement.

Additionally, we are grateful to our new Editorial Board members, Yannick Boswinkel and Shumon Hussain, to take up the challenge and join our effort. The increasing number of applications demonstrates the added value of *INTER-SECTION*, but at the same time asks more and more of its Editorial Board members.

Last but definitely not least, we want to express our deepest gratitude to Dean Peeters, one of the founding members of our journal and a strong asset over the years. Unfortunately, the publication of this volume marks the end of Dean's editorial board membership. We thank him for his dedicated work, his great eye for details, his constructive feedback and his continuous support.

1 'Education' (*Bildung*) pursues a holistic goal; it is a value itself since education affects the entire (educated) person; it is something that people might want to do for themselves and it will ideally change their being-in-the-world (Humboldtian ideal) (e.g. Scheler 1947). 'Training' (*Ausbildung*), to the contrary, is much stronger oriented towards utility; its value is measured in its effectiveness; training results in the ability and/or the know-how to do something.

2 Another more recent Dutch example for a funding policy that supports the few rather than the many is the 18,8 million Euro grant given to the 10-year project 'Anchoring innovation' headed by "leading scholars" of the Classical World; the project is funded by the Dutch Ministry of Education and one of the six research projects that received a so-called *Zwaartekrachtpremie* in 2017 (Gravitation programme of the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO)). 'Anchoring innovation' researches innovation processes in Graeco-Roman society.

3 In general, this reflects the education/training dichotomy. While education is tied to virtues such as self-reflection, general knowledge-sensitivity, epistemic curiosity and the like, training is usually linked to and valued through specific and well-defined skills. The tension between the two becomes perhaps most clear when the problem of *innovation* is concerned. Innovation - to generate new ideas and/or to come up with new creative solutions, is obviously not just a matter of having the necessary skill-set. Since the latter is mainly cultivated in the current system, however, innovativeness is a goal often difficult to reach.

4 This is the reason why each issue has so far been accompanied by an academic writing course organised by the Editorial Board and directed by faculty Post-Doctoral researchers.

5 A simple example is archaeological fieldwork where cooperation *on an equal footing* is often required to generate significant results.

6 The term “unconditional” refers to an ideal-state in which no power or interest conflicts can undermine the quest for knowledge and for critical self-reflection because tensions are positively transformed into a productive joint effort.

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