Erop of eronder: de strijd om het bodemarchief in drie Vinexlocaties: over archeologische monumentenzorg, ruimtelijke ordening en de kwaliteit van de leefomgeving

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SUMMARY

EX SITU OR IN SITU
The battle for the buried archaeological record
On archaeological heritage, planning and the quality of the living environment

This book attempts to find an explanation for the strains and frictions that arise when archaeological interests clash with other claims on space and land. To elucidate the tensions involved, it describes research conducted at two levels: the abstract and the practical. In the former we look at underlying thinking patterns in the two areas of policy in question, archaeology and planning, whilst in the latter we examine actual cases where conflict has occurred. The intended outcome of the study is to suggest solutions, both theoretical and practical, based upon the insights gained from analysing the issues at stake. These suggestions should help all those concerned with the archaeological record to work together more successfully, as well as defining conditions for the improvement of that collaboration.

In the early 1990s, archaeological heritage management (AHM) and planning – two policy fields that had previously operated in separate spheres – finally began to seek one another out. In the Netherlands, the 1990 white paper on planning known by the acronym Vinex (Vierde nota over de ruimtelijke ordening extra) explicitly mentioned archaeology as a factor able to enhance the quality of the day-to-day living environment. In the vision outlined, that environment should not be allowed to become dull and monotonous. At about the same time, the 1992 Valletta Convention ascribed a largely political significance to archaeological heritage, as the “collective memory” of Europe and hence worthy of protection. It also stated that archaeologists should participate actively in planning processes in order to effectuate that protection.

For Dutch archaeologists, the repercussions of Vinex – which entailed the construction of a million new homes, most of them in greenfield locations – struck at the heart of the principle that valuable sites should be preserved “in situ”. Nevertheless, in the early 1990s the then State Service for Archaeological Investigations (Rijksdienst voor het Oudheidkundig Bodemonderzoek, ROB) decided to implement a Valletta-driven policy of preservation in situ at these locations.

In this study, we present three cases to illustrate how those involved have dealt with the different claims on land, from archaeologists and developers, at Vinex locations. All three are in the riverine Betuwe region of the eastern Netherlands: Elst-Westeraam, Arnhem-Schuytgraaf and Waalsprong near Nijmegen.

First, though, chapter 1 reviews the intellectual development of archaeology and archaeological heritage management in the Netherlands, together with attitudes towards cultural heritage, between the first half of the nineteenth century and the final decade of the twentieth. The guardians of that heritage, in their capacity as “conductors of memory”, have found themselves confronted constantly by issues that remain central to archaeology as a scientific discipline and to AHM to this day. The core questions here – “What is archaeology?”, “What is archaeological heritage management?”, “What is valuable heritage, and why?” – are normative and ontological in nature, and also draw in the motives for preserving heritage.

From the early nineteenth century, archaeology evolved along two distinct lines into a scientific discipline in its own right. The first of these is the institutional line represented by the National Museum of Antiquities and the chair in Archaeology at Leiden. Although dominated originally by an orientation towards classical antiquity, these later developed an interest in Dutch finds. In Leiden, the classic ‘Bildung’ ideal was the driving force behind the collection and exhibition of artefacts.

The second line is the empirical path taken by gentleman collectors and learned societies as they sought and gathered finds out of an eclectic curiosity in which archaeology and ethnography were viewed as extensions of one another. Early personal observations in the field, albeit ad hoc and unsystematic, constituted the tentative beginnings of an empirical tradition that would take root in the Physics Society of Groningen in the last years of the nineteenth century. This current, founded originally by an orientation towards classical antiquity, these later developed an interest in Dutch finds. In Leiden, the classic ‘Bildung’ ideal was the driving force behind the collection and exhibition of artefacts.

The first chapter also examines the background to the Historic Buildings and Monuments Act (Monumentenwet) of 1961, enforcement of which was entrusted to the ROB, itself established in 1947. With the idea of AHM still comparatively new and developing fast, the various attitudes towards it embrace fundamental intellectual and practical notions...
and makes use of certain theoretical concepts, the most important of these being ‘action theories’ and ‘congruent meanings’. To help elucidate these, an early case from Dutch AHM – Boshoverheide – has been taken as an example.

Covering the entire spectrum of political opinion formation, Fischer’s theory of the four discursive levels – “the logic of practical deliberation” – provides an insight into the stratification of policymakers’ thinking and conduct, and so offers a solid basis for a schematic presentation of the action theory concept (See figure 3.1). An action theory (or interpretive frame, in Dutch: handelingstheorie) is the system of internalised ideas and beliefs that guide what an individual does in specific circumstances. That frame has four layers, divided into a first and a second order. The former consists of judging solutions (layer 1) and defining the problem (layer 2), whilst the latter covers the motives of the actor involved, including their underlying beliefs (layer 3), and their final preferences (layer 4). This second order can thus be regarded as the perspective or mental framework from which the actor looks at a problematic situation and its possible resolution.

This actor-based view of the action theory is supported by Hisschemöller’s research into policy problems and how to conceptualise them theoretically. Problems are not givens, but rather social constructs. Actors may or may not agree upon a particular policy matter, as regards either how the problem is formulated or the policy objectives and the means used to achieve them.

The action theory concept can be used to establish a systematic presentation of the questions this study raises concerning the nature of the conflicts surrounding the buried archaeological record, how they unfold and what consequences they have for that record itself, for the planning of building developments and for the quality of the local living environment.

In the literature, the action theory concept was originally developed with a focus upon policymakers. It is just as applicable to a variety of other professional groups, though, not least archaeologists and planners. Schön has demonstrated convincingly that not only do practitioners of one profession tend to approach problems in a similar way, but so too do members of different ones. Moreover, he shares the belief that problems are constructs and that actors approach them and the situations in which they occur from the perspective of their own background ideas and priorities.

2) Hisschemöller 1993.
3) Schön 1983.
Given all this, it is possible to construct an ideal type of action theory for each of the main professional groups covered by our study: archaeologists, planners and policymakers. Next, a comparison of these three action theories shows that, even when there is a common object to policy, such as an archaeological site, it appears at different levels in each of them (See fig. 3.7).

In the case of policymakers and planners, that object is situated at the second level. But for archaeologists is at the fourth. This disparity is the expression of a difference in epistemological status. To policymakers and planners, the significance of the archaeological record lies in its instrumental function, and it may be a means whereby they can succeed in achieving their own policy objectives. For archaeologists, the record’s significance is a normative ontological notion at the fourth level of the action theory.

The conclusion, then, has to be that these three professional groups are characterised by heterogeneous action theories and so neither a “shared” perception of meanings by the actors involved nor consensus regarding the values at stake is likely. This in turn raises the question of whether those actors can actually work together successfully and, through co-ordinated action, arrive at solutions they all support.

As a precondition in this respect – effective co-ordinated action by actors with heterogeneous action theories – Grin and Van de Graaf introduced the notion of “congruence”4. Their view is that actively seeking out “congruent meanings” should suffice to bring about mutually acceptable solutions. In our case, such meanings can be said to exist when every actor involved attributes a positive significance to a piece of land as holding the local buried archaeological record, so that it is perceived as meaningful within their own action theory. This attitude holds out the prospect that a desirable outcome is achievable, whilst at the same time all the different attributed meanings together point the way towards a shared solution.

It is in these terms that the three cases have been analysed. Our central question was whether opportunities to form congruent meanings existed in each case. We also examined whether, and if so how, those opportunities were seized – or why they were not – and what preconditions must be met to enable the formulation of congruent meanings.

The three cases make up the empirical component of this study. Chapters 4, 5 and 6 address Elst-Westeraam, Arnhem-Schuytgraaf and Nijmegen-Waalsprong in turn, providing a chronological description of the battles for the buried archaeological record between about 1994 and 2004.

The aim of these descriptions is to reveal how the actors involved approach the archaeological issue. Our chosen angle is what might be called the “actor perspective”, by which we mean that each relevant point of view is presented. In describing the actors’ objectives, the means they used, how they approached problems, what solutions they advocated and their own backgrounds and priorities, our purpose is twofold: on the one hand to outline the unfolding situation so as to provide an initial insight into the issues and circumstances involved, and on the other to enable reconstruction of the main players’ action theories.

The descriptions themselves are based upon an analysis of existing, mainly written sources such as policy and development control plans, reports of meetings and consultations, letters, research reports and newspaper articles.

Topographically, all three sites are in the riverine Betuwe region. Administratively, during the period covered by our study they fell within the so-called Arnhem-Nijmegen Hub (Knooppunt Arnhem-Nijmegen, KAN), which was both a geographical designation and, to some extent, a political entity. The KAN had its own executive body with its own aims, the most important of which was to improve the region’s economic competitiveness. To maximise opportunities in this respect, the KAN executive considered it necessary to create a good living and working environment.

Elst, Arnhem and Nijmegen were all listed in the 1990 Vinex white paper as suitable districts for large-scale housing development. A small community with a population of about 17,000, Elst is situated in the rural Betuwe to the south of Arnhem. Westeraam, a greenfield site covering about 220 hectares to the east of Elst’s main built-up area and the Arnhem-Nijmegen railway line, has been designated for the construction of 2350 homes.

Arnhem, a town of some 135,000 residents, began work on the new Driel-Oost Vinex housing estate in 1994. Later renamed Schuytgraaf, this development on polderland to the south of the River Rhine covers about 440 hectares and will eventually contain 6500 homes.

Nijmegen has a population of some 147,000. Waalsprong, originally known as Land over de Waal, lies to the north of the town and is destined to provide 12,000 homes covering an area of approximately 600 hectares.

At all these locations, problems related to the buried archaeological record can be traced back to the different objectives and priorities being pursued by the actors involved. The local authorities wanted to build new residential areas, with the quality of the living environment as their guiding principle. With that in mind, the planners were expected to produce schemes that make the best possible use of the space available. The ROB wanted to anticipate the ratification of the Valletta Convention and to make sure that archaeological work followed the proper AHM cycle. Since its priority was the scientific value of the buried record as a means to enhance our knowledge of the past, the ROB sought to preserve as many finds as possible in situ.

At Schuytgraaf, major difficulties arose over Site 10. This is a find of Stone Age relics which the ROB decided to designate as a protected ancient monument during the planning process. In Elst, there were frictions and tensions after the remains of a Roman temple were found during excavation work, and also problems with a known site, De Hoge Hof, situated right in the centre of the new estate. The main issue in Nijmegen was the sheer number of archaeological finds and how to treat them with due care. One source of conflict was the construction of a major traffic roundabout on what the archaeologists claimed was a Stone Age site, which has been given protected status. The local council here took the initiative to organise cultural history workshops in an effort to agree on solutions to the problems.

The central question in our analysis of the cases, presented in chapter 7, is whether congruent meanings emerged and what preconditions had to be met for them to come about. We then ask what archaeologists, in particular, can do to encourage their creation. The analysis concentrates upon four episodes where it seemed possible that congruent meanings might appear, but in the end failed to materialise. In these cases, congruence would have entailed the find sites being safeguarded for the archaeologists, but also making a concrete contribution towards the quality of the living environment for the local authorities and planners.

The actors’ action theories reveal a number of attempts to instigate congruence, especially on the part of authorities and planners. In Elst, for example, from the outset the local council was very keen to exploit the area’s cultural history to help raise the quality of the living environment and shape its identity. And in Nijmegen, where the local authority’s main priority at first was ecological sustainability, one of the episodes we analysed prompted the designation of cultural history as a basic factor to be considered in further development of the plans. By organising cultural history workshops mentioned above, the council afforded participants considerable freedom to come up with creative solutions. In Arnhem, however, it was never likely that congruent meanings would be established, even though the consultancy firm Archeo-Logic did make an attempt. They were ruled out here by the location of the find, Site 10, on the most expensive land at the heart of new estate.

In all the episodes we looked at, the ROB focused solely upon the scientific value of the archaeological record and showed no interest in its cultural and social significance. Consistently rejecting ideas put forward by local authorities and planners, its single-minded concern for knowledge enhancement was the main reason why congruent meanings failed to materialise.

Further study of the frames of meaning has identified five conditions that need to be met for congruence to come about. The first three of these can be described as examples of what is known as substantive rationality, whilst the other two exemplify procedural or interactive rationality.

1. Local authorities and planners must be in a position to identify archaeological sites as an instrument in their own policies.
2. Local authorities and planners will only view a site in this way if it can be used to “bring the past to life” in a concrete and evocative way.
3. On their own, ideas for “visualisation” – presenting the past to the public – are not enough. There must also be guarantees that they will be developed and implemented.
4. One or other actor must make a conscious effort to bring about congruent meanings.
5. Actors must be prepared to reflect upon their own action theory and be open to others’ ideas.

These conditions were met in none of the four episodes we analysed.

Conclusions

If trying to forge congruent meanings is regarded as a solution, and if that effort is seen as guided by the five conditions above, then the AMH cycle has to be reversed. In other words, the starting point needs to be the synthesis rather than the survey that finds the artefact. Which means that the first question to ask is: in this case, in this specific situation, what might be a synthesis? This inverted perspective begins with the present, not the past, with its point of departure being the proposed
development of area concerned. That is, by asking such questions as, “What potential does the archaeological record hold here, on this site and in this situation?”, “What are we going to do with it?” and “How can that benefit the quality of the environment?”. An approach of this kind eschews assumptions of primacy, for either archaeology or planning, instead focusing upon the creation of a common object of policy: an artefact. The objective should be to initiate a process in which those involved establish congruent meanings in respect of that artefact. This means that local authorities and planners, for whom it has an instrumental meaning, acquire an artefact with the desired significance and also, for archaeologists, with the potential to enhance knowledge now or in the future.

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