Archaeological resource management and preservation

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It should be obvious to everybody working in archaeology today that the position of the discipline has gone through some rather drastic changes over the past 15 years or so. As the former Chief Archaeologist of English Heritage, Geoff Wainwright, put it in a lecture on *The future of European Archaeology* at the inaugural meeting of the Europæ Archæologiæ Consilium few years ago: 'the central importance of cultural heritage for social and economic progress around the globe is increasingly recognised as a vital element in creating a different kind of world and as an essential building block in the social and economic well-being of people. Indeed, archaeology and its allied cultural-historical disciplines are more important than its practitioners care to admit. In Europe today we start from the proposition that we simply cannot have social and economic development without recognition of our cultural heritage and history. It is widely recognised by international bodies, national and local governments, the international world of commerce; academia; the media and non-governmental bodies that society cannot move forward into the future unless it understands and acknowledges the past from which we come. This view of the relationship between cultural heritage and socio-economic development is not controversial nor is it solely the view of an elitist practitioner. It is a view that will be found in towns and villages throughout Europe, who cherish their sense of place and provide the fuel for many debates regarding its future' (Wainwright 2000).
Obviously, this perception of heritage is very much one of the 21rst century and is rather different from the ideas about the role of cultural heritage that we grew up with. I assume that in retrospect, the adoption - in 1992 - of the European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, or the Malta Convention as it is better known, which has meanwhile been ratified by most European countries, will prove to have been a watershed, at least in Europe. It defines a standard for the management of archaeological properties and provides a frame of reference for countries that have not ratified the convention yet and also for countries outside Europe, where a comparable international standard is lacking.

Development of archaeological resource management
While the Malta Convention may - in future years - be seen as marking an important change, there was a long preceding development. It is commonly accepted that about two centuries ago, around the beginning of the 19th century, archaeology became a scientific discipline. Antiquarianism turned into archaeology and the new discipline rapidly evolved in other directions than the traditional interest for the Mediterranean area and the classical world.
These developments were by no means a coincidence. The scientific interest for non-classical archaeology was promoted as a direct consequence of the political restructuring of post-Napoleonic Europe, the formation of nation states and the need to develop, or to (re)define, a 'national identity'. The past is an essential component in that process and it is significant that the concept of 'national antiquities' was invented in this period. The term *antiquités nationales* was used in the title of a book published in 1790 by a French antiquarian, and was soon applied widely all over early 19th century Europe.
The national heritage rapidly became one of the foundations of the nation as a political and a demographic entity and was – often quite consciously – used to create and foster a national awareness and pride.

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This new importance of national antiquities was, of course, a strong impetus for measures to conserve monuments in the field and to display relevant objects in national museums.
But, at the same time, the story behind these remnants of the past had to be told as well and it needed scientific legitimating, so the favourable political climate also created a basis for the development of academic research. In this sense, it may be said that protection and management of archaeological heritage are not new tasks of archaeology but indeed a very old and fundamental one.
Nevertheless, in the 20th century academic archaeological research and protecting and conserving archaeological heritage became very different lines of work. It is not difficult to see why this occurred, despite the common roots. After all, archaeology is about studying the past. Although archaeology may be used or abused for political purposes, completely unconsciously for lack of theoretical reflection, to 'colour' a story in a politically desirable way, to leave out elements that are considered undesirable, or even to falsify evidence, it is about discovering and interpreting material remains from the past. Although there always is some pseudo-science, most archaeological research is done in a scientific manner and is normally considered by its practitioners as apolitical and as 'pure research'.

By contrast, the activity of 'taking care of the past' (the German concept of *Denkmalpflege*, or the Dutch *monumentenzorg*) or its modern form of archaeological heritage management is something which is done in the present. It is always a political activity, which is traditionally dominated by legal issues and practical concerns of conservation methods. For a very long time, therefore, there has been this increasing gap between on the one hand academic research into the history of man and necessarily having an international perspective, and on the other the protection and management of heritage, almost entirely from a national viewpoint and primarily coping with political, legal, administrative and technical issues.
The link between the two were the rescue excavations, nowadays also referred to by the politically correct terms of 'preservation *ex situ*' or 'preservation by record'. In many western European countries such as the UK and Germany, even this natural link between research and heritage management became quite weak, in my view for social as well as economic reasons such as the growth of the heritage industry or a fairly rigid academic structure. In smaller countries (such as in Scandinavia and The Netherlands) and in most of Eastern Europe where integration was achieved through the Academies of Science, both branches of archaeology never grew that far apart.
Nevertheless, while it is understandable why academic research and heritage management became separated to varying degrees, it remains curious that until fairly recently there was nothing in archaeology comparable to the role of archival sciences as a sub discipline of historical sciences. The preservation of its study material was apparently not a great concern to archaeology.

From the 1960's onwards, many changes occurred. The environmental movement started, that would result in the green debate and the recognition that the world's natural and cultural resources are in danger. This became the basis for the birth of archaeological heritage or 'resource' management in the modern sense. Archaeological monuments, in the sense of movable as well as immovable parts of the cultural heritage, are no longer seen primarily as objects of study but as cultural resources to be of use and benefit in the present and future. In some ways, '*resource* management' is more suitable than '*heritage* management' because resource is more value-free than 'heritage' and refers to the idea of seeing the material remains of the past as a resource: for society as a whole as well as for research by archaeologists.
Archaeologists have become aware that their source material is rapidly disappearing while only a tiny fraction of the information can be recorded. We now know that its survival needs a different approach that requires communication with the outside world, influencing the political and socio-economic decision making process, and enlisting the support of the general public. In most of the western world, existing notions of historic preservation through protection of ancient monuments have gradually been replaced by more dynamic concepts of managing archaeological resources in the framework of spatial planning systems. This happened first in the US in the 70s; it started a decade or so later in many parts of Europe.
In Europe the pace of this development varied strongly in different countries with different traditions and legal regimes.

The Scandinavian countries, for example, were way ahead and did not really need the Malta Convention when it was adopted in 1992. The result has been that the rescue archaeology, which had dominated fieldwork in much of Europe, came to an end (on developments in the UK, see Thomas 2006).
It started with small scale excavations during the post-war reconstruction effort and culminated in unprecedented operations accompanying infrastructure development in the 1970s and 1980s.
Archaeology became part of the planning process and in a non voluntary manner. Although the scope of the legal obligations varies from country to country, the impact of development on archaeological resources must be taken into account. This has created a vast increase in archaeological fieldwork that used to be referred to as contract archaeology and is nowadays described as 'consulting', 'development-led', 'developer-funded', or 'compliance-driven' archaeology. See also Willems and Van den Dries (2007).

Implementation models of the Malta Convention
There are significant differences in the way in which the Malta convention is being implemented in various European countries. In my view, there are three models how this is being done. These are related to political views and to legal notions about the role of the state and about private property. In addition, there are different opinions about the nature of archaeological work. In France, for example, all archaeological work is seen as *research* on behalf of the state. In a country such as the UK, archaeological work is seen as a *service*, not unlike many other services that can be bought and sold; see the recent discussion between Demoule (2002ab) and Thomas (2002), Hunter and Ralston (2006) or Demoule (2007). Related to this are different political views on the usefulness of such things as a free market and the desirability to allow 'market principles' to operate in the field of culture; and also on the need for, and the degree to which a market needs to be regulated, or the quality of work controlled.
These differences have led to different systems by which the Malta Convention is being implemented. Sometimes, as in Germany, Switzerland or Spain, where cultural autonomy lies with the states and not the federation, there are even considerable differences within one country. If you look at what different systems seem to exist, there are two relevant basic questions:
1. does the state consider archaeological work to be a service, or does it not,
2. does the state wish to control the quality of archaeological work or does it not.

If these are put into a diagram (Fig. 1), there are four different options but one of the boxes is empty: I do not know of any situation where a country does *not* consider archaeological work to be a service and at the same time is *not* interested in exercising control over the work that is being done, by whatever means.

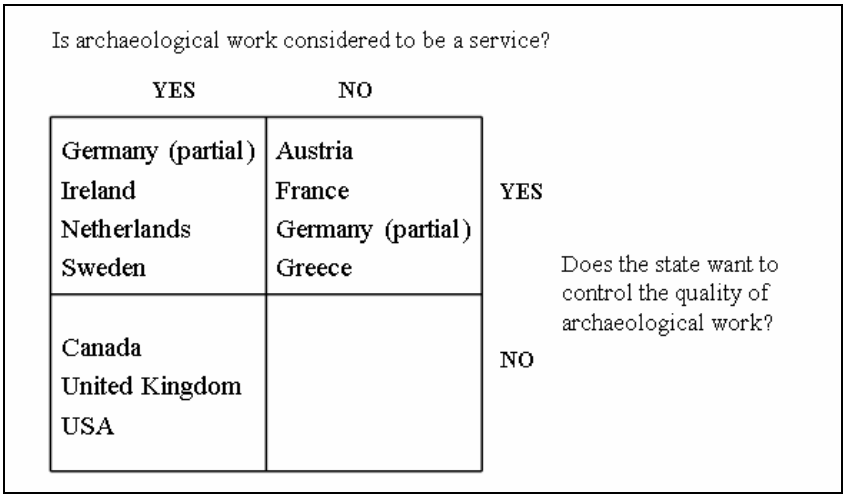

Figure 1 The organisational principles of archaeological resource management systems in different countries (after Willems & Van den Dries 2007).

In practice, there are thus three different systems in existence. I shall begin with a model that was adopted in a very explicit form in The Netherlands but that exists in many other countries.
In view of the increase of archaeological work in The Netherlands, the political decision was taken to create a market for archaeological services, in which 'market principles' apply. Private excavation companies are allowed to offer their services in competition with each other. However, this is only one aspect of the decision. The complementary part is that, while it is acknowledged that archaeological work may be a service, it is also acknowledged that its result is important for the understanding and valuation of the national archaeological heritage. Therefore, market principles can only be allowed to operate when the quality of the necessary work has been ascertained. Otherwise, there is too big a risk that commercial and financial considerations will prevail. Therefore, a free market system was introduced *in combination with* a system of quality assurance which is based on the law.
This is illustrated in Figure 2 that shows the triangular relationship that exists between the authority, which can be a local or national government, the developer of plans, and the archaeological contractor. The upper line of the triangle gives the relation between the competent authority and the developer: their relation takes the form of a permit, or usually a whole series of permits, which the developer needs to realise his plans. The main issue here is the ordered use of space and control of the impact of the proposed development.
The right part of the triangle gives the relation between the competent authority and the contractor. The main issue in this case, is the way in which we acquire knowledge about the past. Archaeological sites are an important source of information about our past and it is also a fragile resource which makes it a government's responsibility to ascertain that it is properly handled. In the Dutch view, this cannot be guaranteed by the mechanisms on the left part of the triangle: the issue there, is time and money: when the developer has the right permit, he becomes a principal to the archaeological contractor and their relationship takes the form of a contract by which the principal seeks to ascertain that the work is being done as economically as possible and within a specified period of time. *That*, and nothing else, is the product which the developer wants from the contractor. The government, however, wants the contractor to produce something very different, namely relevant knowledge about the past and for that reason the government needs its own control in the process, which is a licence requiring, among others, work under quality standards.

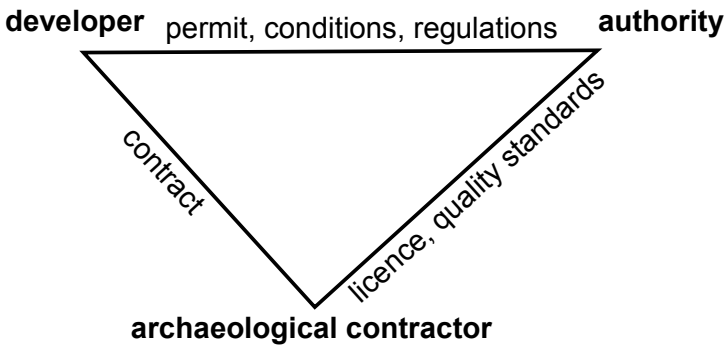

Figure 2 The relations between the government, archaeological contractors and developers.

The whole point of the Malta Convention is that the permit which the developer needs should preferably not be given if valuable archaeological remains are at stake. If he *does* get it, because other interests are considered to be more important, archaeological investigation should be a condition and it is up to the authority to guarantee that this investigation is properly done. Therefore, the system of quality standards must be backed by the law, so that it will not be easily circumvented.
Comparable systems are in use in other European countries, although explicit archaeological standards are only one way in which the State controls quality. In Germany, for example, in those German states where commercial archaeology is permitted, no explicit standards exist but control is exercised by control of the market: the state archaeological service selects the firm that will do the work. Another variant to this type of control can be a licensing system, in which it is somehow established which contractors are, and which are not considered capable of doing the work.

This is the essential difference with similar systems elsewhere, notably in England where - in principle - the right part of the triangle is lacking. There are exceptions, and I know I am simplifying matters, but in principle only the upper and the left part of the relationship exists: what is being done about archaeology is largely determined by the conditions imposed by the authority on the developer and, second, by what that developer, in his role as principal, agrees with the contractor. There are no legal provisions covering the relationship on the right. In the 1980's, archaeology was privatised without safeguards in the same way as was done in the USA and Canada a decade earlier, and this is precisely what most European countries want to avoid.

Before I go on, I would like to add that I am not implying by this, that archaeological contractors in the UK do not have standards. As you may know the IFA has quite good ones, but these are not backed by legal demands although their use is often encouraged by county archaeologists (for an analysis, see Hinton & Jennings (2006) or Lawson (2006)). Nor do I wish to imply that there can't be developers - in the UK or elsewhere - who do in fact take great care to ensure that the archaeological work they commission is properly done. But the basis of the system remains that most archaeological work is being done without an enforceable mechanism for control by the government and much depends on the contract between developer and contractor.

The French system is in fact just the opposite. Although again a simplification, in principle the left part of the triangle is lacking there. The French law has an archaeology tax, which is imposed on developers as compensation for the damage inflicted on the national heritage and which is used to pay for archaeological work. In France, it is the government that determines what the developer should pay and what he should comply with before the development can take place, and it is *also* the government that controls the archaeological work. This is being done by a public administrative institution called INRAP, and although there will in reality surely be contractual arrangements with the developer almost all archaeological work is a state monopoly.

This system does not have explicit standards and provides guarantees for the quality of the work being done because that is ascertained by INRAP. Moreover, there is no direct connection between the tax yield from any given development and the amount that INRAP will in practice spend on the excavation. From an archaeological point of view, this is a very good mechanism to ensure that money is being spent where it is needed most. On the other hand, there is obviously some contradiction here with the way in which the developer pay principle in the Malta Convention was intended. Elsewhere, a development might simply become too expensive and be relocated because of archaeology. In the French system, that requires other mechanisms.

This kind of comparison illustrates what the strengths and weaknesses can be. In the Dutch type of system, for example, the archaeological contractor can get in a very difficult position, because that contractor always has to serve two masters. In the English type of system, there is inadequate government concern for the quality of archaeological work and a strong risk that financial considerations will prevail. And in the French type of system, there is no market competition with a drive for innovation, there is the risk of an inefficient bureaucracy, and there is an assumption that if the work is being done by a semi-governmental organisation, it is done well. Of course each system also has its advantages, and I would like to stress that none of these systems is necessarily superior. Much depends on the way in which archaeological heritage management in a given national context actually works in practice. Some theoretical disadvantages or weaknesses can be remedied by the way in which things are being done in real life. In Sweden, for example, there used to be a French type of system which is currently shifting towards a more commercial, market adjusted practise with more archaeological contractors and no longer a state monopoly (Lekberg 2006). But this is still being done in a controlled way. The alternative for competitive tendering is that a County Board decides who is to carry out the contract archaeology and how much this should cost, and it instructs the developer to make a deal with the chosen archaeological unit. So there you have a system that moves from the 'French' to the 'Dutch' model, but without market competition.

Preservation

Although it may seem that discussion so far has mostly been about preservation *ex situ* and not so much about *in situ* preservation, this is not the case. After all, when states are interested in preserving archaeological resources, the work involved can be done through a state monopoly on archaeological work as well as through a commercial system or any type of hybrid system.

However, even though research on preservation in situ can be commissioned to private enterprise and universities, it is clear that organising preservation in situ is always a core activity of the state. Even in the most commercialised systems, those of the Anglosaxon countries, it is semi governmental organisations such as Parks Canada, the National Park Service or English Heritage that are primarily responsible. This is because on the one hand, preservation in situ is closely connected to legal protection of sites, and on the other it is normally only national level organisations that are equipped to either carry out, or to commission research.

It has become clear that for a sensible archaeological resource management that includes preservation *in situ*, archaeology needs better tools. We have become aware that new types of research are needed to provide such tools. Much of this research is in fact being done by national bodies charged with archaeological heritage management, which are diverting their core business from traditional research *of* the past, through excavation, to research which is specifically aimed at creating knowledge that is needed for effective management of the remains *from* the past. For example, research into the conditions which determine the survival of artefacts in the soil, which is the subject of the PARIS conference, research into conservation methods, also relevant for this conference, or research aimed at integration of the disciplines which are concerned with the historic environment, among which archaeology is only one, and with their integration into such fields as landscape designing and spatial planning. The latter is not the subject of this conference, but I mention it especially because such research is equally vital for an effective preservation in situ (cf. Bloemers 2002).

Research in conservation methods is of course not a new development. It is in fact a traditional research topic that has been highly developed in countries with an abundance of architectural remains such as in southern Europe, China, India and the southern United States. Very often, this research deals with archaeological remains *after* excavation. By contrast, research into the preservation of buried remains is still an emerging field that as far as I am aware is being developed mostly in Northwestern Europe and in the US.

It is, however, useful to consider that this type of research is not just suitable to underpin preservation *in situ*. Figure 3 shows a model of the archaeological resource management cycle. All except one of these steps are archaeological. That is selection: the decision to select sites for protection, excavation, to be monitored during destruction (watching brief) or to be given up completely, is not archaeological. Selection is of course completely political. It is a governmental decision and authorities depend on research to underpin what they decide, and even to legitimise it.

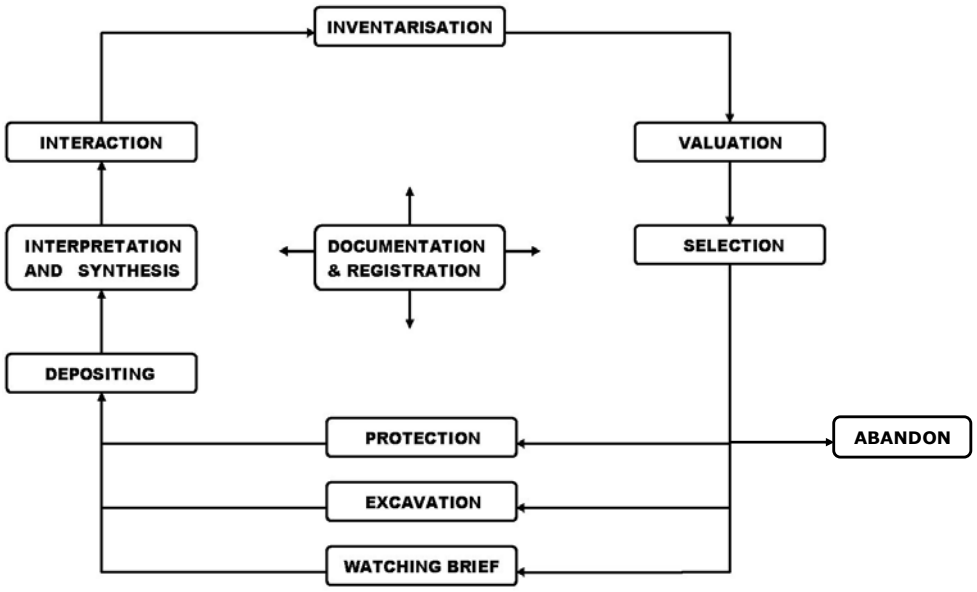

Figure 3 The cyclical process of archaeological resource management.

Very often nowadays, decisions are taken to preserve sites or parts of sites in situ, because this appears to be the most economically feasible. As archaeologists, we used to be in the business of research of the past and in particular we used to do that by excavation. Nowadays, as archaeological heritage managers we have established a new principle, a conservation ethic, that says that we should try and preserve sites, and not just because they are our primary sources but also because they are such a fragile and non renewable resource. Of course it is wonderful when our governments accept this principle and when there are official policies in place, backed up by research, to preserve important elements of the archives contained in the soil.

But at the same time, in everyday practice, one sees that this conservation ethic is increasingly being used almost as a blind pretext to limit the cost of excavation. There are often situations where there appear to be no good prospects for long term physical preservation but nevertheless that decision is taken. There are also situations where only a small part of a site is excavated with very limited research value, while the rest is left for investigation sometime in a very uncertain future. It seems to me that in such cases, our ethic is being used against us, by politicians that want to save face as well as to save money and that are being helped by some of us that are so blinded by it that they appear to have forgotten what archaeology is all about. Of course some archaeological sites have important intangible values that ought to automatically make preservation the preferred option, but for the normal type of invisible buried site, preservation should not be a goal in itself but a means to an end.

Admittedly, however, and no matter what anyone thinks about preservation, in many cases we really just do not know if what is decided or what we recommend to be decided, is really the best possible option. We simply lack the information to make a well-founded recommendation or decision. The research that is being discussed at this conference is essential to improve this situation, so I hope the international exchange will be fruitful, and I wish the PARIS-community of research a successful future. We really do need it.

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