

Forum

Reverse Heritage

In Search of a Usable Past

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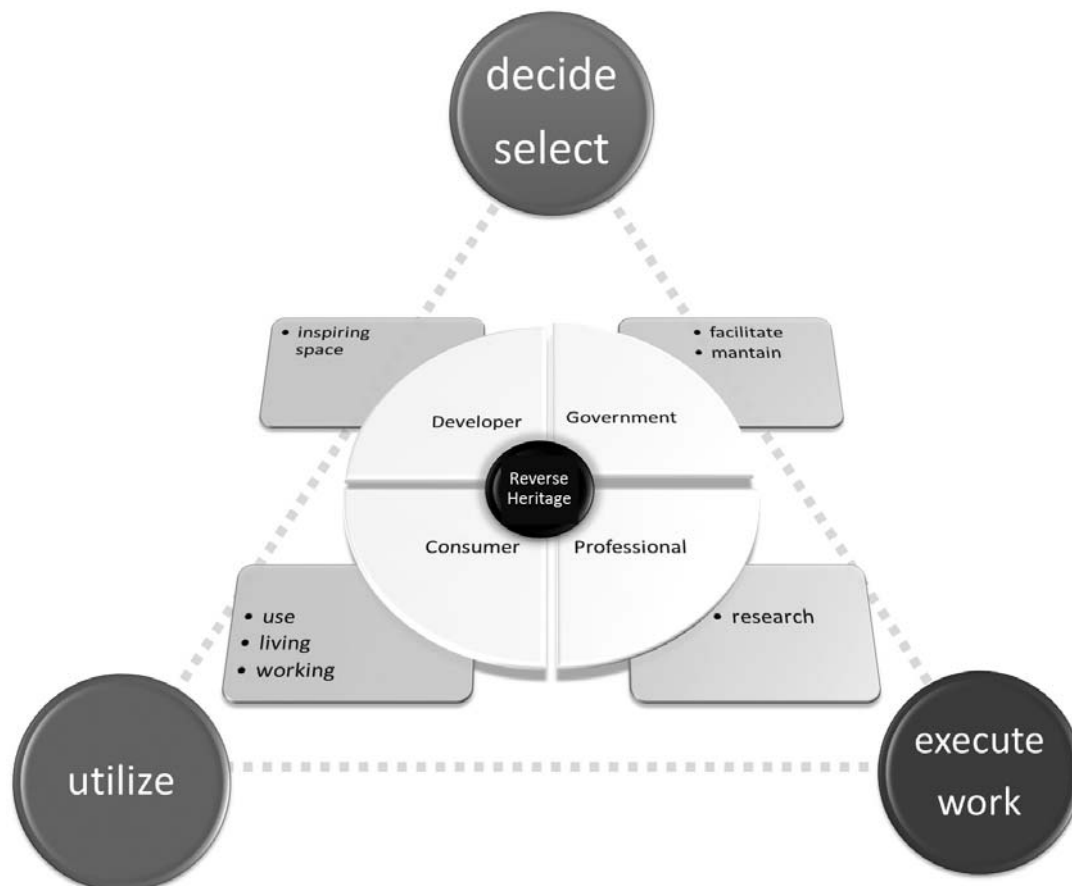
We would like to thank our colleagues from Germany, England, Sweden, Spain, Belgium, South Africa, and the Netherlands for the valuable comments on our article on Reverse Heritage. Our special thanks go to Cornelius Holtorf and Sophia Labadi for providing the opportunity to write about this subject and providing editorial comments on earlier drafts. This worthwhile academic debate has helped us to sharpen our ideas and expand our view on the method. Therefore, we have broadened the concept

from archaeology to heritage, combining archaeology, built monuments, landscape, and intangible heritage. From now on, we would like to speak of “Reverse Heritage.”

Instead of reacting to every single comment, we have tried to summarize the discussion by the various authors. In our point of view every author, whether intentionally or not, brings the question of heritage management back to either one, or all three essential focus points as shown in Figure 1. We will introduce these briefly and then elaborate further on the various comments related to these points.

Who Decides on What?

This question aims to clarify the assembly or existing group that sets the heritage agenda. It is clear that the government in the Netherlands enacts and respects the law, but the



actual content of decisions and legal texts are drawn up by democratic discussion. Therefore, all stakeholders (professional, administration, politics, developer, and consumer) take part in the discussion and create a democratic balance between goals on knowledge production, knowledge guardianship and the everyday use of knowledge. One can imagine that they differ according to the stakeholder considered. The developer is interested in the identity of the space and useable stories to inspire his or her development, while the government is interested in protection of the site for future generations. The consumer is interested in encountering and enjoying the history of his or her new homeland and the academic professional wants to have data for his or her research framework. All valuable arguments are important to weigh and discuss in the early stage of the planning process. What seems irrelevant to one party is an insurmountable problem for the other. Therefore, we suggest working along the lines of Reverse Heritage to establish a true cooperation and interaction between the private and public interests of all stakeholders. The question comes back to deciding on the definition of "value" and selection and value for whom?

Once defined, it is very important to have these different goals decided on beforehand, at the time of the overall definition of the development, even when not all of the costs can be precisely calculated.

Who Does the Actual Work?

With this question, we would like to stress that there are different types of work to be carried out in the process of heritage management (e.g. management, protection, archiving research, utilization, and commodification). All have to be executed according to objective standards and by educated specialists. We sometimes tend to forget that archaeology or

heritage management is more than our own specialty, as most of us have been educated as an academic specialist. Of course this question interferes with the point of setting the scope. If the focus is set on physical protection or utilization of heritage, there could be fewer traditional research questions.

Who Reaps which Benefits?

Heritage management results in products. The question is: who gets most of the benefits from these products? There is no doubt that the Dutch law was not only implemented for archaeologists or heritage managers. From the political point of view there was a broader target group. The Malta Convention speaks of heritage as a building material for scientific research but that is just one side of the moon. Twenty-five years ago this was a very good start, but in our opinion this is an old-fashioned approach. The Faro Convention seems more up-to-date by integrating heritage into everyday society. That is why we can differentiate more users of heritage products than only archaeologists. We should discern many different consumers of heritage products.

We have noticed that in some reviews the boundaries between the three issues mentioned above are apparently blurred and the criticisms, as a consequence, are mixed up. This seems logical when considering that people weigh the results from their point of view and their role in the entire system. Instead of discussing the points of criticism separately, we have grouped these individual points into these three areas of attention and will discuss these in the following paragraphs.

Who Decides?

The four reflections on our paper signal a lack of understanding of one vital concept in heritage management in the Netherlands, which we clearly should elaborate upon. It is

important to grasp this concept and its consequences fully in order to understand the logical additional step that Reverse Heritage/Archaeology forms. This vital concept is the complete embedding of heritage and archaeology in spatial planning in the Netherlands.

The incorporation of heritage in spatial planning legislation has proven to be the best way to ensure that archaeology is taken seriously as a weighted condition before any development takes place. This way, archaeology is effectively taken out of the realm of a “left-over” condition and of rescue archaeology, and is placed into the realm of democracy, for the spatial plans are drawn by the lowest governmental entity, the municipality. In almost 100% of the Dutch developments, heritage is thus being weighed.

Reverse Heritage/Archaeology is therefore not democratizing archaeology per se for the first time: archaeology already is lodged in a democratic environment. We see, however, that although archaeology is embedded in a democratic setting, the goal-setting and decision-making frameworks surrounding archaeology and the output of the archaeological process are in a lot of cases still the domain of academic archaeology. Although a scientific working method in archaeology is certainly needed, we feel that the output of that research itself should be connected more closely to the other stakeholders as well. Some of the reflections in our paper voice concern about this working method being another way of, to put it bluntly, getting archaeological remains out of the way as quickly and cheaply as possible. Within the Dutch legislative framework, however, this is nearly impossible. A thorough quality system has been developed and implemented over the last decade, under which all commercial parties excavating must abide in order not to lose their permit to excavate. In addition,

procedures and directives have been formulated for all documents, actors, and phases in the archaeological research process.

What is possible however, and what should be done, is to carry out archaeological research efficiently and effectively. Being part of spatial planning does not only grant the right to be taken seriously, but also demands an effective working method to fit in the spatial planning process properly. Reverse Heritage/Archaeology offers not just a way to carry out research effectively and efficiently, but, with a broader goal in mind: a tangible, visible, experienceable return on investment. That is another meaning of effective and efficient.

Who Does the Work?

A substantial part of the criticism that Reverse Heritage/Archaeology raises in the archaeological sector is about the attitude towards the academic nature of archaeology and the role of the professional archaeologist. It seems Reverse Heritage/Archaeology is at best seen as not contributing to archaeological science, and at worst as detrimental to it. As we see it, this reaction mainly stems from the blurred boundaries between research-driven archaeology and “preventive” archaeology, as Dries Tys calls them, for example. In his reflection, Tys correctly observes that there is a difference between the archaeology performed by universities and academies, and the commercial version performed in the setting of spatial planning. However, he fails to explicate two matters that are both, at the same time, inextricable and completely opposed to each other in the specific Dutch situation.

First, there is the consequence of every archaeologist having been schooled in the academy, thus viewing him- or herself as a scientist first and foremost. This is the principal reason that there is even a discus-

sion about the role of science in commercial archaeology: we simply cannot see ourselves as something else than scientists, even though the daily practice of today's Malta-based archaeology in the Netherlands asks for a different type of professional, one that accepts one's position as an—important—cog in spatial planning. And yes, there are other professionals in that system that have legitimate opinions on the planning process and accompanying building conditions, of which archaeology is one. The archaeologist in the Dutch version of "Malta" does not perform science, as much as an environmental specialist does not study soil pollution. The work accomplished, however, is always carried out according to scientific method.

Second, there is the follow-up fact that commercial archaeology in the Netherlands is indeed fundamentally different from academic archaeology, as Tys already stated. Academic archaeology rightly focuses on the production of knowledge and meaning from artifacts and settlement traces. It is also responsible for developing methodologies and applying syntheses to disparate research projects. The goal of Malta archaeology seems to prevent archaeological knowledge from being lost during spatial progress, pure and simple. Reverse Heritage/Archaeology wants to go beyond that, by consistently using the results of archaeological fieldwork to enhance our living space, instead of calling it a day when the report has been printed. We would therefore claim "Commodity Heritage/Archaeology" as a more suitable name.

The essential truth is that archaeology—in whatever form it takes—has to be undertaken according to a scientific method and that it needs professionals to do this. Reverse Heritage/Archaeology recognizes that. Also, though we put emphasis on the public in all its forms as "end user," Reverse Heri-

tage/Archaeology indeed does not pretend to be a form of "community archaeology," as discussed by Eva Kars and Jan Kolen. We could discuss whether the community in community archaeology should inevitably be involved in the three steps of decision, execution, and use or only in one of these steps. The merits of this form of archaeology, in which the public has a role in the performance of fieldwork as well, will first need to be researched in further detail. As of yet, we see the professional archaeologist as the principal executor of archaeological fieldwork.

While the underpinning methods of both academic and commodity archaeology are scientific, their goals are different: one of them is about knowledge production, the other about knowledge management for public use in commodities (just as much as there are universities for technical studies that of course do not perform house building projects). This is not something The Missing Link has thought up, but rather it is the direct consequence of integrating archaeology in spatial planning as we have done in the Dutch legislation. There is no such thing as a choice when talking about the integration of archaeology and spatial planning in the Netherlands: it is a given. To understand why we created Reverse Heritage/Archaeology, one needs to accept that commodity archaeology—in this country at least—does not have the same goals as academic archaeology.

That is why there is a difference between archaeology and heritage management. This comes back to research, protection, and use of heritage as a means for society instead of as a goal in itself.

Who Takes the Benefit?

Who takes the benefits from heritage in the Reverse Heritage/Archaeology process? What are the benefits?

The next phase of the heritage management process is the one in which heritage is used in projects and, ultimately, experienced by the different shareholders, as leisure. To Reverse Heritage/Archaeology this stage is the goal of any “reverse heritage” project. Much of the criticism logically focused on this aspect of the approach. When decisions are made and selection is done, each stakeholder will benefit from this on his or her own territory. Although it will sometimes be a compromise for each or a selection of shareholder(s), the aim is that the project will emerge qualitatively stronger. The scientist can benefit from the research outcome. The developer may benefit from the added value to his or her project through the efficiency of the process and selection, which added quality. The government may benefit from the collection of selected heritage that is being preserved and other spin-offs from these projects on, for instance, social or economic levels. And the end-user may benefit from experiencing this heritage in his or her surroundings as a spatial or social quality, in leisure projects or in educational opportunities for one’s children.

A remark often heard in the comments on Reverse Heritage/Archaeology is that it would be a logical result of the Belvedere Project, or even that both strategies serve the same purpose. This deserves a critical note here. Even though Reverse Heritage/Archaeology would not have been possible to develop without the solid base of Belvedere, the perspective of both approaches varies considerably as well as the process and (therefore) the outcome. In Belvedere, the perspective focuses on the protection of heritage and on a means to give heritage a place in development, whereas Reverse Heritage/Archaeology aims to use heritage as a means to serve other project goals. This goal may be contributing to a certain (cho-

sen) brand of a region, enhancing identity, or creating spatial quality. To Reverse Heritage/Archaeology, heritage may be chosen to add value to the quality of a project, but it may also be ignored. The perspective of Reverse Heritage/Archaeology is thus: “can we use this heritage to add value to the project and facilitate choices in research?” and not “can we give this heritage a place in order to protect it; and how should we protect it?” Reverse Heritage/Archaeology acknowledges the fact that heritage is interpretation and that values attributed to it are subjective. This subjectivity is not ignored, but accepted and used. In the framework of The Belvedere, the decisions are made by heritage experts and architects; in Reverse Heritage/Archaeology, choices are made by a more diverse group of shareholders early on in the development process. If we have to draw a parallel, the ideas of Reverse Heritage are more related to the way of thinking as proposed in the works of Professor Tom Bloemers (e.g., Bloemers et al. 2010).

One of the fundamentally important aspects of Reverse Heritage/Archaeology is the end-user and the role of this shareholder (as a fourth party aside from the developer, the government, and the archaeological scientist). Although the end-user is defined as one of the most important shareholders at the decision making table, the end-user is difficult to give a voice to. The “end-user” is usually too large and undefined a group to bring it to the table early in the process. This often has to do with the fact that early in the developing process the end-users (for instance the future inhabitants of a newly developed area) are still unknown, but also with the fact that the end-user is not organized as a group and usually has no representative.

We would like to define the end-user as the (future) inhabitants, visitors, and entrepreneurs attracted to the area: people who

live and work there and who will be depending on the social and economic structures of the area. Thus, the end-user is not the developer, the archaeologist, or the municipality or other government agency involved. The end-users do not directly pay for the costs of archaeological research. Although, the costs are indirect, ultimately costs for research are passed along to them through an increase in property and housing prices. They therefore also share an economic stake in heritage. In the future a means should be sought to engage and give voice to these public shareholders. Their opinion on heritage values and knowing them as a target group will pave the way for better integrating heritage into (spatial) projects. We should work on the means to reach the public and engage them into the discussion about the importance of heritage and discuss with them the way in which they would like to experience the characteristic heritage. By using social media like Facebook we hope to get more of a grip on involving these consumers, especially on the subject of collaborative storytelling.

Community archaeology in the usual sense is not considered a prerequisite part of the process of Reverse Heritage/Archaeology. In Reverse Heritage/Archaeology we engage the public in an early stage of the planning process and hope to have the voice of the community in the decision making stage, not so much in the stage of specialist work such as archaeological research. Of course in certain situations it may benefit the public to take part in excavation work, but to Reverse Heritage/Archaeology, this is not a central theme. In fact we consider the execution of archaeology the field of scientists, and we think research should be conducted according to the quality standards of Dutch archaeology, fitting in with other conditions of a building project. When these conditions can

be met, the participation of the public in the excavation processes can be considered an asset to public experience of the past.

Conclusion

It is difficult to formulate a single answer to the three questions: who decides, who does the work, and who takes the benefit? As we have highlighted, the answers depend very much on the point of view and the role of the different stakeholders in the fields of spatial development, leisure management, or educational management. Finding a practical solution means setting up a decision making process in which all different stakeholders with their answers have their right to speak out about their goals. This is a process that differs from academic decision making and even from the Belvedere principles.

Much more important than answering these questions is whether, as professionals, we can accept different views to these questions and the acceptance that heritage, or more specifically archaeology, is public property or even a commodity in itself. If not, we have to leave it at the academy, finance it in a different way, and keep it to ourselves.

What we have tried to point out is that we do not have the final solution for the way in which heritage management in the Netherlands should develop, but we hope to have set a direction for the commodification of archaeology and heritage in the future.

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About the Authors

Boudewijn Goudswaard, owner and director of The Missing Link, is a senior heritage consultant with many years of experience in site marketing both with a private consultancy and with the Dutch State Service for Heritage Management. Boudewijn has contributed largely to the current working methods and standards in the archaeological and heritage field in The Netherlands. He has developed a unique methodology for archaeological branding and is involved in several branding projects in the UK, The Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Portugal.

Jolanda Bos is a senior consultant on archaeological site management both in Western-Europe and the Middle East. In the last fifteen years her carrier shifted from archaeological fieldwork to directing excavations, designing heritage policies, degradation & risk assessment, site management and ecotourism. She has recently expanded her research to the University of Breda where she has joined the Associate Professorship Visitor Studies in order to incorporate the field of tourism and visitor management into her research on archaeological site management.

Sigrid van Roode is a senior heritage consultant with years of experience in international heritage management. Her field of consultancy, in which she has been awarded a position as Marie Curie Research Fellow by the European Union, focuses on drawing sustainable policies for heritage sites, including legal and financial implications as well as embedding the sites in a wider cultural context. Sigrid teaches international masterclasses on site management for local students and instructs municipality officials on working with heritage management, for which she develops training courses and workshops.

Harry Pape is a heritage consultant who specializes in heritage management studies from a social perspective. Currently Harry is obtaining his second MA in Heritage Studies. Harry is well versed in both excavation management as bringing the past to a larger public. (HARRY, zeg nog eens iets over jezelf?)

