

Dalfsen

A Dutch Case Study of Involving the Community by Development-Led Archaeology

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The Oosterdalfsen excavation in the municipality of Dalfsen received a wealth of media attention in the Dutch and foreign press in spring 2015 (Bouma and van der Velde 2017) due to spectacular finds and a well-thought-out media strategy. The excavation sparked the imagination of the village, local politicians were positive, and the site was visited by large numbers of local residents. This article looks at the background of this excavation, why local politicians were so mistrustful of archaeologists before the excavation

began, and how the local government turned an unexpected find not only into a short-term marketing asset but also into an enduring cultural program that is still active two years after the event.

The positive attitude of the government of Dalfsen toward its own archaeological heritage today contrasts sharply with the views expressed during previous projects. From the start of development-led archaeology in the Netherlands, archaeological projects have been undertaken at the municipality level. As such, Dalfsen illustrates an interesting example of the position of public archaeology in the Netherlands. Noteworthy projects include Oosterdalfsen (which spans the years from 2011 to the present)

ABSTRACT

This article discusses the way development-led archaeology in the Netherlands disseminates archaeological knowledge to and with the public using the way archaeological projects were designed in Dalfsen (Netherlands) as a case study. In the early days of contract archaeology, which in the Netherlands was designed after the Valetta Convention, archaeologists were primarily concerned with the financial and planning aspects of projects, and there was little room for public archaeology. We suggest that this caused archaeologists to forget to involve the public in their projects. In time, it became almost impossible to rectify this mistake because archaeological contractors became extremely bureaucratic. In the case of Dalfsen, a spectacular project was needed to change this situation. The project, and especially its media value, inspired the municipality to invest in community archaeology and make choices that an archaeologist would not primarily be concerned with. Thus, we discuss the effects of these choices and archaeologists' actions in this process. We conclude that it is important for archaeologists to act as facilitators because it improves the success rate of community archaeology projects.

Este artículo aborda la manera en que la arqueología comercial en los Países Bajos comparte los resultados con el público, usando como estudio de caso el diseño de proyectos arqueológicos en Dalfsen, un poblado en el este de los Países Bajos. En los primeros años de la arqueología comercial, que en los Países Bajos fue diseñada con base en el convenio de La Valetta, los arqueólogos se enfocaron en la planificación y gestión financiera de los proyectos en el contexto de las obras públicas de gran tamaño, dejando poco espacio para la arqueología pública. La resolución de este problema se complicó porque actuando de esa manera las empresas arqueológicas se volvieron extremadamente burocráticas. El caso de Dalfsen, donde se encontraron los restos de un cementerio de la época megalítica, ha causado un cambio relevante. El grande impacto mediático de los hallazgos ocasionó que el ayuntamiento del mismo pueblo decidiera invertir en un proyecto de arqueología pública. De esa manera se abrió un campo de trabajo antes no conocido, donde los arqueólogos se transformaron de científicos y profesionales del patrimonio en gestores e intérpretes para el público. El artículo describe esta transformación y concluye que el éxito de la arqueología pública depende de las decisiones de los arqueólogos y su voluntad de cambiar la dirección de la profesión.

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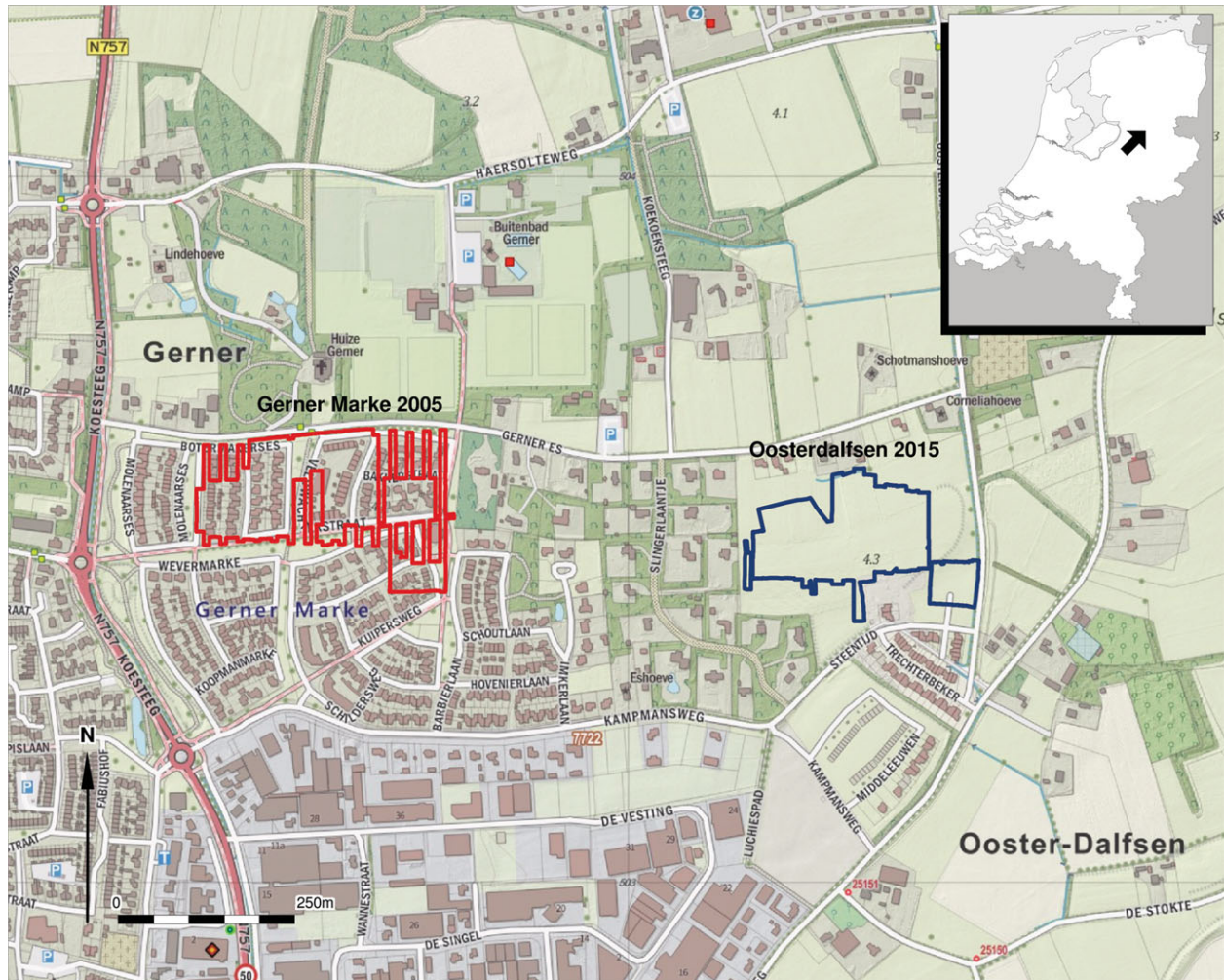


FIGURE 1. Dalfsen and the location of the Gerner Marke and Oosterdalfsen projects (Source: ADC ArcheoProjecten, Amersfoort).

and the adjacent Gerner Marke (2001–2007) (Figure 1). Here, we will suggest that the way Dutch archaeologists designed archaeological projects during the early days of development-led archaeology impacted and influenced the effectiveness of public archaeology initiatives. We will look back at how these two major archaeological projects were designed and implemented and how this was perceived by the contracting authority. Of special interest is the way archaeologists themselves perceived their role in the system of spatial planning.

In this contribution, we will show that the relationship between contract archaeology and public archaeology is historically difficult due to the fact that archaeologists are seldom stationed in one place, so they are not able to build long-lasting relations with the public, and that contract archaeologists do not have dedicated funding for community archaeology projects. After a brief summary of the results of the archaeological projects in Dalfsen, we will focus on the way the projects were perceived by the various stakeholders in the archaeological process: the local government, the villagers, and the archaeologists themselves. An

important aspect we consider is the role archaeologists should play in community projects.

DEVELOPMENT-LED ARCHAEOLOGY IN THE NETHERLANDS AND THE POSITION OF PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

In the Netherlands, archaeological research is governed by the law. The latest monuments act (2007) is written in accordance with the Valletta Treaty, which primarily states that when new developments might affect archaeological resources, the developer is responsible for paying for archaeological research. In the last 20 years, almost all field research has been undertaken by private companies, although government parties and universities regulate the archaeological market and are concerned with the educational and scientific aspects of archaeology.

The law puts the responsibility for looking after historic archaeological sites under the auspices of municipalities. All Dutch municipalities are now required to draw up an archaeology policy. A small number can count on the services of a municipal archaeologist, but most have to procure expertise from archaeological support centers (run by the province, for example) or archaeological consultants. The advantage of this is that targeted expertise can be purchased, but the disadvantage is that there are no archaeologists on hand most of the time. The professional archaeological sector is further regulated by additional quality standards (*Kwaliteitsnorm Nederlandse Archeologie* [Quality Standard Dutch Archaeology], www.sikb.nl).

Archaeology has thus become a part of the process of spatial planning. Decisions about the usefulness and necessity of research depend on the considerations of project leaders who operate outside the field of archaeology and its associated public domain.

The Valletta Treaty describes the mandatory responsibility for bearing the costs of archaeological research. Article 9 discusses the need to communicate research results and to build bridges with the public because the research concerns their own cultural heritage. This part of the treaty, however, is not incorporated in the monuments act (van den Dries 2014). Due to this, programs for public outreach are not an integral part of development-funded archaeological projects. This means that investment in a positive cultural climate cannot be taken for granted and often depends on the active participation of archaeology volunteers from (local) associations.

This does not mean that contact with the public is absent in the Netherlands. As Van den Dries (2014:71) points out, there is a long tradition of presenting archaeological results to the public through excavation visits, booklets, and lectures. There are also examples of a number of developer-funded projects in which interesting initiatives were developed by archaeological companies (van den Dries and van der Linde 2012:14). What they have in common is that they were made possible by archaeological consultants acting on behalf of their clients and/or enthusiastic initiatives of (private) archaeologists often willing to match a part of the cost at their own expense. This has resulted in a general public becoming more aware of and interested in archaeology (van den Dries 2015).

These projects provide information to the archaeology-interested public but seldom communicate with the public about their own needs and wishes (van den Dries 2014). This more engaged form of public archaeology, community archaeology as defined by Marshall (2002), is seldom carried out in the Netherlands, impacting the ability of archaeology to have a lasting positive effect on the design of planned developments or to strengthen group identity in communities. Despite the good intentions of project archaeologists regarding sharing information, many local citizens will quickly forget a pamphlet about the results of a nearby excavation, regardless of how big or small the project.

A BRIEF OUTLINE OF THE RESULTS OF THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATIONS IN GERNER MARKE AND OOSTERDALFSEN

The municipality of Dalfsen does not employ an archaeologist. A policy officer receives periodic support from an archaeologist employed in a support center run by the province. For large-scale projects like the ones discussed below, an archaeological consultancy firm is utilized.

Dutch archaeology requires a strict protocol to be followed from the time a development is first planned. The main potential archaeological values are first assessed against the zoning plans, and desk research is carried out. A prospective field survey may follow, and then possibly a trial trench investigation. After these steps, a selection recommendation is drawn up and submitted to the responsible authority. If considered necessary, an approved advisory recommendation then provides the basis for a definitive excavation, after which the site can be released. Between all these steps, there is room for adapting the schedule or archaeological research. Both the Gerner Marke and Oosterdalfsen projects involved all these steps. In Gerner Marke, a site of approximately 4 ha was excavated, while the area excavated in Oosterdalfsen was slightly smaller at 3.5 ha. The extent of the development planned in each area was 22 and 20 ha, respectively.

The excavations are fairly close and part of the same landscape, namely high sand layer ridges in the Overijsselse Vecht River valley. These sand ridges are part of an extended complex of high soils that follow the course of the Vecht Valley from west to east. The soils made this location particularly popular, so the area is rich in archaeological remains. The Gerner Marke excavation concentrated on the northern edge of the Gerner Es and produced remnants from the Late Iron Age, the Roman occupation, the Early Middle Ages, and the High Middle Ages (Blom et al. 2006), consisting of remains of farms and outbuildings and many other finds. At the time, it was one of the larger excavations in the region, and although the results were not remarkable, they did have news value. The results made a significant contribution to modeling the long-term history of the east Netherlands sandy landscape (van der Velde 2011).

The Oosterdalfsen excavation began in 2015 and built on previous work. During 10 weeks, the expected traces of prehistoric farms were found (Bouma and van der Velde 2017). In the last week, a chance find seeming to indicate a single prehistoric grave had to be checked. It turned out that the site contained a complete burial ground from the Funnel Beaker period (3450–2750 BC; Figure 2). It is the largest burial ground from this period in northwest Europe and hugely important in aiding our understanding of the period's cultural landscape (van der Velde et al. 2018). In addition, a rich burial ground from the Merovingian period was discovered. Due to this archaeological abundance, it was not possible for the archaeological company to excavate everything, so a new community project was carried out in 2017.

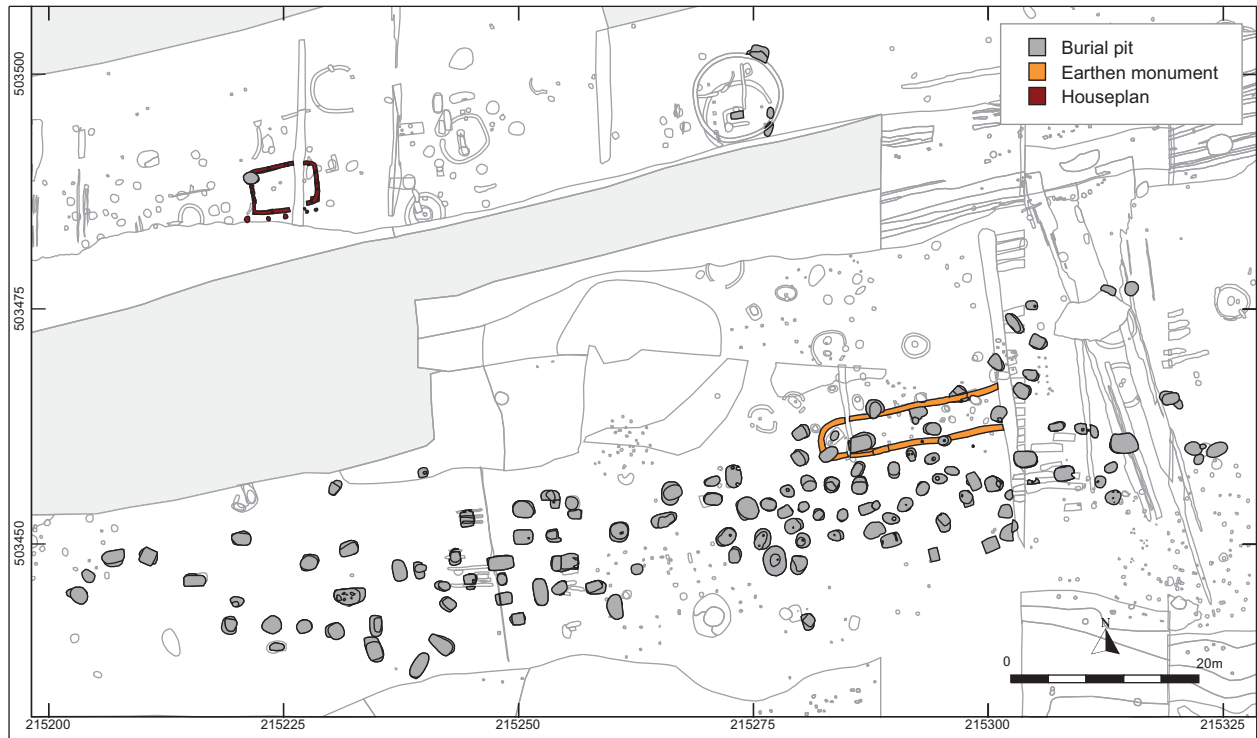


FIGURE 2. Overview of the burial ground of Oosterdalfsen (Source: ADC ArcheoProjecten, Amersfoort).

BECOMING A RELIABLE BUSINESS PARTNER: THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PROCESS AND THE INVOLVEMENT OF THE CONTRACTING AUTHORITY IN THE GERNER MARKE PROJECT

When, in the 1990s, Dutch archaeology was transformed from a state-controlled activity to a market-driven system, much attention was paid to integrating archaeological research into existing frameworks. Archaeologists prioritized an approach to incorporating the spatial planning process that would not delay future building processes and would be measurable in financial charts (Goudswaard 2006).

This approach made the archaeological implementation of projects more professional and more reliable and manageable for contracting authorities and partners. Moreover, the effectiveness of the archaeological process was further reflected in the development of schedules of requirements centered on research questions and a corresponding brief. In fact, a project must run according to schedule to be positively evaluated (in terms of both the process and archaeological quality) and produce an excavation report that accurately answers the questions set out in the schedule of requirements. As such, archaeological consultants focused their attention on the financial aspects of archaeological research. Saving the client money was considered to be of greater importance than creating benefits for society.

The downside of this process affected archaeological science. Synthesis of research findings or assessments of existing archaeological models (the question remains, after all, whether or not archaeology is totally predictable) were seen as disruptive elements in this market-based system, where pricing is the most important factor. In this system, connection with society also became a secondary concern, and often remains so to this day, since informing the public and getting them involved costs money and appears to produce few returns at first glance.

After a coring investigation in Gerner Marke, it was found that a large part of the site required an extra trial trench investigation (Spitzers and Koop 2002). The trial trench investigation revealed a continuous historical cultural landscape (Hulst 2003). As was standard at the time, the archaeological consultant designed a research brief that focused on excavating only a (representative) part of the site and was primarily concerned with keeping costs down and creating an efficient as possible archaeological workflow (Bente and Raap 2004). The ambitions of the project was scaled back to make it seem as manageable as possible to reassure the municipality that the archaeological contingent was a reliable partner in the planning process. Also typical of the time, public outreach was minimized, because such projects cost money and seemed to have no direct return on investment.

After the selection of an archaeological contractor, the excavation was tightly managed. The minutes of the weekly consultation meetings between the supervisor and the contractor show that there was little room for changes to the research strategy, and direct contact between the archaeologists, the municipality, and

the public was not allowed. Contact with local village residents was reduced to a single press conference and two public open days. An offer by amateur archaeologists to carry out additional research was rejected. Upon conclusion of the fieldwork, the results were incorporated into a basic report in accordance with the guidelines in force at the time (Blom et al. 2006). A popular-science booklet was written by employees of the archaeological consulting firm for the public (van Roode and Bos 2006).

The lack of attention to the public aspects of archaeology was not the result of a lack of interesting finds. The archaeological consultant had a one-sided concern for reducing costs, and it would be fair to say that the municipality did indeed save a lot of money during the process. This was apparent in the presentation of results in the final report of the Gerner Marke excavation.

The money spent by the local government was part of an obligatory process and not an investment in getting to learn something of its own history, and in this the archaeology as a whole was less successful. The results of the project, which identified the high research potential of the sand layer ridges along the Vecht, could not usefully be integrated when, in 2007, the archaeology policy plan was written and accompanied by an archaeological value map (Past2Present-ArcheoLogic 2007). Instead, the plan minimized the role of archaeological research in the municipality and the attention given to the supposed positive aspects of archaeological research (such as public participation), reinforcing the role of archaeologists as reliable business partners but little else.

A NEW CHANCE FOR ARCHAEOLOGY? THE PROJECT OF OOSTERDALFSEN

Between 2005 and 2010, interest in community archaeology grew, although it struggled to make an impact (van den Dries 2014). The relevant advisory agency even introduced an approach called reverse archaeology, in which the wishes and expectations of stakeholders other than archaeologists (residents, public, administrators) are almost equal to those of archaeologists in how research is designed (Goudswaard et al. 2012). Although the nature of public archaeology in this period did not alter much within the branch of development-led archaeology, archaeologists were beginning to realize the positive social potential of their projects.

So, when the first plans for a new housing development at Oosterdalfsen (east of Gerner Marke) emerged in 2011, one may expect that the growing interest in community archaeology was taken into account. In minor ways it did, but the archaeology stakeholders were confronted by a negative reaction from the local government itself. The government felt that enough archaeology had been done in the municipality, and that the previous investigation had resulted in only the booklet referred to above plus a report that was “beyond benefits everybody’s comprehension.” Despite the economic success of the Gerner Marke project, the municipality continued to perceive archaeology as merely an expensive activity with no benefit for the community as a whole.

Ultimately, the municipality was convinced of the necessity of a research project, but the developed scope of the project was severely limited, with research conducted in accordance with the framework of the municipal archaeology policy. Whereas in 2002 the archaeological consultant began applying the advisory techniques of affordability and selection decisions aimed at reducing costs to the belief that archaeology should be fully represented in the spatial planning process, between 2012 and 2015, the priority was to stay within the financial limits.

After the coring and trial trenching, a project design was created in which cost control during excavation was the priority. Contrary to the design written for the Gerner Marke project, however, there was some ambition in involving the public in the project and a few “story lines” were identified (Pape and van Eijk 2012; Witte et al. 2015). The major one stressed the importance of archaeology in strengthening local identity in the neighborhood. Archaeology would have to pay for this small shift in attention at its own expense. For instance, half of the excavation team had to consist of archaeology students. With this reduced presence of professional archaeologists in the project, the chances of creating added value were also reduced.

To conclude, due to one-sided emphasis on the technical and spatial aspects of archaeology, nowadays social potentials are virtually ignored by developers. This places archaeology in a difficult position that can be changed only by an effective shocking discovery or a long-term investment within contracted archaeological research. In Dalfsen, the shocking discovery was finding a burial ground from the age of the dolmen builders (Figure 3).

THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF THE DOLMEN BUILDERS AND THE IDENTITY OF A COMMUNITY

Although the results of the investigation exceeded the archaeologist’s expectations, they also created immediate funding problems, and the local government was reluctant to support the excavations. They feared the extra costs and did not believe archaeology added value to the overall project. This changed gradually thanks in part to lobbying work carried out by the archaeological consultant, but the breakthrough was due to the visit of the council to the excavation itself.

The vaguely different hues of the soil were hardly an incentive for granting additional funding, but the Funnel Beaker period is known for its richly decorated pottery. Further, the narrative about the first farmers in a municipality that, until recently, was largely agricultural and the councilors’ experience of feeling 5,000-year-old items in their hands proved to be convincing, which led the council to grant additional funding. Finally, the council believed that it was important to create the opportunity for locals to visit the excavation and increase their awareness.

Moreover, the local government and the archaeologists found a common interest in marketing the excavation. During the final month of the dig, all parties worked together in creating a narrative to communicate to the press and public. Instead of using the archaeologically correct term “Funnel Beaker culture,” communication focused on the “dolmen builders,” as dolmens are the



FIGURE 3. Finds from the burial ground of Oosterdalsen attributed to the Funnel Beaker culture (Source: ADC ArcheoProjecten, Amersfoort).

best known archaeological phenomena in the Netherlands. It was stressed that these dolmen builders were actually the first farmers to settle the landscape, which made them the first (distant) “relatives” of the inhabitants of the present-day village.

Although a good product sells itself, this marketing was successful in getting the project media coverage. A press conference exceeded expectations. The news was widely reported in newspapers, social media, and on television. The estimated press value (as compared to the cost of advertising) of all this media attention was almost a million euros (three times more than the total costs of the project to that point). This also made it worthwhile for the archaeological contractor to invest extra time in the project.

The find was also well received in the village. The excavation dominated local news in the first few weeks. Initially, the news was about the importance of the finds, their uniqueness, and their

age. Then, a kind of local pride arose. Driven by interest in the process of excavation and a wish to see the objects themselves, large numbers of local residents visited the site. Many residents thought that the finds should stay in the village itself. The villagers’ “families” grew thanks to these new ancestors. At first this interest seemed superficial, but in the months following the excavation, a small group of amateur archaeologists, artists, local residents, and civil servants sponsored by administrators (especially the mayor) started to think about how to incorporate these finds into the narrative of the DNA of the village.

The valley of the Vecht, in which Dalfsen is situated, offers a beautiful agricultural landscape, woodlands, and a river attractive to regional tourism. Not being part of the economic heart of the Netherlands and with tourism under threat, there is a constant danger for villages without central facilities to lose relevance and so lose the regional competition for staying (or becoming)



FIGURE 4. The amateur archaeologist Ab Goutbeek, who searched the region for his entire life, and his wife visit the excavation (photo C. Prins, Dalfsen).

a regional center. Therefore, the local government actively tries to stimulate a sense of community. Media attention that markets the city, economic programs, and projects about identity are encouraged by both the local government and the villagers. The results of the excavation were, therefore, welcomed, but in the first months it was unclear how to best integrate these findings into policy and maximize their impact.

The role of the archaeologists (the consultant and the actual excavators) and the municipality was two-fold. The latter certainly felt proud but also responsible for ensuring that everything would end well. The archaeologists carried out a number of open days and lectures about the excavation. During the open days the villagers were able to see a selection of the finds and hear stories about the life of the first farmers (Figure 4). Also, about 100 children from several primary schools in Dalfsen joined the excavation for a few hours.

After the excavation, the main concern of the lead archaeologist was safeguarding the scientific analysis. With all the money from the government for finishing the excavation, press coverage, and extra time for the archaeological contractor, there was no assurance that the results would be studied properly. The local government was willing to finance some extra community work but did not want to be responsible for the entirety of the academic results of the project.

The archaeological consultant and municipality decided to talk to representatives from other levels within the Dutch administration, the province, and the state. This led to heated discussions between the municipality and the state, in particular (Bazelmans 2016). Ultimately, the conflict paved the way for the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research to set up a temporary

emergency fund to further synthesize internationally important projects, but initially the municipality was very much on its own.

The councilors therefore decided that, apart from the discussion of funding the academic research, they could not depend on the archaeological community and that they had to find their own way of dealing with the finds and the results of the excavation. This led to the radical decision to relieve the archaeological consultant of his services and take responsibility for the local heritage.

This was a turning point in the way archaeology was conceived of in the village. Although at first glance it may seem that the archaeologists themselves became victims of the ambitions of the municipality, it also created space for a different line of thinking about integrating results from archaeological excavations into the local community. The archaeologists involved were very keen both to serve the academic needs of the project and interact with the public, but their approach was traditional. The newly appointed civil servants disarticulated the academic pretensions from the activities that served the wishes and requirements of the villagers and the local economy, a matter we will return to later.

THE DALFSEN DOLMEN BUILDERS: WHOSE ANCESTORS WERE THEY?

With funding diminished, little data was processed after the excavation. Only when the project received a grant from the Netherlands Organisation for Scientific Research (NWO) did the municipality make funds available to finish the basic research needed to complete the scientific publication.

At another level, however, the civil servants became very active. Armed with factsheets made on the eve of the press conference, they sketched out a program, the “Treasure of Dalfsen,” in which the excavation results took a prominent position. The program was intended to involve citizens in their own heritage. In this open program, only a small number of projects were designed, leaving space and room for other initiatives to be developed. The municipality was determined to play a prominent role in this program, but villagers and local entrepreneurs also played an important role in determining how their heritage should be interpreted. As a result, the emphasis of the entire project moved from scientific processing to social embedding.

It began with a talk show (broadcast live on regional television) in which the results of the early medieval burials also found at Dalfsen were presented by the archaeologists and the mayor, with artistic work and poems inspired by the archaeology. The “treasure” was supported by initiatives of local entrepreneurs, youth activities, and making heritage visible in the future housing development. Local entrepreneurs brewed Early Middle Ages beer following the discovery of particularly rich graves from the period, bread was baked in the “style of the ancestors” of the Funnel Beaker period, and prehistoric meals were served in restaurants. The restaurants also provided information for visitors on exploring the landscape on foot or by bike. Workshops on the theme of archaeology given by a local artist were also inspired. They resulted in an exhibition in which a member of the Dalfsen history society showed her excavation photos (she followed everything closely with her camera during the excavation), and a local ceramicist displayed her own interpretation of the rich range of shapes of Funnel Beaker earthenware. In addition, the municipality sponsored an overview exhibition of the Neolithic burial ritual in northwest Europe including the Dalfsen finds (2020 in the Drenthe Museum in Assen, Netherlands).

The municipality also supported two other initiatives; the first, a professional documentary (*Just Like Us*) is currently being shown at various international film festivals, putting Dalfsen firmly on the map. The second initiative was a musical for schoolchildren (*wortels*, or “roots”) written by a local filmmaker who was inspired by the enthusiasm for the excavation. More than 100 pupils from the upper classes of the primary school reenacted the excavation. In the musical, a lightning strike takes a group of children back in time, and they come face-to-face with their peers from the dolmen-building culture in the Early Middle Ages. The performances that followed brought hundreds of families into contact with the archaeology of Oosterdalfsen. In advance of the construction of the housing development, the municipality decided to install a memorial to earlier times; a “family path” was developed. Both children and adults were challenged to ask their ancestors questions. The questions and their answers were then engraved in wood and placed in a footpath.

The role of the archaeologists was minimal during the design and execution of the program, with outcomes that were refreshing but also challenging. A large number of the public initiatives were not high on the list of priorities of the archaeologists, but in retrospect were fun for those taking part, as well as appreciated by a large number of the village residents. They also stimulated creativity. Also positive is the fact that after more than two years, many people are still involved in designing new initiatives. In con-

trast to many other projects solely designed and conducted by archaeologists, archaeology in Dalfsen remains alive.

The downside is that the message communicated about the past is not always as academic as the archaeologist might like, raising questions about the feeling of ownership over the past. All the initiatives mentioned above were carried out with a freely available factsheet with a large helping of pseudo-historical knowledge. For example, the Early Middle Ages beer was brewed with spelt and hops, and the recipe for the Funnel Beaker bread and the composition of the prehistoric menu also ignored accepted archaeological knowledge. Large sections of the musical would also have been roundly criticized by archaeologists.

However, given the success, we have to ask ourselves if this matters. In retrospect, it can be concluded that these initiators who created their own sense of history valued the perception of heritage within their own community more than an archaeologically responsible message transmitted from the top down. Moreover, many of the questions submitted to the archaeologists during the program illustrate the gap between the needs for knowledge of the interested public and those of archaeological scientists. The general public wanted more than typologies; they wanted a glimpse into the daily lives of their ancestors. Archaeologists suddenly faced questions about ancestors’ favorite colors, pets, and beliefs. There is no scientifically sound answer to such questions, but a space was created for both a discourse and the imagination of the archaeological practitioner. During the subsequent study, the desire to understand “how life used to be” proved to be the very platform where scientist and interested layman can best find a common interest.

The involvement of the archaeologists in some of the many activities carried out in the Treasure of Dalfsen program initially caused some discomfort. Although the academic community has paid more attention in recent years to public participation and citizen science (Smith 2014), most archaeologists feel threatened when others take over the interpretation of their excavation results. That is exactly what happened in Dalfsen. In retrospect, the trail blazed by Dalfsen between 2015 and 2017 has garnered attention for archaeological heritage in the broad sense. The lesson for archaeologists is to place their professional interest (and responsibilities) into a perspective that makes room for science and science-based initiatives. It is the latter that can make archaeological projects successful as community projects. Projects that originated from outside the profession turned out to be important because they created a sense of community ownership that allowed the positive spirit about archaeology in Dalfsen to endure. That archaeologists did not succeed in taking the role as intermediates (or coaching guides) from the start is due, in part, to the history of the project itself but also a consequence of previous development-led archaeology projects in the Netherlands.

However painful it may be to share this intellectual ownership of the past, it is obvious that archaeology belongs to the whole community, not solely archaeological professionals. Archaeologists need to focus more on guiding this process than on trying to control it. Although this conclusion is far from new—since in the last decades community archaeology has become an important discipline—it remains important to emphasize, particularly within contract archaeology.

THE COMMUNITY IS EXCAVATING ITSELF

The Treasure of Dalfsen program paved the way for archaeologists to become more creative and community involved. The most visible project was a community excavation, managed by two professional archaeologists. In the summer of 2017, 400 people were given the opportunity to participate in a new excavation at the site itself (Figure 5; Bouma and van der Velde 2017). Subsequently, the upper classes of all primary schools in the municipality of Dalfsen (about 300 children) were given the chance to join the dig for a morning or an afternoon. The municipality set up an information tent, installed a webcam so viewers could follow activities online, and found a young person who was prepared to post vlogs about the project in social media.

In the design of the project, the authors wanted to find out if it was possible to create a product in which we could combine the needs of the archaeological community and the commercial partner. One problem with this kind of initiative is often that it is organized as a kind of charity, which may well be beneficial for archaeological communities and archaeology but not for companies that need the projects to be financially viable. Without financial stability, community archaeology cannot become a sub-discipline with long-lasting effects on the discipline; instead, it will remain only a small percentage of the overall time spent on archaeology by professional archaeologists (van den Dries 2015:47).

One of the other objectives was the dissemination of knowledge about the techniques of excavating and the archaeological results. We collaborated with archaeology students and hoped that after the excavation, some of the non-archaeologist volunteers had become enough of “an archaeologist” to become ambassadors for archaeology in the future.

An unanticipated outcome was that areas were excavated that would otherwise never have been studied. The results of this project led to a number of supplementary questions being answered.

The initiative was directed toward people interested in archaeology, particularly those from the vicinity of Dalfsen, but in principle everyone was welcome. An accessible program for amateur archaeologists offered the opportunity to join the dig for half a day, two days, or even the chance to be a field archaeologist for a whole week. In groups ranging from 25 to 40 participants daily, amateur archaeologists assisted in exposing an archaeological site, documenting traces and finds and physically storing them, and continuing right through to administration and processing finds afterward.

During the excavation, presentations were given to clarify how archaeologists arrive at their interpretations, what can be determined using excavation data, and at what point an archaeologist (or layman) begins to make assumptions or suggestions. This approach was partly intended to address the wide gap between what the public wants to know and what information archaeologists can supply. By getting the public involved in the archaeological process, we thought that we would create more mutual understanding.

For outsiders, the idea of excavation is surrounded by a thrill of adventure and possibility of making special finds, but in reality, the day-to-day work is often intractable. The volunteers didn't lack any lust for adventure. Although the occasional person thought they would strike gold immediately, most exhibited boundless patience. In the first place, being part of a research team was perceived as something special. Despite many suffering back pain in the evening, people were also proud to have made an active contribution to discovering their own history. It was also a social event, where participants, including future estate residents of different ages (such as a grandfather with his five grandchildren), could get to know each other. The professional archaeologist spent more time giving instructions and making coffee than actively working in the field. In addition, the participation proved to be a guarantee of a sense of history, since every trace found, no matter how small, and every change in soil color was greeted with great enthusiasm. This was an important lesson for both professionals and students, who think the public needs something spectacular to get interested.

When the excavation finished, several volunteers offered their services again to help with cleaning and processing finds. This shows how this type of project involving large groups of non-archaeologists leads to a lasting interest in the subject, something quite necessary in a system where so many decisions have to be made at local level without the involvement of archaeological professionals.

That this approach met a broad need was apparent as soon as the first spade was put in the ground. Again, almost all of the media were represented, even though there was little to report from an archaeological-scientific perspective. This was not a surprise. During two earlier excavations in the Netherlands, the organizers reported a massive interest from the public, and a survey exploring the way Dutch people perceived archaeology and heritage found that many respondents wanted to be part of an excavation (van den Dries 2014:73). This is also in line with the successes found in other European countries experimenting with this kind of community archaeology (Lewis 2015; Little and Shackel 2007).

A LOOK BACK: THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF DALFSEN NOW BELONGS TO DALFSEN ITSELF

In this article, we have focused on the archaeology in Dalfsen and on the way archaeologists interacted with the public. Dalfsen is for several reasons a relevant illustration of the status of public (and community) archaeology in Dutch archaeology.

We have shown the conflict between the Dutch monuments act, which states that municipalities themselves have to take care of heritage policy, and the Valletta Treaty, which identified a need to share the results of archaeological projects with the public. It is a situation in which tensions are created by the lack of archaeological knowledge present as most villages lack an archaeological policy officer, the desire of municipalities and developers to keep archaeological costs low, and by archaeological consultants narrowly focused on business processes and, sometimes, academic priorities over community outreach, leaving municipal purchasers



FIGURE 5. Excavating in Oosterdalfsen: Everybody is involved (Source: ADC ArcheoProjecten, Amersfoort).

of services wondering what they get for their money. Repairing the damage of this approach has proved difficult, and it was the spectacular discoveries at Oosterdalfsen that created a new opportunity to break this cycle.

When archaeology is managed, as in Dalfsen, by the departments of local governments that are concerned with the purchasing of services (be it archaeology or furniture), it becomes difficult for archaeologists to change the focus from archaeology as a business to an enabler of community archaeology. Contracting authorities like Dalfsen tend to act according to policy but are not very accustomed to going beyond the boundaries of the bureaucratic process. When this does happen, a number of conclusions can be drawn about how archaeologists, administrators, and the public view archaeology:

- Archaeologists mainly focus on conveying a message. In Dalfsen, it was discovered that a local initiative can create a much more powerful understanding of archaeology in local communities by requiring archaeologists to listen to new questions.
- When archaeological initiatives are born from the “bottom up,” the chance that their results survive the period after archaeologists leave tends to be much higher.
- Local initiatives do not always have to conform to archaeological facts. If the aim is to create a sense of history, archaeological restraint is required. The public must be able to contribute something too.
- Professionals must pay more attention to the specific knowledge needs of nonprofessionals, even if these are not always

scientifically justified. Whether or not nonprofessionals can get informed depends on how professionals can bridge that knowledge gap.

- The ideas of professionals and nonprofessionals about what is special often differ widely. A professional is looking for something special, while for nonprofessionals, the archaeological process (often the excavation) itself is already special.

Today, most archaeological companies realize that positive public opinion about the importance of heritage is crucial for the well-being of the sector in the near future. But even in the best of circumstances, there is little chance for long-lasting community archaeology projects to gain momentum. Initiatives are bound to be impermanent because they are tied to specific projects. Although in the Netherlands there are a number of small companies devoted to public archaeology, and there are good examples of interesting and creative projects, only a small percentage of current archaeology involves these kinds of projects.

It is now time to take the next step to allow community archaeology to become a more mature discipline within the Dutch system of contract archaeology. For this, we found out that a community dig in combination with a program of dissemination of knowledge is a valuable tool in creating interest in the administration of local governments that turns into initiatives in public archaeology. Getting archaeological contracts (at least partly) out of purchase departments may be the first step in setting up a new playing field in which we can start to cooperate with local stakeholders to create community projects. From the commercial point of

view, partly collaborating with informed amateur archaeologists and partly with students makes it possible to create profitable projects. In return, the investment in educating these stakeholders creates mutual benefits.

In convincing future clients, it is important to first stress that investing in archaeology will create added value to their projects. This is not just a matter of communicating facts and figures but also the social and cultural benefits (especially when clients are local governments, which they are in a majority of the projects). Techniques by which you can estimate the media value of your public outreach (Ducoffe 1995; Holtorf 2007) as a return on the client's investment can be helpful. As such, investing in media attention through a well-designed and well-implemented media strategy is vitally important.

It is also time for contract archaeologists to look at their projects from a different perspective. The lessons from Dalfsen are especially applicable to professional archaeologists themselves, since a change of mind-set (from simple excavator and all-knowing expert to a coaching guide) is crucial for the success of these kinds of projects. That the success of the Dalfsen project (which actually started as a complete failure but was saved by incredible finds) can create a new momentum is evidenced by the number of questions the archaeological company got from possible clients to conduct the same community dig in their municipalities. At least there is no lack of interest.

Is this analysis just a “good news” story? Partly, it is. Where the municipality initially acted correctly but bureaucratically in relation to archaeology and heritage, these subjects have since achieved a clear place in the village's collective memory and local government policy. At the same time, it remains difficult for archaeologists to carry out fundamental research. For reasons outside the scope of this article, not only was—and partly still is—the municipality reluctant to finance scientific analysis of the data, the results have also been insufficient and embedded in current academic discourse. Within the current contracted research, community archaeology is a very unequal partner, so it is particularly important to pursue an overall balance in projects, from basic science to the identity of a local community. Only in this way can the position of archaeology be permanently and resolutely safeguarded in society.

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Data Availability Statement

Technical reports from the Dalfsen project can be consulted through the e-depot: www.edna.dans.knaw.nl.

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