



ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITUATIONS

Archaeological Theory from the Inside Out

Gavin Lucas

ROUTLEDGE

Archaeological Situations

This book is an introduction to theory in archaeology – but with a difference. *Archaeological Situations* avoids talking about theory as if it was something you apply but rather as something embedded in archaeological practice from the start.

Rather than see theory as something worked from the outside in, this book explores theory from the inside out, which means it focuses on specific archaeological practices rather than specific theories. It starts from the kinds of situations that students find themselves in and learn about in other archaeology courses, avoiding the gap between practice and theory from the very beginning. It shows students the theoretical implications of almost everything they engage in as archaeologists, from fieldwork, recording, writing up and making and assessing an argument to exploring the very nature of archaeology and justifying its relevance. Essentially, it adopts a structure which attempts to pre-empt one of the most common complaints of students taking theory courses: how is this applicable?

Aimed primarily at undergraduates, this book is the ideal way to engage students with archaeological theory.

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2 Doing Fieldwork

Situation 2: In the Trench

The first week of the fieldschool, students are down on their knees, trowelling away, the supervisor is wandering around the site doing who knows what. Imagine if all the thoughts of these people were flashed above them in little cloud-bubbles like those cartoons: when is the lunch break? . . . I have no idea what I am doing . . . they are cute . . . why didn't the supervisor put me over there? . . . this soil looks different to before . . . Then suddenly all these bubbles pop as a voice breaks the silence, calling for the supervisor. A gleaming object has caught the eye of a student. "Is this anything?" the student asks, handing it to the supervisor. The supervisor examines the object, a rounded white pebble. After a brief moment of reflection, the answer comes back: "Probably not. It is a natural pebble, and although sometimes pebbles like this may have been intentionally brought to site – what we call manuports – this is probably not the case here". The supervisor hands it back to the student, who is still a bit unsure. "So . . . shall I keep it or throw it?"

Fieldwork and Facts

What Counts as Archaeology?

Keep it or not? That is the question faced by any archaeologist when excavating and encountering things in the ground. For novices, such questions may be more frequent, but no matter how experienced you are, this dilemma will always crop up now and again. The fear is, of course, you may be discarding something meaningful or keeping something pointless. But either way, think about what happens in that moment of decision. If you keep it, the object gets registered and given a number, it goes through the same process as all the other finds and becomes a small fact about the site, a little bit of data. If you throw it on the spoil, it has

become nothing and sinks into oblivion. There you are, at the birth of a fact – you are the midwife and perhaps you never even realized it.

Such decisions actually pervade our work all the time and underline the selective nature of fieldwork; we are always dividing the stuff we encounter into two groups: stuff that matters and stuff that doesn't. Because it isn't just about what object you keep or discard; it is also about whether that pile of rocks on the surface is a ruin or a natural pile; should I take a GPS reading or not? Whether that linear anomaly on a geophysical plot is an archaeological feature or an artefact of the software. Although a lot of the examples in this chapter will focus on excavation, almost everything discussed applies to other types of fieldwork. Indeed, perhaps this is what defines fieldwork in general: the act of transforming a farmer's field, a mountain valley or the seabed into an archaeological site. Crucially, we will adopt in this chapter, a notion of **the field** as anywhere this process of transformation takes place – which in recent times has included an increasing diversity of places, from an archaeologist's van to outer space!

The stuff that matters become our facts and data; the stuff that doesn't is ignored and eventually forgotten. Not everything that matters is always kept; the soil we are trowelling may get saved or sampled, but most of it ends up on, indeed creates, the spoil heap. But still we record things about it like its colour, its texture, composition and so on. But even here, we make selections; we cannot record *everything* about it. Is that even possible? We write down its colour, but not how it tastes; we measure its thickness, but rarely do we weigh it. The selections are endless, and in most cases we don't even think about them. As a student, this is part of what you learn, usually by following guidelines and rules about how to record stuff in the ground. These selections are not entirely arbitrary of course; in part, they have been honed over years and years of experience, but they are also informed by certain assumptions about what we think is important based on the research questions and general disciplinary background knowledge which lies behind all projects. Most of the time, what goes into the meaningful group, worthy of keeping or recording and what doesn't, is not subject to any deep reflection but taken for granted. But you only have to look at the history of archaeology to see that these divisions have not always been the same as they are today (Box 2.1).

Box 2.1 Total Recovery?

Excavators, as a rule, record only those things which appear important to them at the time, but fresh problems in archaeology and anthropology are constantly arising, and it can hardly fail to have escaped the notice of anthropologists, especially those who, like myself, have been concerned with the morphology of art, that, on turning back to old accounts in search of evidence, the points which would have been most valuable have been passed over from being thought uninteresting at the time. Every detail should, therefore, be recorded in the manner most conducive to facility of reference, and it ought at all times to be

the chief object of an excavator to reduce his own personal equation to a minimum.

(Pitt Rivers 1887)

Archaeologists who systematically record the position of a coke bottle or tin foil from a cigarette wrapper and then carefully bag and curate it as part of the archaeology of the site just make themselves (and other archaeologists) look silly.

(Drewitt 1999)

The late nineteenth century was a period when archaeologists were increasingly exhorting each other on the importance of mundane things and to recover as much as possible, especially in areas where art historical approaches often framed recovery protocols, that is, saving only museum-worthy objects. It is easy to portray the development of scientific archaeology as one where this shift in mindset marks a decisive break between antiquarianism and true archaeology. Yet the goalposts for recovery have constantly been shifting and often depend upon the kind of site you happen to be working on. Pitt Rivers, who worked mostly on prehistoric sites in England at the end of the nineteenth century, argued for total recovery while Flinders Petrie, who worked in Egypt at the same time, faced with tons of pottery as opposed to the handfuls that Pitt Rivers was used to encountering, argued for a selective retention policy. Yet even Pitt Rivers' methods were somewhat contradictory to his philosophy; he seems to have rewarded his workmen for the recovery of "nicer" finds and didn't always collect all bones but only the more diagnostic parts (skulls and long bones). And it goes without saying he will not have used sieves or flotation to recover smaller items.

Indeed, this last point reveals how recovery protocols are affected by broader frameworks of research; the rise in recovery of environmental samples from the 1950s is closely linked to an emerging interest in the ecological dimension of human cultures and societies. The same can be said about the interest in later modern periods, such as the archaeology of nineteenth and twentieth centuries remains which were – and still are in some places – neglected as outside the domain of archaeology. At the same time, no excavation can recover everything; has there ever been a site without a spoil heap? Most of the soil and stones are not kept. But recovery it is not just about materials; it also about the relations between materials: the location of finds, the stratigraphic position and shape of deposits, all the kinds of things we, of course, cannot keep simply because the very act of excavation destroys them. In this case, total recovery takes on a new meaning, one which places great burden on the written or visual record to "preserve" these aspects of a site more sensitive to our excavation. This is why excavation is sometimes called "preservation by record". Yet such claims, even when put in quotes, raise all kinds of questions about the extent to which a record can act as a copy of the site – what is often called the archive objective. This is a topic we will cover in more detail in Chapter 3.

What all this comes down to is quite simple really. We can argue and theorize all we like about what archaeology is, but every day, on every site, the boundary between what counts as archaeology and what doesn't is being made in the hundreds and thousands of small decisions about what to keep, what to record. Archaeological facts are not out there waiting to be discovered; they are made in these everyday events. But let's be clear here. When we say made, we don't mean made up; soils, stones, walls, pits and potsherds are all real things and they too play a role in these decisions. But when we describe something as "a natural pebble", that is not the same thing as the cold, smooth, rounded object you hold in your hand. Facts are always abstractions, representations of real things which begs the question: what is the relationship between the physical object and the fact?

Well, one thing we already know from the previous discussion is that facts are selective, they involve processes of sorting between what is deemed relevant and what isn't. Nobody can collect or record everything; we always make decisions based either on prior assumptions usually defined by the discipline or on-the-spot calls. When creating a fact about a layer, we regard colour as an important attribute but not usually how it tastes. When deciding if something is worth keeping as a find, we make judgements about whether it was made or at least used by humans and may therefore have cultural significance. But even if we accept that facts are selective, that they only give us partial representations of the things they refer to, that still leaves the question of how we understand the nature of that representation. Surely facts are, by definition, true? However selective or partial they may be, they still purport to be truthful statements about things. This layer was dark brown, it was not blue or pink; it was 12 cm thick, not 200 cm thick. Surely then, in making facts, one of the most important things we need to do is be truthful or faithful to the thing which we are representing? Archaeologists often refer to this fidelity as **objectivity** – but this is a difficult term, so let us put it to one side for now and explore this problem through a more familiar set of terms: description and interpretation.

Interpretation and Description

Archaeologists are a cautious bunch on the whole. Fieldwork is, like any good science, guided by protocols and rules which attempt to obtain truthfulness in the construction of facts. One of the most important traditions in fieldwork has been the importance of separating **description** from **interpretation**. A description is often depicted as factual, while an interpretation goes beyond the facts to speculate or infer something not immediately evident. I remember a conversation with a colleague once where he showed me two drawings; one was a plan of a site, to scale, using standard conventions drawn in the field. The other was a simplified drawing showing the same site but in a different style, one that tried to show what the features represented. He held up the first and said this was fact, the other interpretation. It is one thing to describe a layer as dark brown and 12 cm thick, quite another to identify it as a floor. Its colour and thickness we can see and measure, it is right in front of us. The notion that it might be a floor

is surely more speculative; it refers to how that deposit was used in the past, a thing we cannot ever observe. So in calling this layer a floor, we have to accept that this is an interpretation because we are making inferences beyond what is observable.

To some extent, this seems like an intuitively correct way to separate description from interpretation; a description shows us what was there, while an interpretation goes beyond that, it makes inferences (Box 2.2). But how separate are they really? Let's go back to that deposit we are calling a floor and consider its interface with the deposit above it. The interface is that line on a section or profile drawing that marks the separation of two layers (Figure 2.1). Is that interface the surface of the deposit or could it actually be a horizontal levelling cut? Maybe the original upper surface of that deposit has been scraped away prior to the upper layer being laid down. How do we decide which of these two it is? Of course we use various clues to help, but this just underlines the point that this is an interpretive decision. Such examples can be multiplied; you only have to think about how difficult it can be sometimes to define the edges of a deposit at all; where does it stop and start? Often deposits blend or merge into one another and sites don't always conform to the neat, discrete layering shown in textbooks. Very often when you draw a section or profile of a trench or feature, you are faced with decisions about where to draw lines demarcating layers; even though we may use conventions to indicate where divisions are more (or less) distinct, such decisions can still be open to negotiation.

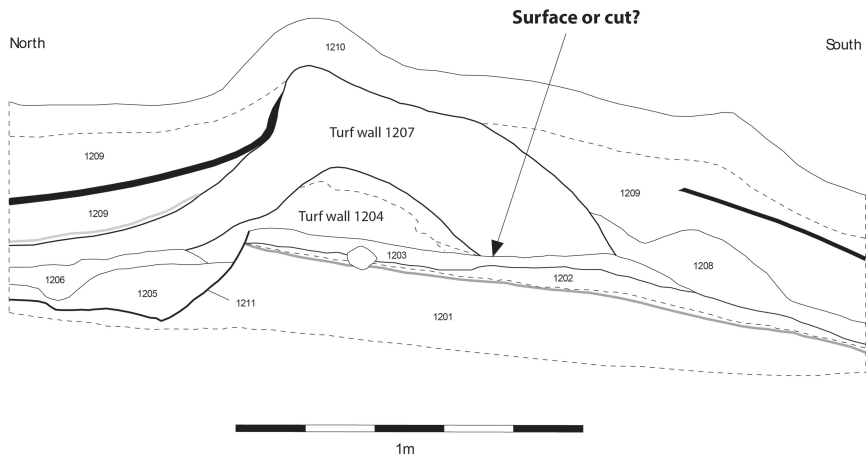


Figure 2.1 Section drawing showing the interpretive problems of an interface: is the top of deposit 1203 a surface or a cut – perhaps a horizontal continuation of the cut 1211?

Box 2.2 The Context Sheet

One of the common targets of criticism in field recording was the way description was separated from interpretation on *pro forma* record sheets for excavation units, known as context sheets in the UK. Moreover, description tended to take up the larger part of space on such sheets with the interpretation relegated to a small box at the bottom. The philosophy implicit in such traditional sheets is that subjective input should be both kept to a minimum and clearly separated from objective description. In the 1990s and early 2000s, many archaeologists argued against such divisions and tried to develop sheets which embodied a more reflexive and self-aware process of documentation where the relationship between description and interpretation is more fluid and recursive. Compare the two context sheets in Figure 2.2 and look at how they differ in respect to these issues.

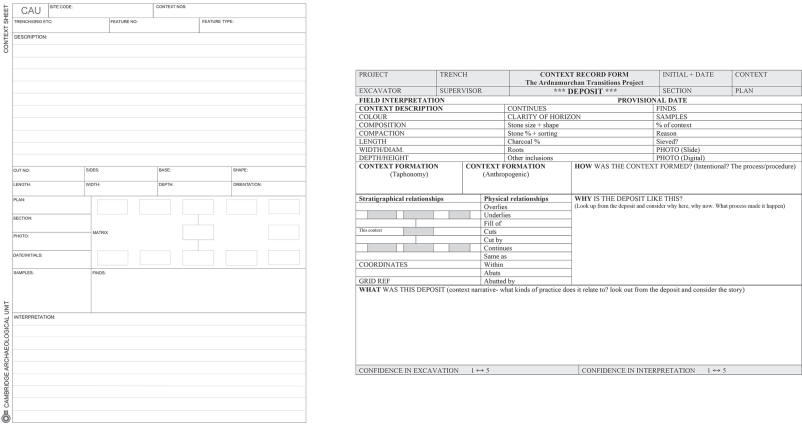


Figure 2.2 A comparison of two context sheets (left: Cambridge Archaeology Unit; right: Ardnamurchan Transitions Project).

All of this suggests that the distinction between description and interpretation is not as rigid as we might have thought; deciding whether the upper face of a deposit is an intact surface or has been truncated/cut away will start to affect our descriptions; not only do we have to decide if the deposit is complete or not, it will also affect whether we have one or two unit sheets to fill out: a single deposit with a surface or a deposit with a truncated surface on the one hand and a cut on the other. And if we open the door to this, then maybe we need to open it further.

You might think whether we call a deposit a floor or a midden won't change the description of it. It is still dark brown and 12 cm thick. Yes, but maybe we will start to pay closer attention to other aspects of the deposit we hadn't given much thought to before. If we see it as a floor, we might expect it to be more compact than other adjacent deposits, maybe we would go back and check our description, compare it and possibly modify it in light of this. On the other hand, if it clearly is not compact but rather soft and loose, maybe our interpretation of it as a floor needs to be questioned or explained why it is not more compact.

What this example suggests is that the relation between description and interpretation is recursive, that is, each informs how we construct the other. This does not mean they are completely circular though and can be collapsed. There does remain some autonomy between the two. Overall descriptions tend to follow more explicit protocols; we might have a checklist of attributes to go through, whereas an interpretation is more open and flexible. At one level, descriptions are always interpretive in the sense that they are selective and guided by some set of assumptions; protocols we use to describe a layer are based on theories of soil science and deposit formation which guide us in choosing what things to record and how. But the crucial thing here is that these general theoretical frameworks are independent from the specific interpretations you might make of features on a particular site. In this sense, the difference between description and interpretation still has some validity, though maybe the terms are not the most appropriate. In most cases what we mean by interpretation is some inference as to the past use or formation process of a deposit or feature. In the cases discussed here, whether we are dealing with the interpretation of an interface as a surface or cut, or of a deposit as a floor, the inference is how the deposit was formed or functioned in the past. These formational or functional attributions are different to the physical attributes of description because they are inferential. It is fair to say, both description and inference are interpretive, but in different ways which does not invalidate the distinction between them.

However, there is another dimension here we still need to consider. It is not just that description and inference are recursive, each helping to constitute the other. This recursiveness also extends out to how we interact and even excavate a deposit. If, for example, we decide that this deposit is a floor and not a midden, then it might also affect the way we excavate it. We might want to separate finds from the surface as finds contemporary with the use of the room with which the floor is associated and finds from the lower part of the deposit as mixed/re-deposited material brought in as part of the floor construction. In doing this though, it also reveals to us something even more important about the construction of facts in the field; it isn't just a purely mental or conceptual exercise. It is a deeply embodied and performative one. Everyone knows fieldwork is an intensely physical activity; you are outside, using your hands, arms and legs, and at the end of the day, your muscles can ache, especially at the beginning of the field season. This physical aspect of our discipline is not just one of the perks (or put-offs) of doing archaeology; it is also deeply implicated in the production of facts and production of archaeological knowledge. More importantly, as we shall see, it also

shifts the balance of agency in terms of how facts are made: as joint endeavours constructed not only by the archaeologist but also by their tools and, of course, the ground itself.

Fieldwork as Lived Practice

Observation and Intervention

In the previous discussion about description and interpretation, I presented these ideas as if they were purely cognitive acts; I look at the layer and see it is dark brown, I notice the layer sits within four lines of stones I take to be walls and infer my layer must be a floor. It is as if we can make all these decisions at a distance, simply by gazing at the ground. It reminds me of that stereotypical image about how archaeologists used to excavate 150 years ago: sitting in an armchair under a parasol while directing the labourers, occasionally getting up to inspect the area, making notes. Doubtless this stereotype has some truth to it, which we will see later on in this chapter. But in terms of the previous discussion, such detachment seriously misrepresents the process of how facts are made. Quite possibly I can record the colour of a deposit at a distance, but if it is a hot day, it may help to moisten the layer to enhance its colour or at the very least, remove the top, dry crust to get a fresher exposure. In most cases, making facts requires not just detached observation but physical intervention. Certainly, there will be times when you do need to stand back; one of the reasons the supervisor seems to spend a lot of time wandering around the site doing nothing is that she is thinking about what is going on: how this layer relates to that, what that section of wall is doing there, why are these two features at different levels? But to answer these questions, usually also then requires some action: clear away that spoil, clean up that edge, remove this layer so we can better see what is going on . . . Observation and intervention – like description and inference – are inextricably bound together.

But this relation is more complex than simply a recursive process of reflecting and acting. Into this mix, we also have to include recording. We often think of recording as something we do when the process of intervention has reached completion; when we have finally resolved the edges of a deposit, then we are ready to record it; when the section or profile has been cleaned and the stratification makes sense, we can start to draw it. But in some ways, recording actually *precedes* the intervention; one of the reasons we clean the top of a deposit to ascertain its edges is so we can draw it, measure it and so on. One of the reasons your supervisor tells you to keep the trench edges straight and vertical is that they want it to materially prefigure the drawing you might later make. We are sculpting and shaping the site to look like the record we will subsequently make of it. Why? Because the whole point of a record is to be a faithful copy or representation of the physical thing it records. If a drawing of a deposit looks like the deposit, then it is partly because we have moulded the deposit to look like the drawing, even before we have made it. This is the reason why sometimes, plans of different sites or parts of sites can look eerily familiar, why descriptions of soils can become

very repetitive, especially when recording and archiving systems become highly standardized across projects.

Once again though, we must be careful not to over-state this. You cannot sculpt a site into any shape you like; as archaeologists, you are trying to learn to “read” the soil, to spot when there are changes or differences. The ground itself has its own properties, its own characteristics which will resist as well as conform to your actions. The point here is that recording on site is never a passive process of simply transferring what is there, on to paper or tablet; the record is always an active co-production between the archaeologists and the site (see Box 2.3).

Box 2.3 Following the Cut

The phrase “follow the cut” refers to the injunction given to archaeologists when excavating features like pits, postholes or ditches (Figure 2.3). These cut-down features filled with sediment require the excavator to find the edges between the “fill” and the surrounding (often “natural”) soil. How should we characterize this action? Are we simply revealing what is there? And if so, how does the skill of an excavator seem to make such a difference in enabling this cut to emerge? Matt Edgeworth offers a very lucid discussion of this and argues that we are neither simply uncovering what is “really there” nor are we making it up.

The problem here is that, on the one hand, we traditionally see this cut as something which pre-exists the archaeologist, while on the other, the feature only becomes visible through the act of excavation. The problem exists because we have already assumed a separation of the cut (in the past) and archaeologist (in the present) at the start, whereas Edgeworth argues that the cut is never a static object. It was made in the past, presumably by humans like us but with very different tools; but it didn’t then just freeze. It continued existing, interacting with the soil and other living organisms around it, its shape subtly being modified as the sides weathered and this process of “what the cut is” simply carries on when the archaeologist comes along and starts to excavate. The “cut” therefore is an extended co-production of many different agencies and materials from compact subsoil and long-dead humans and antler shovels to wind and rain to archaeologists and their trowels. At any one point in time, it is always an emergent thing, an object which is a conjunction of past and present forces and materials. Viewed in this way, the original problem and separation of a “pre-existing cut” and an “excavating archaeologist” no longer has any meaning or relevance. When the archaeologist is following the cut, it is as much about how the cut guides the archaeologist’s hands as it is about the dexterity of those hands.



Figure 2.3 Excavating the edge: Tony Baker excavates a second- and third-century “corn dryer”, finding the edge of the clay foundation from the flue’s infill deposit (photo: Cambridge Archaeological Unit/Dave Webb).

But there is yet one final thing still to add. Even accepting that any record we make is dependent on this recursive process of observation and intervention with the ground, neither intervention nor observation can usually happen without the use of instruments. To observe the colour of the soil as dark brown, I need a spray bottle to moisten the soil or a trowel to turn over a fresh surface. To record the colour, I may even decide to use a Munsell chart book. To make a vertical face, I need a spade with a sharp edge, a flat-bladed trowel to clean up and maybe even a plumb line if I want to be extra precise. We can use our spit to moisten soil, our hands to dig holes – and often we do! But no excavation would be possible without the army of shovels, picks, trowels, buckets, total stations, paper, pens, manuals, string and so on, which accompany us onto the site. These are our microscopes, our particle accelerators – the instruments we need to gather our facts. And just like the microscope and the accelerator, they are not just passive tools used to record what is there; they play an active role in shaping and constituting those facts (Box 2.4).

Box 2.4 Paper Versus Pixels

Which is the better way to plan layers on a site: using a state-of-the-art 3D scanner or measuring tapes, pencil and paper (Figure 2.4)? If you believe planning is all about accuracy and precision, then you are likely to go for

the modern technology. There is no doubt it will measure the edges and even topography of the layer or feature to a level of accuracy in a way that traditional tapes and levels could never compete with. Indeed, if you can scan in 3D, it far surpasses 2D drawings which have to rely on hachures or combine elevations and plans to capture a site in three dimensions. It will also be quicker. So surely the answer is obvious. But is it? Let's look at some of the counter arguments.

Colleen Morgan and Holly Wright have argued that important cognitive work is lost in the shift from hand drawing to digital recording. Given what we discussed earlier in the chapter about the problems with separating description from interpretation, planning a layer or feature is not only about accurately rendering the shape or size of a deposit, it is equally about understanding why it takes this form and how it relates to other layers on site. It is argued that drawing engages the archaeologist in an understanding of the site in ways that are lost with digital recording because it is a much more interactive and recursive process, especially so when more than one person is involved in making the drawing. In a follow-up study, they found moreover that this was especially acute with novice archaeologists and students because the impact of the technology is much greater on the inexperienced whose mental map of what it is they are recording is generally much more undeveloped. Indeed, when comparing people's descriptions of objects before and after drawing, it was commonly the case that the drawing greatly enhanced attention to details and aspects not noticed before.

Related to this is also a question of speed. It certainly can be beneficial to record a site faster, especially in the competitive world of commercial archaeology. But taking your time brings its own benefits; embracing the slower pace of low-tech tapes and pencils means you have time to think and once again engage with the site in a way that fast, automated technologies make harder. This is the impetus behind calls for a **slow archaeology** by archaeologists like William Caraher who has questioned our inbuilt assumptions that advances in field technology are always better. Indeed, there is a wider issue here which relates to the way highly refined methodologies – whether of fieldwork or scientific analysis – streamline the archaeological operation too much. Marko Marila has argued that this methodological streamlining which is especially associated with archaeological science encourages a “fast archaeology”, which may produce speedy results but at the expense of narrowing the breadth of our knowledge. When excavation, for example, is too formalized and bound to protocols, how will we innovate?

At the end of day though, as Morgan and Wright conclude, it isn't a question of either/or but rather acknowledging that different technologies each have their own strengths and weaknesses but more importantly, construct knowledge in different ways, that the medium matters.



Figure 2.4 Students planning with traditional tapes and paper (left) and a total station (right) at the university fieldschool in Iceland (photos: the author).

But it isn't just our instruments that help to give form to our facts and records; we do too in terms of our subjectivities. If there is a difference between making a plan with pencil, paper and tapes versus making one with a total station or GPS (see Box 2.4), there is also a difference between the plans made by different people, though often subtly so (see Box 2.5). We are all different; some of us are better at drawing than others, some are colour blind, some dyslexic; all of our individual qualities can affect the record. Yet at the same time, one of the fundamental points about going on a fieldschool and learning field methods is to dampen or limit the effect of these personal traits. We train our bodies to use tools in a certain way, we train minds to think in certain ways, our senses to perceive certain things. Archaeological sites and facts are not just made by archaeologists; they make us. Our engagement with sites and with the instruments and tools we use, also shapes us, shapes our subjectivities; not to the same depth and extent that our parents or homes shaped us, but nonetheless, we are being moulded to perform in certain ways so that whenever we find ourselves on an archaeological site, this moulding, this training, kicks in. And it will also leak out into other situations; maybe a walk in the countryside might trigger your archaeological self or a stroll down a high street. You might notice things and think about things you wouldn't ordinarily have, if you hadn't been trained as an archaeologist.

Objectivity and Subjectivity

Such training can be seen as both shaping your subjectivity but also stripping it – making you more objective. We came across this term **objectivity** earlier; it usually has a sense of being impartial, free of bias, but one of the best ways to understand it is as the opposite of **subjective**. When archaeologists or other scientists talk about being objective, they mean not letting their subjectivity taint any description or creation of a record. We don't want any bias or prejudice to be skewing the production of facts.

Box 2.5 Gendered Fieldwork

We all know how gender is implicated in behaviour in everyday life, how cultural norms around the traditional binary of male and female gender roles leads to certain expectations, no matter how critical or reflexive we try to be. Archaeological fieldwork is no more exempt from these patterns than any other sphere of life as Joan Gero once demonstrated in a paper on gendered fieldwork. In particular, she found some quite startling differences in the way her male and female students dug and recorded. When the students were excavating around finds to leave them on pedestals of soil for later plotting, she noticed that the pedestals of male students tended to be larger than those of the female students who only left enough soil to support the find. Gero saw this as indicative of an (unconscious) masculine practice of drawing attention to their own finds as the eye is automatically drawn to these finds “framed” by larger pillars of soil. When it came to drawing, she also observed that the female students were much more open to ambiguity in what they were recording, using dotted lines in the plans and acknowledging uncertainty. In contrast, the male students were much more likely to use solid lines and produce a record that left little space for uncertainty.

Such subtle, gendered differences in how male and female students engaged with the site is connected to broader philosophies of knowledge production where authority and certainty is valued over ambiguity, an issue Gero went on to write about in another paper (see Box 4.1). Indeed, the larger point here is not whether male and female archaeologists differ in how they excavate or record but rather whether a masculinist “logic” of how to do science has dominated archaeological practice throughout most of the history of our discipline. This is not about essentializing male and female ways of thinking but acknowledging that cultural norms of gendered behaviour impact science as much as any other cultural practice.

But what does removing subjectivity really mean? How can anyone get rid of their subjectivity? Isn't that what it means to be human? Does being objective mean becoming dehumanized? This is one way of looking at it, although in a moment we will see this is not quite right either. Let's think of it this way. Which do you think produces a more accurate plan: a total station using lasers, prisms and a computer chip, or a pair of archaeologists with tapes and pegs? The answer – as we saw in Box 2.4 – is of course the first and the reasons are manifold: it is a lot harder for humans to take account of sloping ground, humans are more prone to make errors transcribing numbers from tapes to paper or round numbers up and down, the wind and weather may also impact performance and so on. In short, compared to a machine, humans frequently don't measure up when it comes to certain operations. Using a total station is not just more accurate, it's more

objective because the degree of human-induced error has been reduced; all we have to do is to point and press a button. It is quite literally, dehumanized recording. Still, there are other sources of inaccuracy with the older method using paper and tapes; the tapes may stretch and bend, gridded paper may shrink or expand. Nobody is arguing that instruments don't also have their problems, but the issue is rather which has the least. So let's wind this back one stage. Which is better for measuring the dimensions of a deposit: a measuring tape or the human body? I can certainly pace out the length of a layer or use my arms or hands as guides, but a measuring tape is certainly more useful, however much it may stretch or break; human paces and body parts are of variable length, whereas a tape measure is standardized. Once again, a tape measure is a more objective means of evaluating the dimensions of a feature than any human body on its own. Objectivity as it is being used here therefore means a situation where an act of recording has been delegated to an object.

So one way of characterizing what we mean when we talk about objectivity is really about minimizing subjectivity; we can never remove human involvement and subjectivity all together, but we can minimize the dependence on human eyes and hands to dehumanize the recording process as much as possible by delegating as much of this task to non-human instruments and tools as possible. This is what our recording tools do, whether they are cheap fibre glass tapes or expensive robotic total stations, cameras or soil pH meters. This is also what Munsell colour books and *pro forma* context sheets also do; by creating standardized protocols, they essentially turn the human mind and body into a supplement of these recording protocols. Ultimately, all the training you receive in learning how to do fieldwork and how to record could be seen as about learning to subordinate your agency to a variety of instruments and tools so that as objective a record as possible is made.

Yet describing this process of creating objectivity through delegation to non-human instruments as dehumanizing is misleading. One of the major theoretical developments in the last few decades has been an acknowledgement that objects like tools are what *makes us human in the first place*. In using cameras and total stations to record a site, we are not dehumanizing the process but actually reproducing what it is to be human, more specifically, to be an archaeologist as a special kind of human. Rather than see Munsell books and GPS as ways of minimizing subjectivity, we could argue that in fact they are ways of enhancing subjectivity or more precisely, archaeological subjectivity. This in fact has been a key argument of many archaeologists who talked about the role of material culture in the past, especially its role in human development and evolution. Whenever humans use other things, it often extends their abilities or powers in super-human ways; it is in this sense that some have claimed we have always been cyborgs. When humans domesticated horses, they increased their speed of movement umpteen fold; when they developed projectiles, they created a new ability to kill or maim other life at a distance. Tool use, whether of a palaeolithic hunter or an archaeologist in a trench, gives people capacities to act in new and sometimes very powerful ways. Just as a bow and arrow enhance the subjectivity of a human-as-hunter, so a trowel enhances the subjectivity of a human-as-archaeologist.

Arguably in discussing our instruments on site as tools for minimizing subjectivity, for dehumanizing the recording process, we have it the wrong way around. Rather we should claim such objects *develop* our subjectivity or humanity rather than strip it away – but develop it in very specific ways. Maybe all we really mean by objectivity is enhanced scientific subjectivity, and as such, objectivity is not opposed to subjectivity but simply a specialized facet of it. And we should stress that it is just *one* facet; archaeological subjectivity has in fact multiple facets, even in the field. Certainly when it comes to recording a deposit, we might value the use of measuring tools to obtain an accurate representation of its shape and dimensions; we might value the use of *pro forma* sheets to create some consistency between our descriptions. But on other occasions, we might actually wish to eschew such technology or develop alternative tools; sometimes, our bodies and senses are the best tools for the job (Box 2.6). Consider, for example, the case of human footprints in Peche Merle Cave, southern France, dating to more than 10,000 years ago; since their discovery in 1949, they had been subject to repeated archaeological investigation using morpho-metric techniques (i.e. counting, measuring and classification), but usually these only resulted in broad identification of the number of people and their age. Yet when archaeologists recently invited three indigenous trackers from the Ju/'hoan San people in Namibia to study the prints, whole mini-narratives emerged around the prints which often extended the number of people but importantly told them about how they were walking – a woman slipping, a middle-aged man walking slower than his companions and so on. Suddenly, the whole scene comes much more alive. Ultimately, the strength of our understanding comes from combining different approaches and being open to different ways of experiencing the archaeology.

Box 2.6 Phenomenology and Fieldwork

Our bodies are our most important tools for recording; even when we use cameras, digital surveying equipment and tablets or pencils and paper, we use our eyes and hands to operate these things, just as we use our whole bodies when fieldwalking or excavating. The problem is, most conventional recording technologies tend to privilege just one sense: vision. Colour, size, composition and spatial position all largely rely on our sense of sight, and moreover, on one that has been channelled in very specific ways. Why are sites typically presented as aerial, birds-eye views in our plans and maps? We almost never see them or experience them like this and nor did people in the past.

Many archaeologists, drawing on a philosophical movement called phenomenology, argued for broadening the experiential repertoire of how we engage with and record sites. Phenomenology in the philosophical tradition

comprises a much richer set of ideas than implied here and archaeologists have drawn on it in other ways than described here (see Chapter 3). However, this approach, which is primarily associated with British postprocessualists studying the landscape, is perhaps the most well-known within the Anglophone world. Chris Tilley, who is the most famous exponent of this method, made it central to his fieldwork, especially of landscape survey, but the same approach has been used in excavation and artefact analysis. During fieldwork on site at Neolithic enclosures in Italy, Sue Hamilton and Ruth Whitehouse used various sounds such as human shouting and banging stones or wood together to try and map the soundscapes of these spaces by recording the relationship between audibility and distance and what role this might have played in social organization. Chris Tilley and Wayne Bennett used portable doorframes during the excavation of Bronze Age huts in southwestern England to gain a sense of viewshed from within the houses.



Figure 2.5 Recording sensory distances over which sound (human shout and conversation, wooden whistle and stone striking) can be heard and human body movements can be communicated (photo: M. Seager Thomas).

Gavin McGregor decided to record a variety of affective properties of late Neolithic and early Bronze Age ornately carved stone balls from Scotland to see if they could help us better understand their meaning. What happens when you spin one of these balls, what visual effects does it create? In all these cases, the archaeologists were trying to interact with the archaeological remains in a way that made them come alive, made them active, rather than passive objects to be simply studied at a distance.

Such approaches are not about trying to re-live past experiences but rather to foreground the fact that people in the past interacted with things and the environment in an embodied way that was not mediated through tapes and surveying instruments but other everyday objects like cowbells or doorframes – or simply their bodies. Again, it is not about the historical veracity of these alternate “props” that necessarily matters but an openness to experimentation and exploration of sensory qualities of the archaeological remains as these may open up new avenues of interpretation and thinking about the past.

However, developing archaeological subjectivity in the field is even broader than simply experimenting with new approaches or new tools. Archaeologists’ engagement with a site is not just through or alongside their tools and equipment; it is also an engagement alongside other people including, as well as other archaeologists, developers, planning control officers, local and descendant communities, digger drivers, landowners and so on, all of whom will have a greater or lesser interest in the site and what you are doing with it. This is important as the conditions under which fieldwork takes place can be quite different – especially between research-led and development-led projects, which impacts knowledge creation.

Who Is an Archaeologist?

As a student studying archaeology, you may find yourself on a training excavation which may also be your first ever time on a dig. Hopefully it is exciting and probably, you imagine you are there to learn how to excavate. Are you an archaeologist? Maybe that’s an unfair question; does it have to be either/or? One is learning to become an archaeologist for sure, but when do you know you have *become* an archaeologist? When you have your degree in hand? When you have become a member of a recognized society of archaeologists? When you get your first *paid* job on an archaeological project or with an archaeological organization? Your teacher might tell you, you never stop learning, you never stop becoming an archaeologist, which is true of course but also an easy answer from someone standing on the other side of the lecture theatre drawing a regular salary! Because while your teacher may have a point, if you look again at what goes on in real-life archaeological situations, there is a constant and often subtle and unspoken set of divisions that suggest something otherwise. Let’s look at some of them.

Profiling the Profession

Who dug the tomb of Tutankhamen? Howard Carter you might think and of course he was there on site, but the bulk of excavation was carried on by hundreds of labourers whose names almost nobody knows today. In former colonial contexts like Egypt during the 1920s, the majority of the fieldwork was conducted by local men, women and children: teams of diggers and spoil removers under the supervision of experienced foreman. Flinders Petrie had a permanent staff of six Egyptian foremen under a chief supervisor, who ran digging teams of hundreds from the 1880s. So what did Petrie or Carter do if they weren't digging? Usually they organized and boxed up finds and made the records – drafted plans, took fieldnotes, recorded finds, often with the assistance of other Europeans. And it wasn't just in Egypt and other former colonial settings this happened; back on European soil, local labourers also did most of the digging, while the “archaeologist” made the records, wrote up the site or presented the results to learned societies (Box 2.7). You may have heard of Flinders Petrie, but have you heard of Ali al-Suayfi, his chief excavator? You may have heard of Pitt Rivers, but have you heard of Herbert Toms, one of his best field assistants? Not to mention the countless, un-named and largely forgotten people who wielded the shovels and spades, moved baskets, buckets and wheel-barrows of soil off the site. Tell me, who are the archaeologists here?

Box 2.7 Sutton Hoo in the Summer of '39

Sutton Hoo is a site in eastern England, famous for its Anglo-Saxon burial mounds, including a ship burial. The earliest excavations here took place in the late 1930s, just before the beginning of the Second World War. The landowner of the site, Edith Pretty instigated the initial excavations and hired a local, self-taught archaeologist Basil Brown affiliated with a nearby museum to conduct the work, with help from workers on Pretty's estate. The second summer of work, they struck gold – literally. But what was really impressive about the second season was the discovery of a ship burial, as it was this that grabbed the attention of Charles Philips at Cambridge University. Discussions between the local and British Museum and other institutions resulted in Philips taking over the excavations from Brown with a team of archaeologists who were or became key figures in British archaeology during the early-mid twentieth century including W.F. Grimes, O.G.S. Crawford and Stuart Piggott. But during that summer of 1939, the events around the project also offer a glimpse of how power was distributed within an excavation and connected to issues of class and gender.

The original excavator Brown was a farmer, and archaeology was something he originally did in his spare time until the local museum and then

Petty paid him. But whatever skills he had as an excavator were deemed unimportant compared to the status of a Cambridge scholar and his sidelining on the excavation after the arrival of the “professionals” anticipated the increasing divergence of amateur and professional in British archaeology over the mid-twentieth century. But Brown wasn’t the only one sidelined. There were also women working on the site, both archaeologists such as Stuart Piggott’s then wife, Margaret Guido, an exceptional excavator and finds specialist, and the photographers Mercie Lack and Barbara Wagstaff who took high quality images of the ship burial. The dynamics of these relationships, especially of Brown, was recently the subject of a Netflix film *The Dig* and although some of the “facts” have been played with, the basic storyline offers an incisive insight into the social politics of archaeology in England at this time.

Issues of class and race are obviously bound up here with these valuations which is why theories of Marxism and Postcolonialism can be helpful. Pitt Rivers was part of the English landed gentry with connections to nobility on his mother’s side while Toms was the son of a gardener who married a maid in Pitt Rivers household. Flinders Petrie was a middle-class Englishman, while Ali al-Suayfi was Egyptian, better known as Ali Muhammad Swafi of al-Lahun who also worked as a site guard. Whatever the complexities of the real relationships between these men and the archaeology they did, at the end of the day they have been reduced to grossly simplistic positions which revolve around class and race which have determined who gets to be called or recognized as an archaeologist. Indeed, at this time the idea of an archaeologist as a professional was somewhat anachronistic; Pitt Rivers was, if anything, a soldier by profession. But it is not just race or class that is implicated here, gender is also a key factor. It should not have escaped your notice that Pitt Rivers, Petrie, Toms and al-Suayfi are all men. And yet just as we dig behind Pitt Rivers to discover Herbert Toms, so if we dig behind Toms, we will find his wife Christine Sophie Marie Huon, who worked alongside Toms on most of his earthwork surveys. Indeed, although there are some well-known female archaeologists from the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, there are many more who are invisible. Many of them did fieldwork, but a large number were also involved in processing the finds from excavations, and as the feminist archaeologist Joan Gero later put it, women frequently became associated with the “domestic, indoor” work of archaeology while their male colleagues dominated the excavation trench.

This is all history, you might say. This may have been how things were in the 1920s, but in the 2020s, we do things differently. Think again. For example, even if the gender ratio among your fellow students is roughly similar, studies have clearly shown that as you progress throughout your career, whether it is in academia or commercial archaeology, a gender imbalance will start to appear. Not only are there more men than women in the older age groups, men also tend to

dominate in the more prestigious and better paid jobs. This is changing, but slowly and painfully. Given what we discussed in the last section about the formation of archaeological subjectivities, it should now be very obvious if it wasn't already, how broader social and cultural structures impact archaeology simply because it impacts who becomes or is counted as an archaeologist. Other aspects of fieldwork also carry over old and deeply rooted social hierarchies. In Germany, there is often still a traditional division between those who excavate – called *Techniker* – and the archaeologist whose job it is to analyse and interpret the finds and site. What is going on here is a manifestation of a deep cultural prejudice and assumption about how work is valued: intellectual labour is more important than manual labour and is linked to class distinctions in society. Brain over brawn.

Of course, the situation differs between countries and places. In the UK, the division between those who dig and those who think was to some extent undermined by the rise of rescue and development-led archaeology in Europe after the Second World War and an increase in trained archaeologists emerging through university programmes. Although a gradual process, fieldwork in such contexts became gradually democratized, to the extent that the use of local labourers gradually disappeared as the numbers of trained archaeologists increased. Fieldworkers now both dig and record. Yet ironically, as this happened, a split also emerged between those archaeologists working in development-led archaeology and those based in universities and research. As late as the 1980s, a lot of the fieldworkers came into archaeology through unemployment schemes, and it is only in the last decades that undergraduates with a degree in archaeology make up most field staff on commercial projects. In countries like the UK, a new division emerged between commercial and academic archaeology and even if this is now changing, it is still a slow process in part because the system underlying it helps to perpetuate it: those working in academia have time and are paid to write articles, do research, attend conferences, while those in commercial world are only paid to dig and write technical reports. I remember an occasion when, having newly finished my PhD, I went to work on a development-led excavation in London and even though I had been working in projects like these since I was 16, because I had just come out of my doctoral studies, most of the staff assumed I didn't even know how to hold a trowel. But this was 25 years ago.

Box 2.8 Research-Driven and Development-Led Excavation in Europe

Although your experience as a student of archaeology is largely framed by the academic environment, most archaeologists are not working in academia but in development-led or preventative archaeology. The chances are, if you look for a job in archaeology after graduating, or even in the summer, it will be in development-led archaeology. How this operates varies between countries; in some places like France and Denmark, such work

is closely tied to museums and state institutions; in others like Britain and the Netherlands, independent companies carry out the work. Such a division has been characterized as a socialist versus capitalist model of heritage management. There has been a lot of discussion about what kind of system works best, and each has their merits. One argument made by Kristian Kristiansen has been that the research dimension in countries which have gone down the capitalist route has suffered in development-led archaeology, because of the way financial considerations are privileged. In other words, in development-led archaeology, the work becomes almost mechanical, churning out lots of basic data on sites and finds, but none of it “interpreted” or incorporated into larger research questions. In the UK, Richard Bradley ran a project which attempted to sift through all the grey reports produced by development-led archaeology and integrate them into our knowledge of British prehistory, a fact which seems to lend support to this criticism.

However, the division between research-driven and development-led excavations involves a problem more complex than what social model a country adopts. This is exemplified, for example, in the case of Sweden. When Kristiansen wrote his review of this topic in 2009, he singled out Sweden – which he defined as a mixed model of socialist and capitalist, but one that privileged research over money – as a model of good practice. Yet voices from within the development-led community of archaeologists in Sweden became increasingly critical of how the situation there has stifled innovation. When Åsa Berggren tried to incorporate a reflexive methodology drawn from her experiences working at Çatalhöyük, onto development-led projects in Sweden, the result was not entirely successful. Indeed, responses from the archaeologists working on the project tended to fall into two contradictory categories: people either felt they were already being reflexive or reflexivity was seen as a luxury add-on, which few had time to properly implement.

What is going on here? The problem is that the divide between framing research questions and conducting fieldwork still exists in Sweden, but *within* development-led archaeology. In Sweden, the problem is that the major research questions and agenda are being set by people in heritage offices, while the people in the field are still largely just fulfilling a job set by someone higher up the chain of command. As Lise Börjesson’s research has found, despite the heavy emphasis put on research within the larger domain of development-led archaeology in Sweden, when it comes to fieldwork it is still primarily about collecting and documentation. As a result, people conducting excavations often feel constrained when it comes to experimenting or making fieldwork more “theoretical”, a problem which is only exacerbated by the way fieldwork practices have become highly codified and uniform. The problem here then is not a lack of theory or research-thinking in development-led archaeology but rather its separation from the process of excavation and documentation. In a sense, the fieldworkers job is to provide data for those higher up in this system to interpret. Sound familiar?

Outside of Europe, the people involved in fieldwork also continue with legacies from earlier times. In places like Egypt or Turkey, local labour is still used on excavations, even if archaeological students, professionals and researchers make up a large part of the team and now dig as well as record. Alison Mickel's work on local labour on archaeological projects in Turkey and Jordan, for example, has highlighted the issue of lucrative non-knowledge, where it pays for local labourers to feign ignorance or downplay their skills, otherwise they would not be hired. After all, they are being hired usually as labourers, not archaeologists. However, the legacy of colonialism is not just felt in how excavation teams are composed; it is also evident in which countries engage in fieldwork outside their own. How North American, British and German archaeologists, for example, don't see national boundaries as a constraint on where to do research and even have "research outposts" in these places such as the various British Institutes and Schools in Amman, Ankara, Athens, Rome and Nairobi. The appropriation of other pasts has long been acknowledged within archaeology, and it is not just about physical appropriation through excavation and – at least originally – export of finds back to Europe or North America, it also the conceptual appropriation, one of writing "others" history – and ironically, even monopolizing the postcolonial critique of this appropriation.

Collaborative Archaeology

If the inequalities within the profession affect who is counted as an archaeologist, the situation is no less complex when we consider the interaction between archaeologists and other interest groups, especially local communities. One of the most important developments of the last decades in archaeological projects has been the collaboration of archaeologists with local communities. In almost all places that archaeologists work, there are local communities already living there and who may have deep roots and ties to the place. For them, the past can be a living and personal thing. The archaeologists are only visitors, staying in the area for the duration of the project or seasonally. In most cases, the archaeologists cannot work without some degree of interaction with the local community – at a bare minimum, they may need landowner permission, local government permits and the hire of local services, whether it is someone to operate a JCB or provide accommodation. But is that as far as our engagement should go?

In many countries like the US and Australia where archaeology is often conducted among descendant communities of indigenous people, this is nowhere near enough. The archaeological remains are part of their heritage, their history and usually, not only is their endorsement needed but their participation and sometimes, their instigation. The terms collaborative and community archaeology actually cover quite a wide spectrum of relationships between archaeologists and local people (Box 2.9). At one end of the scale, archaeologists might simply seek approval for their project and keep the community informed of the results through meetings and presentations. In other cases, archaeologists will facilitate greater engagement, involving people in the excavation and finds processing, and perhaps even encouraging younger people to study and become archaeologists.

When I ran a small project in South Africa among a descendant slave community, we interviewed people, consulted with them about their own views on their heritage, explained our aims, gave a talk on site to a party of local school children and invited a couple of teenagers to help on the excavation. All very laudable, but of course, it wasn't enough. Looking back, it was clear that my own agenda was steering the project and the relationship was still deeply asymmetrical.

Why? Because the engagement was still largely on my terms, about letting the community into my archaeological project, not about co-creating the project with them. And this is where the big difference turns: the extent to which local communities are not passive consumers of archaeological research but active participants. As Sonia Atalay has put it, it is about archaeology with, by and for local communities. Which means more than having locals work on site. It means having them co-determine the direction of the research, shape the research questions, even to the extent that it might challenge or go against some of the deep philosophical assumptions you are working under, including what counts as knowledge, what counts as archaeology and what counts as ethically appropriate. This is ultimately about making archaeology open up fully to other perspectives and belief systems because archaeology is not a neutral science – it offers a view of human history and society which is grounded in a western, modernist perspective, yet most of the societies and histories it studies never shared this perspective. Which kind of archaeology is better: one which tries to forge a dialogue with these other perspectives or one that ignores them?

Box 2.9 What Do You Mean by Collaboration?

What does collaborative or community-based archaeology mean to you? Sonya Atalay is an Anishinaabe-Ojibwe indigenous archaeologist who has worked in both North America and Turkey on community-based participatory research (CBPR) projects. She has offered a really useful way to see collaborative and community archaeology as a spectrum or continuum, based on the extent of community participation and the degree of their involvement in decision-making. This is important as there are a number of terms which are used, often interchangeably, yet they can mean subtly different things: public archaeology, community archaeology and collaborative archaeology are among the more common. But what do they involve?

Atalay suggests that we see this along a continuum of five broad levels (Figure 2.6). At the bottom is legally mandated consultation which is the bare minimum and may involve nothing more than getting a permit to do research. Above that comes public archaeology and outreach, which typically means the archaeologist presenting their work to select members of the community. Next up the scale is the involvement of various stakeholders in the interpretation of the research and is typically described through

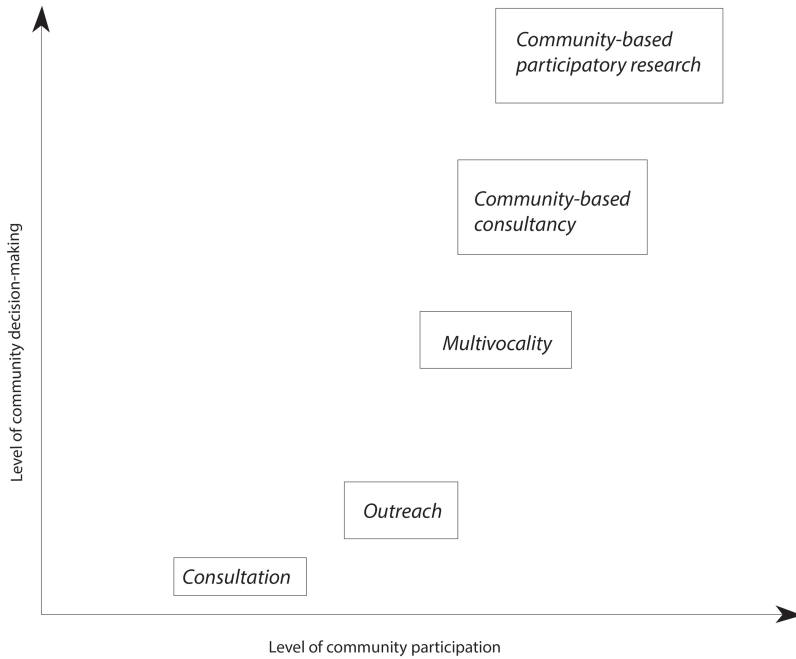


Figure 2.6 Different levels of community engagement (adapted from Atalay 2012).

terms such as multivocality. Then comes the community-based consultancy model where the archaeologist is hired by a local community to work for them on a project at their instigation, and finally, there is CBPR, where the whole process is community driven and fully participatory. The various definitions of public archaeology, community archaeology and collaborative archaeology can vary a lot depending on who is using them, but on the whole, public archaeology has tended to be closer to the more passive end of the scale while collaborative archaeology towards the active end, while community archaeology can cover almost the whole spectrum.

Ultimately, what matters here is what the extent and nature of collaboration is rather than the label – of which there are many more than I have listed here.

Indubitably the level of community interest in the archaeology of an area varies; most of my archaeological projects have not occurred in places like South Africa but Europe, mainly England and Iceland. Here, there are no indigenous or descendant communities in the sense normally understood, though this needs qualification. Contemporary groups like neo-pagans will claim spiritual

connections to prehistoric sites, while there are many communities with longer traditions that have a material heritage that archaeologists will encounter: Jewish cemeteries, Roma camps, not to mention the more obvious cases such as the Saami in northern Scandinavia. But even in the absence of such “interest groups” or stakeholders, one should never assume one is working in a vacuum. When I was excavating on an urban plot surrounded by residential tower blocks in the east end of London in the late 1990s, there was never any sense of community connection to the prehistoric and Roman remains we were digging. This doesn’t mean people weren’t interested though. Excavating at an abandoned farm in rural Iceland, some folks are curious or fascinated by what you are doing, some have no real interest. But in some ways, the same issues apply in these places. One can just respond to local interest by giving talks or site tours and simply adjust one’s level of community engagement according to their interest, or one can be more pro-active in seeking out local involvement. Various projects have tried to stimulate what is called participatory research or citizen science; in Scotland, local communities have been conscripted to help register sites, especially sites under threat from coastal erosion using everyday technology of the GPS on smartphones and designed apps. I have a PhD student who is engaging local diving clubs to help register underwater sites, a method which has been used in many other places with great success. Where would you place this on Atalay’s scheme? (see Figure 2.6)

These kinds of projects are very different in one way to those working among indigenous communities. In Scotland or Iceland, the local communities usually share the same broad world view as the archaeologists and willingly adopt the protocols set up by archaeologists. Moreover, they are usually not contributing to the design or conception of archaeological projects but acting as data collectors through a crowdsourcing model. To some extent, the same approach underlies policies which encourage metal detectorists to bring their finds into museums for appraisal; in this case though, the metal detectorist also usually has their own, personal interest in the data and finds collected which may align with archaeologists, but not always. Indeed, what metal detectorists show us is that even when doing archaeology in Europe, there can remain difference of opinion and even conflict over archaeological remains. Normally, of course, archaeology as the state-backed steward of the past is considered to have the last word, but how do we balance such competing claims?

Let us end by simply asking ourselves the question again: who is the archaeologist? At the beginning of this section, we saw how labourers, skilled and experienced foremen, supervisors and other people were frequently marginalized or written out of history as archaeologists because they weren’t white, middle/upper class European men. We also saw that even today, though there is more diversity, the iniquities of this former condition still effect and shape the profession today. But as diversity and inclusion has expanded under the banner of community and collaborative archaeology, how shall we draw the line today? In some ways, trying to define who is the archaeologist might seem like the wrong question; the fact that we have institutions which establish qualifications like a degree

in archaeology and membership of professional societies suggests that being an archaeologist will always be bound up with these institutional contexts. A metal detectorist or a village elder are not archaeologists, no matter how closely they collaborate with the profession. On the other hand, if being an archaeologist means doing archaeology, then the answer is not so straightforward. The ultimate point here is really to understand that what really matters are not labels like “archaeologist” but actions. And if doing fieldwork is part of what it means to do archaeology, then it involves a lot more people than we might include under the label “archaeologist” and that archaeology is therefore always done by more people than “archaeologists”.

Box 2.10 Community Archaeology as Intervention

In many ways, the closest parallels to working with indigenous communities in Europe are those projects which engage with a specific sub-population, especially a marginalized or subaltern group who, for whatever reasons, are not integrated into “mainstream” society. A wonderful example of this is John Schofield and Rachael Kiddey’s work with homeless people in Bristol. As an example of contemporary archaeology, their work sought to not only understand the materiality of homelessness in a western, twenty-first-century urban environment but equally to work *with* homeless people in the project – not only as informants but as full participants who helped shape the direction of the research, work at the excavations and create exhibitions. Moreover, for Kiddey this project was a natural extension of her own personal activism and links back to the motivations all of us have for doing archaeology (see Chapter 6 for a discussion of this issue).

A somewhat different community project is Operation Nightingale which uses archaeology to promote the well-being of military personnel and veterans. Serving and ex-soldiers have participated in a variety of excavations as part of a rehabilitation process, supported by the Ministry of Defence, and some of the participants have gone on to study archaeology at university. Works by Paul Everill and colleagues on evaluating the impact of programmes like Operation Nightingale have shown that levels of depression and anxiety dropped substantially after participating in these projects while general well-being increased. What is especially interesting here though is that with community archaeology for groups like veterans, the focus is much more on the community – the archaeology itself might or need not have any direct relevance to the “community”; that is, the excavations do not necessarily focus on sites relating to the backgrounds of the veterans (although in one case at least, excavations at Hougoumont Farm in Belgium was selected because of its association with regimental history and the Battle of Waterloo).



Figure 2.7 Andrew Dafnis, Homeless Heritage project, surveying Turbo Island, Bristol, in 2010 (photo: John Schofield).

Who would have guessed fieldwork was so theoretical? For many, excavation is the part of archaeology that has its feet firmly on the ground, far removed from the abstract realm of theory. Yet as we have seen, at every turn issues have popped up to suggest otherwise. Indeed archaeological fieldwork is actually one of the best places to look for archaeological theory. Not because we can sit around the site hut talking about Heidegger but quite the opposite. Archaeological theory does not have to be about calling on some (usually dead) French or German philosopher, but actually using our engagement with archaeological stuff as the foundation for theoretical reflection and the contexts and structures within which this takes place. Certainly many of the ideas discussed in this chapter have origins in other contexts, but the point is how they have been adapted, shaped and altered by their encounter with an archaeological situation. The same can be said for the subsequent chapters in this book. For our student in the trench deciding what to keep and what to throw, it is really the same problem they face when encountering ideas – wherever they have come from.

Exercises for the Classroom

1. Find a place – like your classroom – and imagine it is the “field” or an archaeological site; how does it alter the way you inhabit and interact with that place?
2. Divide the class into two debate teams: for and against total recovery on site.

3. Make your own context sheet.
4. Record an everyday object as if it was an archaeological find; discuss what aspects you are choosing to record and whether other sensory qualities which are relevant to the use or understanding of the object might have been more useful.

Further Reading

Fieldwork and Facts

Discussion about total versus selective excavation can be found in Carver (1990) and Lucas (2012, pp. 42–51), while the debate around interpretation and description is addressed by Hodder (1997; also 1999), Andrews et al. (2000) and Chadwick (2003), who also discusses context sheets. For a more extended discussion of context sheets and textual records on site, see Pavel (2010). The quotes in Box 2.1 came from Pitt Rivers (1887) and Drewitt (1999), while discussion of Pitt Rivers' field methods can be found in Bradley (1983). A recent volume exploring the intersection of theory and fieldwork through a variety of papers is by Cobb et al. (2012), including the Ardnamurchan Transitions Project, while the impact of Hodder's reflexive methodology at Catalhöyük is explored in Hodder and Marciniak (2015).

Fieldwork as Lived Practice

One of the earliest works to explore the performative nature of archaeology is by Shanks and McGuire (1996); also see Pearson and Shanks (2001) where the notion of the cyborg was also explored. The performative nature of fieldwork is examined from a variety of perspectives, including phenomenology (Bender et al. 2007; Hamilton & Whitehouse 2006, 2020; MacGregor 1999; also see van Dyke 2014), ethnographies of archaeological fieldwork (Edgeworth 2006, 2012), feminist archaeology (Gero 1996, 2007) and science studies (Lucas 2001; Lucas 2012, pp. 215–257; Olsen et al. 2012, pp. 58–77). Edgeworth's discussion of "following the cut" can be found in Edgeworth (2012). Recent debates about the impact of digital recording on site include papers by Morgan and Wright (2018), Morgan et al. (2021), Hacigüzeller (2012, 2019) and Taylor et al. (2018), while slow archaeology is addressed by Caraher (2019) and Marila (2019). For the "craft" of drawing, see Wickstead (2008, 2013) and McFadyen (2016). The study on Pêche Merle cave is from Pastoors et al. (2015).

Who Is the Archaeologist?

For studies on the role of local labour in archaeology in the Middle East, see Quirke (2010), Doyon (2015) and Mickel (2021) while Shepherd (2003) provides a good example from South Africa; for the valuation of different fieldworkers in

European archaeology, see Bradley (1989), G. Carver (2012), Everill (2012) and Cobb and Croucher (2020). On Sutton Hoo, see M. Carver (1998). For gender politics and the division of labour in archaeology, see the classic paper by Joan Gero (1985) and also the website trowelblazers.com. For general surveys of the profession, see Aitchison (2013, 2014). For the issues of research in development-led archaeology, see Kristiansen (2009) and Bradley (2006); the case of Sweden is explored in Berggren (2009) and Huvila and Börjesson (2019). On the impact of colonialism on archaeology, the literature is vast, but see Trigger (1984) for a seminal paper. For collaborative archaeology, especially in the context of indigenous communities, see Colwell-Chanthaphonh and Ferguson (2008) and Atalay (2012). On the use of citizen science, see Dawson et al. (2017), while Kiddey's work on homeless heritage can be found in Kiddey (2017) and for Operation Nightingale, see Everill et al. (2020), while for a more general statement on archaeology as activism, see Kiddey (2020).

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