



Culture



NEARCH
Meet the partners
N°6



Meet Krijn Boom

Profession:
PhD student

Institution:
Leiden University (UL)

What is it you do exactly? (job title)

I'm doing a PhD research at Leiden University, within the NEARCH programme. The research is called 'Imprint of Action: the economic and sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology' and focusses on the impact of archaeological activities in (local) communities and how this impact can be measured and analyzed.

What is your institution's involvement in the NEARCH project?

Leiden University is involved in various projects within the NEARCH programme. More specifically, we are working on all matters public, from researching the public's perception of archaeology and heritage and working with local communities, to measuring the social impact of public archaeological activities. Moreover, we are also responsible for the project platform, hosting the various NEARCH projects, based on the CommonSites RSR system.

What attracted you in the NEARCH project and why did you wish to participate in it?

The interaction between public archaeology, new technologies and communication is very interesting in this project. There are a lot of new ways of interaction with the public incorporated into this programme, but what's more interesting – they are all part of an overarching sociocultural and economic framework which tries to streamline and valorise public archaeology under the 'sustainability'-denominator, an aspect of heritage management very much needed in light of the (repercussions of the) financial crisis.

Are you and your team working on some activities in particular? If so, which ones?

Yes, a PhD research.

What is the aim of these activities?

The conduct of archaeology has a profound effect on communities all over the world. People attribute values to their heritage and as a result may classify archaeology as an important part of their lives. While this valuation goes one way, from people onto their archaeological heritage, the very conduct of archaeology and supporting archeological activities also generates impact onto these people's lives.

The economic impact of archaeology has been the subject of various impact evaluation studies in the last decades, but the sociocultural impact of archaeology only recently gained attention. The cause for this is the growing pressure on governments to deal with sociological aspects, mainly based on rapid social change. As a result, the importance of the sociocultural impact of archaeology has been acknowledged by institutions such as the European Union, UNESCO and ICOMOS. However, there is a lack of knowledge about how to evaluate and measure sociocultural impact.

The goal of this study is to research both the economic and sociocultural impact of archaeology and to see if there is a methodological and theoretical bridge to be found between them. The focus lies specifically on public activities in archaeology, because they prove to be a perfect incentive for people to (re)think their opinion of archaeology and therefore generate a valuable insight into people's notion. The eventual end/final result of this research will be the creation of a comprehensive and practical framework on impact evaluation of archaeological public engagement activities, which can be used by governments and project managers alike.

What continuation would you give to some of the activities of the project?

I think that the evaluation and measurement of the social impact of archaeology is very important, as well as the creation of the overarching, sustainable, framework.

What influences would you like NEARCH to have on archaeology and the work of archaeologists in general?

I hope that the NEARCH project creates an intricate framework for working with the public on all matters archaeological heritage and will give inspiration for doing so through several interesting and innovative approaches.