

Ethics in Caribbean Archaeology: Past, Present, and Future

14th - 18th November 2023 @Snellius



Description and Aims

Ethics in archaeology is a constantly evolving field and one that has gained increasing attention in recent years. The Caribbean region has also been experiencing this movement, albeit at a lesser intensity when compared to other regions of the world. However, social, political, economic, and environmental pressures at work in this region make an ethical re-evaluation of archaeology in the Caribbean even more urgent than in other regions. This workshop had two aims. First, to plant the seeds for creating a community of (young/local) Caribbean researchers who explicitly consider and implement ethical approaches in their research and work practice; second, to create a research agenda that considers ethical solutions to key ethical problems in the Caribbean. To achieve these aims, we brought together a group of Caribbean researchers to talk and plan towards archaeological, heritage, and museum best practices that explicitly consider current ethical challenges.

Tangible Outcomes

During this workshop, we achieved all of our expected outcomes. We successfully created a research agenda, outlined the structure and future actions for the creation of a community, and wrote extensive parts of a position paper. We created channels of communication to keep the participants engaged in the near future, as well as plan for our follow-up workshop to be held at the University of Copenhagen in 2024. Furthermore, we identify three new goals for the implementation of active and ethically responsible archaeology in the Caribbean. These are 1) the creation of an (online) network of academics and non-academics who prioritise an ethically oriented archaeology in the Caribbean; 2) the creation of a virtual academic program that will allow Caribbean people to study archaeology and obtain a degree; and 3) the creation of a videogame that celebrates Caribbean Indigenous, African, and European histories while promoting ethical considerations about archaeological heritage. These topics will be the key points for our follow-up workshop.

“Aha” Moments

Some key moments were the realisation that all ethical challenges circle around the lack of education and support of younger generations of archaeologists. Most importantly, how this relates to specific areas of the academic system where changes would facilitate more ethical research. As well as the impact that funding agencies have on local capacity building and on storage and curation challenges.

Organisation/Format

The support of our workshop by the Lorentz Center was invaluable. Besides helping in the process of creating the workshop, their support during the event helped us and the participants to feel at home. They also provided us with an Open Space Technology session, which was essential preparation for the rest of the week. We were all highly impressed with and grateful for these inputs.

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