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Part Three

Case–studies

Part 3 will discuss several case studies, gathering information in answer to the questions that were put forward in the beginning of this thesis (Chapter 3): what did the barrow landscape look like? An answer to this question is needed in order to understand the function of barrows in the landscape and how barrows relate with the natural and cultural landscape surrounding them. What was the original impetus behind the creation of the open space a barrow was built in, and what was that open space used for? Human activity played an important role in the history of an open space. An open space could for example have been used as a grazing area, for the cultivation of crops, or it could have served as settlement location.

In part 2, Chapters 4-7, several methodological aspects of pollen sampling in barrow research have been described and discussed. In addition the uncertainties, assumptions and consequences for the results were discussed as well as how to interpret the results. All have a bearing on part three of this thesis. In Chapter 6 it was concluded that the best pollen sum to use in barrow research is an Arboreal Pollen (AP) sum. Inclusion of Betula (birch) should be decided per site. To be able to compare all sites with one another it has been decided to apply an arboreal pollen sum minus Betula to all sites. The percentages of arboreal and non arboreal pollen have been calculated based on a total pollen sum (see sections 6.2 and 7.2).

In Chapters 8-12 several case-studies are discussed. Chapters 8-10 consider three research areas that are all situated on the push moraines that were formed during the Early and Middle Pleistocene in the northern half of the Netherlands. Chapters 11 and 12 will study two research areas that are situated in the southern part of the Netherlands, where cover sand was deposited during the Late Pleistocene. Most of the palynological data discussed in Chapters 8-12 were originally obtained by other researchers (for references see the corresponding case-studies). For the case-studies most of the data were re-analysed and pollen spectra and/or pollen diagrams were re-plotted. In some cases pollen percentage data had to be recalculated based on the appropriate pollen sum for the present barrows study (e.g. tree pollen sum minus Betula, see Chapter 6). Subsequently all (re-analysed) data have been reinterpreted by the author of the present work.

Not all methods described in Chapters 4-7 could be applied to all case-studies. As has been mentioned above, much of the palynological data used in the following chapters were obtained by other researchers many years ago. It is often the case that documentation about the sampling method and the exact sample locations is not available, especially when dealing with older excavations. Many burial mounds were excavated in the 1920s-1940s. Knowledge about barrows has grown enormously since then and excavation methods are much more detailed now. The older excavations sometimes lack proper documentation, and when
this is available, is sadly incomplete. Dating of the excavated barrows was usually based on grave goods, but the exact location of these finds was not always well documented. Multi-period barrows were often not recognized, while stratigraphic differences were not distinguished. Hence, it is difficult to relate grave goods to proper dating of the barrow. Many of these barrows were re-excavated during the 1970s. These re-excavations were mostly based on the documentation of the older excavations, which we now know was not always correct or complete. Many samples for pollen analysis were taken during these re-excavations. Since (the original) documentation was not always accurate it is not in all cases clear what the exact sample location was in a barrow. It is therefore hard to establish the relation of the samples to the dating of the barrow. The old surface of the second period of barrow at Stroe (section 8.10), for example, was sampled following the documentation, while with the present knowledge it cannot be confirmed that there was indeed a second period in that barrow. In such a case it is hard to specify the exact sample location and to say more on the dating of the according pollen spectrum. However, since it is not always possible to retrieve the necessary information to clarify this relation, one has to rely on data that are available. As a consequence one has to assume that not all pollen spectra are correctly dated. However, only about 5% of the barrows discussed in this thesis seem to have encountered this problem and this will be accounted for in the discussion of the corresponding case-studies (e.g. 8.3 Ermelo, 8.10 Stroe, 8.11 Uddelermeer, 9.1 Warnsborn and 9.1 Wolfheze). For a more extensive discussion about the reliability of older excavations and consequences for interpretation in present research see Bourgeois (2013, p.47-48).

As a final introductory note to the case-study chapters, it should be mentioned that many barrows are known by several names. Barrows were often re-excavated and across several publications the same barrows were assigned different names. For this thesis all the barrows that are discussed have been given a new name. In Appendix I an overview can be found of the other names and numbers a given barrow was assigned in the several publications from which data were extracted for use in the following chapters.