LIVING MEMORY AND ADAPTIVE HERITAGE REUSE: ARCHAEOLOGY FESTIVAL IN POMÁZ

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The international OpenHeritage project, coming to a close this year, has focused, among other things, on community archaeology as a form of civic engagement with heritage. Community archaeology programs supported by the project were discussed in the previous issue of Hungarian Archaeology (Rácz & Laszlovszky 2022). The Hungarian contribution to the project, in connection with the Pomáz–Nagykovácsi puszta archaeological site, was concluded with an archaeology festival on 28 August 2022. The event presented recent community archaeology work around the Pilis region as well as archaeological methods that are accessible and interesting for the general public. The local history and heritage protection in Pomáz was also brought into the spotlight.

Keywords: heritage protection, adaptive heritage reuse, OpenHeritage, Pomáz, community archaeology

What is cultural heritage? What is heritage in general, and how should we treat it today, apart from putting it on display in a museum? This may sound like a philosophical question, but it is not unanswerable; there are many ways to interpret and make use of heritage, and communities can (re)claim elements of their past both symbolically and physically: reanimate them, and incorporate them into their everyday life by various means. Heritage is often unappealing and inconspicuous. Although most people associate the word 'heritage' with protected buildings, other things can also become elements of heritage, such as a tradition, the memory of a person important for a community, or an object that acquires new functions and interpretation while handed down from one generation to the next.

OpenHeritage[2] is an international project supported by Horizon2020, a research and innovation scheme run by the European Union. The Cultural Heritage Studies Program at the Central European University (still in Hungary when the project started) was one of the 16 partners in the OpenHeritage consortium between 2018 and 2022. The project's primary focus was adaptive heritage reuse, that is, to explore how a heritage site – be it an old factory, an archaeological park, a street, or a whole district – can be revived and used by the locals. The primary aim is to find a way in which the site becomes more than a 'dead' showcase, remaining relevant and meaningful for today's communities while adhering to heritage protection policies. That usually entails some transformation to accommodate the changes in function, social demands, and expectations in terms of technological setting and sustainability. The basic concept of adaptive reuse is that the most effective form of conservation is utilizing a site with heritage and monument protection in mind. Examples for this type of reuse include turning unused buildings under monument protection into community spaces, cafés, or apartments for rent.

OpenHeritage was launched to explore adaptive heritage reuse, a field that has gained popularity in the past few years but looks back on a short research history. The project examined conditions and practices of adaptive heritage reuse on three levels: explored the legal and policy environments in all participating countries, conducting case studies in 16 countries; investigated long-standing practices of heritage reuse; and created six 'laboratories' from Portugal to Germany and Poland, where different practices were tested (*Fig. 1*). The archaeological site at Pomáz–Nagykovácsi puszta and its environs, operated by the project's Hungarian participants, was one of these 'heritage labs.' The laboratory method is often used by research and
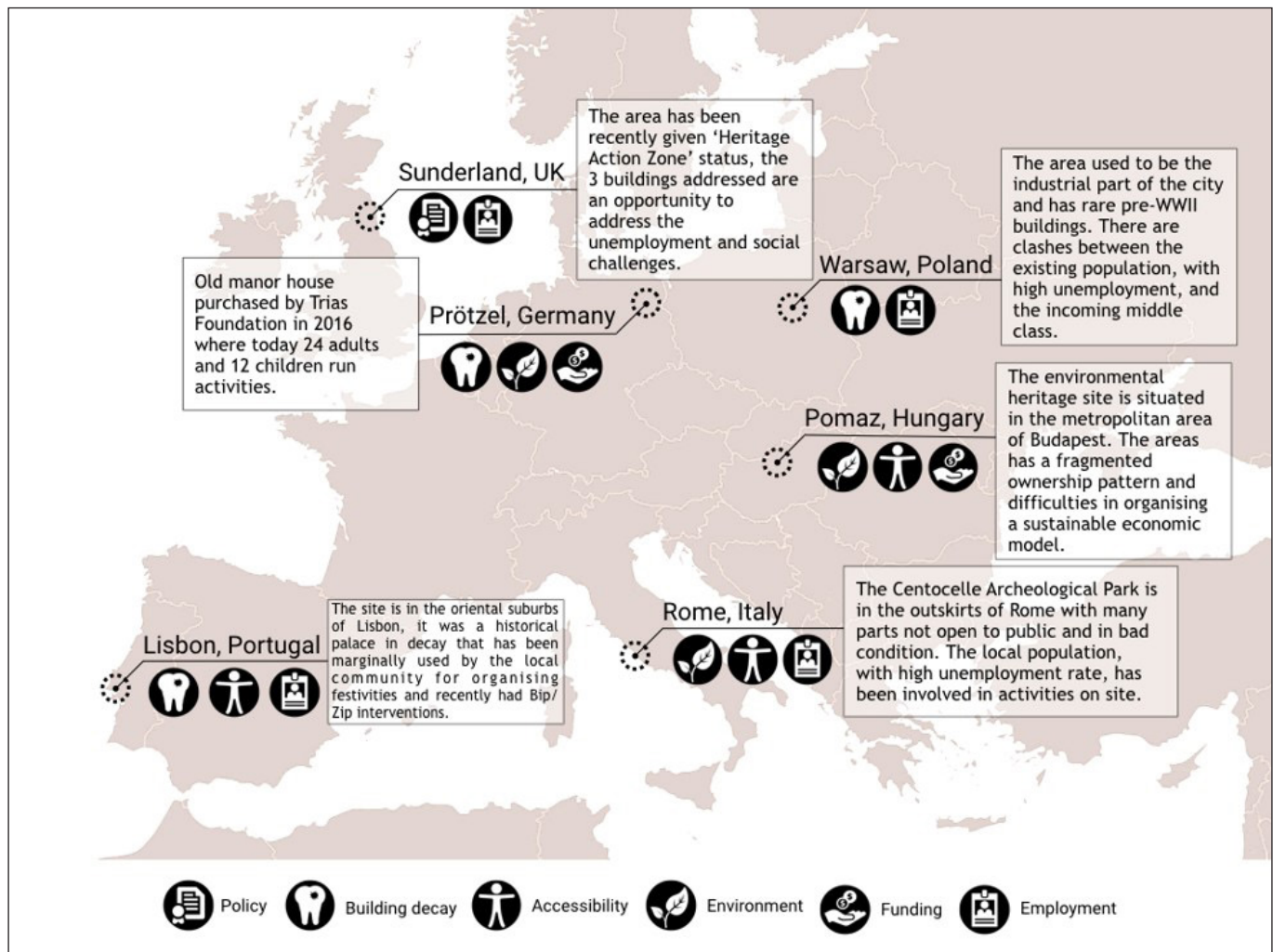
Fig. 1. OpenHeritage labs in Europe

innovation projects to test research results; in this case, to test the conclusions drawn from the case studies. Emphasising the importance of raising awareness about local heritage, the OpenHeritage labs explored the local community's needs, expectations, and opportunities. A community will maintain and tend to elements of heritage that are known to them and to which they have an emotional and intellectual bond. Similarly, they will do so for those transformed according to the community's needs. Thus, sustainability depends on the active involvement of the local community, local government, stakeholders, financial supporters, researchers, and policymakers.

Pomáz, and in a broader sense, the Pilis area, has a complex heritage that includes the natural environment, various buildings, and archaeology so that it can be approached from multiple angles in terms of heritage protection and reuse. For example, the ethnographic house in Pomáz has recently been reopened and is now hosting exhibitions in the vicinity of a small, spontaneously formed community space, the "heritage court," reflecting local interests and needs. Crowdfunding and crowdsourcing were important elements of the project, which means that volunteers, local stakeholders, and policymakers were actively involved in financing and implementation. That, of course, can only be realized within the possibilities of the given historical, social, and geographic setting of a heritage site. OpenHeritage also supported the technical realization of another crowdsourcing program, the inventory of local values of Pomáz, an initiative that promotes local architectural, cultural, and historical heritage elements and facilitates the dissemination of knowledge about these. A government decree recommended such inventories be launched on different levels, that is, heritage lists on the settlement and regional levels. These raise awareness of local values and traditions and foster their protection—be they the legacy of a local artist or scientist, ethnographic traditions or architec-

tural features unique to the region, or the work of a local physician. These can all contribute to, support, and reinforce local identity and thus stimulate the community's interest in their own heritage and its conservation. In June, we organized a national workshop to summarize the project's main findings in terms of policymaking, local governments' role in heritage protection and reuse, and good practices that are worth adopting (*Fig. 2*).

Archaeology is a form of heritage protection that attracts wider audiences; therefore, it was an indispensable part of the project. In addition, the Hungarian lab is, in fact, home to an archaeological site itself. The experiment conducted in the Hungarian lab received invaluable input from the Association of Community Archaeology (Közösségi Régészeti Egyesület). Their goals corresponded to the aims of the project in many respects: involving members of the public interested in the protection of cultural heritage and research is an important precondition to effective conservation. (This educational work and the associated challenges and legal regulations have been discussed in *Hungarian Archaeology* see, e.g., Bakos 2020 and Szücsi & Kiss 2021.) The Association's work is also pivotal from a professional point of view since they participate in rescue excavations of the Ferenczy Museum Centre. Recently, the Association used the Pomáz–Nagykovácsi puszta site as a gathering point for its field walks and trips, and their theoretical orientation sessions, presentations, and discussions also took place here – this was, among others, a form of adaptive reuse of the archaeological and heritage site (*Figs 3–4*). The Association collaborates with institutions that conduct official excavations and offers opportunities for non-professionals to join the excavating, documenting and processing of finds. Many sites – classified as cultural heritage at risk – need to be protected from looting and illegal excavations, and the Association plays a crucial part in this form of heritage protection. During their field walks, they also collect finds, and these objects, thus, acquire new layers of meaning: in addition to being historically valuable artifacts, a brooch, a piece of valuable pottery, or a coin becomes the fruit of cooperation between the interested public and professionals, creating direct links between the artifact, its past function and meaning, and the life and activities of a present-day community.

Fig. 2. The national workshop organized by OpenHeritage in Pomáz focused on the policymaking aspects of heritage protection

Fig. 3. Potential uses of an archaeological site and biofarm: preparations for field walk with the Association of Community Archaeology at Pomáz-Nagykovácsi puszta... (photo by József Laszlovszky)

Fig. 4. ...and friendly gathering at the same place (photo by Tibor Ákos Rácz)

We wanted to disseminate these results to the wider public, not only as a success story of the Association but also as a good practice of civic involvement. Therefore, concluding the project's Hungarian activities, a one-day pop-up exhibition and archaeology festival took place on 28 August 2022 in the Teleki-Wattay Castle, a baroque mansion and a notable example of adaptive heritage reuse. The organizers were the Open-Heritage project, the Association of Community Archaeology, the Friends of Pomáz Association, and the Ferenczy Museum Centre. The event also commemorated the 250th anniversary of the mansion. Since the topic of heritage protection and adaptive heritage reuse is too complex to be presented in a one-day event, we decided to highlight the community archaeological activities as an effective and inspiring example, accompanied by other topics with a local focus. The aim was twofold: to present the results of community archaeology and the methods they work with and to show the ways and means of how one can join in the work and become part of the future success of these endeavours. Knowledge about basic methodology combined with a sincere interest in heritage fosters the appropriate treatment and conservation of artifacts and monuments. The event also hosted short presentations and roundtable discussions about other forms of heritage protection and reuse: what is the definition of heritage, and what can be regarded as the natural, cultural, tangible, or intangible heritage of a community, a town, or a region? The visual identity of Pomáz's buildings and their relationship with the town's architectural heritage, research into local history and family history, and the future of the dynamically developing heritage inventory were also discussed.

In addition to the poster presentation of the finds unearthed during field walks, we went beyond the traditional forms of presentation and showed the archaeologists' work in more hands-on and relatable ways. Visitors had the opportunity to see and learn about different archaeological methods: how a drone is operated to make aerial photos of a site or how human and animal remains are treated after excavation. Also, they could participate in a mock excavation and observe experimental archaeological methods used by a blacksmith working with traditional methods. A special guided tour was also offered, where the visitors could glimpse into parts of the mansion that are usually closed to the public (*Figs 5–6*). The positive feedback received from the visitors indicates the demand for such events of knowledge dissemination among the wider public.

The festival was opened by István Leidinger, mayor of Pomáz, whose presence and opening speech confirmed the local decision-makers' marked interest in heritage. The event attracted hundreds of visitors. In addition to the organizing institutions, invited specialists, such as architect Attila Szczuka, archaeologist János Attila Tóth, park ranger Dávid Péter, and anthropologist Tamás Hajdu supported the professional team behind the festival. The Association of Community Archaeology brought nearly 70 volunteers and its president, Tibor Ákos Rácz (archaeologist at the Ferenczy Museum Center); while Magdolna Ozorai, Géza Nagy, and Csilla Siklódi represented the Friends of Pomáz Association. László Rupnik offered visitors an insight into remote sensing, drone, and field recording methods, Mónika Jászberényi introduced the sub-

Fig. 5. Visitors of the one-day archaeology festival participate in a "treasure hunt" (photo by István Kudó)

Fig. 6. Excavation of a 'grave' at the concluding event in August 2022: children also learned about methodology (photo by István Kudó)

tleties of finds analysis and documentation, Dominika Szabó designed and led treasure hunts for families, and Petra Páncsics supervised an "archaeological sandbox" for children. Harri Weigel presented the experimental archaeology of blacksmithing. From the OpenHeritage project, Dóra Mérai, József Laszlovszky, Zsuzsanna Reed, and the author of the present paper held presentations and offered guided tours in their respective fields of expertise.

Beyond entertainment, events like this have the potential to bring together a heritage community, part professional, part civic, and attract new volunteers. Research should not stop at producing data and interpretation for a narrow professional audience. It is equally important to ensure professional requirements while allowing the wider public – who, as taxpayers, ultimately fund our work – to connect with their heritage and have a say in its future. From the civil society organizations that ensure participation, through the online platforms of knowledge dissemination and debate, to the regulations of cooperation with local authorities, the practical and technical basis for this connection is constantly evolving and developing. It is a dynamic framework rather than a finite and well-defined model of operation. The ultimate aim of OpenHeritage was to foster such development and facilitate cooperation that can continue beyond the funding and timeframe of various projects. The responsibility lies with the local communities and policymakers to create the conditions and ways of sustainable heritage use and protection through a deeper understanding of their own local heritage.

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