

Who cares? Perspectives on Public Awareness, Participation and Protection in Archaeological Heritage Management

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Who cares? Perspectives on Public Awareness, Participation and Protection in Archaeological Heritage Management

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Detail from Ales stenar, the famous stone ship at Kåseberga, Skåne, Sweden

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Foreword

*Katalin Wollák, President of Europae
Archaeologiae Consilium*

One of the major tasks of the Europae Archaeologiae Consilium is to provide archaeological heritage management agencies with a forum for discussion and a platform to exchange information. We organize our annual heritage management symposiums and special seminars in order to provide an opportunity for our member organizations and other experts to learn about each other's well-established practice. We also consider that it is essential to monitor developments in heritage management, and to react to the changing role of archaeology in society, and the roles and functions of heritage managers, archaeologists and other professionals.

In the last twenty years, in the so-called "Malta era", investment-led archaeology became determinative; although we strongly endeavoured to preserve the research element of our discipline, it became part of the market world. In this context it was unavoidable that new service functions had to be evolved; the development of commercial/contract archaeology indicated these changes. In this new era new expectations arose and professional archaeologists need to pay more attention not only to demands of the investor as a customer, but also to the customer's and other stakeholders' perception, and to the understanding of the results.

Another type of professional challenge concerned how archaeology can remain a sensitive tool in preserving national identity in a globalizing world. Besides the positive effects of the lack of a common EU "cultural policy", however, labelling cultural goods (including finds), for example, as (commercial) goods is deemed to be ambivalent. This issue was addressed positively by the formulation of special requirements in the case of archaeological finds, but the application of sometimes more restrictive national provisions was left within the competence of the member states. The same EU approach to the free movement of goods and services led to a delicate situation resulting from the Commission intervening in a member country by requesting it to take action which would adversely effect the regulation of metal detectors on and near the sites of ancient monuments.

Radical changes are resulting from recent developments such as the economic crises or the "digital shift" arising from the expansion of the Internet. In several countries cultural heritage institutions are merging and integrating, the legal environment is changing rapidly, and resources are decreasing. Not only has the influence of economic policy become stronger, but there is also significant public demand to control archaeological activity. In certain countries treasure hunting has become a legitimate livelihood, and alongside all this, the younger generations are not so interested in historical facts and contexts.

Three years after the 2009 EAC symposium, which focused on the looting of archaeological sites with the title "Europe's Archaeological Heritage under Threat", we felt it could be beneficial to return to the issue of plundering and jeopardizing the archaeological heritage. We planned to examine not only the causes, but also the responsibility of our profession and to seek possible measures which could be applied. The 13th EAC Symposium, organized in March 2012 by the Swedish colleagues with the title "Who Cares? Perspectives on Public Awareness, Participation and Protection in Europe's Archaeology" tried to reconsider the question: do archaeologists, heritage managers, civil servants, university-museum-research experts perform properly, and do we answer all the questions posed by society?

Our profession faces several new challenges and has to adapt to major ongoing developments; we have to find new ways to communicate our achievements better. We need to demonstrate the cultural benefit from the results of our work, and more importantly we need to transform our accumulated knowledge to reach different target groups and stakeholders with the collaboration of all interested parties. The EAC symposium was an important stage in this spiritual process. The keynote speakers analysed the position of archaeology in the new historical narrative and in the context of the growing influence of economic interests. Both the papers represented different aspects, and the open discussion supported the above-mentioned objectives, introducing good examples of how to achieve a better understanding of heritage values, and how to raise greater public awareness.

I'd like to express our special thanks to Agneta Lagerlöf, the scientific coordinator of the conference and the editor of this volume, as well as to the colleagues from the Swedish National Heritage Board, who helped both in the preparation of the conference and in compiling the publication. The small questionnaire prepared by them offered an opportunity for each country to compare their practice with other models and helped to collect the legal framework of different European countries. I'd like to stress the effective role of the moderator, Björn Magnusson Staaf, in generating thought-provoking discussions. The venue of the conference, the Cité des Sciences in Paris, France, ensured an excellent environment for a high-quality conference, and for this the EAC is extremely grateful to the French Ministry of Culture and especially to host of the meeting, Bernard Randoin. We offer our congratulations to the contributors of the papers and we are very proud that the EAC was able to publish the proceedings of the symposium in time for the 2013 EAC Heritage Management Symposium. We believe this volume will enrich the series of the EAC Occasional Papers, arousing an interest in further volumes in the series among the professionals and other concerned parties.

Budapest, 20th November 2012