

Setting the Agenda: Giving New Meaning to the European Archaeological Heritage

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Edited by Peter A.C. Schut, Djurra Scharff and Leonard C. de Wit



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Egon Schrama's sculpture 'Visserijoorlog' (Fishery war) marks the location of a 16th-century shipwreck in Almere, the Netherlands. The authorities decided to preserve the shipwreck in the ground using a special technique called *inkuilen*, which involved covering the wreck with plastic and a layer of earth to maintain a high water level. The province of Flevoland has initiated a series of markers of this kind to give new meaning to the archaeological heritage.

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In memoriam Willem Willems



On December 13th 2014, after a short illness, Willem Willems passed away. Willem was one of the primary instigators of the *Europae Archaeologiae Consilium* (EAC), playing a key role in its formation, and was its founding Secretary.

Willem was one of the giants of archaeology in the Netherlands, across Europe, and indeed... around the world. He was one of the small team convened under the auspices of the Council of Europe responsible for the drafting of the treaty for the protection of archaeology (Valletta Convention), and in this role made an indelible contribution to the evolution of European archaeology. Besides being an excellent scientist and teacher, Willem was one of the key architects of the modern discipline of archaeological heritage management. He occupied a central, indeed pivotal, position in European archaeology and worked enthusiastically and tirelessly to bring together colleagues from different traditions and bind them to a common purpose. Willem was a warm hearted person, true and faithful in all his contacts with his colleagues, students and friends.

The decision of the Board of the EAC to dedicate Occasional Paper No. 10 to his memory is more than appropriate, and signals and reflects his particular and outstanding contribution to European archaeological heritage management. Time after time Willem took the initiative in bringing people together for the sake of archaeology. Good tempered, with humor and seemingly inexhaustible practical creativity he made numerous efforts to find improvements to the way that archaeological heritage management is carried out in Europe and the rest of the world. He understood that 'conditio sine qua non' for being successful in the field of international cooperation is endurance and a clear view on what you want to achieve – Willem was absolutely steadfast in working towards his vision for European archaeological heritage management – a vision focused on striving to attain the highest possible standards of heritage management, but at the same time ensuring that heritage management practices are always rooted firmly in pragmatic and real-world situations.

That is exactly what EAC wanted to formulate during the annual symposium of 2014 in Amersfoort: Setting the Agenda: Giving new meaning to the European archaeological heritage.

In his article 'Malta and its consequences: a mixed blessing' (EAC Occasional Paper No. 9, 151–156) Willem showed delicately but firmly, and with his characteristic humor and insight the need for such an agenda. He played an important role in the Amersfoort symposium, chaired a session, and was most influential in the formulation of the Amersfoort Agenda which is the most crucial part of this book.

We remember Willem Willems as an ardent champion of European archaeology and as a very good and loyal friend. We feel inspired to go forth in his spirit. The agenda as formulated in this book will help us to meet that challenge.

Adrian Olivier and Leonard C. de Wit

Introduction

The challenge

The European Archaeological Council (EAC) is seeking to formulate a strategic agenda to meet today's challenges for archaeological heritage management in Europe. To this end, it organised a working conference in Amersfoort in the Netherlands on 20–21 March 2014.

Over the past three years, the annual EAC symposium has focused on the role and meaning of archaeological heritage in Europe. The results have given us insights into current developments and challenges for archaeological heritage management, amongst other things through a consideration of the positive and negative effects of the Valletta Convention (EAC Occasional Paper 2014). The 2014 symposium built on the work of past years, shifting the focus to the future with the theme of 'Setting the Agenda: Giving new meaning to the European archaeological heritage.' The time is right to think about linking 'Valletta' to 'Faro', the Council of Europe Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005), which recognises the need to put human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage.

With society changing rapidly, the archaeological community needs to be aware of these social, political, technological and economic developments and respond to – or at least be prepared for – the challenges of the new era.

The 1980s saw the emergence of an initiative to make agreements at European level in order to afford better protection for the sources of our history. The Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta 1992), which resulted from this process, continues to inspire and has helped reshape archaeological heritage management in many countries in Europe. As a result, fewer important archaeological sources have been lost without our knowing.

At the same time, some people have questioned whether our efforts have succeeded in achieving the Convention's aims. The rise in the number of archaeological investigations has not necessarily expanded our knowledge of the past. And the ever-evolving information technology has not been used to its full potential in terms of storing and sharing digital data and information – a vital step in the production of new knowledge and in strengthening the discipline's links to society. In addition, ongoing professionalisation has had an impact on the involvement of people outside the archaeological profession, such as amateur archaeologists. The archaeological community is expected to think about its standards and values, and open them up to discussion.

The economic crisis is also an important factor. Public resources for archaeology are in decline and the private sector's willingness to meet the costs of archaeological research is also coming under increasing pressure. Their archaeological responsibilities are often seen as a burden, rather than a source of inspiration, pleasure or pride.

More than two decades on, we need to launch new initiatives to explore ways to treat archaeological values as sources of knowledge about Europe's past. It seems a good idea to connect these challenges with the principles of the Faro Convention and thus give new meaning to archaeological heritage management in Europe.

We aim to have an interactive, open discussion on the topics which require greater attention on a European scale and which can inspire all members of the EAC. The symposia of the past three years and the resulting publications have provided fantastic input for the working conference that was held in Amersfoort in March 2014.

Topics for a strategic agenda

Through the working conference, the EAC sought to provide a foundation for a strategic agenda, as well as to explore possibilities for an action programme to improve archaeological heritage management in Europe. During break-out sessions the participants discussed possible agenda topics around the following three main themes.

1. The spirit of the Faro Convention: embedding archaeology in society

Recognising the need to put people and human values at the centre of an enlarged and cross-disciplinary concept of cultural heritage

Emphasising the value and potential of cultural heritage wisely used as a resource for sustainable development and quality of life in a constantly evolving society (Preamble, Faro Convention)

Archaeology is not just for archaeologists. Many people are passive but interested consumers of the results of archaeological research – they visit museums, read books, engage in education, and visit excavations, heritage

sites and archaeological parks. Others have a more active role in community archaeology, as amateurs, through re-enactments or by monitoring whether local authorities have embedded archaeology in their spatial planning policy.

These are questions that need to be answered: Do we have a role to play in involving other groups, local communities and the public at large, and if so, what is that role? Is the concept of community archaeology worth promoting and how should it be embedded in the often strictly professional legal framework? What is the most successful approach? Is there a need for an international initiative? We need to give the future a past by making the past visible and perceivable when implementing spatial plans.

2. Dare to choose

Recognise the public interest associated with elements of the cultural heritage in accordance with their importance to society (Article 5a, Faro Convention)

2.1 Quality or quantity?

For each form of selection, we need a good idea of what archaeology we can expect to find where, how these values can be effectively traced, and what has probably been lost as a result of economic activities such as farming. The clearer our idea of such matters, the more transparent and rigorous our choices can be. There has to be further development of the maps and methods we need to help us. An international exchange of ideas about how to tackle this is of course vital. If we wish to achieve this exchange within Europe, what are the main themes to address?

2.2 What do we want to know?

Not all archaeological information is equally important. In situ and ex situ selection is a key issue, given the need to maximise the added value of archaeological research and to ensure that archaeological heritage management remains as efficient and cost-effective as possible – not least to ensure ongoing public support. The first question to consider is: What questions about the past do we want archaeological research to answer? This needs to be explored at an international level, so that national and regional agendas can also address cross-border issues.

3. Managing the sources of European history

Enhance the value of the cultural heritage through its identification, study, interpretation, protection, conservation and presentation (Article 5b, Faro Convention)

3.1 The harvest of Valletta: Adding to our knowledge of the past

Despite the sharp rise in the amount of archaeological research being conducted, there have been few syntheses that bring the resulting information together to build a new bigger picture and raise new questions about the past. You would expect this to be the natural stuff of academic endeavour, but the link with universities is weak.

Here the questions that need answers are: Is there enough interaction between academic and commercial archaeology? Are academics aware of what developer-led archaeology has yielded? To what extent does the (commercial) research agenda for individual excavations focus on knowledge profits at a higher level? Is the right information being generated? Or are those working in archaeological heritage management simply unwilling or unable to take on this task effectively? How do we build a bridge between the major stakeholders so that they can study, share and disseminate information while at the same time strengthening one another? Do we want to achieve a synthesis on a European scale and if so, what should the main themes be? What does this mean for national heritage management?

3.2 Exchanging information in the digital era

The Parties undertake to develop the use of digital technology to enhance access to cultural heritage and the benefits which derive from it (Article 14, Faro Convention)

All over Europe, information is being generated about our past. Every survey and every excavation supplies information in the form of digital data, documentation, finds and publications. Access to this information at a European level could be considerably improved by agreeing on standardisation and by forging connections, connections and more connections. Would an archaeological knowledge map of Europe be feasible? What are the benefits and challenges of an archaeological knowledge map or shared database? Can an initiative like 'Europeana' inspire the archaeological community?

The process

The main aim of the presentations was to inspire and prepare participants for their discussions during the break-out sessions. The presentations were selected to provide an overview of the topics, but also to show opposing opinions or an artist's refreshing perspective.

The presentations in the 'Spirit of the Faro Convention' theme were primarily intended to highlight the different aspects, possibilities and interactions of all participants in archaeology, community and society and the relevance of archaeology to society. Public participation is a basic necessity, with the public not just as an incidental bystander and passive consumer but also an active participant and stakeholder. Should we actively invite the public to communicate their wishes and perhaps even give them a vote in decisions? This is not just a question of expanding opportunities for public participation, but more especially of changing attitudes to enable a more democratic approach.

In this publication Graham Fairclough reflects on developments in society and changing ideas about the archaeologist's role by examining the differences between the Valletta and Faro Conventions. He addresses an important question, wondering whether it is not archaeology, but archaeologists that need to be more deeply embedded in society. At the symposium Monique van den Dries also reflected on this journey from 'Valletta' to 'Faro' and discussed how engagement with the public has evolved. In this volume she takes the discussion one step further by looking at recent facts and figures that have primarily come from the Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe (2012-2014) survey. In the context of deinstitutionalisation and the growth of bottom-up social structures, Roel During discusses the challenges and perspectives for heritage specialists and archaeologists wishing to climb the ladder of heritage participation. At the Amersfoort symposium Guy Königstein gave an interesting presentation from an artist's point of view.¹

'Dare to choose' is a topic which is interpreted in different ways in the member states and which also inspired active discussion during the symposium. Dries Tys and Margaret Keane presented two opposing opinions, triggering a lively debate that illustrated the range of feelings and opinions. The question is not simply whether or not to choose, but also how to cope with the choices we make. The break-out sessions highlighted common aims, such as a desire to be transparent, explicit and informed about choices in the archaeological heritage management process.

In his paper Dries Tys presents a reflection on the current situation for preventive archaeology as a consequence of implementing the Valletta Convention. He proposes an approach in which archaeological sites are selected for their knowledge potential and scientific and social significance. Another approach is introduced by Hauke Jöns, who discusses the possibilities of applying sampling strategies when analysing archaeological excavations. Margaret Keane sheds light on the topic from an Irish perspective, examining the development of discussions on archaeological heritage protection measures and the interpretation of Valletta. In addition, Bert Groenewoudt looks at the situation in the Netherlands and explains some Dutch initiatives designed to make 'Malta' excavations relevant to heritage management, science and society.

The theme of 'Managing the sources of European history' includes two central topics in addition to the end goals. The first is the benefits that digitisation and European cooperation can bring in relation to new perspectives – not only at an academic level, but also to disseminate comprehensible information to a wide audience. Archaeology's role within European projects continues to be limited. This relates closely to the second topic. We are very good at exchanging information through publications, symposia, etc. but to reap maximum benefit we need to do more than simply exchange results – we also need to share information and work towards a common goal at a higher level. The Archaeological Atlas of Prehistoric Europe, the JADE project and the ARCHES project are just some examples of the value of working closely together. Three examples are presented here: Franco Niccolucci sketches the context of computer technology in archaeology and introduces the ARIADNE project, its activities, challenges and opportunities; Hauke Jöns discusses the background, outcomes and future perspectives of the international, interdisciplinary SPLASHCOS network; and Paulina Florjanowicz's contribution explores the situation in Poland, touching upon various challenges to ensure that all the sources gathered are both well managed and usable.

The results

We have defined many questions and raised new challenges for the future. Since the goal of the Amersfoort symposium was to establish a new agenda which, first and foremost, should be a source of inspiration to all EAC members, it was clear that it had to be a joint product of all the members. The symposium participants were therefore challenged to play an active role in setting the agenda. The presentations on each topic were primarily intended as inspiration and to reveal different, sometimes controversial, aspects of the topic. Participants were then divided across a number of break-out groups.

¹ http://www.guykoenigstein.com/winchester_objects.html

Their main task was to discuss and propose issues in need of more attention that should be added to the new agenda. Each participant wrote down three ways to achieve this goal. All these statements were analysed and then presented in the Amersfoort Agenda. This draft was distributed to participants and EAC members for comments, which were integrated into a final version that was discussed and adopted by the EAC board. Both the Agenda and the break-out session reports are included in this EAC volume.

Of course the Amersfoort Agenda is not intended as an amendment to the Valletta Convention. It is primarily a source of inspiration, a vision document, with a focus on specific topics that were chosen to give the Valletta Convention renewed impetus for the next decade and to achieve a stronger connection with the Faro Convention.

We will have to take up this challenge for the future without our esteemed colleague Willem Willems, who has recently passed away. He was a driving force behind developments in European archaeology as well as this symposium. We are most thankful for his invaluable advice and for his work on the symposium and the creation of the Amersfoort Agenda. He will be missed both as a friend and colleague.

We are very grateful for the active role of all the participants, especially Jos Bazelmans, Adrian Olivier and Paulina Florjanowicz who chaired the main sessions. Without the chairs of the 15 break-out groups and the assistance of young archaeologists and students from the universities of Groningen, Amsterdam and Leiden who compiled the minutes for the break-out sessions, it would not have been possible to shape this complex process an agenda. Specific mention must also be made of a parallel break-out group of students and young archaeologists who discussed the topics from a refreshing point of view. We would like to thank Réka Viragos for all her valuable support and advice in the preparations for the symposium and publication. Special thanks also to Annette Visser for her excellent work in revising all the English texts in this volume and to Marie-Jeanne Ghene for translating all the abstracts into French. Working with the publisher Archaeolingua has been an enjoyable experience; without their hard work the volume could not have been published in time. In closing we would like to thank all the authors for their time and effort and for sharing their knowledge and personal experiences in the valuable contributions to this volume.

Reading guide

This EAC Occasional Paper no. 10 has a different format than previous publications. It mainly comprises two parts. The first presents the Amersfoort Agenda in both English and French, with a view to setting the agenda for the future of archaeological heritage management in Europe. The second part contains ten articles by the symposium's speakers and other authors, grouped by session theme. The contributions add depth to the Agenda and present a range of topics, approaches and opinions within the three themes. The reports of the break-out sessions are included as an annex after the French summaries. They provide a glimpse of the participants' discussions and input that formed the basis for the Amersfoort Agenda.

Peter A.C. Schut, Djurra Scharff and Leonard C. de Wit