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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Conference Review: EAA Vilnius – about Archaeological Tourism, Visualisation, Experiment and Reconstruction

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The European Association of Archaeologists held its annual conference of 2016 in Vilnius, Lithuania. About 1,500 participants attended a programme, with a similar number of papers, in over 100 sessions. About a dozen EXARC members attended; what follows here is a review of three sessions.

> the EAA conference is a remarkable melting pot with archaeology from all corners of Europe. We expect the 2018 conference in Maastricht (NL) and the 2019 conference in Barcelona (ES) to be even larger than the one in Lithuania, again with at least a dozen EXARC members present to learn about the state of the art around the continent.

Session 1: I see something that you cannot see. Multidisciplinary approaches in archaeological tourism

At the EAA conference in 2015, the " Working Party: Integrating the Management of Archaeological Heritage and Tourism" was founded. The outcome of this workgroup would be to create European guidelines for archaeological tourism for Europe and beyond, maintaining and sustaining an information platform and professional network. This session is aimed at creating a multidisciplinary dialogue and raise awareness of the benefits and possible conflicts of archaeologists and professionals from other relevant disciplines, working together in archaeological tourism projects and turning them into meaningful experiences for the public. Following up on this session, the workgroup will organise a session and a roundtable at the upcoming EAA conference 2017 in Maastricht, NL.

Ms Kovac explained about the successful cooperation in Ljubljana, Slovenia, around the Archaeological Park Emona. The Park consists of the Roman remains scattered in and under Ljubljana. Even though known for a long time, it was not until 2010-2011 that these remains were joined as one entity in a Roman context. This happened in close cooperation between the Museums and Galleries of Ljubljana and the municipal tourism department. A five-year management programme was developed, which is under the coordination of the municipality. This contrary to the hit and run policy of putting up signs and routes without checking if they are effective. Of course there were problems along the way, like lacking communication, overbooking of the park, not meeting financial obligations, disrespect for the ruins by tour guides and finally the lack of authenticity on some of the offered programmes, but the benefits were larger than the drawbacks. The programme was a great success with 30% more visitors to the city than before, and a better reputation of the archaeology among the inhabitants. The archaeologists and the museums have proven to be a successful partner for tourism and the cooperation will continue into the near future. Equally important is that the tourism income is shared between the stakeholders. Contacts between the different parties are good, meaning that opportunities for new programmes are easily followed up.

Three ladies from Skanderborg, Denmark then stepped onto the stage and gave a remarkable presentation on the marrying of art, archaeology and tourism in their area. Probably the most important reason for their success was the good contact between the different stakeholders, working on equal terms and always meeting each other in the middle. One just has to stretch up one’s comfort zone. In-situ art is an important component in Skanderborg, but it is just an

attempt at finding new ways to tell landscape stories. Link that with an overarching background story (like the interpretation network of the Limes mentioned by Hazenberg) where art is the method of transporting the story. Statistics show that in Jutland, Denmark, 40% of all visitors are cultural tourists and have plenty of money to spend. The trend is, from an international perspective, that this group is growing, but one can only be successful when one focuses on authentic and unique experiences. Tourists favour the local and the unexpected. An important success factor is local ownership instead of a top-down approach.

This session showed several examples where it has become clear that archaeology alone is not enough; we are too small to sell ourselves and need to cooperate with other parties, join with other interests, in order to find enough relevance. However, we should not sell our skin too cheaply, and balance between research and promotion. For example: the narrative, the interpretation framework used in cultural tourism, needs to come from research and not the other way around, otherwise one loses on authenticity. Finally: without creating local interest, without being rooted in local communities, any initiative for cultural tourism is doomed.

Session 2: Visualizing the past. Exploring meaningful approaches in interpreting the archaeological record through illustrations and reconstructions

ICOMOS are a non-governmental international organisation dedicated to the conservation of the world's monuments and sites, and they were the organisation behind the session on visualizing the past. They did a survey a couple of years ago on reconstructions of monuments and sites. The majority of respondents believed that physical reconstructions at archaeological sites were becoming more common (71%) but that the principles of the Venice Charter on this subject were increasingly disregarded (68%). Respondents also highlighted the interpretive and educational functions of physical reconstructions in addition to the goal of increasing tourism. They further noted that digital reconstructions were becoming more common and widely accessible online, in museums, for research, and at heritage sites.

This session on visualizing the past aimed to discuss the issue of illustration, visualization, and physical and digital reconstruction of archaeological heritage.

Where presentation of archaeological heritage is required, this can take several shapes. In some cases, physical protection is needed; in other cases things are made visible, or just referred to by modern means, like street names. Presentation of contents can be done by digital means or by using living history, for example at festivals. Sometimes heritage specialists are called into a project at a far too late stage. Dilemmas are often not discussed early enough. One should always discuss how much authenticity would be lost in the final version of the story told.

New houses are built to give visitors an understanding of how these may have looked like in the past and, if one applies a holistic approach, can lead to community engagement.

The various speakers of this session agreed that reconstruction should have a central role in research and that enough work should be invested in the reconstruction process. Not only does reconstruction force research into until then unanswered questions; reconstructed buildings can go well together with saving the original archaeological remains under a protective shell on top of which the reconstruction is built, like in Xanten. It is important to alternate between different media including signs, a website, folders et cetera, but be careful that the information does not detract too much from the experience.

Session 3: experimental archaeology: techniques and technologies

Organised as a Lithuanian – Latvian initiative, the final session of the EAA showed a wide range of experiments, prehistoric skills and techniques, various forms of education and their use in the tourism industry.

Inspired by Mesolithic figures carved in bone from Ryemarksgård, Denmark, Ms Rimkutė made plaited mats, and then made people wear them to see if they would be able to resemble the Mesolithic forms. It was clear that these mats were useful as multi-purpose cloth. Rimkutė showed it was possible to make a look-alike of the Danish finds. It is quite possible that people in the Mesolithic used plaited clothing.

MA student Kuriga from Poland explained a well-structured series of experiments in Stone Age bone and antler softening methods including agents like milk, lye, urine, flax oil and water. The work included both bending and cutting of the bone and antler material. The experimental work was followed by use-wear analysis and chemical analysis.

Mr Palomo from Spain presented his case study of the early Neolithic site of La Draga. In one site archaeological research, experimental archaeology and outreach activities take place. The experimentation includes work with wooden tools, stone tools and textile production. Important are both the tools from the manufacture process and from the time when the tools are used. Following on their outreach activities (guided tours, workshops and demonstrations), they are now looking into the use of virtual reality and more modern methods.

Mr Ignat from Romania then briefed us about five years of experiments with Eneolithic pottery by him and his colleagues. They used six different clays and five different tempers. Chemical analysis identified the right clays to use. They used the coiling technique as well as the moulding technique. The data collection in this work was particularly well done.

Mr Devogelaere from France is a PhD student with promising research. He followed a rigorous and well-structured plan to look at a swatch of bronzes from Antiquity. He compared

different types of alloys and patina recipes, leading to a large collection of small bronze sheets. He started with different alloys leading to different colours. He then used different surface treatments like picketing and polishing, or even gilding. His final step was about patination, both natural and artificial types. These numerous parameters led to a wide spectrum of colours.

Ms Ivleva from the UK had decided to team up with Ms Rolland from France with a paper on glass bracelets from both the La Tène (BC) and the Romano-British (AD) periods – a little difference in time and place, but still very comparable. The results of seven years of experiment were presented, a great team effort. A typology was developed, not just on the looks of the bracelets, but on recognising technical manufacturing details. Production flaws could include oblong glass bubbles, papery folds because of badly fused glass, and iron scales on the inside surface. It was great to see the inclusion of ethnographic sources, of modern glassmakers moving away from their burners toward using woodfires and the simplest of tools.

It is important to change from a single experiment into production.

A quite interesting research was presented by Ms Pil from Belgium: micro wear analysis on early medieval combs. She combined a typological research with an experimental approach and used wear analysis. She now has a reference collection for antler manufacturing tools and a use-wear collection with traces from, among others, human hair and horsehair.

Conclusion

All in all, the EAA conference is a remarkable melting pot with archaeology from all corners of Europe. We expect the 2018 conference in Maastricht (NL) and the 2019 conference in Barcelona (ES) to be even larger than the one in Lithuania, again with at least a dozen EXARC members present to learn about the state of the art around the continent.

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