

Notes from meeting march 6 & 7, 2000 on a European Network of Archaeological Open Air Museums

A network should be used as an instrument to reach certain goals. It should be possible to start up some open minded discussions on museum concepts: there is hardly talk of competition if one only sees how many groups every museum has to disappoint.

We should talk about the definition of a Open Air Museum, cf ICOM (MS). They have had a discussion on this subject with conclusions on the quality of museums as well. Goldmann has mentioned this subject as well last year at the Tagung Experimentelle Archäologie in Düppel, Berlin. It should be possible to reach and maintain a certain level of quality.

Conferences could be held on different subjects:

- criteria of quality
- concepts of archaeological open air museums
- round table conference on burnt houses

We would need a central secretary station and activities going around through Europe, staging at different museums. Don't forget to publish fast, which is easily feasible with the new media. A central website with a password protected area for the members..? We need to collect information and spread that again. A board could meet twice yearly the secretary station could do all the handling.

A documentation could be made of all the constructed houses in the museums. Other raw data could be collected as well, to compare with one another.

Education is not just something for children. Programs for teenagers or adults are missing mostly. But an open air museum is not just an 'adventurous playground'. If the public is older, you can crave more from their intelligence, reach on deeper subjects like nationalism and the like. In the Netherlands, there is a successful workgroup of teenagers convening monthly at different open air museums. Next to that you have international building camps. With the teenagers and school it seems like there are no directly 'archaeology-related- subjects at school, but it doesn't have to be history classes in which it should fit in: it could just as well be science, technique, physics or whatsoever.

We should combine the strong sides of open air museums and traditional museums.

Archaeological Open Air Museums sometimes tend to go the commercial side. What in fact is 'original'? Marketing and efficiency is too often mistaken for commercialism. We can use other experts to spread knowledge and enthusiasm on archaeology. Popularizing a subject doesn't mean a decrease in quality of the information (look at the science museums et cetera). We can make archaeologists aware of the importance of education.

Fun is important, a museum is allowed to be fun, as long as the story behind the product is forwarded as well. Being fun and scientifically correct is possible.

What can we learn from each other? Educationally, everybody seems to use the same ideas, but we can develop much more. Don't let a museum like ours be a place for activity-therapy. We could make frameworks for teacher's books. That would make it easier for them.

Participants of the Network should on the first place be open air museums, next to that experts in different relevant fields. It would be good if participants would be active in the network.

We could exchange personnel in the fields of:

- science
- archaeotechnic

- education
- pr
- all over management
- et cetera ..

There could be different workgroups.

Open air museums are maybe regarded as good tools in the struggle of archaeological image building. With them, you reach the public, but it is not purely science, it is not the monopoly anymore of the archaeologist.

A Network is the basis which can make a lot of things possible. In that, it can grow to a European Union Project, but only with enough enthusiasm and support. To apply for 'Europe' it would be best to first set up something by ourselves. If that doesn't work, the 'big plan' will not work either.

All participants will ask themselves: 'what do we get back for our input?' Let it emerge above the personal contacts. Archaeology by experiment is a small field, but still not everybody has contact with one another.

1. contact museums
2. make publications available
3. conferences
4. focus on archaeological open air museums.

What do we do with exp.arch and universities? It would already be good to get the different universities with classes on this subject in touch with each other.

Is experimental archaeology a method or a specialization? (YL)

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Now we will write a letter and send that to about 20 addresses. We wait for their reaction to see if it is worth the trouble. Make the letter not too abstract and be clear about the goals at a practical level. Show, however, the huge possibilities.