

Notes

of the meeting in Oerlinghausen, february 16 – february 18 2001
as remembered by Roeland Paardekooper.

See for the list of participants the separate document which was already sent out to everybody.

Some participants had already arrived early, a day or sometimes longer before. We really started on Friday February 16th.

Martin gave a short introduction on our starting point. The point was to get to know the situation we are in. We talked about our goals but not yet about changing the 30 year old concept: new challenges, our goals and means to reach those.

In our field, all over Europe there are different good initiatives, than a gap. The rest seems to lack profound quality, serving as a touristic highlight or an adventure playground only. We would need a quality label on every aspect of our work.

Most projects are scientifically seen badly founded, there is hardly any experimental archaeology, no quality development. There is talk about the 'prehistoric hobby club', every one of these projects looks like the other, there is no concept behind. If it is called a museum, than it needs scientific facts.

The life sized models you see everywhere are hardly ever well documented.

It seems like if archaeological open air museums are for children. "When they grow up, they are ready for the real museum".

The indoor museum is moving away from antiquarism, they copy things like events from us and each other and don't form any new own concepts, even though there are very good opportunities there.

Different people tell something about their backgrounds and / or ideas.

Marlise Wunderli is secretary of the Swiss Network (AEAS) of those interested in and working with experimental archaeology. There are hardly any open air museums, although the AEAS has for the time being an experimental area. Next to that in Neufchatel there are three Neolithic models 1:1 built. An animating group is stationed there as well.

Roeland Paardekooper is secretary of the Dutch Network (VAEE) for archaeological experiments and education. In the Netherlands there are 9 projects of different size. For the last couple of years, no new archaeological open air museums were established. This cannot be blamed to the failure of Archeon only. There is more and more money and attention coming for cultural heritage, so it should be only a matter of a year or two before new initiatives do get established.

Wulf Hein is archaeotechnician and travels around much. He is trying to get a circle of archaeotechnicians together. Main point of their first meeting was about keeping quality / authenticity. The danger is imminent that people are grabbing concepts from us and making bad copies.

Gunter Schöbel is director of the Pfahlbaumuseum in Unteruhldingen, Southern Germany. We need to go another, new direction, a direction of quality.

Andreas Strassmeir is construction – reconstructor in Museumsdorf Düppel, Berlin. Furthermore he is student museology in Berlin, a new study in Germany. It is important to establish quality and new concepts. Maybe a distinctive peculiarity would be to not be depended of government support (see for example Oerlinghausen, Unteruhldingen, POM-Eindhoven and future Düppel). We should create a demand, an interest at a very young age.

Fabian Peise is member of the board of Museumsdorf Düppel, Berlin and their webmaster. Our goal could be to exchange of knowledge, books, concepts. Further the institution of a quality label would be important, just as more knowledge on methods of advertising. He agrees with Andreas that an important feature of a new generation of archaeological open air museums to sooner or later be independent financially. Right now there is a crisis in Düppel as they probably will have to leave the larger body of museums in Berlin. The number of visitors is decreasing.

Ildikó Poroslai is director of the Matrica Museum in Százhalombatta, Hungary. The museum has both a traditional museum as a bronze age / iron age reconstruction area (6 hectares) within an archaeological and nature reserve. The city of Százhalombatta is not poor. Right now 3 bronze age models are built already, the iron age material is being built. There is a great difficulty in performing good experiments. Last year there were 25.000 visitors.

Lars Wellin is originally a real estate agent and worked some years in the tourism industry. Right now he is working for the "Skäftekärr Ekonomiska Förening" on Öland, Sweden. An area of 53 acres has been bought by the inhabitants of the region. It contains an original iron age landscape with rest up to 80 cms

high. The project here is developed as a good cooperation between archaeology and tourism. There are not enough visitors. Another problem is to keep good employees during the wintertime. If you cannot do that, you will have lost them for the next summer season.

Arwo Pajusi is 'antikvarie' in the Kalmar Läns Museum in Kalmar, Sweden. There are a few Mesolithic, Neolithic and medieval house constructions made here.

Tomas Johansson is director of the Institute for Ancient technology, Sweden. The IAT deals with education, research, documentation and information. In Sweden, there are about 40 different places with constructions on 1:1. 30 of them are connected to each other in the Swedish Network for Living Past (SNLF). An important issue Tomas is raising: why is there still no academic course for our business?

Zigrīda Apala and Anda Vilka represent the Institute of History of Latvia - Āraiši Lake Fortress in Latvia. The reconstructed part of the fortress (9th century AD) is open for visitors since 1994. The number of visitors is growing by the year, up to 34.000 last year. An important issue to be tackled by a future network is that a lot of people in our business feel isolated, set aside from science and traditional museums.

Martin concludes the issues raised up to now:

- why is there so little money for our institutions in comparison with for example traditional museums and science?
- How do we employ staff all year round?
- There is a lack of good publications for the public. Popular books are often copies and bad translations of old books, with a huge amount of mistakes.
- The quality of our shops is heavily connected to our own program
- Education is more than just playing with children
- Every open air museum has to fit in its region, being that regions cultural focus
- we need new concepts, being innovative, being ahead of the spirit of the times.

Gunter makes clear that Unteruhldingen is the focus in a micro region, for example for tourists. But besides of that, Gunter has contacts all over Europe, going outside the own borders, for example through the internet. You can contact colleagues everywhere.

It is time for a new direction, like Danish museums. They have a much more social component. We need power: a lobbyist to create political support.

Tomas: if you work practical, they make you feel like 3rd class archaeologists, not being taken serious. Maybe we shouldn't call ourselves archaeologists as we are not traditional ones. We can go around traditional archaeology.

Martin: we are just one field of archaeology.

Tomas: If you put 'ancient technology' in the focus, you will see it is linked to many subjects: science, teaching, craft, anthropology, archaeology, art and history of technology.

Marlise: we go further than archaeology: we crave context and while teaching, we tell the story. Most scientists want to be left alone. Other archaeologists, like the ones in museums, they explain to normal people. This gap between the two groups will stay. The danger exists, there will be new museums without an educational concept, without any education. If you teach schoolchildren, they will come back with their parents. What has experimental archaeology to do with education?

Fabian: we must take school classes and their opportunities serious. School groups are not necessarily interested, the children are forced.

Ildikó: Groups in Hungary only go to the park, hardly to the museum.

We try to keep respect of both our colleagues and the public.

Andreas: young archaeologists are different from the older generation. There lies our chance.

Fabian: The academical world does its own experimental archaeology, they have other questions than ours. The linkage with those experimental archaeologists is important.

Tomas: the new generation is not that traditional indeed. We form the future direction for them. However, the establishment hesitates.

Gunter: the key is education at the universities. Nowadays, museums and universities are in different camps. We in Unteruhldingen do both in one: we create resources, examine and show the results to the public.

Martin: Universities are concerned about science, the rest of the archaeological field has to be learned in the real world. Now cultural management is the hit, events, museums, but no opportunities in museum education. People keep reinventing the wheel, with decreasing quality.

Gunter: there is nowadays even a study for event manager. Is that a new way of doing museums?

Lars: we know the question of costumers, education people must have certain skills and basic knowledge.

Wulf: we are bringing in the visitors to the traditional museums.

Anda: education is only one role, we can report back to archaeology. The whole way of interpretation is our basic question.

Martin: why are we doing what we are doing? Is the museum the right place to educate people?

Ildikó: we need cultural management to make a big difference.

Andreas: we are the mediator between science and the public. We have to establish a two way street, what it is not right now. We should spread scientific views and insights to the public.

Concluding points:

1. self confidence – finding our place in society
2. there is more to just being an archaeological museum than just archaeology
3. we should be the cultural focus for our own region en getting our own network
4. money
5. what is the sense of educational work? Is there genuine interest and why is there more interest for us than for traditional museums?
6. What about the classical museum skills: collecting, keeping and exhibiting? Or are we just the mediator or educator?
7. How to educate qualified personnel?
8. what about the future?

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Friday afternoon: Quality, or who should be our partners.

Roeland mentions a system of accreditation of museums as it exists in the US. With this he points to the question: do we want to have only 10% of all (the best) or do we want to represent 90%? In the US every museum can register, and 90% did so. Only the best can be designated, after a long and difficult procedure. Being designated (self criticism!) one knows more about oneself and is able to attract more funding. Right now, we are focused on the top 10%.

In measuring quality, there are major problems. If you create a guild, you have to exclude organisations as well.

Tomas mentions also in prehistory, not everybody had the same high technical standard.

Martin: The level of your skill is not the issue, it is more about the quality and the honesty of presenting. We are modern people, acting for other modern people. Be true, do not lie. On the other hand this doesn't mean you can just do or build anything.

Andreas: we have to have a scientific backup, based on research. This excludes a whole lot of open air museums.

Anda: our aim is not to fake the past: we have a method to present the past.

Lars: how must the scientific world appear in ours? As consultants.

Wulf: real archaeologists are sometimes jealous with us: ask them to give advise, they will be pleased.

Martin: be careful: you can have an important professor to advise you, but that doesn't have to guarantee quality. You need to involve specialists. Nowadays there is no time for research. Get knowledge of the current state, put it together. Right now there is no cooperation, nobody knows about each other.

Tomas put some keywords to quality together: contact, exchange of knowledge, education, lobbying, library, publishing. Management should be in it as well.

Martin: an ISO standard 9000 would be a problem, do not do that now. Our chance would be to remain a small group for the first years and work all of this out. Set high standards and move them upwards. Our way is to develop.

Karl Banghard: you have to exclude people, start with a fixed number and do not open up until things are settled.

Remember there is no ideal park or prehistoric paradise.

Publications of archaeological open air museums should address different levels. The workgroup as it is formed here will have a website for members only.

Concerning membership of the workgroup it is clear that the people absent are the workgroup for the time being. New members will be invited by the workgroup if there is consensus about them.

The different levels of standards are shown in the provisional establishment of standards for "Exarc" which will be inspected by a native English speaker before it will be passed around in our group.

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Saturday morning
Culture 2000 & Agenda 2000

Tomas introduces the subject 'European funding' to the group. In the mean time, everybody received the right URL to check all details on the program 'Culture 2000'. Application requires 5 partners from different countries, all of them contributing 5% of the budget during the three years it takes. In potential, our group has much more than just 5 nationalities.

The national network partners (AEAS & VAEE) are out, because they do not have enough money. After some discussion, a few representatives reported to Tomas, while some others have to check with their associates at home. Applying for funding has to be done fast.

Another goal is to get 'Brussels' to realize we exist and play an important role. This is a second step which Tomas will undertake.

Now we have to get operational and fill the agenda.

We will create a protected website and will organize other activities, like round table conferences.

What should be among others, on the website:

a first intro. This will be made in English and then sent around to be translated by all workgroup members.

a list of publications – journals – books

a collected bibliography for internal use (including cd's and films)

new books (reviews)

links to the individual websites

program of what is happening in Europe.

There will be appointed one administrator for each subject.

Andreas: an overview over living history groups, an expert pool

Tomas: EU, focus on trying to set up an academic course, training our own staff

Fabian: webmaster

Martin: addresses of European locations of life size reconstructions

Ildikó: education for university students (start of overall education)

Lars: tourism and visitors

Arwo: book reviews: what is new on the market

Zigrida & Anda: organic material (woodwork and textile objects), eastern contacts

Roeland: Information collecting and filtering on EU, secretary.

Marlise: filter information on events, our window to Switzerland, AEAS

Gunter: tourism and the history of archaeological open air museums

Wulf: list of archaeotechnicians, graphic design

Anneke: host the next conference in Eindhoven

The next meeting of the workgroup will be in Eindhoven (NL), on October the 19th 2001, just before the 'Tagung Experimentelle Archäologie' there. People who haven't been able to join us in Oerlinghausen will be able to meet us informally during the weekend following on our meeting.

Before 'Eindhoven' we have to see how things are going, know if we get European funding and make thematic starts with different topics.

The 3rd meeting will be from Friday, may 31st to Sunday June 2nd 2002 in Latvia. During these days we will have a short technical meeting, further on we will be discussing subjects in round tables, like for example wood and textiles.

Loose remark:

there will be an archaeological fair in Germany in 2002. See Archäologie-online.de under events or check www.hanau.de → museums → fair 2002 / Archäologiemesse