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## Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

# Conference Review: Reconstruction “in Situ”, International Archaeological Meeting of Calafell, 2011

Persistent Identifier: <https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10036>

[EXARC Journal Issue 2012/1](#) | Publication Date: 2012-01-15

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March 2011, EXARC convened for the 17th time, this time in Calafell, Catalonia, Spain. We could go along with the 6th international archaeology meeting of Calafell, a biannual conference. Three days long, from 9:30h in the morning until 19:30h in the evening, we listened to about 20 papers, had an excursion to the nearby archaeological open air museum, the Ciutadella Iberica and held our annual general meeting (AGM).

The speakers came from all directions: 11 countries were represented. Most papers were from non-EXARC members which made it even more interesting. The organisers had been able to attract a few 'top of the bill' speakers.



With about 75 participants from about 15 countries, this was a very varied group of people and presentations.

In the morning of the first day, Santacana Mestre as well as Guitart Duran attempted to set a stage for the methodology and theory of 'in situ' (re)construction. Santacana Mestre went as far (after presenting a history of (re)construction) as showing his 'Ten Commandments' which unfortunately were not debated in depth. Guitart Duran referred to (re)constructions as being an abstract presentation, inspired by the past, but being abstract, they are an own entity and therefore never wrong – they do not necessarily represent anything else except themselves.

In the afternoon, four case studies were presented. Müller presented the Roman Archaeological Park at Xanten (DE) which is continuously being expanded. It is the least endangered archaeological site in Germany, still research excavations are carried out. For each Euro spent on the park, visitors spend another six euro in the region. Juhl & Serlander presented Eketorp Fort (SE) and the plans for the near future. New houses will be (re)constructed and a cafe is desperately needed. The museum will go ahead with branding products so you can recognise the museum name around the area. Here too, research has been done into the contribution to the region. Archaeologists are much needed in archaeological open air museums, but so are other kinds of professionals. Martin & Baud presented Guedelon (FR), where a castle is built in the medieval way. Although a very spectacular project, Martin & Baud gave a very down to earth presentation which, thanks to the live simultaneous translation was easy to follow. They referred to the massive load of research work which this project has triggered, much of it still is in its publication phase. Piotrowski presented the recent developments at Biskupin (PL), seen both from an archaeological and from a museum point of view. It is expected that 2011, the construction of (re)construction sites themed with the Neolithic and Medieval Period will commence. Also here, they need a restaurant.

Day Two started with a session with broad views. Paardekooper presented his ideas about how EXARC could promote experimental archaeology internationally. Masriera Esquerra presented OpenArch, the project she is leading which includes 10 archaeological open air museums and EXARC as partners for a period of five years. We will hear a lot of this project in the future. Baena Preysler & Palomo Pérez gave a short history of experimental archaeology in Spain. In 2005, an association was initiated, called Experimenta (just like the Swiss organisation). October 2011, they will hold their biannual conference, which as usual will bring together over 100 participants.

Jameson gave a presentation of the US National Park Service's sites with (re)constructions. Although policy is not to do it, there are still dozens if not more parks which are happy to do so. You could call most of them Outdoor Living History Museums. EXARC needs to change its semantics to better connect. Brown gave an overview of his work at Colonial Williamsburg (US), a key site in understanding the type of museums Jameson had introduced. It was wonderful to see things set in a perspective overlapping several decades.

Humer gave an introduction into the Archaeological Park Carnuntum (AT), full of Romans. It was good to have more Romans represented, something we do not often see. Interesting too, to compare the Xanten Park with the Carnuntum one – not all Romans are the same at all!

Day Three started with Bidwell's presentation of the Tyne and Wear Museums at Hadrian's Wall, which include archaeological open-air museums like Arbeia and Segedunum. He referred at length to the hallmark publication edited by Stone & Planel, *The Constructed Past*, experimental archaeology, education and the public. It is important to mention such reference works time and time again. Bidwell described what they had learned and would do differently nowadays. He mentioned, a (re)construction costs about 1/3rd of what an indoors showcase exhibition costs per square metre. Naumovsky was a welcome guest from Macedonia, presenting the National Museum's excavations of a very rich Neolithic site which was subsequently (re)constructed. They have come very far but face problems with lack of money. Being dependent on political decisions, they cannot always plan ahead. These issues were all too familiar to many of the participants. Dell'Unto from Lund University (SE) gave a whirlwind presentation with video clips of all sorts about the use of augmented reality, both indoor and outdoor, for the communication of archaeological sites. His audience was pleasantly surprised when Dell'Unto just showed a handful of ideas, mentioning that nowadays, we can use consumer hardware and open source software to create augmented reality. How different from even five years ago!

Mytum gave an overview of Castell Henllys (WLS), an archaeological open air museum he had helped creating and was still involved with. Teachers at this site are interpreting only in first person character roles, which is sometimes hard. When a digger machine appeared on the site, they explained their visitors that this was 'a dragon'. The site has a very emotional connotation. Pulini (IT) described a public archaeology project in the middle of a modern town. By this example, she explained how Italian archaeology works with her successful attempts to show the Roman past to the inhabitants of Modena.

Hernández Cardona was the last to present a paper, about the limits of experimental archaeology. He mentioned changes in society which reflect on archaeology and presented examples of computer generated (re)constructions but unfortunately failed to live up to the title of his presentation.

With about 75 participants from about 15 countries, this was a very varied group of people and presentations. Many people were very open and eager to discuss and meet each other, not only the foreign participants but the Catalan and Spanish people as well. The live translation meant that the conference was accessible to Catalan and Spanish, something which, just like the broad list of invited speakers, was only possible thanks to generous funding. The organisers, mainly from Catalonia itself, may be congratulated. All in all a good conference with long but worthwhile days.

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[\(re\)construction](#)  
[review](#)

🔖 Country [Spain](#)

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