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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Ways of Structuring and Organizing an Archaeological Open-Air Museum

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In February 2014 Clara Imeyer, student of *International Tourism Management* at the Hochschule Bremen, Germany, completed her Bachelor thesis with the title *Ways of Structuring and Organizing an archaeological Open-Air Museum – Analysis of the Iron Age House (Eisenzeithaus Venne, Germany)*. This article is intended to provide an insight into her approach to this topic and present the most important results of her work.

> The continual work of the volunteers at the Iron-Age-House over the years, their motivation and enthusiasm are now yielding results exceeding by far the scope that could have been expected at the beginning of the project.

The research question of the thesis was:

"How should an Archaeological Open-Air Museum which is reliant on sponsoring and the work of volunteers be structured and organized to guarantee its long-term existence?"

The thesis deals with eight different organisational components of Archaeological Open-Air Museums. These components
are: Formation, Management, Finances, Goals, Target groups, Programme, Staff, Marketing & Public Relations.

The first part of the thesis concentrates on the development of different criteria for the analysis of the study object. These criteria are displayed below:

Formation	Findings which provide an indication of settlement structures and daily life of the ancestors
Management	Structured organization, presence of archaeologists and managers, business plan
Finances	Responsible use of budget for maintenance, composition of the budget, sponsorship money
Goals	Procurement of historical contexts, touristic effect in the region
Target groups	School classes, adults interested in culture
Programme	Connection of education and entertainment
Staff	Mastering of prehistorical techniques + pedagogics, importance of volunteers
Marketing & Public Relations	Importance of word of mouth, effects of events, merchandising

The analysis of the study object by means of these criteria and by comparing it to two similar institutions follows in the second part of the thesis. The objects of comparison are the Sachsenhof in Greven and the Bronzezeithof in Uelsen.

The goal of the thesis was to answer the research question by means of secondary analysis and fieldwork as well as giving recommendations to the Iron Age House (Eisenzeithaus Venne, Germany).

The following represents a summary of the most important findings of the author's work. The archaeological findings of the Schnippenburg in Ostercappeln form the basis of the Iron Age House initiative in Venne because they provide information on settlement patterns and the

daily life of people in the Iron Age. These findings constitute the scientific basis for the reconstruction of the Iron Age House. The scientific support of the project lies with the city and county archaeology Osnabrück. Due to financial, organizational and time restrictions there are no managers, neither in the Iron Age House nor in the Bronzezeithof or the Sachsenhof. The management of the projects is up to volunteer members of the support teams and is one of the many tasks which they are responsible for. Due to the voluntary nature of the project, the management of the Iron Age House follows at present no stipulated organizational plan, especially considering co-workers cannot be compelled to take on certain tasks against their will.

The Iron Age House is a non-profit organization that uses its profits only for the maintenance and expansion of the project. Since the project, in contrast to the Sachsenhof and the Bronzezeithof, gets no public funding, sponsorship money plays an essential role in finance.

The goals of the Iron Age House are, amongst others, to develop an understanding of the historical environment and moreover the present-day culture, education and tourism in the region. Since school groups, families and culturally interested adults are the main target groups of the project, education plays a very important role. Education is also the primary goal at the Sachsenhof and the Bronzezeithof.

With tours and hands-on programmes the combination of education and experience is realised. The quality of the programmes is ensured by the capabilities of the volunteer staff relating to prehistoric techniques and skills in the field of education. These skills cannot be taken for granted in a volunteer-run museum, as the request of the Bronzezeithof for more museum educational services shows. The quality of programmes on the one hand, and a high customer orientation on the other hand, are therefore the strengths of the Iron Age House. They are factors of success and an evident reason why visitors come back and share their positive experiences with friends.

Word of mouth is an important primary marketing strategy of the Iron Age House. In addition, the website is frequently visited and extensively used for booking inquiries. The annual Iron Age Festival attracts many visitors and achieves a large PR effect for the project. The Sachsenhof, which places a greater emphasis on scientific research and experiments, supports the Iron Age Festival with programmes which would otherwise not be possible to realise. The high number of visitors during this event, however, highlights the merchandising as an untapped marketing tool of the Iron Age House.

A problem that was addressed by all three institutions is the acquisition of new volunteers. Recruiting persons who are willing to work for such a project without payment has proven to be very difficult.

Thus, the analysis of the study project revealed some important outcomes which are summarised below.

To be successful in the long term, an Archaeological Open-Air Museum which is based on voluntary work and sponsorship should pay particular attention to the following aspects concerning its design and operation:

1. The development of a business plan which not only includes the smart objectives of the institution but also the strategies regarding how these objectives can be achieved.
2. The search for sponsors from the region to achieve a regional anchoring of the project and to remain as financially independent from government grants as possible.
3. The development of high quality educational museum programmes that combine education and experience and result in a high customer satisfaction.
4. The education and training of (future) staff relating as much to the education of visitors, as to the command of prehistoric techniques and historical expertise.
5. Marketing activities that increase the awareness of the project extending beyond the existing catchment area.

The continual work of the volunteers at the Iron Age House over the years, their motivation and enthusiasm are now yielding results exceeding by far the scope that could have been expected at the beginning of the project.

The general acceptance not only in the immediate vicinity but also in areas that require a day's outing to go to the Iron Age House testifies to the fact that the project has reached most of its goals.

However, this level of acceptance can only be maintained if the personal engagement of the volunteers never lags, that their historical knowledge is permanently widened, and that teaching methods undergo a continuous process of refinement.

It goes without saying that the acquisition of sponsorship money of any sort is of the utmost importance.

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FIG 1. SHOOTING WITH BOW AND ARROW

FIG 2. SHED AT THE BRONZEZEITHOF UELSEN

FIG 3. OVEN AT THE BRONZEZEITHOF UELSEN

FIG 4. BRONZEZEITHOF UELSEN

FIG 5. BAKING BREAD

FIG 6. ICE ON THE IRON AGE HOUSE (EISENZEITHAUS)

FIG 7. OVERVIEW OF THE AREA OF THE EISENZEITHAUS (IRON AGE HOUSE)

FIG 8. THE IRON AGE HOUSE AT VENNE

FIG 9. BIKES AT THE EISENZEITHAUS (IRON AGE HOUSE)

FIG 10. THE IRON AGE HOUSE AT VENNE

FIG 11. FIBULA FOUND AT THE SCHNIPPENBURG

FIG 12. GRINDING CORN IN THE IRON AGE HOUSE

FIG 13. OVERVIEW OF THE SACHSENHOF IN GREVEN

FIG 14. OVERVIEW OF THE SACHSENHOF IN GREVEN

FIG 15. USING THE SMITHY

FIG 16. THE SCHNIPPENBURG