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Reviewed Article:

Engaging Diverse Audiences at the Archaeological Open-Air Museum Düppel in Berlin – Practical Examples and New Strategies

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In 1939, a boy called Horst Trzeciak was playing on a piece of land on the outskirts of Berlin. While playing, he found a number of pottery sherds. In an exemplary fashion he brought the sherds to the "Märkisches Provinzialmuseum", which was, at that time, the city museum of

Berlin. The sherds were identified as medieval and catalogued. After WWII, the city of Berlin was divided, the "Märkisches Provinzialmuseum" landed on the eastern side of the wall. Archaeologists working in the western part of Berlin began researching the medieval colonization of Berlin and Brandenburg. While investigating potential sites for research excavations, they came across the sherds found in 1939. As the sherds could be dated to the medieval period around 1200 AD, the site was deemed suitable for better understanding the change in settlement patterns during that period. From 1967, the site was excavated as part of a DFG project (DFG=German Research Association).

> Archaeological open-air museums are a perfect place for experimental archaeology, as they offer the space and craft experience to build a firm basis for academic experiments. The research staff in universities sometimes do not have practical experience with the materials they study. In open-air museums, academics can combine their thorough knowledge of the archaeological data with the practical knowledge of craft specialists yielding a fruitful cooperation. These research aspects and activities make a visit interesting also for other visiting groups. It is also an opportunity for universities to communicate their research, as the

During the early medieval period, large parts of eastern and central Germany were occupied by Slavic populations. There were many confrontations between the Christian German Empire in the west, and the pagan Slavic tribes in the east. During the early 12th century, Western Bishops and Dukes planned a crusade to Christianise and finally conquer the Slavic territories. In 1157, Albert the Bear of the House of Ascania, took over Brandenburg Castle and became the first Margrave of Brandenburg. The Christianisation and assimilation of the Slavs was characterized by violence. In order to cultivate the scarcely populated regions, settlers from western Germany were brought in. It was this process of assimilation that the archaeologists hoped could be clarified through the thorough excavation of the site at Düppel (See Figure 1).

The excavation uncovered a horseshoe-shaped settlement with log as well as timber post constructions. A number of wells and pitch production pits were also found. Organic materials such as wood and animal bones were preserved in the lowest parts of some wells due to the waterlogged conditions. Other finds from the site included pottery sherds, spindle whorls, two Slavic temple rings made of copper, iron objects like a knife blade, stirrups and spurs, animal bones and a wooden fragment of a staved wooden bowl. The majority of the pottery is German, although there was also late Slavic pottery. The temple rings also indicate a Slavic presence, as they were a clear part of Slavic dress culture (von Müller, 1998). Although the excavation yielded considerable results, it was not possible to establish if the settlement had been clearly setup by the new settlers, or if it was a Slavic village. It is likely,

standard article in a periodical has a relatively limited readership.

that both groups lived there together although the relationship between the two groups remains elusive (See Figure 2).

During these interesting excavations, the idea was born to recreate some of the houses as well as the medieval craft techniques and some of the surrounding landscape, to enable the taxpayers to experience the results of an archaeological excavation in a more knowledge providing and enjoyable manner. The houses were reconstructed on the original sites of the medieval floor plans. Gardens, fields, meadows, and differing types of forests were created to demonstrate a model cultural landscape. Oxen, pigs, and sheep completed the picture of a medieval subsistence village. The open air museum was set up through the volunteers of the society "Fördererkreis Museumsdorf Düppel e.V.", initiated in 1975. The volunteers organized themselves in working groups, specializing in different topics and craft activities. The volunteers that brought the museum to life on weekends were pioneers of the "living history scene" which has grown considerably over the last 20 years. Since 1995, the Museum Village Düppel has belonged to the City Museum Berlin, which is responsible for the running of the museum today. In 2016, we worked on a new strategy for the future of the Museum Village Düppel. It was established that our core business of live interpretation of the everyday life in a medieval village would remain one of the main topics, other themes should be explored also in order to make our work more relevant to the present and to increase our interest groups (See Figure 3).

Live interpretation

Today the volunteers from the society still bring the village to life on weekends. Most volunteers wear medieval clothing made from authentic materials. The clothing is made according to the museums own kit guide. Hand stitched and plant dyed using only archaeological evidence from the Brandenburg region of around 1200. The dress is often an icebreaker for conversations with visitors and illustrates the fabrics and the work that went into clothing. Some craft demonstrators do not wish to dress in medieval clothing. As the museum is historically grown, and the volunteers have built and shaped it for almost 40 years, the scientific staff is careful about telling volunteers what to do. If craft specialists want to put the main focus on the techniques themselves, that is fine. We are trying to be inclusive at all levels. Our visitors understand the difference. Volunteersdemonstrate craft and everyday activities but do not take on a medieval character. They remain in the present and talk about the past from their perspective. Craft demonstrations like smithing, pottery making, basket weaving, as well as everyday tasks such as cooking, are carried out in and around the houses and workshops. We have thought about working on a first person character with a professional storyteller. It would be a good product to offer, but has to be done well. The live interpretation of the past through living history enables a more emotional and therefore memorable experience than traditional "cabinet" museums. The live

interpretations as well as the animals are the main “pull factors” of the open air museum. Young families especially enjoy the setting, craft demonstrations, and the freedom and space for children to run around. This does not mean all fun and no education; rather we try to provide fun education.

Experimental Archaeology

As part of the new strategy, the museum’s tradition of experimental archaeology is used to establish the site as an open-air laboratory for research activities. Since the 1970’s some working groups have been answering research questions in archaeology through carrying out experiments in the true sense of the word. Although there are various definitions of experimental archaeology, and the debate on defining it has been going on for more than 30 years, a true experiment should follow the scientific design of experiments: 1) hypothesis taken from archaeological record, 2) writing an experimental design, 3)test (with authentic materials were necessary and thinking about controlling variables and parameters), 4) document everything, 5) think about the results, 6) if necessary try again! 7) publish! (Coles, 1979; Ferguson, 2010; Kucera, 2004; Kelterborn, 2005; Outram, 2008; Reynolds, 1999; Richter, 1991; Vorlauf, 1991).

Archaeological open-air museums are a perfect place for experimental archaeology, as they offer the space and craft experience to build a firm basis for academic experiments. The research staff in universities sometimes do not have practical experience with the materials they study. In open-air museums, academics can combine their thorough knowledge of the archaeological data with the practical knowledge of craft specialists yielding a fruitful cooperation. These research aspects and activities make a visit interesting also for other visiting groups. It is also an opportunity for universities to communicate their research, as the standard article in a periodical has a relatively limited readership (See Figure 4).

Being relevant

Besides the obvious outputs concerning live interpretation of the past and academic research, archaeological open-air museums should try to be socially relevant for the personal lives of visitors as well as for todays and maybe tomorrow society. One method is to tell stories that visitors can relate to connections with their everyday lives today. In the new exhibition at the Museum Village Düppel, which opened in May 2018, we tried to achieve this by a number of different means. The exhibition begins with a number of “hands-on stations” covering archaeological methods like excavation, pollen analysis and experimental archaeology. The methods are explained using practical examples and visitors can interact with each one, rebuilding a model of a house from postholes, smelling the difference between birch and pine tar, or identifying pollen through a microscope.

Emotional exhibitions

The objects found during the excavation of the settlement at Düppel are presented next to life-sized illustrations of fictional inhabitants of the village in combination with an audio station. The objects and fictional characters are used to address a number of overarching topics, like childhood, textiles, and iron working. The texts describe the production and use of objects, and if suitable, make a link with the present. With textiles, for example, the time spent making a garment in the medieval period is placed in stark contrast with statistics demonstrating how much clothing is discarded per person each year, which in Germany comes to 18 kg. In the audio stations, each fictional character talks in the first person perspective about a small segment of their everyday life concerning the object and/or the overall topic in question. This engages the visitors on an emotional level, which is one of the most important factors for long-term retaining of information (Berry, Schmied and Schrock, 2008) (See Figure 5).

“Green” education

Another way to become relevant would be to employ the unused resources available in open-air museums - the cultural landscape. Most open-air museums are situated in rural settings, some distance away from the nearest town or city. Those museums built within a city like Düppel, have gardens and fields, as most archaeological open-air museums strive to show a model cultural landscape. These different natural habitats, including the gardens growing a variety of ancient crops, are home to numerous different species, suitable for a whole range of educational programs on biodiversity, ecology and sustainability.

At the museum village Düppel, the different landscapes and habitats were created along with the medieval house models. At the time of the first excavations, the site was completely free of trees and shrubs. In cooperation with researchers from Berlin Universities, the reconstruction of different forest and meadow types was planned and implemented beginning during the 1970`s using only species which would have been present around 1200 AD in Brandenburg. Due to this fact, the eight hectares of the Museum Village Düppel today boast a segment of “primeval forest”, managed woodland used for grazing (sheep, cattle and pigs), and different types of meadows as well as arable fields and gardens. The number of ecological habitats is therefore quite large, waiting to be used as an educational resource (See Figure 6).

Biodiversity

Within a multitude of starting points, let’s begin with the most obvious one – biodiversity. With the news full of reports on the extinction of species, the museum could be a platform for information and discussion on the topic. At the moment we are planning a small, interactive permanent exhibition outside on the topic of biodiversity. For the development of first concepts, we invited specialists from Berlin Universities, volunteers from our museum and laypersons with differing specialties to join in a workshop. After three short presentations on

some key issues of biodiversity, the participants were divided into groups to discuss specific questions and come up with a collection of questions that should be asked and answered in an exhibition on biodiversity at the Museum Village Düppel. The three most important findings from this exercise were that the question "why is biodiversity important" is just as vital as the explanation of what biodiversity actually is, that diversity in landscape forms equals diversity in species and lastly, that we need to show what small things every one of us can do to increase biodiversity. All three aspects will form the core of the exhibition. Specifically, the diversity in habitats is easy to present and mediate, as the museum landscape is made up of exactly the small units, which are needed for high biodiversity.

Networking and participation are not only vital for ensuring relevant content, but they also open up new formats for events and education as well as cooperation with universities. Through the workshop on biodiversity we are now in contact with a number of local environmental NGOs as well as university lecturers in biology. We will start our next season on the 3rd of March 2019, the UN World Wildlife Day, with a number of topical activities. The Berlin foundation for nature conservation (Stiftung Naturschutz Berlin) will set up camera traps two weeks prior to the event to catch the wild inhabitants of our museum on film. The data will be evaluated with visitors while introducing the initiative "ArtenFinder" (species finder), a citizen science project, where the interested public can record and document sightings of Berlin wildlife. As part of the event, there will also be a seed swap, with stalls from different projects, our own museum gardening group and from the public. Although there will be seeds from rare grasses and wildflowers, the main focus will be on ancient and rare plants and crops (See Figure 7).

Preserving ancient crops and breeds

Ancient crops are one aspect of biodiversity archaeological open-air museums can be seen predestined to cater to. Whereas topics like wildlife preservation can also be covered by nature reserves, ancient crops and their importance for us today can be a unique selling point of (archaeological) open-air museums. This point is also put forward in the book "*Biodiversity: Principles, Threats, Protection*" (Wittig and Niekisch, 2014, p.462). During the establishment of the Museum Village Düppel, genetics professor Werner Plarre was one of the earliest proponents for the preservation of ancient crops as well as animals in archaeological open-air museums (Plarre, 1990, pp.149-165). He took part in conferences on the topic, planted ancient apple trees, winter rye and old medicinal plant as well as starting a back breeding program of medieval pigs. Although his work has been carried on, the scientific supervision has been missing, something we want to change for the future. A BBC segment with the title "Are forgotten crops the future of food?" August 2018, illustrates how the topic is relevant and also very present in the national media (BBC 2018).

Clay, cob and wood in past and present

Moving from the landscape to the reconstructed houses, there are a number of issues with strong contemporary relevance. One link lies between biodiversity and buildings made from clay, wood and thatch, for example, they are yet another habitat for many species. Wild bees, a particularly endangered group of insects, find shelter among the thatched roofs and in the clay walls. However, past building techniques and materials can also function as a bridge to socially relevant questions of the present and future in other ways. More specifically, when looking at sustainable and environmentally friendly ways of building, wood and clay are celebrating a renaissance (Knoll und Klamm, 2015, p.191). To further enhance debates on alternative building techniques, we organize each year an event titled 'Clay, cob and wood in past and present'. We work together with a range of partners and societies, carrying on with repairs on our historic reconstruction (in front) of the museum, with the help of the visitors and showcasing the use of such material in the present. For children, this is always a great day out, as they can "muck in" and get dirty (See Figure 8).

The offices of the employees as well as the exhibitions, and other service facilities at the Museum Village Düppel are all housed in old containers from the 70's. A modern, properly insulated replacement building is overdue and plans are being drawn up for its realization. As we are re-inventing ourselves as a sustainable place for the education of the future, a new building should also incorporate these ideals. At the moment we are in talks with a publicly funded college of construction technology, the Knobelsdorff Schule in Berlin. The college's mission statement contains these aspects of sustainable building, which is why the carpenters, joiners and bricklayers (who are experimenting with clay), should be our natural partners when considering an educational building site, where old materials and techniques could be used in a modern and sustainable way. However, it is important not to forget, that people who in the past lived more sustainable lives because they had to survive and not because they wanted to.

Conclusion

Including these topics in the "portfolio" of archaeological open-air museums, we not only help address problems of our world today but will win and engage new audiences and visitor groups for our museums. Engaging diverse audiences and increasing visitor numbers is now as important as ever. Not everyone thinks that the past is relevant, so we can demonstrate to them how it is relevant for them. By engaging with discourses within society, a museum can function as a platform for negotiations regarding diverse topics. The important thing is to mediate discussions, not begin by lecturing and helping with expert knowledge if needed. Museum education programmes must aim to teach and to pose questions as well as answering them or admitting that there might not be an easy answer. The past is important, but we have to be relevant for today's world to explain why.

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Gallery Image

FIG 1. AERIAL VIEW OF THE MUSEUM VILLAGE DÜPPEL. COPYRIGHTS: FÖRDERERKREIS MUSEUMSDORF DÜPPEL E.V.

FIG 2. BUILDING ONE OF THE FIRST HOUSES IN THE 1970S. PHOTO BY J. MÖLLER

FIG 3. VOLUNTEERS IN MEDIEVAL DRESS. PHOTO BY MICHAEL SETZPFANDT

FIG 4. DEMONSTRATING AN IRON SMELTING EXPERIMENT. PHOTO BY MARKOLF BRUMLICH

FIG 5. HANDS-ON APPROACH AT THE NEW EXHIBITION IN THE MUSEUM VILLAGE DÜPPEL. PHOTO BY MICHAEL SETZPFANDT, COPYRIGHT STIFTUNG STADTMUSEUM BERLIN

FIG 6. DIFFERENT LANDSCAPES AT THE MUSEUM VILLAGE DÜPPEL. PHOTO BY THOMAS PFÜTZNER

FIG 7. THE “DÜPPLER WEIDESCHWEIN” A MEDIEVAL TYPE GRAZING PIG THAT WAS BRED AT THE MUSEUM VILLAGE DÜPPEL. PHOTO BY JULIA HEEB, COPYRIGHT STIFTUNG STADTMUSEUM BERLIN

FIG 8. “CLAY, COB AND WOOD IN PAST AND PRESENT” – AN EVENT WHERE VISITORS JOIN IN AND GET THEIR HANDS AND FEET DIRTY. PHOTO BY JULIA HEEB