Archaeology and Heritage on the Way to Sustainability

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Sustainability has become *one of those terms* within heritage studies, with its meaning seemingly reducing the more it is used. It has become an all-encompassing tick-box term that provides enough justification in itself to gain the approval of funding bodies and those who want to keep heritage practice and research socially-relevant. As such, I was not necessarily expecting a lot from this session; at best hoping for a few interesting case studies that could be transferred, adapted or used in my own work. However, TH2-21 was much better than this: it had a common, if subtle, thread that linked the papers, and touched upon a broad range of issues that are actually critical for the future of archaeology and heritage as both a profession and a wider societal activity.

The session started with an interesting presentation from Anna-Carin Andersson of the University of Gothenburg. Her paper, *Sustainable heritage and archaeology – a blessing or a curse?* focused on archaeologists and the profession, and came to the somewhat unexpected conclusion that the concept of sustainability is not useful for archaeology: instead we should think about *feasibility*. It is not often that archaeologists approach the concept of what is *professionally sustainable*, and so this was a welcome break. Andersson left us to consider whether the EAA should move more towards being a Pan-European trade union; I am not sure about the benefits of this, but it is certainly a worthwhile discussion following the important work done in *Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe*.

A further discussion on practice was provided by Jan Vanmoerkerke of the French Ministry of Culture. Various legal frameworks affect the scale, scope and nature of archaeological work in France, and in the case of this paper we could also perhaps read sustainability as feasibility, but from a different perspective. If archaeological authorities only have finite resources and cannot investigate all building works, what should be prioritised? Land use and planning, as well as the law, need to be considered and connected in order to minimise the loss of archaeological sites and give heritage a sustainable future.

To papers from colleagues in Poland moved us back towards our interaction with the public. Anna Zalewska of the Polish Academy of Sciences introduced the concept of *archaeological social responsibility*, looking specifically at how we should address dark heritage and painful memories. This examination of the 'memory boom' was taken further by Kornelia Kajda of Adam Mickiewicz University; archaeologists should show that there are multiple pasts and histories and contribute with detail to enhance 'public' understandings of the past. Kajda looked particularly at the concept of Urbex, the exploration of abandoned places by the public: here-and-now experiences that inspire people to engage with heritage.

Sofia Voutsaki of the University of Groningen examined the use of the past in Laconia, Greece. To a certain extent, there were some similarities between this paper and that of Zalewska, in that it explored ideas of an appropriated and/or authorised past. Nationalism and identity were key elements here; but is seeking out and portraying a glorious past a sustainable strategy?

In *Here I Live – interpretations of the past, present and future*, Anita Synnestvedt from the University of Gothenburg introduced us to a project centred on a stone age monument situated within a residential area that is today home to many asylum seekers and people with immigrant backgrounds. The project shows how it is possible to use archaeology and heritage as a motor for integration and as a focal point for community-building. Engagement, involvement and giving the community a stake in the area's heritage is critical in order to ensure a sustainable future for both the monument and those who live around it.

The final presentation was led by Andrea Travaglia from the University of Amsterdam and introduced a European portal for the blending of natural and cultural heritage management. It is in many ways a paradox that despite the World Heritage Convention connecting natural and cultural sites on a shared list of global significance, there is often little actual practical or administrative link between natural and cultural heritage managers. This online tool, then, is an attempt to give natural heritage professionals a better understanding of cultural heritage, and vice versa, with the hope that it will lead to better and more holistic thinking and practice. To a certain extent, this paper brought us back to the start and thinking about the sustainability or feasibility of our profession. Is a sustainable future to be found as nature-culture experts or is it essential that we stand in on the cultural/human/social side?

Sustainability, then, is not always an empty term. This session showed that it is perhaps best to see the concept of sustainability as a vessel which can be filled with multiple interpretations and meanings. The wide range of papers here testify to the fact that sustainability does not need a one-size-fits-all definition, and nor can we give it one. Archaeological sustainability is central to the discipline, and is arguably unconsciously present in the thoughts and actions of every archaeologist – although in different ways: from thinking about the feasibility of the profession, to the wider impact of one's research, to the creation of a realistic excavation budget. Examples and ideas relating to sustainability lie latent and unconnected. Perhaps, then, in order to make the broader public aware of heritage and give archaeology and archaeologists a louder voice and role in society, we need to be more active when thinking about sustainability. How do one's actions help make archaeology – at whatever scale – more sustainable? The lessons of this session suggest that we need to be more audible, more visible, more engaging, more engaged, more open and more collaborative.

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