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INTERPRETATION OF CULTURAL HERITAGE – WISHES AND POSSIBILITIES

Abstract: Over the past few decades the interpretation of cultural heritage has gained importance. The development of new technologies rose exponentially, opening a row of different possibilities for interpretation, both visual and narrative. A special place in interpreting cultural heritage is taken by archaeological open-air museums and archaeological parks. Over the past few decades and in entire Europe, dozens of them have been established. In them, a special kind of interpretation and/or presentation of cultural heritage takes place, intended both for the broad public and experts. It is at the same time visual and narrative. Basically, in such parks, especially this specific kind of knowledge transfer is being developed, based on personal and hands-on experience. Although this kind of interpretation is especially interesting to the younger population, it is of extreme importance exactly for experts, archaeologists, and archaeology students. In such a way, it is easier for them to comprehend man in the past and his relation to the surrounding, materials he used, algorithms he applied, etc. Archaeological open-air museums and archaeological parks are usually made in such a manner that they can fit into the already existing or specially designed landscape. At the same time, they offer an ideal surrounding for the activities mentioned above. In this paper, the authors will describe a few archaeological parks and open-air museums, with special attention dedicated to the kinds of interpretations they offer and to their target groups.

Key words: archaeological open-air museum, archaeological park, cultural heritage, archaeology, experiment

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, the interpretation of cultural heritage has gained importance. The development of new technologies rose exponentially, opening a row of different possibilities for interpretation, both visual and narrative. A special place in interpreting cultural heritage is taken by archaeological open-air museums and archaeological parks. Although similar in concept, they differ in terms of the real archaeological remains and especially the interpretation usage in the dialogue with the public.¹ Over

¹ Breznik 2014, 5-12; ICOMOS 2015; EXARC 2008.

the past few decades and in entire Europe, hundreds of them have been established.² Specifically, it can be said that archaeological parks provide the link between scientific research and the public, with interpretative, educational and, recreational potentials, while the AOAM resources are not scientifically restricted and usually comprehend experimental archaeology – by becoming the place of testing and “learning by doing” approach, especially in the form of archaeological tourism.³ This means that in both of them, a special kind of interpretation and/or presentation of cultural heritage takes place, intended both for the broad public and experts. It is at the same time visual and narrative. Basically, in such parks, especially this specific kind of knowledge transfer is being developed, based on personal and hands-on experience. Although this kind of interpretation is especially interesting to the younger population, it is of extreme importance exactly for experts, archaeologists, and archaeology students. In such a way, it is easier for them to comprehend man in the past and his relation to the surrounding, materials he used, algorithms he applied, etc.

Archaeological open-air museums and archaeological parks are usually made in such a manner that they can fit into the already existing or specially designed landscape. At the same time, they offer an ideal surrounding for the activities mentioned above.⁴

KEY STUDIES/GOOD PRACTICES FROM EUROPE

The first museum the authors would like to present is situated in Italy, near the town of Modena. Its full name is **Montale Rangone, Parco Archeologico e Museum all'aperto della Terramara di Montale**. It is both an archaeological open-air museum and an archaeological park since the original archaeological site is situated some hundred meters away from the open-air museum. The park is organized as part of the local government structure.⁵ The original site belongs to



Fig. 1. Montale Rangone, Parco Archeologico e Museum all'aperto della Terramara di Montale Remains of the original Terramara houses discovered during the excavations (photo by M. Tapavički-Ilić)

² <https://exarc.net/venues> (accessed February 2022).

³ UNESCO 2015; Schmidt 2015, 6-10; Zanasi 2015, 40-42.

⁴ Тапавички-Илић 2020, 168.

⁵ Paardekooper 2012, 161-169.

the Terramare culture of the Middle Bronze Age, dated into the middle of the 2nd millennium BC. Some of the settlement remains can still be seen in a special, protected area. Leaning onto the archaeological site, there is an archaeological open-air museum with the same name, that contains replicas of Terramare houses with the entire replicated households.⁶

Although both the park and the open-air museum host visitors of all ages, their main target group are school children, especially ten to twelve years of age. Children visit the facility as organized school trips and they get introduced to the remains of the original Terramara houses discovered during the excavations (Fig. 1). After that, they all move into a separate space, where they get introduced to various kinds of archaeological finds (pottery, tools, and weapons made of metal, bones, etc.) and they are encouraged to ask questions. During this phase of their visit, each child gets a replica of a find which he/she needs to process typologically, describe and write down the remarks (Fig. 2).



Fig. 2. Montale Rangone, Parco Archeologico e Museum all'aperto della Terramara di Montale Children processing replicas of finds, describing them and writing down their remarks (photo by A. Pelillo)

Only after having done this, children move into the amusing archaeological open-air museum. There, they can see replicas of actual finds, including fully furnished houses. Here again, they get the opportunity to get hands-on experience. One of the houses represents a farmer's house, while the other abode of a member of the warrior elite. The master of the house entertains his guests while sitting by the fire and flanked by his collection of weaponry. In one of the house corners, there is a series of tools for metalwork, an activity that was doubtlessly controlled by those who occupied the position of power within the Terramara society.⁷

Another museum is positioned in Spain, in the little town of Calafell, south of Barcelona. Its full name is **Ciudadella Ibèrica de Calafell**. It is again both an archaeological open-air museum and an archaeological park, but the original archaeological site is situated directly beneath the open-air museum.⁸ It is part of the local government.

The original site belongs to the period of the Late Iron Age, dated in the period between the 5th and the 1st century BC. Here, the entire settlement was reconstructed us-

⁶ <http://www.parcomontale.it/it> (accessed February 2022).

⁷ Pelillo (ed.) 2009, 29

⁸ Breznik 2014, 116-118; <http://www.calafellhistoric.org> (accessed February 2022).

ing approved methods of experimental archaeology techniques. The remains brought to light through excavations were integrated with the parts that were re-constructed. They are separated from each other with a thick red strap (Fig. 3). Within a defensive wall, the citadel includes dwellings and other structures, partially furnished with copies of excavated items for everyday usage.⁹

As a town situated directly on the Mediterranean coast, Calafell receives most of its visitors during hot summer months. During other seasons, it is a less populated small town. Here again, the archaeological park is designed to host visitors of all ages, but its main target group are teenagers and young adults, basically people between 18 and 25 years of age. For obvious reasons, they attend camps organized only in summer.

Young people spend a week or two in this area. After being introduced to the site, they get to complete different tasks which vary from day to day. The tasks are always performed under the supervision of expert staff. They can include plastering water or a

grapevine cistern, making Iron Age shields, or weaving ropes from esparto grass (Fig. 4). All the items made during these processes remain in the archaeological park for further usage. In this way, young people get direct hands-on experience and a better insight into the life, needs, and actions of an Iron Age person.



Fig. 3. Ciutadella Ibèrica de Calafell Original walls of the Ciutadella Ibèrica integrated with the reconstructed parts are separated from each other with a red strap (photo by M. Tapavički-Ilić)



Fig. 4. - Ciutadella Ibèrica de Calafell Young people completing the tasks of weaving ropes from esparto grass under supervision of expert staff (photo by M. Tapavički-Ilić)

⁹ Colell et al. 2013, 433-440; Pelillo (ed.) 2009, 26, 139.

The **Steinzeitpark Dithmarschen** is situated in Albersdorf, in northern Germany.¹⁰ It is basically an archaeological open-air museum included in an archaeological park, standing independent of the local government structure. There are about forty hectares of the natural and agricultural landscape made as similar as possible to the one existing there during the Neolithic period, i.e. 5000 years ago. Within this area, a Neolithic village has been reconstructed with wooden and clay dwellings erected next to the original prehistoric funerary mounds.¹¹ Currently, a museum building is under construction, to be opened in 2023.

The museum and the park operate each year from April to October. During that period, they host all kinds of visitors: school classes, families, tourists, and experts. But there is a special group of visitors that comes to spend a week or two here, settling down in the Neolithic village and training to live as the Stone Age people once used to.¹² These are archaeology students and professors from the nearby University of Hamburg.

Part of their activities pretty much resemble the ones performed in the Ciutadella Ibèrica de Calafell, like weaving, spinning, making textiles (**Fig. 5**), cooking in replicas of prehistoric pottery vessels etc. Some other activities are a bit more difficult, like flint knapping. Besides special skills needed to perform it, one also needs the raw material, i.e. flint. It can be collected in the nearby area, so the students are also taught to recognize adequate flint materials and to gather them. All these actions are basically part of the training for a subject taught at the Hamburg University – experimental archaeology.¹³



Fig. 5. Steinzeitpark Dithmarschen in Albersdorf Students making textiles (photo by M. Tapavički-Ilić)

Experimental archaeology is taught at about forty European universities, possibly at about 60 worldwide.¹⁴ It is less frequently the case that students get the opportunity to “time-travel” and experience life from a prehistoric or any other historical period. For many of them, this is a lifetime experience. Besides in Steinzeitpark Dithmarschen, this happens in sites like the Middelaldercentret in Denmark, but also with the University of

¹⁰ <https://steinzeitpark-dithmarschen.de> (accessed February 2022).

¹¹ Pelillo (ed.) 2009, 73.

¹² Meller, Thielen 2018, 211-220.

¹³ <https://exarc.net/issue-2021-4/mm/book-review-vorgeschichtliche-techniken-im-archaologischen-experiment-im-steinzeitpark-dithmarschen> (accessed February 2022).

¹⁴ https://exarc.net/venues?type_1=higher_education_centre&field_era_s__target_id=All (accessed February 2022).

Torun in Poland, in Latvia, and with the University of Vienna at the MAMUZ Museum in Austria.

The open-air museum **Archeon** is situated at Alpen a. d. Rijn, halfway between Amsterdam and Rotterdam.¹⁵ It is an archaeological open-air museum established in 1994. It is set up as an organization, independent of the government.

Within this archaeological open-air museum, there are 43 buildings from various prehistoric and historical periods, thus presenting a complete overview of the Dutch past. The Prehistory is represented by reconstructions of Mesolithic hunter-gatherers' encampment (8800 to 5300 BC), some Neolithic dwellings (5300 to 2000 BC), a Bronze age farm with metal handcraft workshop (2000 to 800 BC) and Iron Age houses (800 to



Fig. 6. Archeon, basket-maker (taken from <https://www.archeon.nl/en/discover-park/middle-ages/basket-maker.html>; accessed February 2022)

12 BC). Buildings from the Roman period (2nd century AD) include reconstructions of a Domus, a religious complex with temples, an arena where gladiator fights take place, but also handcraft workshops and a tavern. The Middle Ages are represented by fifteen houses that all together form a community typical of the 14th-century Dutch town. The permanent presence of the so-called „archaeo-interpreters,“ dressed in period costumes and placed in their various historical settings, brings this open-air museum to life and allows its visitors to witness daily demonstrations of ancient arts and crafts. During special

¹⁵ <https://www.archeon.nl> (accessed February 2022).

events, performances feature groups of re-enactors, usually legionaries, gladiators, and medieval knights.¹⁶

The museum operates each year from April to November. Like all of the museums and parks described above, it hosts all kinds of visitors: school classes, families, tourists and experts. However, Archeon offers something that none of the previously mentioned facilities does - a Medieval holiday (Fig. 6 and 7).¹⁷



Fig. 7. Archeon, turner at work (taken from <https://www.archeon.nl/en/discover-park/middle-ages/turner.html>; accessed February 2022)

This special holiday is offered to tourists, usually families, who are willing to spend some time (usually a week) in Archeon or more precisely, in its Medieval part. They get to live in a Medieval house and experience the Medieval way of life since during the opening hours of the museum, they need to act as if they were „archaeo-interpreters“ themselves. In other words, they need to renounce all of the modern luxuries (smart-phones, tablets, sweets, even eyeglasses) and „time travel“ to the 14th century. Each Medieval house that hosts tourists belongs to a different craftsman: a baker, a surgeon, a shoemaker, a weaver, or a pots merchant. In accordance with that, his/her guests need to learn basic knowledge from each craft and become capable of performing some of the simplest related tasks. Although many people find this kind of holiday less amusing and relaxing, there are many families that are eager to visit Archeon in this context. Many of

¹⁶ Pelillo (ed.) 2009, 151.

¹⁷ <https://www.archeon.nl/en/grouppackage-deals/holidays/medieval-holiday.html> (accessed February 2022).

them return to Archeon each summer with craftsmen's skills they brought to perfection. The concept reminds a bit of that of Sagnlandet Lejre in Denmark, called Prehistoric families.¹⁸

CONCLUSION

The here presented archaeological open-air museums and archaeological parks include various methods of interpretation of heritage, which are in line with already well know and accepted principles of interpretation.¹⁹ It is obvious that beyond the basic, all of them use interpretation as an important element in education, experiment and knowledge gained through the visits, as well as for the quality spent free time.²⁰ As in the case of Museums generally, in the context of AOAM, education is described as museum pedagogy.²¹ This kind of education/pedagogy which is developed from the various methods of interpretation of professional/scientific information and data is the main reason why archaeological open-air museums exist. Although heritage interpretation is still facing obstacles in entering formal education, museum pedagogy can be the channel that refers interpretation to groups of school children and excursions, but also to students of (experimental) archaeology. Usually, within informal education, it refers to tourists, but all the mentioned activities conducted in AOAMs testify to multifold possibilities of non-formal education, practical learning, and on-site experience which need to be treated as good practice examples of teaching heritage with the results in line with the formal education.

In the end, it could be said that the long-term management plans of the open air-museums listed as good practices from Europe which are focusing their activities on the museum pedagogy/education by using various interpretative methods (storytelling, living history, experimental archaeology, reenactments, etc.), stands in direct connection with the expert knowledge transfer and qualitatively spent free time of their visitors.

¹⁸ Holtorf 2014.

¹⁹ Tilden 1957; Beck, Cable 1998.

²⁰ Paardekooper 2020.

²¹ Jantzen 1994, 18-19.

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Rezime:

INTERPRETACIJA KULTURNOG NASLEĐA – ŽELJE I MOGUĆNOSTI

Ključne reči: arheološki muzej na otvorenom, arheološki park, kulturno nasleđe, arheologija, eksperiment

Tokom poslednjih nekoliko decenija interpretacija kulturnog nasleđa dobija na značaju. Razvoj novih tehnologija je eksponencijalno rastao, otvarajući niz različitih mogućnosti za tumačenje, kako vizuelno tako i narativno. Posebno mesto u tumačenju kulturnog nasleđa zauzimaju arheološki muzeji na otvorenom i arheološki parkovi. U proteklih nekoliko decenija u celoj Evropi osnovano ih je na desetine. U njima se odvija poseban vid interpretacije i/ili prezentacije kulturnog nasleđa, namenjen kako široj, tako i stručnoj javnosti. Uglavnom se u takvim parkovima razvija ovaj specifičan vid prenošenja znanja, zasnovan na ličnom i praktičnom iskustvu. Iako je ovakva interpretacija posebno interesantna mlađoj populaciji, ona je od izuzetnog značaja upravo za stručnjake, arheologe i studente arheologije. Na taj način im je lakše da shvate čoveka u prošlosti i njegov odnos prema okruženju, materijale koje je koristio, životne principe koje je primenjivao.

Arheološki muzeji na otvorenom i arheološki parkovi su obično napravljeni tako da se mogu uklopiti u već postojeći ili posebno dizajnirani pejzaž. Istovremeno, oni nude idealno okruženje za različite aktivnosti. U ovom radu autori su opisali nekoliko arheoloških parkova i muzeja na otvorenom, kao primere dobre prakse iz Evrope, sa posebnim osvrtom na vrste interpretacija koje nude i njihove ciljne grupe.