

The public, archaeological specialists, and the corporate world: “The Devil’s own brew”

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The world in which archaeology now fits is radically changed from only a decade ago. Across Europe an increasing majority of archaeological – indeed heritage – work is now done in a much more commercial way and is incorporated into various ways of doing business such as property development or state sponsored infrastructural development. In retrospect, this may be seen to have given rise to a ‘specialist’ endeavour in archaeology called variously ‘public’ or ‘community’ archaeology. This seems to differentiate work that follows a community’s own interests from work led by professional specialists, from work done for more academic specialist motivations. However, the worlds of both business and heritage are changing. The explicit recognition of the importance of local communities’ and social groups’ perceptions of the past, and the corporate worlds recognition that sustainable development does not finish the building or highway is built means that this three-way division can no longer be maintained.

This session will discuss the current state of the means of engagement between archaeological specialists, developers, and local communities. The debate concerns a wide spectrum of ‘the heritage’ whether tangible like archaeology or intangible such as folklore and traditions. It will pose the question of the roles that public or community interests and developer funding should play in directing research or investigations when mediated by the concept and implementation of corporate social responsibility.

The session will draw its ideas and conclusions from a range of papers on topics ranging from patrimony, ethics, the politics, and the values behind archaeology. Papers will assess the implications of developer funding on cultural heritage management and the public patrimony. It is proposed to publish the proceedings of the session plus invited papers as a lasting contribution to these debates.

Please email paper abstracts of 200 words to the session organisers.