

Session title: INTERNATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION: GAME WITHOUT FRONTIERS?

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Room:

Session abstract:

Europe is becoming more and more of a union in several aspects despite of the still existing country borders. Those borders guarantee the countries their autonomy in spatial planning and in heritage management. However, there are a lot of examples of border crossing housing and industrial zones and also infrastructural facilities normally don't stop at country borders. Most of the time archaeology is a topic in this spatial development.

The western part of the city of Maastricht, in the south of the Netherlands, is completely surrounded by Belgium. There are many examples of archaeological sites crossing the modern border. During archaeological investigations we often encounter the difficulties of cooperation in bi-national projects. This is not only on the level of administrations or legal differences but also in the perception of archaeological heritage management, conflicting research frameworks and the (lack of) exchange of archaeological data and knowledge. Though the contact on a personal level with our colleagues is hardly ever a problem at all, it is difficult institutionalizing these contacts.

Paper abstracts:

INTERNATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVESTIGATION: GAME WITHOUT FRONTIERS?

Gilbert Soeters, Municipality of Maastricht, The Netherlands

In this presentation the author will define the different levels at which archaeologists encounter problems in bi-national archaeological investigations. At a strictly archaeological level there usually appears to be the intention to cooperate beyond county borders. But then difficulties start to appear.

As an introduction to the other presentations, from the simple aspect of data-exchange to conflicting legislation will be discussed. From the point of view of a Dutch archaeologist active in the border zone, the relationship with Belgium and Germany is the topic. The experience the author obtained by working in Germany for many years and his cooperation with Belgian colleagues in recent years, makes it possible to show some examples that clarify the difficulties to some extent.

Does the solution to these problems come from a top-down approach embedded in European legislation or does the answer lie in a bottom-up approach from the archaeologists themselves?

ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE MANAGEMENT: BELGIUM AS A CASE STUDY IN DIVERSITY

Marc Lodewijckx , University of Leuven, Belgium

Undoubtedly, Belgium has one of the most complex system of government. In 1830, Belgium was created as a buffer state between the greater powers of France, Germany and Great Britain, for which it has served as a battlefield for many centuries (e.g. Waterloo, Flanders Fields, the Battle of the Bulge). It was originally made up with parts from the surrounding countries, including the Low Countries (now The Netherlands). At the present time, Belgium is a constitutional, popular monarchy and a federal state with three regions – Flanders, Wallonia and the Brussels Capital Region, and three communities – the Flemish Community (Dutch-speaking), the French Community (French-speaking) and the German Community (German-speaking) in the east of the Walloon Region. The Brussels Capital Region is officially bilingual (Dutch-French) but has become multilingual because of its international role as capital of the European Community.

In 1989, the authority on archaeology and heritage management was transferred to the three regions and only a few of the former national institutions, such as the Royal Museums for Art and History in Brussels, were given a federal status. Cultural and educational matters were already awarded for a long time to the Flemish, French and German communities of Belgium. Since then, legislation and practice in connexion with archaeology have become differently organised in the three regions and for instance the German community has its own archaeological service within the Walloon region.

As a result, spatial planning and heritage management have become extremely complicated because the authority for a particular site, monument or archaeological collection, is not always clearly decriminalized. Especially the planning of large infrastructure works, such as motor and railways, pipe lines and airports, is constantly resulting into complex working parties in which all partners are to be represented. Additionally, commercial archaeology is emerging in Flanders but is not tolerated in other regions, where different solutions are to be found to match the imperative needs of archaeological management.

FRONTLINE ARCHAEOLOGY IN FLANDERS

Tim Vanderbeken, ZOLAD, Belgium

Belgium: probably the most difficult country in the world to explain to foreigners in terms of state formation and legislation: there are three regions (a Walloon and a Flemish one and a 'special' region for Brussels) and three communities (a Walloon, a German and a Flemish one). Those five levels each have their jurisdiction and government. Moreover, it would simplify things if those five levels each had their borders, but this is not the case: the German community is geographically contained by the French region, the region for Brussels is distributed over two communities, the French and the Flemish. No wonder politicians had problems in forming a federal government. And to make it even more complicated: Each region consists of provinces, each province of municipalities; each again with separate legislation and leadership. It is in this political landscape that Flemish archaeologists try to survive. With so many authorities, it is almost inconceivable that archaeological sites do not cross legislative borders. In this presentation, the author describes a few examples of

“frontline archaeology” in Flanders. One of them is the iron age oppidum of Caestert which is situated on two different boundaries, a national and a regional one.

THE LANAKERVELD-EXCAVATIONS: TWO SIDES TO ONE STORY

Anne Brakman, Municipality of Maastricht, The Netherlands

Lanakerveld is a location in the western part of the municipality of Maastricht, the Netherlands, adjoining the border with Belgium. In the near future Lanakerveld will be developed into a new neighbourhood and an industrial zone. This industrial zone will expand into Belgium, giving it an international aspect.

Prior to development, archaeological investigations started on both sides of the border. It soon became clear archaeological sites don't stop at international borders either. However, differences in legislation, investigative traditions and the processing of information between Belgium and the Netherlands led to two different fieldworkstrategies. Next to that, there is the problem of incompatible datastorage systems and problematic information accessibility. How can we piece together the results from the investigations on both sides of the border as to get a coherent story of this locations history? And, although there is information exchange between municipal archaeologists on both sides, how can the results be made easily accessible to other researchers?

DEFINING THE RULES OF THE GAME

Geoff Carver

This paper draws on the author's extensive experience excavating in numerous countries to look at several examples of fundamental, very low-level obstacles to international archaeological cooperation, ranging from disciplinary differences between English “archaeology” and German-language “Archäologie,” to differences in the on-site division of labour within various national “traditions,” down to ontological differences in the terminology used to document excavations.

These kinds of problems, although often overlooked as being so “low-level” as to appear unimportant, gain significance at the large scale of international infrastructure projects, cross-border cooperation, etc. Reference will be made to a number of case studies. A very concrete example (different terminologies used to describe soil composition and soil colour) will be used to show how such apparently insignificant details limit the exchange of archaeological data and knowledge, given the problems they cause for database design and ultimately the potential for large-scale comparative analysis (i.e. “datamining”).

While digital means for overcoming at least the problems of data-sharing will be discussed briefly, more emphasis will be placed on the implications such differences have for archaeology as a discipline – or disciplines – and its institutional framework. This leads to even more fundamental questions. If we have such trouble understanding (and communicating with) our own contemporaries – our colleagues – how much can we really hope to understand of people and cultures from the distant or even not-so-distant past?

VIEW FROM THE “BORDER”. SLOVENIAN EXPERIENCE IN THE INTERNATIONAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL COLLABORATION

Zrinka Mileusnić, Institute for Mediterranean Heritage, Science and Research Centre of Koper, University of Primorska, Slovenia.

The Institute for Mediterranean Heritage was founded in the year 2003. Since then it has been constantly involved in different kind of projects, including the bilateral or bi national projects. The Institute was also involved in several projects, funded by the EU programme. Presentation will focus on the experiences gathered in the bi-national projects, based on the collaboration with the so-called ex-Yugoslavian Republics. Collaboration between these was fairly strong in the past and the new political situation and creation of the new states and frontiers has changed the possibilities and ways of research and scientific collaboration. The collaboration has slowed down and the possibilities for the collaboration of the common heritage have been reduced.

The second part of the presentation will focus on the problems that were encountered in the international projects, financed by the EC. Thematically the main goal of these projects was to stress out the common European identity, based on the archaeological research. Problems appeared when the fieldwork and the research activities were planned in the countries outside the EU. These are having common cultural background and have also taken part in the creation of the European history but the work was restricted and limited by the current political "frame" of the national borders.