



Dare to Choose: Making Choices in Archaeological Heritage Management

EAC Symposium, Athens, Greece, 9-11 March, 2017

The archaeological discipline puts effort into achieving the greatest possible scientific added value and supporting the potential values of archaeological heritage for society. However, choices have to be made at different stages and levels of the archaeological heritage management process. Several interests are at play when making these choices: science, society, financial, legal and logistical possibilities, public support. Choices are based on the weighing up of different factors such as values, interests and practical opportunity.

A call to action for Europe's archaeology was set out in the [Amersfoort Agenda](#). It identifies the subject of "decision-making" (theme 2, "Dare to Choose") as one of the three key themes in meeting the current challenges facing archaeological heritage management in Europe.

The key aspects in making choices can be resumed through its three agenda items:

- Be conscious, explicit and transparent about the choices being made and the consequences of selection in the archaeological heritage management process;
- Develop a sound infrastructure to support the making of informed choices: identify research frameworks and criteria, and enable access to current archaeological knowledge and data;
- Adopt a broader perspective when making choices: open up boundaries within the discipline and involve other stakeholders (and their interests) in the process.

Clear choices should indeed ultimately result in a more consistent and transparent decision-making, a stronger defense of funding for archaeological excavation, a more sustainable approach to archaeological heritage management and a better-informed and engaged public.

This Symposium will give EAC members and others a welcome opportunity to explore the variety of approaches in decision making mechanisms and actions and consider how they may become embedded in general archaeological policy and practice over the next few years.

The Symposium will last one and a half days (9 and 10 March) and will consist of three presentation sessions followed by discussions – including questions and comments from the floor. Each presenter will propose actions as part of their presentation/paper. The results of the Symposium will feed into the EAC "Making Choices" and "Archaeological Archiving" Working Groups and form part of the future *EAC Guidelines on the basics and requisites of informed, transparent and structured choices* in the archaeological process.



Thursday 9th March 2017 (11.00-17.30)

Session 1 – The decision making mechanisms. Not everything is being excavated, recorded, researched, archived with the same intensity. The aim of this session is to explore the various decision making processes within their context: on what grounds do we choose the archaeological sites to excavate, the preservation, the analysis, the archiving and the publication of the chosen datasets?; how can we strike the best balance between financial implications and public support?; what are the values of the related stakeholders and other disciplines and how do we take them into consideration?; how can we be transparent about the choices being made, what is the minimum infrastructure needed for making the necessary choices and what are the long-term consequences of these choices?

Friday 10th March 2017 (9.00-17.00)

Session 2 – The choice of research questions for excavations. Is question-driven fieldwork vital or not? How do we identify research frameworks in order to make the necessary choices? What questions need to be answered and subsequently what methods / field strategies do they require? How do we develop criteria and standards for assessing the significance of the archaeological sites? Which political/economical/social realities do we take into account in the creation of our selection criteria?

Session 3 – The choice concerning the involvement of society. This session will give an overview of the choices operated concerning public participation and publicity and the question of how we can make informed choices allowing us to achieve not only the greatest possible scientific value but also support the potential value of the archaeological heritage to society. The practice of “embedding archaeology in society” through public participation is still in its infancy, but basic questions already appear: What does the public/society want from archaeologists? Which choices do we make regarding public engagement and public awareness? How can/should the various stakeholders and their interests be involved in the archaeological heritage management process? How can we adopt a broader perspective and explore ways of involving others in making our choices?