



*Managing Europe's Archaeological heritage*

## **New Challenges: Archaeological Heritage Management and the Archaeology of the 18th to 20th centuries**

**24<sup>th</sup> EAC Heritage Symposium  
23–24 March 2023, Bonn (Germany)**

### **Concept Note**

From a heritage management perspective the archaeology of the 18th to 20th centuries deals with features and finds from the period after the beginning of industrialisation, which are obtained through excavation and documentation using the techniques and methods applied in all archaeological disciplines.

In this epoch of condensed and parallel traditions, archaeological findings must be analysed for their specific informative value alongside other material sources on an equal footing with pictorial and written evidence as well as audio-visual sources and oral traditions. Due to the great density of sources in the modern era, archaeological heritage management has to ask itself almost daily to what extent objects and monuments from the 18<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> century should be examined or even preserved. A careful and well-founded selection based on an interdisciplinary perspective has a special significance here and must be part of the public discussion.

The protection and preservation of monuments of this era as statutory tasks are a great challenge for heritage conservation. At the same time, however, the temporal proximity offers important points of reference for our society today, so that archaeological remains of the 18th to 20th centuries are both: A great new task and an opportunity for heritage conservation.

While archaeology as a science tries to integrate the new subject academically, terminologically and methodologically, archaeological heritage management with its pragmatic approach has been facing the new task for years by making decisions within the framework of the respective legal possibilities. These decisions, which ideally lead to the preservation of the "modern" structures in the ground or to their excavation and documentation, require – in order to avoid undocumented removal – in each case new



strategies of monument justification, negotiation and mediation against the background of the respective historical context. In view of the dimensions of the features, the diversity of finds and the large quantities of finds, the strategies and techniques for documentation and recovery, storage and conservation must also be adapted.

Thus, institutions entrusted with the collection and permanent care of archaeological finds are also faced with selection decisions, as these are characterised in the modern era by an extreme increase in the diversity of materials. In addition, industrial production has joined handicraft in the manufacture of objects. Comprehensive specialist knowledge is necessary to understand or interpret the objects. The development of collection strategies for archaeological objects from the last 200 years is therefore imperative. It should also be recognised that expertise about these recent features, processes and places can be found beyond traditional archaeological loci. Communities of expertise exist across Europe and it would be of great interest and benefit for the EAC to recognise and engage with them at this symposium. By developing partnerships of expertise across academic, practitioner and communities of interest, Archaeology of the recent past and contemporary society can become a deeply democratic process.

Many research objects touch on topics that affect contemporary society and interest many people, so that archaeological interpretations carry great weight in public perception. This is especially true for war relics, monuments of industrial and urban history or objects from the era of colonialism, where research is at the centre of a societal discourse in addition they bear a strong emotional component. Particularly in the case of the latter, it is also always a question of dealing with the testimonies of these epochs in an ethically justifiable way. The material remains of war and terror lead to the limits of archaeology and beyond: they become evidence, crime scenes, anchors for commemoration and political education.

For the **EAC Heritage Symposium**, we welcome proposals for lectures that demonstrate a clear connection to the practice and theory of archaeological heritage management. In doing so, we want to explore **some basic questions**:



Which archaeological sources of the period under discussion do we want to protect, to record and to preserve? Why should we do this? What, then, is their monumental value and thus their social relevance? If preservation - in situ or in collections - is not possible, which sources do we want to document at all and if so, with which approaches and practices? Which broad range of interdisciplinary methods do we need for this task?

Aspects tackling these set of questions should preferably be related to the following **themes**:

- Archaeological witnesses of industrial, infrastructural and urban development,
- Remains of war(s) and terror as a task of archaeology,
- Mass production and new materials as a challenge for archaeology.

The aim is to present and discuss as wide a range of heritage practices as possible. The conference programme should reflect the temporal depth as well as the thematic range in a balanced way.

### **Scientific Coordinators:**

Dr. Erich Claßen

LVR-State Service for Archaeological Heritage in the Rhineland

Dr. Alex Hale

Historic Environment Scotland

Dr. Rebecca Jones

Historic Environment Scotland

Dr. Thomas Kersting

Brandenburgisches Landesamt für Denkmalpflege und Archäologisches Landesmuseum

Dr. Regina Smolnik

Archaeological Heritage Office of Saxony