

 **live** ARCH

LIVING HISTORY IN ARCHAEOLOGICAL OPEN AIR MUSEUMS



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by Gunter Schöbel,
Museum Direktor, Project Partner *liveARCH*



Although, 1:1 productions of "Living History" lost their actual meaning in the German speaking countries at the end of WW II, they gained importance and became trendy again after the new beginnings in the 1990s, especially within the fields of folklore, prehistory, early history, and history in general. In archaeological open air museums, which are committed to communicate and interpret history spanning from the time of the first hunters and gatherers to the late Middle Ages, this form of presenting history, the 1:1 productions, becomes increasingly important. But also outside of the museum landscape, the realistic presentation of the past has won in popularity and has resulted in high viewing rates for TV productions. This opens the way for event managers, city authorities, and event park managers, to exploit themes of the historical sciences, in order to market their establishments and leisure programs more effectively to the public. These marketing strategies, however, suggest that the quality of "Living History" programs offered in a scientific context at open air museums would be of lesser quality. This is especially true when profit is the main objective, as can often be observed in commercially oriented establishments. What do we mean by quality, when we speak about "Life History" presentations? The issues surrounding this question were addressed in theory and practice during a conference titled "Reorientation in the convergence zone between

leisure events and educational mission" that took place on May 21–24, 2009 in Unteruhldingen at Lake Constance. This conference volume presents a summary of the contributions and the results.

The debate was opened by representatives of 11 European countries, who met at Lake Constance on May 21 and 22, 2009 for a conference to the EU project LiveArch, Culture 2000 Education and Culture of the European Union opened the debate. The conference "H⁸ – Eight countries present 'Living History'", focused on the educational mission of the archaeological open air museums and the question how to reconstruct the past most authentically. The goal of the meeting was to discuss the spectrum of methods and to exchange knowledge and experience concerning the effective interpretation and conveyance of historical facts from different points of view. The dialogue centered around the exceptional projects of individual countries, such as the renowned "Biskupin Festival" in Poland, and the depiction of certain epochs, such as the life style of Roman soldiers and gladiators, that have been presented by the senior historian **Markus Junkelmann** for many years. Nevertheless, there was also room for highly unusual projects like the one of **Otto Jolias Steiner** (Agency for Adventure Worlds, Switzerland), who staged the project Matterhorn "Zermatlantis" as an excavation. Other participants and presenters had sent representatives of



state museums and universities, who reported about their approach to live interpretation of past epochs. **Ulrich Mehler** discussed the theme of medieval markets and their effect as a historical component. **Ruth Bader** introduced the first plans for the 600th anniversary of the Council of Constance (1414–1418). **Harald Siebenmorgen** from the Badisches Landesmuseum in Karlsruhe elucidates the “Evènements” in his house as highlights for the museums visitors. **Erwin Keefer** discussed in depth the possibilities of visitor oriented productions of history at the Württembergisches Landesmuseum in Stuttgart, a traditional museum housed in an old castle and located in the center of the metropolis.

The touristic view was presented by **Rainer Hartmann** (Institute for Leisure and Tourist Management at the University of Bremen). He illustrated the overall results of the event marketing and aspects of tourism and leisure science, which became the basis for a workshop. Following the conference on May 23 and 24, the theoretical discussions became practice for the conference participants and museums visitors.

At the festival weekend, 14 historical groups presented throughout the Unteruhldingen open air museum, a variety of Living History events that are rooted in various European regions with the goal to authentically convey 5000 years of European history. Actors and participants of the ARD TV series “Stone Age – The Experiment” were part of the festival together with the Celtic group “Carnyx”, Roman gladiators and Magyars, who demonstrated the fighting techniques of the early Eurasian nomads (Hungarian horse people). An additional highlight of the festival weekend was the test run of the archaeologist **Dominique Görlitz** in a prehistoric reed boat in preparation for his plan to cross the Atlantic. Beyond these major events, all participating European museums provided insight into the wide range of specific presentations staged by archaeological open air museums at their respective locations. This was in spite of the multiple different languages a great benefit for the conference. Scotland, for example, illustrated environmental history and prehistoric plant utilization based on results of palaeobotany. The Netherlands employed the “Museum Theatre” as a form of interactive historical conveyance, Latvia demonstrated music archaeology in their presentation, and Sweden explained the life and combat equipment of the Vikings based on archaeological finds and historical written resources. Italy demonstrated the bronze foundry technique, a self-

explanatory ancient practice for metal processing.

In addition to the broad spectrum of historical groups, there are a vast number of re-enactment groups. At the festival, popular amateur groups from the region staged events from Celtic times to the High Middle Ages. The spectators greatly enjoyed the "Camp Life" and the "Tournaments and Lancing" of the "Ulfinger Alamanni" or the "Württemberg Knights". The Celtic group "Carnyx" and the "Roman group Junkelmann" demonstrated scientifically reconstructed living conditions during the respectively chosen periods. After the first staging of "multi-period events", a concluding evaluation of these events was conducted by students of the Eberhard Karl University Tübingen based on a visitor survey. The study and an internal evaluation by the organizers, clearly evidenced the weak points of such a major historical festival with more than 5000 visitors, but they also showed benefits. The Lake Dwelling Museum Unteruhldingen and the community of the archaeological open air museums have learned a lot from the H⁸ conference and the historical festival that followed. Living History as an important instrument to convey the past has become an integral part of the museum's central mission. After the conferences of the Open Air Museum for Cultural Heritage Cloppenburg and Kiekerberg at the University of Freiburg and

the Landesmuseum Bonn in 2008 and 2009, the archaeological museums are now focusing more strongly on the still controversial topics. As "playgrounds" and "showcase" of historical science, it is their responsibility to provide entertaining exhibits and events that convey historical context. The question remains whether this conference has send a clear signal for a more intense cooperation between science, museums, and the protagonists of the illustrated experimental archaeology.

In conclusion, I would like to express my sincere thanks to all representatives, colleagues at the participating 8 museums, and the more than 200 contributors and participants of the event, named at the end of this conference volume.

by Gunter Schöbel,
Museum Direktor, Project Partner *liveARCH*

Good morning,

I would like to first welcome our esteemed guests Vice District Administrator Kruschwitz, Mayor Lamm, and Mr. Haaga from the Pfahlbau Association's Board of Directors, as well as our colleagues from the *liveARCH*, and our speakers.

In the name of the Lake Dwelling Museum Unteruhldingen, I would like to sincerely welcome you at Schloss Maurach at Lake Constance. I am pleased that the State Bank Baden-Württemberg offered to us the opportunity to meet for the conference, here in the former monastery of the Cistercians Order with its wonderful ambience. In particular I thank those, Mr. Sauer, Chair of the Board of Directors, and Mr. Ziegler, member of the Management, who have made this possible for us. I also sincerely thank the project members of *liveARCH* and the Directorate-General of "Culture 2000" in Brussels, who initiated this event.

liveARCH is a union of eight European Museums in a three-year project that stretches from Lofoten at the Polar region in the north to Modena in Northern Italy in the south. These eight museums attempt to communicate living history at the archaeological open-air museums, hence the name *liveARCH* that stands for living archaeology. The efforts are directed toward a broad audience across

all social classes. The purpose is to decide on how to reach the goal to provide quality conveyance and educational work, and the variety of opportunities in a museum.

Meanwhile this is the 7th *liveARCH* conference since 2007, and we have already learned about the different facets of the work in an open-air museum. The Dialogue with the visitor in Scotland, quality standards in Sweden, marketing in Norway, craft skills in Latvia, or the first European Congress of the archaeological open-air museum in March in Modena, Italy, as well.

We have learned from each other, how "good museum" is made today, and we hope that we can now implement our knowledge accurately and profitably to the visitor for the benefit of our countries. Europe and the world are at a threshold, and we need orientation and togetherness in our cultural representation. This is why I am especially pleased that today representatives of politics, Vice District Administrator Mr. Kruschwitz, and Mr. Lamm, our Mayor will open our conference, and Mr. Haaga, Vice Chairman of the Pfahlbau Association, the museum's funding body, will welcome us on this beautiful day.

For the organizational procedure, there will be short discussions, either individually or in a block after the presentations, for you to join in. Today, Mr. Peter

Walter from the Lake Dwelling Museum and at noontime, Mr. Roeland Paardekooper from the project office will lead the conference, and I would like to express my appreciation to them. Ms. Floetemeyer, whom I also welcome sincerely, will try to translate the contributions to the discussions from German to English. Other contact persons for all questions of organization are Mr. Walter, Ms. Sabine Schöbel, Ms. Schmidt-Henning, and Ms. Siebenhaller or me.

My greatest wish is that all things you have worked for in this conference, you will take back to your country and into your museums. These are, however, not only qualified expert presentations, but also things you enjoyed in this extraordinarily beautiful location, an old monastery at the lake. And, if the weather becomes too hot, just refresh yourself with a swim in the lake. Internalize the tranquillity and the virtue of this place – so that it not only becomes an unforgettable event contextual, but also a personal – well, just a magnificent event.

Events in Archaeological Open Air Museums

by Gunter Schöbel,
Museum Direktor, Project Partner *liveARCH*

Since their beginnings in the 19th century, archaeological open-air museums are not only composing historical archives, but also historical playgrounds in which manifold knowledge of the past is being generated. The museum with the methods of experimental archaeology, interpretation, and living history, is not new, but rather is a very useful pedagogic, visitor-oriented tool. Already the Greek theatre operated successfully with these elements of conveyance to please the public. Many things that are called "person-oriented presentation of cultural heritage" have already for a long time been professional dramaturgy of staged historical events. Medieval market places, Knight's tournaments, historical theme parks, and living history documentation enjoy great popularity. Thus, it is comes as no surprise that in an adventure-oriented world with an increasing number of events, the archaeological open-air museum must face-up to this discussion. Big conferences centring on the subject of living history took place in the farmers' open-air museum Kiekeberg near Hamburg, and in Cloppenburg in Westphalia 2009, the jubilee of the great battle of the Teutoburg Forest in Germany. During the summer there were some more archaeological congresses pertaining to this topic. Thus, it is a great honour for me to open a similar event under the heading *liveARCH* – living archaeology – here at Lake Constance.

I wholeheartedly welcome the colleagues from the eight museums, who assigned us to the task, to introduce these methods to the public in a festival of history, the "H⁸". Today and during the next few days, we want to express living history in theory and in praxis. It will be the first time for us to introduce history in this form. Usually we present the history of the Lake Dwellings with the traditional means of a museum, such as original finds, guided tours, and pedagogic projects, and our reconstructed villages. For us it was a fascinating and at the same time educational experience. It was not easy to coordinate 300 people from different countries, but we succeeded. I am very grateful to all participants, and together with you, I am looking forward to the next few days.

But first let us show you the torture instruments. Examples that make us think.



1 – Project Wunsiedel.

Photo: Internet.

Wunsiedel, Wunhenge, Germany

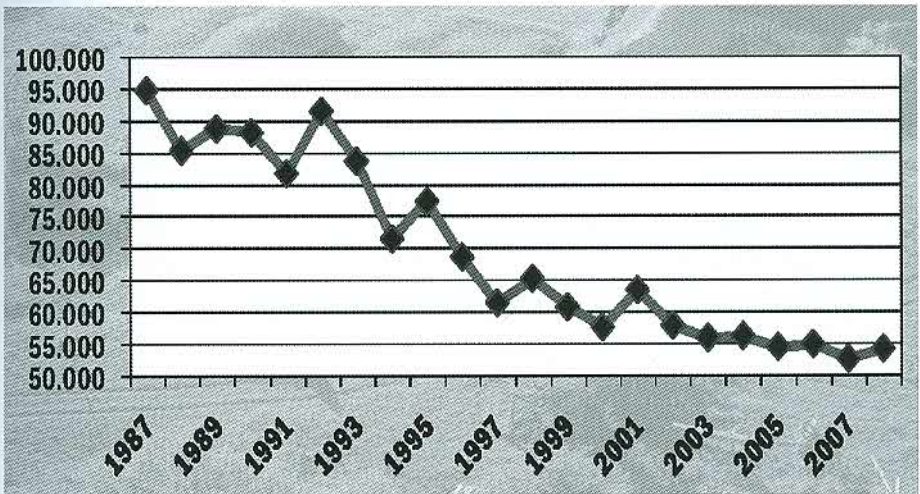
In the Fichtelgebirge at Wunsiedel a new Stonehenge with Druid Forest, Celtic village and grave mounds as it would have looked 4000 years ago, is planned (Fig. 1). An Investor, who equips very successfully amusement parks from Costa Rica to Legoland with huge plastic rocks and boulders, is about to construct an authentic reconstruction for no less than 2 to 4 Million Euros. In this ambitious project, he can rely on a majority resolution brought about by close vote, and the support of the local mayor. His response to the opposition from the ranks of archaeologists and the state administrative office for museums in Bavaria, who did not want to support a "plastic Henge" in Franconia, is that this ambitious project with an estimated 150 000 visitors per year, can, with remaining opposition from science and nature conservation, be realized somewhere else in Germany. The translocated reconstruction works by compiling archaeological finds with material, which neither existed during the 14 Stone Age nor during the Iron Age.

Grand Parc du Puy du Fou, France

Viking ships are charging and set ablaze a medieval tower castle three times a day gathering applause from thousands of onlookers. This is being quoted by the operator as an authentic recount of an historical event – the visitors experience 2000 years of French history. According to the advertisement of the commercially oriented medieval adventure park, up to 1100 amateur actors are staging the show.

Parco Roma Imperiale, Rome (Fig. 2)

In order to relieve the antique sites of heavy tourism, to better show the origin of the national heritage, to create more touristic attractions for Rome, and to extend the average hotel stays for another two days, the Vice Mayor of Rome, Mauro Cutrufo, supported by the conservative majority party of Silvio Berlusconi, plans the reconstruction of the antique City of Rome on 4000 hectares between the airport Fiumicino and Civitavecchia. An artistically themed archaeological park with a coliseum forum and racetrack is to emerge. Once finished, it is expected to attract 5 million visitors per year, 4 million of which are already in the

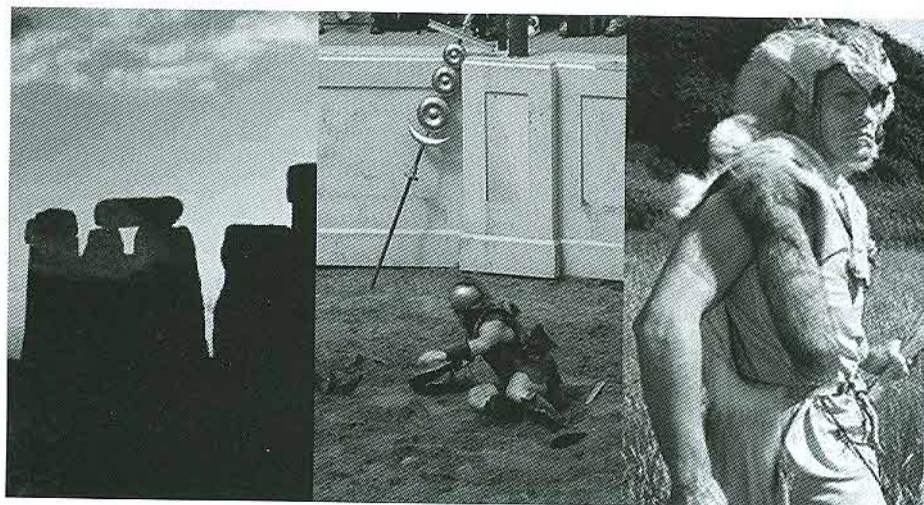


city. This would be an increase of today's numbers of 1 million more visitors. The commercially oriented amusement parks Eurodisney near Paris and the Europapark near Rust are to serve as an example. But there is an opposition movement called to life by environmentalists, historians and the tourist business. Vicesindaco Mauro Cutrufo, however, refers to the support he receives from the University of La Sapienza. The director of the city archaeology office is resentful and fears a devalued effect on the originals.

2 – Project Rome. Photo: Internet.
3 – Numbers of visitors Lejre.
Graphics: saglandet lejre.

Lejre, Denmark

The research centre erected on an old royal manor east of Copenhagen in Denmark, has written history for the experimental archaeology in Europe. Since the 1960s, it justifiably is deemed to be a successful experiment, to combine archaeological science with the transmission of experience pedagogy. The archaeological open-air museum does, however, have problems (Fig. 3). The



4 – Will pictorial scenarios replace archaeological contents in the future? Photos: Internet, *sagnlandet lejre*.

numbers of visitors decreased to half. With a new concept, diversification of offers, and a change of name, the visitors are to be reclaimed from the commercial theme parks. "Land of Legends" instead of "research centre", actions and information areas throughout all times of Danish history are in the planning stages. The incorporating of Hollywood movies and an adjoining Infopark for renewable energies, from terrestrial heat to solar energy are intended to help to bring back the success. It appears that here, a previous clear pedagogic profile of an archaeological open-air museum with research, is being transformed according to current trends in fear of a further decrease of number of visitors.

Are such scenarios the future? (Fig. 4) – or are they already present?

If we regard the scene of the archaeological open air museums, then it has
16 already parted from the presentation of

original finds in the centre of didactics a long time ago. Does that mean that the old museum is dead? After collecting and conserving, research also threatens to disappear, so that only the best practice at the transmission of knowledge according to marketing aspects, seems to have a future. That would mean, however, that we will be robbed of our roots and resources and that we would mutate to an entertainment instrument – a development that actually was never planned.

The development of museums having emerged from the mystery chambers of the late Renaissance, starting from the 16th century the educational agenda visitor-orientated concepts started to show already in Europe. Slogans that are trendy again today. The cataloguing as a basis of each exhibit developed starting from the 17th century in Germany, clear collection concepts can be recognized in the 18th century and a discussion around didactization and goals learning of is present since the 19th century. Examples for good museums exist in Europe already for more than 100 years, thus they were already well known before the

national or international associations like the ICOM came into existence. Why then should we leave this road? Because society changes? Because the visitor is no longer the same education consumer as he or she was 20 years ago. Will the multiple, determining customer searching for variety in tourism replace the reserved cultural and educated citizen? Are there really paradigm changes in the society, a radical break, which need new aspects on the past?

The visitor expects according to recreational research a cultural experience and not indoctrination. The visitor requires a staged event, a picturesque, lively, and exciting presentation, social diversity, and further cultural education. For us this means new perceptions of cultural heritage, gladly with the help of Europe and the UNESCO. However, this also means, just as demanded by politicians, to meet changes with flexibility and fantasy, in order to increase the number of visitors, not without losing the balance between a fun event and serious pedagogical exhibit.

This is not easy. It is not enough to stage only one event to demonstrate it better. The events, as is often criticized, lack the historical anchoring, and except for the fun component the actual social relevance. The event turns more and more into a successful commercial hocus-pocus. Nevertheless, to represent the original find also no longer suffices for making the visitor fall in awe as he or she would in the curiosity cabinet. According to surveys, the aura of authenticity impresses only 16 per cent of the visitors. It needs the variety of convergence, the educational aspect, the understanding, and the dialogue with the visitor.

I will not and cannot discuss the results of the *liveARCH* H⁸ conference in advance. But I would be happy, if in the contributions to the successful examples and in the discussions to this current dilemma of the museums, more answers could be found. I am very curious, how we will solve the problem of recreational event versus educational mission in the future.