

Session Proposal

European Association of Archaeologists (EAA) 12th Annual Meeting

Krakow, Poland

19th to 24th September 2006

Organizer: Dr Åsa Gillberg & Dr Ola W Jensen

Discussant Professor Jarl Nordbladh

Theme:

Archaeology in the Modern World: Theoretical and Methodological Perspectives.

Session Title:

The history of archaeological practice – reflections on technology and social organisation in field work

Abstract:

Through the centuries the archaeological practices and the conditions for surveying, mapping, excavation and field documentation have changed. Different practices have co-existed side by side, as institutions and organisations developed their own ways of conduct. But why do practices differ? These processes have seldom been the focus of scientific studies, perhaps because they have been perceived as secondary, detached from, or not important at all in relation to the archaeological results.

The use of a certain practice has far-reaching implications for what kind of results an excavation will generate. Technical changes may also deeply affect the social organisation of labour, which is an equally important aspect of archaeological practice.

The history of methods and techniques within archaeology has been discussed from several different perspectives. Usually it is described as a progression thanks to either individual genius or some innate progressive development of archaeology itself. Some would even argue that the development of excavation techniques is a precondition for the discipline. In another approach theory is considered irrelevant to excavation, the latter merely being a technical process, while others would agree that the excavating methods used are the result of a theoretical choice: practice is seen as nothing more than applied science. A fourth approach sees archaeological practice as mainly the result of different social factors, a construction in a constant state of being negotiated and renegotiated.

The overall purpose of this session is to reflect on (not describe!) archaeological field practices in the past. Suggested issues are for example practical consequences of technological change, social organisation in the field (work force, gender, colonial archaeology, and expeditions), preconditions for changes in field work (economical, political, institutional, interdisciplinary co-operation), the life and death of equipment, methods, technologies etc.

Contact details:

Dr Åsa Gillberg

Dept of Archaeology and Ancient History, Gothenburg University

E-mail: a.gillberg@archaeology.gu.se

Dr Ola W Jensen

Dept of Archaeology and Ancient History, Gothenburg University

E-mail: ola.jensen@archaeology.gu.se

Discussant

Professor Jarl Nordbladh

Dept of Archaeology and Ancient History, Gothenburg University