

There is live after ARCH

The history and future of an EU project

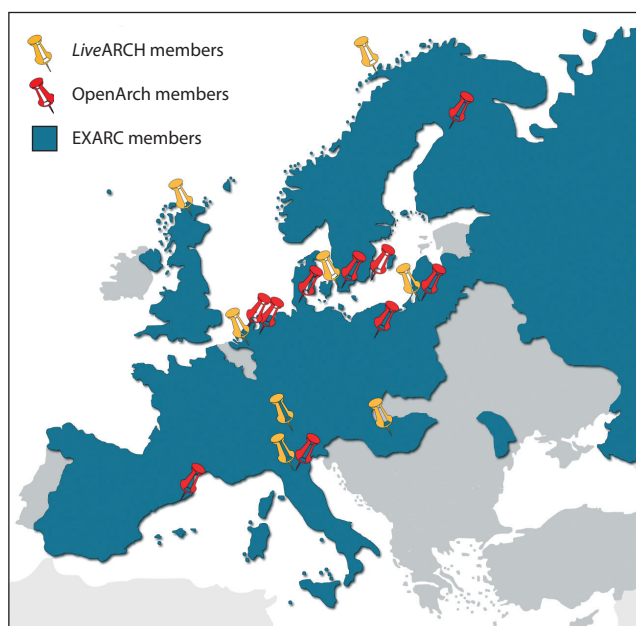
■ Roeland PAARDEKOOPER (NL)

EXARC

In the late 1990s, annual experimental archaeology conferences were held in Germany. Later, this series of conferences and its proceedings would form the basis of an association, mainly active in the German speaking part of Europe. But well before that, in 1999, the then manager of the archaeological open air museum at Oerlinghausen, Martin Schmidt, realised that the base of experiments and education presented at the aforementioned conferences had been executed at archaeological open air museums – so why not set up a network for them? Although experimental archaeology and education are important tools of such museums, there are many more aspects which these museums master, therefore, an association would be a welcome arena for discussion, exchange and learning.

With this in mind, Schmidt contacted Paardekooper. He in turn contacted a Swedish archaeologist, Tomas Johansson, legendary in his own country for bridging between science, primitive skills, film and experiment. Johansson took an active role and some months later, the three ended up in a remote train station in the Netherlands. When discussing, we realised how large a potential an association of archaeological open air museums would have.

Soon after, 13 invited museum managers and others involved met at Oerlinghausen for an intensive weekend. These 13 people count as the founding members of EXARC. For 2 years, preparations for starting were made and in March 2003, EXARC was officially founded in ‘Land of Legends’ Lejre.



■ **Fig. 1 LiveARCh members:** Lofotr Viking Museum (NO), The Museum of Foteviken (SE), Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen (DE), Historisch OpenluchtMuseum Eindhoven (leader) (NL), Arais Archaeological Museum Park at the Latvian National History Museum (LV), Matrica Múzeum és Régészeti Park (HU), Parco Archeologico e Museo all'aperto della Terramara di Montale (IT) and The Scottish Crannog Centre (GB). **OpenArCh members:** C.I. De Calafell (coordinator, CAT), Archaeological-Ecological Centre Albersdorf (DE), Archeon (NL), Muzeum Archeologiczne w Biskupinie (PL), Fotevikens Museum (SE), Hunebedcentrum (NL), Kalmar läns museum (SE), Kierikki Stone Age Village (FI), LNHH (Āraiši) (LV), Parco Archeologico e Museo all'aperto della Terramara di Montale (IT)

Unfortunately, our first chairman, Johansson, died later that year. He had some unconventional ideas and vision which could have lifted EXARC. A detailed history of EXARC can be found on line at <http://www.exarc.net>. By the end of 2009, EXARC has about 65 members. The countries with members, you find in Fig. 1.

liveARCh

But the members of EXARC did not to give up – the road to EU projects was opened by a one-year project called Delphi. This was meant to gain firsthand experience with running EU projects and combined the Arais Lake Fortress (Latvia) and Archeon (the

Netherlands) under leadership of the Pfahlbaumuseum in Unteruhldingen (Germany). The three museums collected the questions, most frequently asked by their visitors. These were put on line on a website which existed in 13 languages. Further, time islands were constructed in the three places as well as time roads. Arais and Unteruhldingen took part in liveARCh, Arais and Archeon are in OpenArCh. More information on Delphi you will find on line under EXARC.

All the ideas which gave EXARC a reason to exist were combined into a plan and in 2004, it was decided to try and start an EU project to realise our ideas to the ben-

efit archaeological open air museums in general and any professional in adjacent professions. The HOME museum in Eindhoven (NL), one of the founding members of the association, volunteered to be a lead partner which is always a hard task. It still took a good year before the application was ready and another year before we could start. The 8 museums of liveARCh, which ran 2006-2009 are shown on the map (Fig. 1). Unfortunately, no more than 8 partners were allowed to join for EU reasons.

With the ambitious liveARCh project, which existed side by side with EXARC, the 8 museums disseminated historic knowledge by means of living history. An active visit to these 8 museums would make the public appreciate a sense of common heritage. The museums also realised very early on that good working relations with the academic world were vital in making the difference between a museum and a more leisure like activity. What all people involved knew from the beginning, was that this would be a project with a lot of communication going on.

The liveARCh project has sent over 100 people each for over 4 days en route to see one of the other archaeological open air museums. Often the people travelling were not the management itself, but employees of all parts of the 8 museums. Seeing colleagues in a similar museum in action and discussing with them sets one's own work in perspective. Besides that, a total of 850 participants travelled and met in one of the 8 countries at an official meetings or workshops.

We also knew that liveARCh, like many culture projects, would mainly deliver intangible results: the process was

more important than the final results. Also, there were not many measurable goals. As we soon realised, in some countries, living history (or better: live interpretation) is more embraced than in other countries. This is no value judgement, what works well in one county may fail utterly in another; live interpretation is one method of a toolkit of many. It will be up to EXARC to further explore this toolkit.

LiveARCH has defined archaeological open air museums, a definition which EXARC moved on to a flourishing use. The guide of European Archaeological Open Air Museums (described elsewhere in this volume) paints the landscape of museums we know of; one needs to know oneself well before setting out for the future. The defining of archaeological open air museums and the publication of a guide to them have both been most helpful in positioning these museums in their physical, political and cultural environment.

A main issue for *liveARCH* was to open up discussions on quality. This was the reason why EXARC came into being but when looking closer at it, this proved to be the most complicated of all *liveARCH* matters, but equally the most promising. A lot of information was gathered, both from within the archaeological open air museums as from the 'ordinary' museum, tourism and education world and we are not ready to use it to its full value.

In 8 meetings (some of them hands on workshops, some others more in a conference style), we met intensively and learned to understand the others' differences as well as what we have in common. The bandwidth is extremely large. If you add to that the different cultural and linguistic backgrounds, you will understand what had to be overcome – partly it worked, partly not. The staff who had the chance of meeting each other often learned

to respect and understand the colleagues – and that is exactly what the EU envisioned.

LiveARCH proved to be very complex with a heavy 'top down' organisation structure. The administrative workload was very intense. *LiveARCH*'s scope varied broadly with many different activities, may-

An MA studies was executed into tourist destination marketing, using the *liveARCH* member Lofotr (NO) as a case study (see elsewhere in this volume) and another MA studies was executed into education, using Fotevikens Museum (SE) as case study (see elsewhere in this volume).



■ **Fig. 2** One of the Kierikki guides inside a Stone Age house reconstruction holding a harpoon made of bone (photo: Kierikki Stone Age Centre)

be too many, making it sometimes hard for the participating museums to identify or to have an overview – some themes were 'off stage' for a year, while others always called for attention. More information on *liveARCH* you will find on line under EXARC.

Bonus

Thanks to *liveARCH*, a PhD could be supported into the quality of archaeological open air museums, hopefully giving some food for thought for a future discussion on this subject within EXARC.

Other bonus results are in unforeseen staff exchanges between several museums in the project, for example an archaeobotanist from Hungary doing a project in Norway.

Many professionals have been able to take part in the 8 meetings, the travelling circus called *liveARCH*, many of which were or became members of EXARC. This has been positive for EXARC, but especially to its members as in some cases accommodation, travel or the conference itself were partly funded.

In EuroREA, for 4 years, there has been given attention to *liveARCH* and its successes. This has been interesting to our readers and proved to be a good way for *liveARCH* to show the world what they have accomplished.

Future

It is up to EXARC now to continue – else much will be wasted and soon forgotten. EXARC is the logical continuation of *liveARCH*, the 8 museums in a way return to the association they came from.

EXARC has kept on running meetings and will do so in the future. This is one of the important singular chances for museum staff and others to meet each other and exchange views on pressing or less pressing (daily) matters. Sometimes a far friend and colleague is just as valuable as a neighbour.

In order to make our type of work more visible, EXARC offers a journal (this EuroREA) which unfortunately cannot be published as often as we like. It is made available to all the members in over 20 countries and therefore has a wide circulation. EuroREA has proven an important inspiration for many readers as it gives a wide variety of examples of 'what is happening'.

The website of EXARC is mainly meant for its members, as a linking pin. This is the same functionality which is sought in the secretariat: members, colleagues, students and others ask for details on experiment and reconstruction, questions which usually mean bringing people from different parts of the world in touch with each other. It is important to keep the members together and help them in their quest to become more professional, both by learning from each other (inward) and by learning from other professionals (outward).

In the long run, EXARC, *liveARCH* or otherwise, it is about people, our visitors, our colleagues and the people of the past.

OpenArch

It was in Barcelona that the decision was taken in 2004 which led to *liveARCH*. In 2009, EXARC returned to Barcelona for a follow up which so far is an idea only settled in a new EU application. The team which prepared the application were Clara Masriera i Esquerra, Geir Sør-Reime and Roeland Paardekooper.

Basic elements of *liveARCH*, winning elements, we have introduced into the new plans, which go by the name OpenArch. We will again discuss the dialogue with visitors, the dialogue with skills and the dialogue with science in the sense of experimental archaeology. All these themes however have developed since 2004 and as much as we learn from the past, we intend to modify the aims and means for the future.

With the municipality of Calafell in Catalonia as coordinator, a total of ten museums have joined forces in OpenArch, an overview you will see in Fig. 1. When evaluating *liveARCH* with a perspective on continuation, we learned to put more emphasis on science. Joint experiments will be defined and executed over a period of 5 years and in that way move experimental archaeology forward. All too often, experiments are not repeated or not repeatable and therefore lack the merit of progressing our knowledge, reinventing the wheel again. OpenArch will also focus more on education, an important reason for existence of many of our museums and centres. The museum management can benefit from this project and we intend as well to open a dialogue with other museums and museum organisations. Intangible heritage is an important asset of our sites which makes us different to others; defining this



■ Fig. 3 Stone Age Market is the main event of the year in Kierikki. Two members of the hunter-gatherer tribe "Kuttelo" by the fire (photo: Mika Saloranta)



■ Fig. 4 Grinding stone objects is one the favourite activities at the Stone Age village (photo: Mika Saloranta)



■ Fig. 5 Reindeer sledge ride at the river Iijoki, on the banks of which the Stone Age Village lies (photo: Sari Koopman)

better in the sense of the stories to be told, the knowledge to be shared in each local example is a key task. Finally OpenArch will work very much with dissemination and PR – not just towards our colleagues, but also promoting archaeological

open air museums to the public. More information on OpenArch can be found on line under EXARC.

The most important activities will be workshops, staff exchanges and experimental

actions. We are happy to have 3 *liveARCH* members taking part in OpenArch as well as offering the opportunity of participating for 7 other museums. All together we have a very mixed group, exactly what Brussels means with its motto: "united in diversity". If all goes well, the project will start the five years cooperation in April 2011.

Summary

Histoire et développement du programme européen *liveARCH*

Le programme *liveARCH* a été mené entre 2006 et 2009 auprès de 8 musées participants, pour tester la diffusion des connaissances via l'histoire vivante et l'apport de cette pratique dans les parcs et musées archéologiques. Le principal objectif de *liveARCH* était d'évaluer la qualité de cette médiation à travers des ateliers, des conférences et des échanges au sein des équipes des musées pour formations professionnelles. Les résultats devraient maintenant être pris en compte auprès de tous les membres de l'EXARC. Certaines conclusions seront approfondies au cours d'un nouveau programme européen, OpenArch, mis en place pour 5 ans sous la coordination de la commune de Calafell et intégrant 10 musées participants.

Es gibt ein „Leben“ nach *liveARCH* – Die Geschichte und Zukunft eines EU-Projektes

Das *liveARCH*-Projekt wurde von 2006 bis 2009 durchgeführt, um in den 8 teilnehmenden Museen Ideen ausprobieren zu können, die zur besseren Verbreitung historischer Kenntnisse durch Aktivitäten im Bereich der „lebendigen Archäologie“ zum Nutzen der archäologischen Freilichtmuseen im Allgemeinen beitragen sollten. Das Schwerpunktthema von *liveARCH* bildete dabei „die Qualität“ und wurde durch Arbeitstreffen, Konferenzen und den Austausch von Mitarbeitern behandelt. Es besteht dabei die Erwartung, dass die gewonnenen Informationen nun von allen EXARC-Mitgliedern in ihrer praktischen Arbeit genutzt werden. Einige der bei *liveARCH* angesprochenen Themen werden überführt in ein neues, auf fünf Jahre angelegtes Projekt mit dem Namen „OpenArch“, das von der Gemeinde Calafell unter Teilnahme von 10 Museen koordiniert wird.