EXARC JOURNAL 2024/3
10 Articles | Open Access

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Unreviewed Mixed Matters Article:

Conference Review: The Future of Experimentation, Lejre, March 2024

Persistent Identifier: https://exarc.net/ark:/88735/10761

EXARC Journal Issue 2024/3 | **Publication Date:** 2024-08-22

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On 13 March 2024, Lejre Land of Legends and the SAXO Institute at the University of Copenhagen organised a seminar: The Future of Experimentation – from experiment to new archaeological knowledge.

The seminar hosted 15 presentations and 125 participants, and was held in the King's Hall in Lejre Land of Legends. It had two purposes. Firstly, we wanted to come closer to an up-to-

> The presentations will be published in the series Studier i Teknologi og Kultur (Studies in Technology and Culture) by Lejre Land of Legends in spring 2025.

date definition of the concept of experimental archaeology, and secondly, we would try to reach a proposal for the trends in future experimental work. Therefore, all 15 presenters were asked in advance to weave a definition of the term 'experimental archaeology' into their lectures; correspondingly we handed out a reflection paper at the seminar, where we asked the audience to identify the most visionary trends in the day's presentations.

With regard to a definition, there was broad agreement that three things have to be in place for an experiment to be called 'experimental archaeology':

1. the experiment has to be rooted in (archaeological) source material;
2. data and documentation have to be systematically collected;
3. the experiment has to be carried out according to a clear hypothesis.

It was a fantastic day with interesting presentations, a great desire to ask questions and a lively debate. Seven of the presentations came from established institutions.

Tríona Sørensen and Martin Rodevad Dael (Viking Ship Museum, Roskilde) presented the work conducted there with two reconstructions of the same ship-find, carried out in 1984 and 2022, respectively. They focused on the methodological development that has taken place in experimental archaeology, which was clearly reflected in the differences between the two reconstructions.

Daniel Serra and Kari Helland (Midgard Viking Centre, Vestfoldmuseene) gave a thought-provoking account of their research into how new types of both hearths and cooking vessels affected the food produced in the Viking Age and the Middle Ages.
Lone Blom Kristensen and Nanna Kirkeby (Vingsted Iron Age, Vejle Museums) talked about their experiments with manufacturing and sewing with lamb-gut thread in connection with a reconstruction of Iron Age leather cloaks, which emphasised the importance of the relationship between craftmanship and archaeology.

Karl Jakob Lamberth (Viking Age Village, Albertslund) told the delegates about his experiments with Viking-Age funnel-shaped glass and suggested it could be used for oil lamps. The presentation pointed to many opportunities for further research into, for instance, alternative oil types and wicks.

Maria Ojantakanen (Viking Age Village, Albertslund) shared her thoughts on the reconstruction of Viking-Age harps, by tracing her footsteps and questioning her own practice. An important point was that the sound of the harp was not only dependent on the

material and the tuning of the strings, but also on technical solutions during the reconstruction.

In his data-rich presentation, Laurent Mazet (Lejre Land of Legends) investigated the chaîne opératoire of the ski, and questioned, for example, whether the series of choices in the manufacturing process could be seen as a technological chain or as a family tree.
Based on his own experience, Lucas Garbrecht Overvad (Lejre Land of Legends) investigated what advantages cross-professional collaboration has in experimental archaeology and how such partnerships can be strengthened. He also proposed suggestions on how artisans can benefit from experimental archaeology.

Eight of the 15 presentations stemmed from research at the University of Copenhagen, among them three from PhD students: Gustav Hejlesen Solberg, Stefanie Langaa Jensen and Emma Vitale.

Hejlesen Solberg (National Museum/SAXO Institute) had – in connection with his PhD project – worked on an archaeological experiment at Lejre Land of Legends' concerning the reconstruction of a fencing course from the Iron Age. The experiment gave an interesting insight into how space affects action and movement in combat.

Based on her thesis and her PhD project, Langaa Jensen (Museum South East Denmark/SAXO Institute) investigated where the limits for archaeological practice are, and opened up a discussion on whether the formation of archaeological knowledge could benefit from the slowness of experiments: going off track, uncertainty, and opening up new realisations.

As part of her PhD project, Vitale (the GLOBE institute) reconstructed a dog sled from the 1930s and test-drove it to explore the relationship between knowledge and technical practice. Using the knowledge she gleaned from the experiment, she identified parts of dog sleds in the archaeological record.

There were also presentations from two newly qualified archaeologists who had applied experimental archaeology in their graduate theses: Magnus Hjorth Jørgensen and Sofie Louise Andersen.

Hjorth Jørgensen (National Museum/SAXO Institute) worked on the identification of recycled structural timber from archaeological excavations. It raised the question of whether reconstructions of houses, such as House 17 in Sagnlandet Lejre, built in 1989 by architect and archaeologist Bente Draiby, can be used as a kind of 'answer key'.

In her thesis, Andersen (SAXO Institute) observed and documented the movements of a weaver and suggested using Motion Capture in the future, to record the actions of artisans in

experimental archaeology. The method has great potential for comparing artisans with differing knowledge and skills.

There were also presentations by three students from the SAXO Institute: Alexander Grove Lauridsen, Camilla Fraas Rasmussen and Sofie Nielsen. In his BA project, Grove Lauridsen investigated the possibility of placing diagnostic fracture markers on flat-hewn arrowheads from the Late Neolithic and Early Bronze Age. The intention was to scan whatever material the arrowhead had penetrated or collided with. Furthermore, he distinguished arrowheads with use-fractures from arrowheads with fractures due to post-depositional circumstances. Whilst reconstructing a four-post system, Fraas Rasmussen and Nielsen presented some important methodological questions in relation to handling a dataset that swings between qualitative and quantitative data, as well as to the importance of standardisation during the registration process.

Henriette Lyngstrøm, associate professor at the Saxo Institute, spoke about a series of experiments on iron extraction and forging, which were carried out in a close dialogue with an archaeologist, a metallurgist and a blacksmith. The experiments were well-documented both with regard to the choice and use of materials and concerning the analysis of iron and slag. In her presentation, she argued for experimental archaeology to be carried out with open senses – and for the concept to be extended to 'experimental cultural history'. This was one of the trends the delegates pointed to in their reflection paper as a clue to future experimental work. They also highlighted the importance of using reconstructions to identify archaeological material, recording artisans' movements, as well as the discussion of whether the formation of archaeological knowledge could benefit from the slowness of the experiment. Moreover, it was believed that in the future, sensory input such as light, sound and smell will be recorded to a much greater extent than it is today.

The presentations will be published in the series *Studier i Teknologi og Kultur* (Studies in Technology and Culture) by Lejre Land of Legends in spring 2025.

Keywords conference
review
experiment

Country Denmark

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Gallery Image

FIG 1. THE KING'S HALL IN LEJRE LAND OF LEGENDS – IN THE MORNING MIST, WAITING FOR THE CONFERENCE TO BEGIN. PHOTO BY H. LYNGSTRØM

FIG 2. THE SEMINAR HOSTED 15 PRESENTATIONS AND 125 PARTICIPANTS. PHOTO BY LEJRE LAND OF LEGENDS

FIG 3. THE PRESENTATIONS WILL BE PUBLISHED BY LEJRE LAND OF LEGENDS AND THE SAXO INSTITUTE AT THE UNIVERSITY OF COPENHAGEN IN SPRING 2025. PHOTO BY LEJRE LAND OF LEGENDS

FIG 4. ALL PRESENTERS WERE ASKED TO WEAVE A DEFINITION OF THE TERM ‘EXPERIMENTAL ARCHAEOLOGY’ INTO THEIR LECTURES. PHOTO BY LEJRE LAND OF LEGENDS