

# Heritage Management or Counting Curls?

## Recent Developments in German Academic Institutions Dealing with Classical Archaeology and Cultural Heritage

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**Abstract** The two workshops on Crete and Sicily showed the potential of landscape and public archaeology and provided inspiring best-practice examples through various projects. In this article, we explore the extent to which classical archaeology at German universities has embraced these new fields. Integrating landscape archaeology, cultural heritage, and site management practices remains a key concern, especially regarding heritage, conservation, and imparting relevant skills to archaeology students. It is uncertain whether the conditions in German institutions can favour these clearly advantageous approaches.

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After a workshop on using landscape to bridge the past and the present, and the social role of archaeology, we feel compelled to analyse the status of landscape and public archaeology in German speaking universities.

In 2000, prehistoric archaeologist, Ulrike Sommer, wrote “As has already been stated by countless reviewers, in Germany academic merits are not achieved with brilliant ideas but through thorough collection, documentation, and typochronological classification of data—certainly not through brilliant deconstruction.”<sup>1</sup> A detailed and painful analysis, such as counting curls of statues in order to establish their chronology. She laments a kind of conservatism<sup>2</sup> in German archaeology, which is relegated to an ‘auxiliary science’ with respect to disciplines offering more precise data<sup>3</sup>. Sommer exposes how landscape archaeology only found its way into German archaeological disciplines at the turn of the millennium

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1 Sommer 2000, 160.

2 Sommer 2000, 160.

3 Sommer 2000, 161.

through Lüning<sup>4</sup> and Schade<sup>5</sup>, while it has been practised in the Anglo-American sphere since the 1970s<sup>6</sup>.

Settlement, environmental, and landscape archaeology are closely linked subdisciplines that combine the fundamentals of archaeology and spatial sciences and address sociological questions for studying the human-environmental relationships of the past. Settlement archaeology (Siedlungsarchäologie) has been practiced in Germany since its introduction at the end of the XX century through Gustav Kossinna<sup>7</sup>. It was, however, primarily concerned the distribution of settlements, while the final decades of the XX century saw deeper analysis of the wider environment and the influence of landscape on human settlements (and vice versa), especially in USA and Great Britain<sup>8</sup>. Although German research institutions introduced and established landscape archaeology in the 2000s, and a master's program was launched at the *Freie Universität* and the University of Applied Sciences Berlin, many archaeologists still consider it a "diffuse construct"<sup>9</sup> with no clearly defined content and research questions. In addition, landscape archaeology in Germany is undertaken almost exclusively by practitioners of prehistoric archaeology, who are more concerned with geophysical, botanical, and zoological subjects than classical archaeologists<sup>10</sup>. In most classical archaeology curricula, there is little evidence of landscape archaeology and the innovative research approaches that might inspire young scientists and offer new and relevant perspectives of the ancient world. The use of scientific methods and the increasing interdisciplinarity of the subject renders landscape archaeology a powerful tool for investigating new and more broadly contextualized issues. The scientific results of such interdisciplinary projects are of great value, especially in relation to contemporary concerns such as climate change, migration, and globalization.

Archaeology moreover offers a high degree of communicative potential towards the wider public and a potent social role in public archaeology. Many projects with active public involvement in archaeological research have been already successfully conducted<sup>11</sup>. McGimpsey coined the term of public archaeology in the 1970s<sup>12</sup> to indicate that archaeology should not be a private activity, but a matter of public interest<sup>13</sup>.

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4 Lüning 1997.

5 Schade 2000.

6 Sommer 2000, 161; Teichmann 2010, 127–34.

7 Lang 2002, 252.

8 However, a more intensive use of landscape concepts and approaches would be worthwhile, see Meier 2009, 707–19; Rempe 2018, 47–48.

9 Doneus 2013, 13.

10 Teichmann 2010, 134; Meier 2009, 709–19. Only in recent years, several projects by classical archaeologists focusing on the archaeology of landscapes were conducted in the Mediterranean region: Teichmann 2010, Rempe 2018.

11 Doppelhofer 2017, 392.

12 McGimpsey 1972.

13 McGimpsey 1972, 10.

The building boom of recent decades has endangered archaeological sites and triggered the need for rescue excavations (known as ‘motorway archaeology’ in Switzerland<sup>14</sup>) and the deeper involvement of local populations in investigating, preserving, and rendering cultural heritage accessible.

As Christoph Doppelhofer explains in his paper “Der Archäologe und die Öffentlichkeit: Die neue Rolle der Archäologie im 21. Jahrhundert”, the development of the post-processual discourse following ‘New Archaeology’ as well as the post-colonial disputes with Native Americans, for example, contribute to a more intense collaboration between archaeologists and local populations<sup>15</sup>. Archaeology is still a field of public interest and media broadcasts on science and cultural tourism are flourishing<sup>16</sup> in the “experience society”<sup>17</sup>. Unfortunately, while German museums arouse the public interest through highly effective public exhibitions, they mainly focus on highlights and common stereotypes like the Celts or the Teutons that erroneously portray different cultural groups as single, closed societies<sup>18</sup>. German archaeologists must forego the use of stereotypes to interface with the public and acknowledge that modern media has allowed interest to widen from specific groups such as the educated middle class to a far broader audience. There is increasing demand for public involvement in archaeology “at eye level”<sup>19</sup> and “working from the academic ivory tower”<sup>20</sup> or attempting to preserve cultural heritage for scientific purposes<sup>21</sup> are no longer sustainable. A recurring question is gaining traction: Who owns the past?

Modern archaeology must therefore not limit itself to conveying results, but also has to promote the participation of local populations. Methods of deep or cultural mapping that capture the traditions, histories, and experiences of the locals can also inform archaeologists about the excavation and its local context<sup>22</sup>, which promotes a sense of identity and awareness of an individual’s own cultural heritage and should to some extent help curb destructive phenomena such as looting or vandalism. For classical archaeologists from Northern Europe engaging in short-term campaigns in the Mediterranean regions, such public relations can drive a far deeper appreciation of the specific contexts and of their research objectives in general.

The formulation of identity through public involvement can, however, also have a negative impact. Many archaeologists in Germany still fear an instrumentalization of their

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14 Kaeser 2016, 202.

15 Doppelhofer 2017, 388.

16 Holtorf 2018, 29.

17 Kircher 2012, 63.

18 Sabine Wolfram in: Simon-Nanko & Rauhaus 2015, 481; more in general: Kircher 2012.

19 Doppelhofer 2017, 388.

20 Doppelhofer 2017, 387.

21 Skeates 2000, 62–63.

22 Doppelhofer 2017, 389–90.

field by ideological and extreme groups, which is not unfounded<sup>23</sup>. The revival and reconstruction of national myths like the narrative of The Teutons, which strengthen notions of national identity, may also be leveraged by extremist interests. As Dr. Miriam Sénécheau pointed out in a talk in Basel 2018, broadcasts surrounding the national myth of Arminius and the Battle of Varus are deliberately disseminated on the internet by groups with National Socialist backgrounds. While some of the reluctance of German archaeologists to embrace public archaeology stems from this promotion of national myths, many archaeologists insist that it remains integral to making active contributions to contemporary issues<sup>24</sup>. Doppelhofer thus calls for the integration of questions on ethics, mediation, and the obligations of archaeology into university curricula to allow critical reflection on the relevance and responsibility of such disciplines<sup>25</sup>.

It is surprising that the trends described above have not had more impact on archaeology in German universities. Public archaeology and heritage management remain relatively neglected topics even after the catastrophic damage inflicted on world heritage in the Near East in recent years. The avenues for studying heritage management or protection in German academia, or at least for connecting archaeology and heritage management, remain limited. In the courses offered by German archaeological institutes in the summer semester of 2019, only four out of thirty-one institutions<sup>26</sup> deal with heritage management. While budget and staff constraints may account for the scarce coverage of the wider aspects of archaeological research and public archaeology in many smaller university departments, the overall situation for a student seeking tuition on heritage management practices in German archaeological institutes is somewhat dismal. Some universities offer separate programs associated with archaeology degrees<sup>27</sup>, which include education in heritage management and conservation. Other degree programs for conservation and heritage management are in no way connected to archaeological institutes and do not focus on the demands of classical archaeology; namely at the universities of Frankfurt/Oder, Cottbus/Senftenberg, Bernburg/Dessau/Köthen, and Paderborn. For archaeology students in Germany, it therefore becomes a choice between settling for traditional classical archaeology at local institutions or moving abroad to attend degree programs designed to teach heritage and site management. One positive highlight is the Archaeological Heritage Network of DAI (German Archaeological Institute), as it does offer opportunities to students and perhaps some scope for synergies.

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23 See: Bizeul 2013, 9–33; Sénécheau 2012, 219–34 treats the revival of the Teutons as national myth in German schools.

24 Kaeser 2000.

25 Doppelhofer 2017, 393.

26 At the university institutes of Augsburg, Berlin (FU), Cologne and Leipzig, bearing in mind that even these four institutes did not offer in all four cases seminars on heritage (management), but in the latter two cases individual events in colloquia.

27 At Bamberg, Halle, Heidelberg; these three are not included in the above cited 31 departments of Classical Archaeology at German universities.

The two workshops on Crete and Sicily showed the potential of landscape and public archaeology and provided inspiring best-practice examples through various projects. The networking of doctoral students from various European countries offers the potential to allow new collaborations and results and can also help widen archaeological research to include heritage practices. The trend towards becoming aware of ethical questions and mediation as well as interdisciplinary integration renders meetings like in Kapetaniana and Scicli essential for archaeological education, especially since the opportunities to delve into heritage concerns in German universities remain decidedly limited.

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