

# EX NOVO

## Journal of Archaeology

Volume 1, Number 1, 2016

Special Issue

### THE IMPACT OF THE FALL OF COMMUNISM ON EUROPEAN HERITAGE

Proceedings of the 20<sup>th</sup> EAA Meeting held in Istanbul 10–14 September 2014

Edited by Maja Gori & Valerie Higgins

Appendix

### PERCHÉ L'ARCHEOLOGIA?

An interview with Giovanni Azzena, Barbara Barich, Giampietro Brogiolo,  
Renato Peroni, Mario Torelli by Confederazione Italiana Archeologi – EXNOVO

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# Ex Novo Journal of Archaeology

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## Editorial

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### Introducing Ex Novo

At the beginning of the 2000s, following a short and (too) optimistic period of prosperity caused by the boom of commercial archaeology, Italian archaeology experienced a deep crisis. This seesawing situation was particularly evident in Rome, where the job market was unable to absorb the increasing number of archaeologists graduating from La Sapienza - the largest Archaeology Department in Italy - as well as from the other two universities of the city. Rome was (and still is) a magnet for archaeologists coming from the rest of the Peninsula, in particular from central and southern Italy, seeking jobs in both commercial and public sectors, as the survey carried out by Discovering the Archaeologists of Europe 2014 Research Project has clearly pointed out (Pintucci & Cella 2014).

Job market crisis in archaeology, however, spread rapidly in the whole Peninsula. Soon the unemployment rate started to rise among the younger generation of archaeologists and so their discontent. It was in this situation that a group of students and fresh graduate archaeologists from La Sapienza in December 2004 decided to establish the CIA - Confederazione Italiana Archeologi (Italian Confederation of Archaeologists), the first association of professionals based in Italy whose main aim was safeguarding archaeological careers. A few months later, in 2005, the CIA designed a virtual open access space to foster dialogue among archaeologists, in an attempt to stimulate students, professionals working in both private and public sectors, scholars and researchers to challenge themselves on the role of archaeology in society. Ex Novo was born. The first pilot issue - released online only for a year - collected five short papers by Giovanni Azzena, Barbara Barich, Gian Pietro Brogiolo, Renato Peroni and Mario Torelli, who tried to answer the age-old question: Archaeology, why? The editorial project, however, was soon abandoned, mainly due to difficulties in managing such an ambitious project while dealing with the growing workload and the different career paths pursued by the founder members.

The question underlying the former Ex Novo project, archaeology, why?, *ça va sans dire* remains unanswered and is still affecting the approach to the profession of archaeology in all its multiple facets, from fieldwork activities to museums, from academic research to archaeological tourism, and its relationship to society. More importantly, the lack of dialogue between academic and commercial archaeology still needs to be tackled systematically. Across Europe, and in Italy especially, scholarship and archaeological professions are persistently detached and are too often perceived as almost antithetic spheres.

For these reasons, ten years later part of the former Ex Novo board decided to revitalize the project in collaboration with new colleagues, turning Ex Novo into a fully peer reviewed open access international journal that promotes interdisciplinary research focusing on the multiple relations between archaeology and society.

The focal point of the renewed Ex Novo is to stimulate archaeology to reflect on contemporary approaches and perspectives on antiquity, and to encourage archaeologists to engage with innovative theoretical frameworks borrowed from other disciplines such as history, anthropology, political sciences, philosophy, social sciences and colonial studies. In particular, Ex Novo will address subjects such as the relationship between politics and archaeology, public archaeology, the legacies of colonialism and nationalism within the archaeological discipline, the articulation between local and global archaeological traditions, archaeology and archaeologists' involvement in memory and identity, museum studies, destruction and restitution issues, and will create a challenging and stimulating platform for discussion. By encompassing prehistory to the modern period, and by exploring interconnections between archaeological practice and the importance of the past in contemporary society, Ex Novo wishes to foster a dialogue between disciplines concerned with the past and its relevance, uses and interpretations in the present, as well as to explore current theoretical, political and heritage issues connected to the field of archaeology. (EC/MG/AP/MRL)

#### **Kick starting Ex Novo: between crowdfunding and academia**

The journey of Ex Novo got off to a very good start, running a successful crowdfunding campaign that exceeded all our expectations. Establishing and designing a scientific journal from scratch not only requires time and commitment, but it also entails expenses and budget planning. Given the grim economic situation of research funding within humanities, we decided not to wait for a grant to come in but to adopt a different strategy to finance our project. Not just high tech start-ups succeed on crowdfunding. Over the last few years, crowdfunding in academia has emerged as an important alternative funding mechanism for scientific research. Indeed, unless private funds come into play, scholars are chain grant writing, submitting one grant and making sure the next one is ready to go: crowdfunding is a strategy that can relieve some of this pressure. As effectively stated by dr. Jeanne Garbarino, director of the Science Outreach at Rockefeller University:

*“Science crowdfunding is a potential feedback mechanism to help scientists target interested parties to fund their research, allowing for greater transparency and accountability. People have been saying that science is inaccessible, that scientists are locked up in their ivory towers and we do not know how our tax dollars being used. Crowdfunding could be a mechanism to help improve that system, which can lead to both increased publicity and financial contributions” (Garbarino 2013).*

It is precisely towards this direction that we embarked on this project. On the 30th November 2015 we launched a crowdfunding campaign on one of the best-known online platforms, Kickstarter, placing Ex Novo as academic project within the Publishing category. In thirty days, we closed our funding campaign, going well beyond our expectations: by the 30th December, not only did we achieve our goal, but we also raised 35% more than the initial target. The money enabled us to cover the publishing costs, including inscription to the public registry, copyright

fees, printing and distributing the journal, as well as re-designing and implementing the website.

Despite growing interest into alternative ways for financing scientific research, crowdfunding in Italian archaeology is still a very uncommon practice. Usually it applies only to fieldwork projects that can offer as a reward to backers the unique experience of digging on a real excavation, probably the most appealing side of archaeology to the wider public. In this sense, the case of Ex Novo is totally different. Being an editorial project, Ex Novo could not reward its supporters with field training, nor with any other hands-on experience of archaeology. Rather, we had to rely on the idea behind the journal, that is to bridge the gap between the different voices involved in the study and re-use of the past, putting into practice the multidisciplinary and multivocal approach advocated by the founders of Ex Novo.

By launching Ex Novo on Kickstarter we took our chances, staking the whole project on the success of the crowdfunding campaign. To illustrate the project to a multifaceted audience, we had to strike a fine balance between popularizing the concept of the journal using catchy texts and graphics without oversimplifying its scope at the same time. Ultimately, Ex Novo made it through and in less than a month achieved (and went beyond) the goal set at the beginning. It is worthwhile noting that out of 68 backers, 41 are archaeologists, scholars and heritage professionals, whereas the remaining 27 are non-experts who decided to invest in the project. In a way, this outcome illustrates well the potential of crowdsourcing and the varied nature of people reached through it: on the one hand, the online campaign allowed Ex Novo to extend in very little time the network of professionals willing to contribute to the project, virtually multiplying the choice of topics possibly covered by the journal. On the other hand, the feedback received from non-experts presents new challenges in terms of dissemination of the journal contents, broadening the perspectives of both authors and readers of Ex Novo.

Crowdfunding for scientific research will undoubtedly continue to grow, opening up not only new funding possibilities, but also questioning the current ways of communicating and sharing science, as the experience of Ex Novo may well demonstrate. (MRL)

### **Open Access policy**

Over the last years, the debate focusing on scientific research and its dissemination both within academia and the public at large has revolved around two major aspects: the dramatic shortage of public economic resources, and the outreach strategies focusing especially on the segment of society who has limited access to scientific publications through libraries and online resources. The latter issue is particularly relevant to the Humanities, which are subject to more dramatic budget cuts than other disciplines. Universities, especially the small ones located in peripheral areas, struggle to keep their library collections updated and to purchase online scientific journals. Thus, accessing updated scientific literature is becoming increasingly expensive and time consuming to students and researchers, relying mostly on personal initiative and commitment.

The development of computer technologies alongside growing globalised knowledge has substantially contributed to the spread of scientific data, and in the last 15 years

several scientific journals have decided to be openly accessible, engaging also in lively debates about the subject.

In this picture, Italy holds quite an awkward position. Being one of the pioneer countries in the field, Italy created several well-established open access journals like *Archeologia e Calcolatori*, *Fasti online*, *ArcheoFOSS online* and, since 2011, the *Bollettino di Archeologia Online*, which is the official publication edited by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism. However, a considerable part of academia remains rather skeptical and patronising towards the journals adopting open access policies. It is not unusual, indeed, to consider open access publications as low quality byproducts, irrespective of their actual content or the accuracy of peer review policies, whereas 'branded' journals with longstanding academic tradition are not always meeting the expectations regarding their scientific quality.

It is clearly evident that online open access policies not only facilitate the work of archeologists who can access quickly and free of charge online references, but also enhance the overall cultural growth of society in a wider sense. Non-specialists, in particular, often have difficulties in accessing scientific knowledge without resorting to academic resources and faculty libraries, which are more frequently perceived as a hindrance than a learning tool.

For these reasons, *Ex Novo* opted for a full open access policy, which entails taking also a political stance in the debate about knowledge dissemination. We firmly believe that *Ex Novo* should be a medium for communicating new approaches to archaeology and to the past in general, as well as provide a platform where scholars engage themselves with present-day society by sharing and transferring scientific knowledge beyond traditional academic boundaries. (AP)

### **Reviewing Archaeological Museums, Sites & Parks**

Alongside book reviews, *Ex Novo* publishes evaluations of archaeological museums, exhibitions, sites and parks, given their growing importance in communicating science to the public at large. By devoting a special place to museums and heritage site reviews in our journal, our purpose is to stimulate archaeologists and heritage professionals to adopt sustainable innovation practices in communicating the past to the public, with the ultimate goal of promoting societal engagement for sustainable innovation activities in heritage sites.

In Italy, for instance, the recent reforms of public museums and archaeological sites carried out by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage and Tourism triggered a lively debate concerning the consumption and reception of archaeological heritage. At the core of the discussion lies the way in which the scientific community presents the outcome of their research to different audiences, frequently perceived as too technical and tailored to the needs of a specialized user. Indeed, too often the task of conveying information to the public is delegated to tour operators, privileging commercial aspects rather than cultural ones. In other words, heritage is more frequently perceived as a sole means to cash out as opposed to a tool to promote societal cultural growth. While natural science museums have engaged with theoretical aspects concerning their activities through dedicated journals such as *Museologia Scientifica*, the historic and artistic museums, including archaeological institutions, struggle to catch up.

Today, renewed interest in narrating the past through museums and heritage sites has brought to the forefront the gap mentioned above, placing particular emphasis for instance on the national and nationalistic narratives as displayed in national museums, as well as old-fashioned colonial and ethnographic approaches to the past. In this sense, Ex Novo museum reviews should not simply be a listing of the contents of an exhibition or new archaeological site installation but should instead assess its strengths and weaknesses and locate it within the current field of scholarship. In short, we wish to provide a space to reflect and assess state-of-the-art setups and trends within museums exhibitions and site installations. (EC)



Figure 1. East German guards watch the crowds massing on top of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Photograph: GDR Museum.

### Introducing the Special Issue

Ex Novo inaugurates its editorial activity by publishing a special issue that collects the proceedings of the session *The Impact of the Fall of Communism on European Heritage*, held at the 20th Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists in Istanbul on the 10-14 September 2014, and organised by Valerie Higgins (the American University of Rome) and Maja Gori (University of Heidelberg). Even though the geographic focus of the session was wider, encompassing Russia and other countries of the Eastern Bloc such as Romania and East Germany, the contributions that we received for publication focus mainly on Italy and Albania. The present volume, with this narrower geographical focus, encompasses an outstanding range of perspectives through which the impact of the fall of communism on the heritage of Albania, Italy, and partially former Yugoslavia is assessed.

The year 2014 marked 25 years since the fall of the Berlin Wall, and the main purpose of the session was to examine how heritage in Europe has adapted during this period,

how the narratives of communism that influenced interpretations of the past have been revised, and how the heritage of the communist period has been received. The revolutionary wave that resulted in the end of communist rule in Central and Eastern Europe and beyond affected heritage and its definition, which has indeed changed substantially through time and whose formulation was deeply influenced by social factors and historic circumstances. The breakdown of Soviet Union and Yugoslavia, for example, remapped the political geography of most of Eurasia, creating to date more than sixteen internationally recognized sovereign entities, i.e. nations. Conceptions of heritage in Central and Eastern Europe, indeed, underline the importance of archaeology for national identity building in former communist countries. The history of archaeological discipline and its relation to nationalism and identity building in the Adriatic region (Italy, Yugoslavia and Albania) is analysed by Elisa Cella, Maja Gori and Alessandro Pintucci in the paper *Archaeology in the Adriatic. From the Dawn to the Sunset of Communist Ideologies*. The way in which national identity and its relation to Antiquity is perceived in Albania by the generation who have not had direct experience of living in a communist regime is addressed by Valerie Higgins in the paper *Are We Still Illyrians?*

The fall of communism affected not only the way in which local communities relate to archaeological sites for identity building, but also economic and social aspects of their life as well. Dana Phelps, in her paper *Heritage for Development, Multiethnic Communities, and the Case of Butrint National Park on the Albanian-Greek Border*, reveals the particularly complex tangle that exists between development and heritage projects in transitioning countries such as Albania. So-called ‘dark heritage’, the way in which society relates to heritage that has a negative connotation, is another relevant issue characterising Albania. Francesco Iacono and Klejd L. Këlliçi, in their paper *Exploring the public perception of Communist Heritage in Post-communist Albania*, address the social significance of the remnants of the recent communist past in this country showing that they remain a significant feature marking the urban landscape.

Communism affected countries outside the Eastern Block as well, such as Italy, which had the largest Communist party of Western Europe. The impact of the fall of communism on the development of Prehistoric and Classical archaeology in Italy is addressed by Elisa Cella, Maja Gori and Alessandro Pintucci in the paper *The trowel and the sickle. Italian archaeology and its Marxist legacy*, while Giulia Vollono in her work *Exploring approaches to Italian Early Medieval Archaeology in post communist Europe* explores the impact that such ideology had on Medieval Archaeology and in the construction of a trans-national European narrative in a post-communist Europe while maintaining a central role in the negotiation of local identities. (MG)

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