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*Public archaeology. Theories,
definitions, concepts*

SUMMARY OF THE PHD THESIS

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Half a century has passed since the publication of *Public Archaeology* (McGimsey III 1972), considered to be the "cornerstone" of the field that was to appear in the United States of America and to arouse the interest of researchers in the field of archaeology around the world, becoming the central subject of this approach. Its development has occurred at a sustained pace, so that, at present, a large number of academic institutions abroad offer specialization courses in the field of Public Archaeology, and the number of publications is constantly growing, there is even a journal dedicated entirely to the subject (*Public Archaeology*, Taylor & Francis Online Publishing House, published since 2000¹). However, literature review suggests that archaeologists have yet to find the "middle ground" in setting the objectives, purpose, and methodology of the field in question, most likely due to the broad spectrum of methods, techniques, and implications that the discipline encompasses.

Although, during the last 50 years, the new field has taken deep roots in countries such as Great Britain, Australia, Japan and, especially, in the United States of America, in the Romanian space it is still at the beginning of the road. Thus, at present, no more than a few scientific articles can be identified that refer directly to the existing relationship between archaeology and the public (Ion 2013; Nemeti 2017; Szabó 2017; Palincaş 2011, 2016; Bodi & Plasterer 2022, Brunchi 2022). Starting from this fact, the proposed research has as main objective the elaboration of a methodology that can be subsequently used in the dissemination of archaeological research results among the general public. Of course, such

¹ <https://www.tandfonline.com/journals/vpua20> (accessed: 04.2023).

an approach required, as a starting point, establishing and, more importantly, understanding the current status of the interaction between the two main actors (archaeology-public), both globally and nationally. The early stage in which Romania finds itself, on the axis of sharing the results of archaeological research with the more or less interested public, seems to offer a disadvantage, but I think it is rather an asset. Thus, a good knowledge of the history of the field and its problems, but, more importantly, of the solutions identified over time by the various schools of thought, gives us the opportunity for a path as favorable and free of "mistakes" as possible, which is why the methodology pursued in this approach is based on the main theoretical models developed in the last half decade, models who have experienced varying degrees of success in facilitating a good archaeologist-public relationship.

In order to achieve the objective already mentioned, the research entitled *Public Archaeology. Theories, definitions, concepts* was structured in four main segments, made up of several chapters. The first of these revolved around the concept of contextualization, being presented the general landmarks regarding the chosen theme. Next, it was necessary to expose the theoretical and methodological aspects that accompanied the research during the last three years. The presentation of the current state of knowledge was another key aspect of this approach, so that the last segment illustrates a series of practical applications meant to "sweeten" the existing relationship between the archaeologist and the public.

The early section of the paper was organized into two chapters. First, *Domain definition. Theoretical Highlights*, aimed to present the main concepts with which the field of *Public Archaeology* operates, appealing to

their status and meanings in states where not only the archaeologist-public relationship, but also studies dedicated to the latter have taken deep roots. At the same time, on this occasion we aimed to illustrate the problem that arose with the popularization of the field outside the borders of English-speaking states, but also to transpose, in an international context, the existing situation on the territory of Romania. The second chapter, *History of the Public Domain Archaeology*, aimed to expose the current state of research, both globally and nationally. In order to make the relationship as easy as possible, both to be achieved and to follow, we chose as an example the model proposed by G. Moshenska (Bonacchi & Moshenska 2015, 2, figure 1), integrating the studies published in the Romanian space in the general context, established by the author already mentioned. Thus, the steps taken by both the public and specialists in the archaeological research in Romania over the last 150 years were highlighted. Finally, in the last section of the second chapter, I wanted to make a review of the main legislative problems encountered in Romania and also to suggest possible ways to settle the tensions existing between the passionate public and archaeologists, but also possible ways in which the activities undertaken by "amateur archaeologists" could be exploited, for scientific purposes.

Further, the segment dedicated to presenting and explaining the methodological aspects accompanying this approach was treated throughout the chapter *Methodological milestones*. Representing the third chapter of the paper, it was structured so as to provide, first of all, a review of the main theoretical aspects, without which it would not have been possible to achieve the practical applications proposed later. An important segment of this chapter was dedicated to aerial photography and modern

techniques deriving from its use (Digital Surface Models, orthophotoplans, three-dimensional models, 360° panoramas, etc.). We also considered necessary the brief presentation of the main geophysical prospecting methods used in the activities carried out during the doctoral research, so that the end of the chapter is dedicated to GIS systems, the main medium for integrating all data sets and, at the same time, the working tool that facilitates public access to archaeological information. The need to present this methodological information is doubled by the public's need to be familiar with all the methods used in contemporary archaeology because, in general, only artifacts or reconstructions (made in the final stage of archaeological endeavors) are presented, not being given special importance to the entire archaeological research. Since the proposed work involves the relationship of various working methods, we considered it necessary to dedicate a special segment *Research methodology*. On this occasion, All the steps followed in the paper were exposed, accompanied by the detailing of the proposed research model. The latter was developed in order to obtain results that could be easily disseminated to the public and, at the same time, arouse interest in archaeological research. In this regard, modern methods of archaeological research have been used, which have the advantage of providing results with an attractive visual support.

Fourth chapter, *Public perception of archaeology. Questionnaire*, was developed in order to outline a coherent image regarding the status that the science in question has in Romania, especially in the view of the general public, not involved in specific activities. Thus, the segment was based on the questionnaire entitled *Public perception of archaeology*, developed

according to the model proposed within the NEARCH project², funded by the European Commission between 2013 and 2018, and this study was disseminated online through Facebook. The 583 responses were interpreted qualitatively, the results being analyzed by reference to those obtained at European level. The information thus acquired allowed the development of a strategy for approaching the target audience, representing the foundation of practical applications carried out later. Last but not least, on this occasion, several important issues were also discussed, including *Deontological Code of Archaeologists in Romania*, updated mid-2022, directly regulating aspects of the archaeologist-public relationship.

The last chapter was dedicated to exposing the practical applications, carried out during 2021-2023, and their classification in the typology proposed by G. Moshenska (Bonacchi and Moshenska 2015, 2, figure 1). The selection of working methods, as well as of the approaches used, aimed to cover a wide spectrum of all activities specific to the vast field *Public Archaeology*. Also presented in this chapter was *ArchaeoPortal*³, the online platform that represents the epicenter of doctoral research, which is created specifically to present archaeological information, so that the user experience is as "friendly" and exciting as possible.

Finally, all of the above have been linked and summarised in the section dedicated to the conclusions, entitled *Final considerations regarding the status of Public Archaeology in Romania*. This paper

² <http://www.nearch.eu/what-is-nearch> (accessed 2022/07).

³ <https://arheoinvest.maps.arcgis.com/apps/instant/basic/index.html?appid=e07be90f5a8e41c185994276eed163db> (accessed: 05.2023).

concludes with *List of illustrations* encountered throughout the whole process, *List of Annexes*, made up of the supporting documents, which regulate the status of archaeology in Romania, respectively of its relationship with the public, *List of abbreviations* Used *Bibliography* consulted, and *Annexes* proper, including: *Deontological Code of Archaeologists in Romania* (2022), *Instruction no.2/08.04.2016*, *Government Ordinance no. 43/2000* and *Treaty of Valletta* (1992).

The proposed approach has a high character of originality, demonstrated precisely by the specialized bibliography exposed at the end of the paper, representing the first synthesis dedicated to the field *Public Archaeology* on the territory of Romania. At the same time, the very manner of dissemination and exposure of archaeological research undertaken in recent years has an important character of originality. In this regard, I mention that both the platforms integrated into the website www.archaeolandscapes.ro as well as the archaeological portal *ArchaeoPortal* represents a new stage in what we call *Open Archaeology* or *Popular Archaeology*. Also, the introduction into the scientific circuit of unique settlements, as well as new data sets, obtained as a result of using non-invasive research methods, has certainly contributed to shaping a more complex and complete picture of the local archaeological heritage.

This short introduction cannot be concluded without expressing my gratitude to the people who helped me during my research. Thus, I address, first of all, respectful thanks to prof.univ.dr. Lucrețiu-Ion Bîrliba, scientific coordinator of this paper, for the support and trust granted during the three years of doctoral studies.

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- **Conclusions**

The present research allowed drawing a set of conclusions that could represent the foundation of future *Public Archaeology endeavors*. Thus, Romania is a developing country, and major infrastructure works are just beginning. Thus, we can deduce, compared to developed countries, where this situation was found in the 1960s and 1980s, that archaeologists will be increasingly demanded in these works and increasingly pressured economically, politically and socially. The small number of archaeologists relative to the scale of these works is another problem. In the Romanian space, the involvement of archaeologists in such projects is not seen in favorable terms, possible delays being attributed to them, which is revealed both by the questionnaire applied in the present study and by the large number of press articles on this subject⁴. It is important to note that in these works, archaeologists come into direct contact with all the components that form the term *public*. In other words, archaeologists interact both with the social sphere, represented by the human community, more or less interested in archaeological research, and with the official sphere, the works being managed by the Romanian state through various bodies in the territory (generally under the patronage of the Ministry of Transport and Infrastructure). All these works fall under specific sub-fields of *Public Archaeology*: Cultural Resources Management (CRM) and Cultural Heritage Management (CHM). Recent studies critique the discourse that has dominated these fields over recent years, characterizing it as an elitist narrative that, in order to be understood, requires specialized knowledge

⁴ http://stiri.tvr.ro/lucrari-oprite-in-situl-arheologic-prospat-dechis-pe-autostrada-a7-dar-i-pe-antier_921162.html#view (Accessed: 04.2023).

sets (Smith 2012; Jameson 2016; Matsuda 2016). The interpretations promoted in these speeches are characterized by a romantic vision of the past, focusing on the aesthetic side of monuments to the detriment of other immaterial values. The monopoly exercised by this type of discourse has prevented productive involvement and criticism of the local community, achieving only a *top-down approach*. In Romania's case, this type of discourse still dominates the world of archaeologists, which is why a paradigm shift is more than necessary, given the current economic climate and the policies adopted at European level (Faro Convention, Council of Europe Decisions).

The activities presented above aimed to bring the public closer to archaeological research, by organizing meetings in different forms (exhibitions, workshops, volunteering on site), but also by disseminating information in the online environment, using various interactive platforms, documentaries or promotional videos. Also, the foundations for future collaborations with local authorities were laid, the ultimate goal being to carry out participatory archaeology projects, such as *community archaeology*. In this respect, *conducting workshops*, at least twice a year, can ensure that a good connection with the interested public is maintained. The formation of institutional collaborations is not the only success of this approach, so we managed to create a nucleus of volunteers interested in participating directly in archaeological research. Such steps must be continued, the number of people involved increasing from year to year. In other words, the activities carried out in this research represent only the foundation on which the next archaeological projects in which the public is directly involved will develop, also considering *bottom-up* approaches.

The direction of development of world archaeology seems to be directed towards two coordinates: interdisciplinarity and databases. The methodology proposed in the previous chapter is based precisely on these coordinates, by using geophysical research methods and integrating the results into a geographic information system. The results obtained are easily integrated into various Public *Archaeology* approaches, as we have exemplified in the previous lines, by using various methods of information visualization, methods that provide results with a strong visual impact. Also, the way archaeological information is presented and stored is an advantage through the possibility of integrating information into national databases (a concrete example in this regard is represented by the facilitation of integrating archaeological sites from the Archaeological Repertoire of Botosani County into the ArchaeoPortal platform), but also opening the possibility of collaborations at European or global level, by integrating this data into a widely used GIS environment. Another aspect considered during this research concerned data security, the proposed methodology facilitating this. This problem of preserving archaeological information over the years became evident when we wanted to revisit older archaeological research and reinterpret it, using the methods and knowledge we have today. Preserving raw data and *metadata* is an advantage for future generations of archaeologists, who will be able to reinterpret this data using technologies available over the years. All the researches undertaken in recent years, together with the members of the Arheoinvest center, have been oriented towards facilitating access to information obtained from archaeological investigations and integrating

them into databases usable by both the interested public and specialists in the field, so we hope that our example will be followed by other specialists.

Of course, the need to use interdisciplinarity in *Public Archaeology* studies is absolutely necessary and promoted in the literature (Moshenska 2017, 12). The use of methods derived from the field of Communication Sciences can facilitate the acquisition of a new set of skills that can be used to more effectively disseminate information to a varied audience. Thus, the next generation of "public archaeologists" will have skills to manage programs to engage the public in archaeological activity and will manage to address more efficiently a wider audience, at present, most of the existing specialized publications in Romania not being oriented to the general public. Why not? By approaching other humanities, which study society as a whole (sociology) critically, we will be able to bring back the epistemological character of archaeology to the attention of specialists, too anchored at present in practical approaches.

Another problem, which we find worldwide and which would facilitate a substantial development of the field in question, is represented by the lack of data on the public consuming archaeological information. Statistics and studies carried out so far target specific activities, for example the preferences of visitors to a museum, but, as Gabriel Moshenska (2017, 13) mentioned, large-scale studies addressing the public's preferences in terms of archaeology, at national or European level, are missing. The answer to this problem was the launch of the questionnaire *Public perception of archaeology* in the online environment. It is important to mention that the recorded answers are valid only for a minority segment of the Romanian population, namely the *interested public*, characterized

by a higher level of education than the national average and with a preference for consuming archaeological information in the online environment or television, but represents an important step in identifying a possible target audience in Romania. In this way, important points of Public Archaeology were reached, the *organized activities being framed in* Open Archaeology, Popular Archaeology, *Archaeological Education, Public Sector Archaeology* and Archaeologists working with the public.

Finally, we can say that the field of *Public Archaeology*, more than 50 years after the launch of the work that popularized the name in the literature, has passed the incipient phase of affirmation, *losing its innocence*. Thus, the introduction of the discipline into the academic curriculum of universities offering specializations in the field of archaeology becomes imperative. Whether this personal assessment becomes a concrete fact or not, *Public Archaeology's* global momentum cannot be stopped or challenged.

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