Archaeology in the 21st Century: Challenges of the Postmodern World
In 50 years world has changed ‘beyond repair’ and so does conditions for archaeology.
UN Member States, 1950 = 60

UN Member States, 2011 = 192

1945 – Italy, Yugoslavia, France
1946 – Romania
1948 – Belgium
1952 – Greece
1953 – Hungary
1959 – San Marino
1960 – Cyprus
1968 – Portugal
1978 – Moldavia SSR
1984 – Liechtenstein
1990 – Canton Appenzell (CH)
World Population: 1950-2050

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, International Data Base, December 2008 Update.

THE WORLD’S URBAN POPULATION, 1950-2030
If someone had forecast in 1950 or 1955 what the world would actually look like (we now know) in 2000 or 2005, that person would have been contemptuously dismissed by contemporaries as living in a world of fantasy.

The few long-term projections of that period project a much smaller world, in population, in production, and in real incomes.

Average income was nearly three times higher at the end of the 20th century than it was in mid-century, a historically unprecedented rise.

Extreme poverty (less than 1 USD/person/day) fell from 63 percent of the population of today’s developing countries in 1950 to 13 percent in 2000.

_Growth and Poverty in the World Economy, 1950-2000_  
_RICHARD N. COOPER_
General intellectual changes

- Architecture
- Art
- Literature
- History
50 years

ARCHITECTURE
‘Abstract’

Self-Critical

Autonomous

Unique

Representational

Post-Critical

Contingent

Press Esc to exit full screen mode.

‘Mass Produced’

Morris Louis *Alpha-Theta*, 1961

Takashi Murakami *Flower Ball* 2005-
MODERN

Places faith in the ideas, values, beliefs, culture, and norms of the West.

Attempts to reveal profound truths of experience and life.

Focused on central themes and a united vision.

Authors guide and control the reader’s response to their work.

POSTMODERN

Rejection of Western values & beliefs as only a small part of the human experience.

Suspicious of being "profound" because such ideas are based on one particular (Western) value systems. Prefers to dwell on the exterior image, avoids suggesting underlying meanings.

Focuses on contradictory, fragmented, ambiguous unfinished world.

Writer creates an "open" work; reader must supply his own connections, alternative meanings, and his own interpretation.
MODERN

- Master Narratives and Metanarratives of history, culture and national identity; myths of cultural and ethnic origin

- Faith in “Grand Theory” (totalizing explanations in history, science and culture) to represent all knowledge and explain everything.

- Faith in and myths of, social and cultural unity, hierarchies of social-class and ethnic/national values, seemingly clear bases for unity.

POSTMODERN

- Suspicion and rejection of Master Narratives; local narratives, ironic deconstruction of master narratives: counter-myths of origin

- Rejection of totalizing theories; pursuit of localizing and contingent theories

- Social and cultural pluralism, disunity, unclear bases for social/national/ethnic unity.
And what about archaeology?
1. From one general paradigm to a number of contemporary paradigms.
2. From Big Picture of the past to a number of particular (local) images
3. From empirical, ‘objective’ to interpretative, subjective
4. From scientific (universal, fundamental) knowledge to applied
5. From ‘western’ biased (national, colonial) to global (‘world’) archaeology
6. From objects of science to heritage
7. From public to private.
8. From ‘mission’ to profession
Perspectives for students:

How to use knowledge about the past to think productively about the present and the future?

How to integrate classroom with the real world?

How to understand 21st century practice of archaeology?

What are the challenges of studying archaeology today?

Major determinants:

1. Bologna reform
2. Relevancy of archaeology
3. Job market and job opportunities
• Adoption of a system of easily readable and comparable degrees, also through the implementation of the Diploma Supplement, in order to promote European citizens employability and the international competitiveness of the European higher education system;

• Adoption of a system essentially based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. Access to the second cycle shall require successful completion of first cycle studies, lasting a minimum of three years. The degree awarded after the first cycle shall also be relevant to the European labour market as an appropriate level of qualification. The second cycle should lead to the master and/or doctorate degree as in many European countries;

• Establishment of a system of credits - such as in the ECTS system - as a proper means of promoting the most widespread student mobility. Credits could also be acquired in non-higher education contexts, including lifelong learning, provided they are recognised by the receiving universities concerned;

• Promotion of mobility by overcoming obstacles to the effective exercise of free movement with particular attention to:
  • for students, access to study and training opportunities and to related services;
  • for teachers, researchers and administrative staff, recognition and valorisation of period spent in a European context researching, teaching and training, without prejudicing their statutory rights;

• Promotion of European co-operation in quality assurance with a view to developing comparable criteria and methodologies;

• Promotion of the necessary European dimensions in higher education, particularly with regards to curricular development, inter-institutional co-operation, mobility schemes and integrated programmes of study, training and research.
...It is therefore clear that higher education institutions have a unique opportunity to shape their own European future and to play a crucial role in the development and implementation of the Bologna process...

...it clearly acknowledges the necessary independence and autonomy of universities...

...Universities and other institutions of higher education can choose to be actors, rather than objects, of this essential process of change...

...The Sorbonne declaration of 25th of May 1998, which was underpinned by these considerations, stressed the universities' central role in developing European cultural dimensions. It emphasised the creation of the European area of higher education as a key way to promote citizens' mobility and employability and the Continent's overall development...

BUT SOMETHING SEEM TO WENT WRONG, AT LEAST IN THE INITIAL PHASE.

- In general, national governments, throughout Europe, saw in the Bologna process an opportunity for cutting costs for public education (3 years cost less than 4)

- attention was more focused on formal aspects (ECTS, 3+2+3, 4+1+3...; real structural changes were to a great degree left open (no real financial support for structural changes)

- much of the Bologna reform was introduced (forced) from the top, financial issues in particular
EU Commission policy texts call for higher education activities to be responsive to the ‘needs’ of the labour market and industry. According to this discursive logic, higher education results in and corresponds to the ‘up-skilling’ of the workforce. In this depiction, knowledge is produced and then traded. Education is represented as a product, the researcher as a manufacturer, student as a consumer, and ECTS credits as the ‘currency of exchange’ (Nyborg, 2005).

Furthermore, these lines of reasoning present higher education as a primarily scientific activity (rather than a creative or inspired process). This is most clearly demonstrated by the increasing attention paid to science, engineering and technologies (European Commission, 2003a; 2003e; 2005j) and in the Commission’s demands for institutions and individuals to develop their capacity for strategic research ‘management’.

WHAT IS ‘BOLOGNA’ CHANGING IN ARCHAEOLOGY?

1. Move from ‘Humboldtean’ (‘master : apprentice’ model) with clear hierarchy in degrees (i.e. knowledge) to so called ‘open’ system

2. Introduction of two qualification levels (BA and MA); problems with recognizing formal competences for career in archaeology (i.e. What can a BA in archaeology does autonomously?). This problem is also linked with very common practice of cutting the former 4-5 years programs into 2 parts, assuming that most of the students will continue at the MA level and so reach the level of ‘full archaeologist’ (i.e. BA seen as ‘uncomplete’ archaeologist).

3. Problems with small departments (not enough staff for offering more courses)
Relevancy of archaeology

Archaeology

Discipline & Practice (90% preventive, rescue...)
Archaeological sites and objects

Applied archaeology

CRM

HERITAGE

Cultural Resource Management

CRM

Market value

Customers

Development

Intrinsic values
Anglo-Saxon ‘common law’ tradition: society regulates itself
- optimistic version: operations of a “hidden hand” of market
- pessimistic version: neo-Darwinism, sociobiology, economic liberalism

Continental Europe: state (as the expression of the community of citizens) organises and regulates social life.

Up until the 1980’s in many parts of western Europe, most of what concerned the general interest – such as education, a large part of culture, as well as transports, energy, post and telecommunications, and indeed banks and insurance companies – were the responsibility and the property of the state, that is to say of the community of citizens.

It was only during the 1980s that this state of affairs was put in question (on behalf of economic efficiency; without a real public debate).

From early 1990s the we can witnes growth of private (contract, development-lead..., archaeology) all over Europe.

However, the recent global crisis has considerable impact and triggered reflection on Liberal paradigm illustrated by the notorious statement “The State in not the solution, but the problem” by Milton Friedman which pervaded policy in the last 2 decades.

Geoffrey Dicks (analyst at the Royal Bank of Scotland) “One unusual indicator of an economic slowdown is the employment, or otherwise, of archaeologists. When new ground is broken for a building development, the archaeologists are usually allowed in first, to rescue any important fragments. With little new ground being broken, demand for archaeologists is falling”.

Falling so fast and hard that a BBC item entitled ‘recession leaves history in the dark’ had no qualms to dub archaeology “a ‘canary’ trade, one which – like the canaries warning of dangerous gas in mining history – dies at the first sign of trouble in the air”.
1. The “hidden hand” of the market would work only if people had complete information regarding merchandises and services. But it is never the case: ...people can be very easily manipulated regarding the information they have access to.

2. Supposedly competing companies often engage in agreements of various sorts, verging on illegality.

3. Commercial companies and their shareholders prefer immediate concrete benefits to long-term investments.

4. Regarding archaeology, the notion of competition is often seriously misunderstood. It so happens that developers do not set out to buy the best possible archaeology. Developers simply want, following the regulations in force, their grounds to be cleared of archaeological remains as quickly and cheaply as possible. Economic competition in the field of archaeology has therefore nothing to do with scientific competition.

5. ‘Code of Ethics’ is a noble notion that may be relevant or applicable in some (possibly Protestant) countries of Western Europe, but is it not pertinent, to be realistic, in many parts of our continent and in much of the world. Such a code supposes in fact a shared commitment to strong scientific control, which does not seem to be the case.

6. It is clear that the effects of global crisis on commercial companies, in any economic or cultural field, are quite different and more challenging than is the case with public bodies operating under the guarantee of the State.
Job market and job opportunities

Present situation (pessimistic diagnose):
- Cuts in public sector (no new jobs, decreased funds for basic programs...)
- Development (construction) stalling, bad payers
- Universities in transition (Bologna reform still not showing improvements)
- Heritage protection (public service) challenged

Opportunities and way out of crisis:
- spin-off effect (improvement logically follows the ‘bad’ times; situation should not go ‘beyond repair’)
- investment in knowledge (necessary for finding/creating new employment niches)
  - EU funded projects
  - integration of archaeology with other disciplines necessary for development strategies
- networking, information, exchange programs
- research and scientific development (case: introduction of preventive strategies on motorways)