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# Categories Beyond: an approach to value and relevance of archaeological heritage. Three case studies in Westphalia, Germany

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This short note argues that relevance and acceptance of archaeological heritage, particularly that from the 18th to the 20th centuries, hinge on effective public mediation. To achieve this, it is crucial to focus on the value and legitimisation of monuments from an impartial perspective. Employing an interdisciplinary and open-minded approach is essential in providing pertinent responses to enquiries that resonate with contemporary society. Therefore an approach to archaeological heritage by drawing on extended themes or categories is suitable to make archaeological heritage 'present' and generate public acceptance for heritage work.

## 1. Discussion

The relevance and acceptance of archaeological heritage, particularly from the 18th to the 20th centuries, depend not only on robust scientific and heritage work, but also on effective mediation to the interested public. Essential components of this mediation include providing thorough and unbiased answers to questions that focus on the value and legitimacy of monuments. In contrast to other historical periods, objects of modern historical archaeology delve into issues that offer a direct and intensive glimpse into the living environment of contemporary society. Archaeologists engaged in this field must navigate diverse opportunities and risks presented by evidence from both early and advanced industrialisation. An indispensable interdisciplinary approach to addressing pertinent questions and viewpoints not only enhances the understanding of the research subject but also inevitably fosters greater public acceptance.

An impartial and close examination of archaeological heritage can make visible its soft power and persistence. Taking an individualised, more personal approach, heritage may then become relevant for an increasing number of members of society. Stressing themes that go beyond the specialists' perspective gives an opportunity to



shed light on, or even redefine, fundamental categories of human existence. Exploring questions and themes of contemporary significance provides an opportunity for the public to uncover the timeless aspects of nature and human society within a specific context of present-day life. These questions may concern e.g.

- Sustainability of organic or inorganic materials
- Means of spatial organisation in cities and countryside
- Forms of exploitation and suppression of nature and man throughout history
- Long-term resistance of things against degradation and climate (change)
- Phenomena of worldwide mobility
- Interdependence of individuals and society

The above issues are now noted on the following monuments by way of example.

- Westphalia: Münster, Max-Clemens-Kanal (18th century)
- Witten, Steinhauser Hütte (19th century)
- Neuenkirchen - St Arnold, POW Camp from World War I (20th century)

### **Max-Clemens-Kanal from Münster to Maxhafen, 1731-1840.**



Figure 1: Partially refilled Max-Clemens-Kanal with marked tree trunks of former water line near Emsdetten (Image by Marvin 101, <https://de.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Datei:Max-Clemens-Kanal.jpg>)

#### *Keyword characterisation*

- Canal for civil shipping between Münster and Maxhafen, in use between 1731 and 1840



- Named after two Archbishops of Münster. Clemens August, Duke of Bavaria (1700-1761), initiator of the construction of the first 30km, and Maximilian Friedrich (1708-1784), responsible for 6km extension to Maxhafen (1766-1771)
- Groundbreaking ceremony in 1724, and put into operation in 1731 between Münster and Clemenshafen near Neuenkirchen
- Aimed to connect Münster with the North Sea, but never fully realised
- Total length: 36km; up to 18m wide; up to 3m deep
- Originally equipped with wooden and stone floodgates
- Abandoned in 1840 because of lack of competitiveness against new routes throughout Westphalia, technical insufficiency and excessive maintenance effort
- Technical archaeological monument of late pre-modern times, partially filled with sediments; a popular bike and walking route

### *Extended themes*

- Motivation: Economic advantage by creating a never-completed water route to the North Sea
- Megalomania? Huge French canal projects as stimulus and examples
- Exploitation: Use of nearby River Aa as water supply for canal misjudging the mud entry
- Lack of technical comprehension and efficiency: maintenance effort
- Significance of the elongated wetland biotope for animals and plants

### **Witten, Ennepe-Ruhr-Kreis, Steinhauser Hütte, 1856-1920**



Figure 2: Drone photo of commercial area in Witten with remains of Steinhauser Hütte during the excavation in 2018 (LWL-AfW/R. Klostermann)

### *Keyword characterisation*

- Steel mill, founded in 1855, extended and rebuilt continuously until 1918



- Demolished in 1919, since then covered and forgotten
- Recovered during the clearing for a commercial area and partially excavated in 2018 (17.355m<sup>2</sup>). Puddle furnaces, foundations of Bessemer converters and rolling mill
- Outstanding preservation of the remains up to 8m under surface, partially overlaid by a commercial area, partially distinguished as protected zone with an archaeological monument
- Characterised in local journals as 'Pompeii of Witten'. Focal point of regional identity?

### *Extended themes*

- Exploitation rate of manpower and nature over time
- Development patterns and intervals owing to technical development
- Transitoriness of technical development
- Market dependence
- Phenomena of mass production and specialisation
- Durability of materials
- Sustainability of building materials
- A parallel to Pompeii as an expression of regional identity?

### **Neuenkirchen-St Arnold, POW Camp from World War I**



Figure 3: Drone photo of the camp site and excavation area. Vegetation features highlight some 50 barracks also visible in the excavation trench (LWL-AfW/R. Klostermann)



### *Keyword characterisation*

- POW camp from WWI, 1914-1915, so-called Vengeance-camp ('Vergeltungslager') for French and Russian POWs
- Ammunition dispersal facility until 1930s
- Currently an agricultural area
- Partially excavated in 2022 in preparation for the development of a commercial area

### *Extended themes*

- Continuity of military complexes
- Application of biblical principles in the camp: An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth (reciprocity)
- Soil pollution and long-term risks of explosive materials, environmental toxins
- Aspects of memorial culture in the case of 'dark heritage'

## 2. Presence of archaeological heritage

Fundamental themes, categories and issues like those proposed above allow a diachronic and universal approach to archaeological heritage. Diverse new questions allow fresh answers adapted to contemporary and future societies. Public interdisciplinary research on the basis of monuments allows for the dismantling of restrictive categories like the dichotomy of past and present. It is an effective method to make archaeological heritage present. Searching for categories beyond conventional boundaries may potentially lead to a perspective where archaeological monuments are recognised as valuable and inspiring components of today's living environment.

## Further reading

### ***Max-Clemens-Kanal***

Knüfermann, H. 1907 *Geschichte des Max-Clemens-Kanals im Münsterland, Hildesheim*, zugl. Univ. Diss.

Lange, E. and Heidbrink, H. (eds) 2022 *Der Max-Clemens-Kanal. Wanderungen mit Geschichte und Geschichten*, Münster: Ardey Verlag.

[Max-Clemens-Kanal](#) (Wikipedia)

[Max-Clemens Kanal Traumhaft Radfahren](#)

[Stationen des Max-Clemens-Kanal-Wanderweges](#)



### **Steinhauser Hütte**

Essling-Wintzer, W., Höller, J.H. and Luke, S. 2018 'Steinhauser Hütte in Witten - ein industriegeschichtliches Denkmal europäischen Ranges', *Archäologie in Westfalen-Lippe* 2018, 188-93. <https://doi.org/10.11588/aiw.2019.0.76890>

Schmidt-Rutsch, O. and Essling-Wintzer, W. 2020 'Vergessene Stahlzeit - Die Steinhauser Hütte in Witten. Ein Beispiel für die Herausforderungen und das Erkenntnispotential der Industriearchäologie' in U. Müller and F. Jürgens (eds) *Archäologie der Moderne. Standpunkte und Perspektiven*, Bonn: Rudolf Habelt Verlag. 101-8. <https://www.ufg.uni-kiel.de/de/mitarbeiterinnen/professoren/umueller/daten/2020Archaologie-der-Moderne-eBook-klein.pdf>

### **Neuenkirchen, POW-Camp WW I:**

Wunschel, A. 2023 'Vergeltung aus der Vogelperspektive', *Archäologie in Deutschland* 3, 60.