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## Making Memory – Culturescapes and the Communication of Archaeological Meaning

### Summary

Archaeology plays a unique role in the rediscovery and restoration of lost moments of cultural memory. It also bears a responsibility beyond the narrow confines of academia, and can and should play a role in the public perception of the past. Understanding the material basis of a shared past is now more important than ever, as humankind is engaged in perhaps the most challenging endeavor in its history – learning how to manage the constant expansion, articulation, and integration of our global material culture. However, academic archaeology is an inherently self-referential field, and often fails to engage the public on these larger issues. This article examines an attempt to bridge that communication gap through the development of an innovative, radically cross-disciplinary curriculum.

Keywords: Archaeology; memory; urban culture; sustainability; interdisciplinary teaching; environmental art; architecture.

Archäologie spielt eine einzigartige Rolle bei der Wiederentdeckung und Wiederherstellung verlorener Momente des kulturellen Gedächtnisses. Aber sie hat auch Verantwortlichkeiten über die engen Grenzen der Wissenschaft hinaus; sie sollte eine aktive Rolle in der öffentlichen Wahrnehmung der Vergangenheit einnehmen. Gerade heute ist ein Verständnis der materiellen Basis unserer menschlichen Vergangenheit wichtiger als je zuvor, denn wir befinden uns in einem kritischen historischen Prozess: wir müssen lernen, die andauernde Expansion, Verflechtung und Integration der globalen materiellen Kultur zu bewältigen. Das Fach Archäologie ist jedoch von sich aus selbst-referentiell und es gelingt ihm daher oft auch nicht, die Öffentlichkeit auf diese große Herausforderung aufmerksam zu machen. In diesem Beitrag wird ein Ansatz untersucht, diese kommunikative Kluft durch die Entwicklung eines innovativen, radikal transdisziplinären Curriculums zu überbrücken.

Keywords: Archäologie; Erinnerung; Stadtkultur; Nachhaltigkeit; interdisziplinäre Lehre; Umweltkunst; Architektur.

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## I The archaeology of forgotten memories

It seems fitting, in a collection of works meant to explore the perspective of memory in archaeology, to briefly redirect the attention of the reader back towards him or herself. If I can beg a moment's indulgence, therefore, I would like to ask you to try and summon a memory from this morning, from the instant when you first awoke, and attempt to capture that elusive impression in your mind. Now, answer this simple question: How did you know who you were when you first awoke?

The answer, of course, is that your conception of self, your identity as an individual, is made up of all of your memories, whether they be vivid, half-remembered, or all but forgotten. Your past is what created the person who woke up this morning.

In the same way, humankind's sense of self is made up of its cultural memory. Humankind's multitude of experiences throughout its long history have created what we think of as human culture, in all of its often wonderful and sometimes terrible diversity. And just as you would not be quite who you are now if you lost some of your most important memories, becoming an individual somehow lesser than the whole had been, humankind itself is made the poorer with each memory lost, with each human moment forgotten.

As practitioners of a field devoted to the past, to exploring worlds that exist only if summoned from memory and preserved for the future, archaeologists are painfully aware of how many memories humankind has lost throughout the ages. It is the unique role of archaeology to make a vital contribution to the discovery and restoration of these lost moments of human cultural memory. We give voice not only to the long millennia before written history, when humankind was inventing a new way of life for itself as a species crafting its own environment, but also throughout time to our relationship with the material creations which have come to represent an integral part of our modern way of life.

We need only return briefly to our original question to illustrate how our material creations have become enmeshed with our memory. Thinking of that defining awakening moment, we likely sensed that: I awoke in my bed, in my room, surrounded by my things – my immediate sense of self being interwoven with the material reality of the

spaces and objects with which I have interacted. Some of us may also have shared this immediate experience with another person or persons, creating an intimate instance of mutual comprehension at once a mirror of ourselves and a lens through which we incorporate other perspectives into our own.<sup>1</sup> Our memory of self is then carried by successive layers of these spaces and objects and people that move outward from our private space to public places, across landscapes of diminishing familiarity, and encompassing a broader memory of others. This intertwined landscape of the natural environment, built space, objects, and interpreted meaning makes up what I refer to as the human *culturescape* – the world we have fashioned for and of ourselves.

Archaeology represents the means to explore the culturescapes of the past; however, it is also the means to connect them to the culturescapes of the present. Archaeological culturescapes are, of necessity, made up of discrete memory sites, or recovered spaces and objects that have been given meaning by us as symbols of our past.<sup>2</sup> Our understanding of the past is in turn made up of networks of these memory sites, linked by theories that explain both the connections between them in the past and their connection with our own memory networks in the present. This reflexive relationship exists on the most basic level in the form of our constantly changing generational memories and informal oral histories, in most cases unconnected with an understanding of the more remote

- 1 Although this example is particular to the 21st century audience of this essay, with all it entails of the encapsulated and materially rich built environment and social circumstances which one can assume to accompany it, the same would nevertheless hold true for an individual awakening – for the sake of contrast – upon a bedroll next to the campfire of a migratory camp. While the surrounding space may have been less permanently shaped, the material array less expansively realized, and the definitions of private and public places differently defined, they should not be considered less meaningful.
- 2 I use the term *memory site* here in the most general sense: that of an instance of physical space about which something is ‘known’ through experience (either direct or indirect) and cultural interpretation, and which thus inhabits individual memory and acquires the potential to participate in shared communication. Depending on the degree to which direct experience of the site is shared, the strength of the individual memories, and the nature and intent of the subsequent communication, the qualities of a memory site will prove malleable over time. Although the characteristics of a memory site are thus being constantly renegotiated over its lifetime, it is this adaptable nature that ensures its continu-

ing cultural value. In the physical sense, there are no minimums or maximums to the potential size of a memory site: it can range from a vaguely defined geographical area (‘The West’), to a more closely defined region (‘Italy’), to a city (‘Rome’), to a circumscribed space (‘The Forum Romanum’), to a building (‘The Senate House’), to a small place (‘The Black Stone’), and it is the nature of memory sites to be contained one within the other and to be related to each other in associative networks. Perhaps the most practically applicable scale of memory site for archaeology is that of the settlement or activity space, which is the scale used in this essay. Although there was of course an objective physical and cultural reality to the original sites, which as archaeologists it should be our goal to define or clarify so far as might prove possible, the evolving reality of the sites as developed through cultural communication is an equally valuable source of study. Approaching an archaeological site as a memory site thus emphasizes the perspective that material culture derives from socially constituted and transmitted knowledge systems, albeit actualized by social controls which facilitate the use of both natural and human resources.

past. However, just as archaeology might be said to have taken upon itself the task of exploring the memory network of the past in a thorough and responsible manner, it is my belief that it has also assumed a responsibility to strengthen that too often tenuous connection of the past with the present. This is a responsibility that passes beyond the narrow confines of academia, and can and should play a role in the public perception of the past.

For while we are right to be cautious of the potential abuse of academic opinion, we nevertheless cannot ignore the simple facts that public narratives of the past exist in plethora, that they are most often misinformed or incomplete, and that they are equally often abused for social, economic, or political gain. Thus, while we may properly question the ability of any single field to provide a wholly balanced perspective on the past, we cannot doubt that our contribution would help to *bring* balance to an already imbalanced situation. And even apart from the less tangible benefits of studying the past, of encouraging the imagination to exceed the limits of the known now, an active and balanced appreciation of the past is more than ever a *practical* and necessary part of our future. For humankind is currently engaged in perhaps the most challenging endeavor in its history – learning how to manage the constant expansion, articulation, and integration of our global material culture. We are only now beginning to realize how perilous this experiment is, and the only responsible course open to us is to take every possible consideration into account as we plan our next steps. However, by firmly fixing our gaze on the future and asking only what *can* be done, we ignore the deepest source of data about what *should* be done – humankind’s successes and failures in similar circumstances in the past.

Unfortunately, as the public portrayal and use of the past by modern media, business interests, and politicians constantly reminds us, the *field* of archaeology – as opposed to the manipulated *products* of archaeology – has hardly played an influential role in this discourse. And while we may bemoan such developments within the confines of our own discipline, when we speak about such things as the differences between the archaeological interpretation of a site and the political or cultural identity of a site, what we are really speaking about is our failure to communicate a lasting *meaning* of archaeology to the broader public which can be incorporated into their own lives and memories. Although there are many aspects to this problem, the failure often originates in the simple fact that archaeologists perceive the world, and especially the material world of the past, in a very different way than the public.

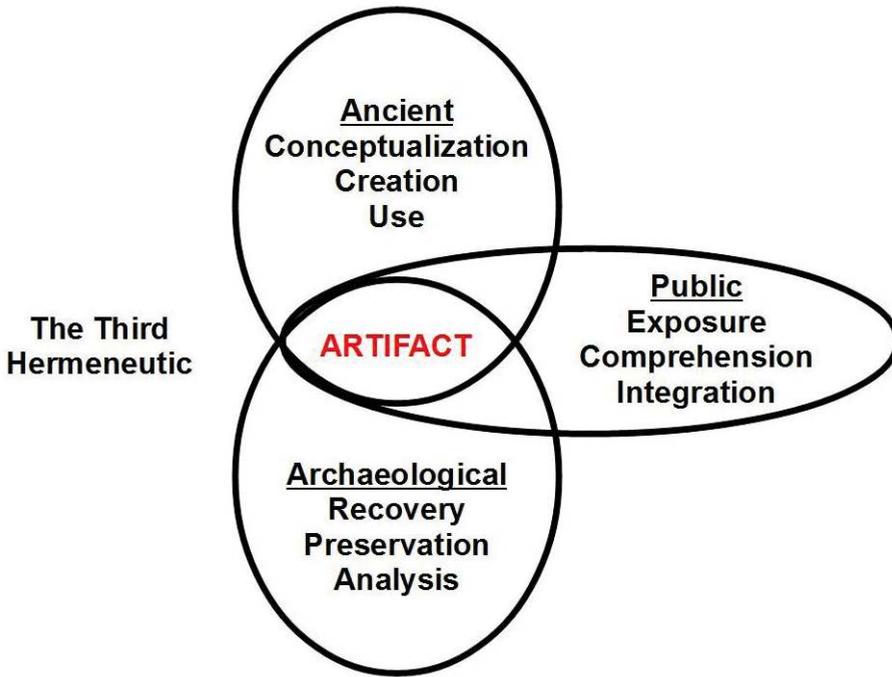


Fig. 1 The three Hermeneutic circles of archaeological communication between the past and the present.

## 2 Communicating in circles

While we are accustomed to the challenges represented by the fact that the archaeologists who interpret an artifact perceive it from a very different point of view than those who created it – the effects of the so-called Double Hermeneutic Circles of differing living experiences on the valuation of an object – we do not often address the challenges posed by what might be called the Third Hermeneutic Circle: the way in which our own way of living as archaeologists presents us with challenges in communicating with the public about our shared past. This conceptual continuum can perhaps be illustrated in the following way:

- |                         |                                      |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| – Ancient Sphere        | Conceptualization, Creation, Use     |
| – Archaeological Sphere | Recovery, Preservation, Analysis     |
| – Public Sphere         | Exposure, Comprehension, Integration |

Considering that these suggested terms all describe ways in which human beings bring new material objects into their lives and ascribe utility and cultural value to them, they

may be seen as broadly similar, although representing successive stages in the social life of an object. The processes of initial *conceptualization* of the object by its creators, later *recovery* of the object by archaeologists, and still later *exposure* of the object to the public, all result in a new instance of material meaning being added to the lives of those involved. The processes of *creation* by those who conceived of the object, *preservation* by those who rediscovered it, and *comprehension* of its purpose and history by the public are all ways in which the potential of that material meaning is actualized. However, the ultimate value of the object only becomes apparent in the third step, through the actual *use* of the object by its originators, through the *analysis* of the object by archaeologists, and through the *integration* of the object's meaning in an active way into the life of the public. While archaeology has done much to bridge the gap between the effects of its own processes and the perceived reality of the ancient world, and has served as a means to expose otherwise unknown aspects of antiquity to the public and encourage the comprehension of individual objects, we often fail to take the final step of pursuing the meaningful integration of the past into the individual public lives of today. However, do we not judge projects in our own field that may recover and preserve artifacts, but never take the final step of analyzing and sharing them, to be a loss of enormous potential? How then can we accept the enormous loss of potential in not sharing our own knowledge, of failing to face the challenge of breaking through the Third Hermeneutic Circle and ensuring not only the legacy of the past but also that of our own field?

The result of this isolation of ideas has been the popular perception that academic archaeology, viewed together with archaeological tourism and popular archaeological contributions to public debates, is one-dimensional in nature. We have produced spaces and objects to be readily and visually consumed, interpreted through individual memory either as examples of the familiar continuity of human activity or the foreignness of the inexplicable other, but we have not effectively communicated their meaning so that the lessons of their cultures can be integrated into our living culture. And yet this challenge is far more than an isolated academic exercise. For in a world increasingly overwhelmed by the need to adapt to both the creation of unfamiliar new technologies and the depletion of long-accustomed levels of natural resources, archaeology has the unique ability to provide balance to our perspective, based not on the breakneck pursuit of the future but on an appreciation of the lessons to be learned from our rediscovered past.

Archaeology's natural focus on the role of material culture interacting with shaped space, and the effect this process had upon the larger landscapes over which we walk on our surveys and dig through on our excavations, should give us the ability to bridge past and present and build meaningful perspectives on the problems we face today. Perhaps most importantly, we can provide an understanding of how humans learned to create

the complex material environment of our current urban culture. It is often forgotten in public debate that humankind has not always lived in villages or towns or cities, and that even for most of our recent history what we conceive of today as urban life was a rare and sometimes tenuously supported concept. Put in context, over the past twelve-thousand years humankind has managed to emerge from the last Ice Age, learn how to transform the natural environment into a designed source of sustenance through agriculture, and acquire the skills to create our own artificial environment through an adaptation to sedentary life in built space. From the time of our earliest explorations along this path, we have now progressed to the point where the future of human culture is linked not simply to settled life in discrete built spaces supported by a locally designed environment, but more intricately to urban life in densely populated cities supported by a globally exploited environment. We have learned over the millennia to live as an urban species, and like so much of our cultural behavior our ability to utilize this skill, the skill to build and support and live in urban environments, and our attitudes towards it, have been shaped by a long and complex history. It is on this topic – the exploration of how human culture has invented and has in turn has been influenced by our built environment – that archaeology has a unique opportunity, and indeed responsibility, to contribute.

### 3 Field reports from the borders of archaeology

But how do we overcome the barriers put in place by the demands of an academic discipline and the intransigence of cultural preconceptions?

Despite its public recognition, academic archaeology is an inherently self-referential and somewhat isolated field. Unlike other arts or sciences, archaeology has almost no role in pre-university education but receives a prodigious amount of media attention over the more materially impressive aspects of its field work, with the result that public perception is governed more by what we *do* than what we might have to *say*. Archaeology's primary means of communication, both within itself and with the public, is ensconced within the halls of the university, and therein its most effective method of outreach is through teaching. And yet, whether in the early stages of graduate education or later as lecturers, archaeologists are not taught to be teachers, and the subject is one which elicits comparatively little debate within the field.

However, I would like to suggest that we can indeed utilize the popular attraction to archaeology to make the public more self-aware through innovative methods of education, and in this way increase the valuation of the field in general and overall support for its work. Although there are many ways to approach this goal, perhaps one of the

most effective ways I have encountered is to build partnerships with people in other fields whose perspectives will complement and challenge our own, and to make this interactive process part of the learning experience. In the spirit of more traditional field reports, therefore, I would like to briefly present two of these educational experiments. In contrast to field work, these projects do not explore the borders between archaeology and the past, but between archaeology and the present.

#### 4 Human spaces

From 2007 to 2011 I was given the opportunity to develop a series of courses at the University of Art and Design Helsinki<sup>3</sup> exploring the material culture of the past, with the specific goal of communicating this in a way that would be meaningful to students learning to create the material culture of the future: students of art, design, architecture, and eventually even engineering and economics as the university later underwent a merger with other technical and business universities. These courses, entitled *Human Spaces*, focused on the development of built space and urban culture as social phenomena, exploring what were described as *culturescapes* above in order to encourage students to see beyond the material artifacts and into the social realm. This was intended to provide a direct connection to the interests of students studying spatial fields such as environmental art, architecture, and urban planning, but also – by examining the use of different types of specialized spaces – serve as a way of integrating the interests of as many other fields as possible. In addition, the transformation of modern urban culture and its tension with the natural world were then topics of widespread interest, and it was hoped that demonstrating how archaeology could inform the debate on these issues would strengthen the student’s belief that the past could meaningfully inform the future.

After briefly experimenting with more traditional lecture formats,<sup>4</sup> I realized that what was needed was a means not only to fill the students’ imaginations with visions of past cultures but to also connect with their own career goals on their own terms. In other words, I needed to move beyond a surface recognition of the Third Hermeneutic,

3 I would like to thank then Professor of Environmental Art Markku Hakuri for his steadfast support in this project, as well as the members of what was then the Department of Visual Culture.

4 The first course offered as part of the program was actually somewhat more prosaically entitled “Art, Archaeology, and Society” and followed a traditional lecture format which progressed chronologically from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age and Classical period, and geographically from

the Near East through the Aegean and on into the west. Mid-semester reviews indicated that the message was not being communicated as effectively as it could be, and the second half of the course was spent reviewing the material through lectures dealing with specific types of urban spaces. This attempt to redress a less than successful start is what produced the eventual Human Spaces lecture model, and served as an instigation to attempt other more innovative teaching methods.

merely *exposing* them to the perspective from which archaeology viewed the past, and find a way for them to *comprehend* the past in a way that would allow for meaningful *integration* of it into their own lives – a way for the world of the past to pass through the archaeological process and become a part of a broader memory of human achievement and a catalyst for future ambitions.

The eventual solution was to craft three distinct parts to the course, each designed to target a specific step in this process. During the first part of the course, a series of lectures would expose the students to a range of topics, each drawing from a range of iconic sites such as Göbekli Tepe, Çatal Höyük, Ur, Saqqara, Knossos, and Mycenae, and ending with more familiar sites such as Athens and Rome.<sup>5</sup> Although the format evolved somewhat over time, the topics addressed included:

- Sedentism – Private Spaces and Community Places

*introducing sedentism as a comparatively recent and revolutionary human practice*

- Urbanism – Building a World of Meaning

*introducing urbanism as layered socially symbolic and institutional materiality*

- Spaces for the Living

*exploring the role of public spaces*

- Spaces for the Dead

*exploring mortuary spaces*

- Spaces for Things

*exploring manufacturing and mercantile spaces*

5 Although the course's admittedly western focus was a byproduct of my own background in Aegean prehistory and Classical Archaeology, which was usually an advantage as I could rely on a general familiarity with the better known sites of later antiquity as teaching tools, it did sometimes create challenges. The course always included a number of students

from Asia, who were often unfamiliar with historical references normally taken for granted in the west and in turn sometimes posed questions from an unfamiliar perspective. While representing a potentially fruitful avenue for exploration, plans for sister-courses focusing on Asia and the New World unfortunately never materialized.

– Power Spaces

*exploring political spaces*

– Belief Spaces

*exploring religious spaces*

– The Other-Space of Nature

*exploring bounded nature and the disappearing border between urban and environment*

– Archaeology and the Urban Singularity

*exploring urban culture as a resource sink historically tending towards collapse  
& how archaeology can offer a perspective on a balanced built society<sup>6</sup>*

– Experiencing Urban Culture through Environmental Art

*introducing the history and techniques of environmental art<sup>7</sup>*

Each lecture followed the same general format, exploring the topic by beginning with Near Eastern Neolithic sites the students would likely never have heard of, moving to the generally more recognizable Bronze Age sites of the Near East and Aegean, and ending with the familiar cultures of Greece and Rome. In this way, the students could

6 Where previous lectures had focused on understanding specific aspects of built culture, this lecture was an attempt to explore urban culture on a higher level, with the main goal being to connect the topic to problems confronted by modern global urban development. To accomplish this, urban culture was described metaphorically as a simple interactive system, composed of Environmental, Social, and Material resource pools, in which Resource Sinks (consumers) encounter Resource Ceilings (limits) and as a result create and implement Resource Levers (multipliers) in increasingly complex and interdependent ways. Societies have often tended towards an event characterized here as the Urban Singularity – a tipping point at which urban culture no longer acts as an overall Resource Lever but instead becomes a Resource Sink, drawing down resources of all sorts

until the point of collapse. Past urban cultures were confronted with their own Urban Singularities, brought about by a range of problems including an inability to understand and correct the limitations of the natural environment, a lack of control over the natural resources upon which they relied, an over-reliance on trade and exterior resources, and a dependence on the stability of complex political systems. These factors represented great challenges to the developed urban cultures of the past, even when only a single problem was predominant – and yet today we face them in combination. This brief overview was meant to encourage students to appreciate the importance of studying the past when addressing future challenges, no matter how large.

7 Kuebel 2009.

be introduced to new ideas and slowly associate them with sites that they may already have known of or even experienced. Although this method meant that a broad brush approach had to be taken at first when situating the sites within their own culture and milieu, the iterative approach also meant that the students became more and more familiar over the semester with the iconic sites, and thus a richer depiction of each culture became possible. The students also became accustomed to a method that required them to compare and contrast different aspects of urban culture as they developed over time and in different social contexts, which would hopefully encourage them to take the next step and think about modern urban culture in the same light.

In order to reinforce this process, immediately following each weekly lecture the students would leave the classroom and travel to a part of the city which embodied the theme that had been introduced that day.<sup>8</sup> Helsinki is a remarkably compact city and provided a well-rounded range of sites for this purpose, including the Senate Square, the National Cemetery, old market squares and new malls, old and new Parliament buildings, a range of cathedrals and churches both traditional and innovative, and widespread parks. Once at a site we would hold an open examination and discussion of how the history and theories that had been introduced in the day's lecture could be applied to an understanding of the living world. Students were encouraged to realize that they were not simply walking through built space on these trips, but were instead walking through layers of time and meaning embedded in the present and constantly interacting with their lives. This second part of the course was meant to foster a deeper comprehension of their places as evolving end-points of the urban culture process, and the results were often immediate and remarkable.<sup>9</sup>

The students in the course generally fell into one of four groups: Finns who had grown up in Helsinki, Finns who had grown up outside of Helsinki, and foreign students from Europe and Asia.<sup>10</sup> Each of these groups naturally tended to approach the various sites in the city from the perspective of their own backgrounds. For the city natives, who often transversed these sites on a daily basis, it was not uncommon to have

8 As may have been surmised, these classes were longer than the usual lecture hour, and typically ran to a 1.5 hour lecture followed by another 1.5 hours of travel and discussion on site, or a 3 hour commitment.

9 Although not the focus of this essay, I would be remiss if I did not mention the obvious potential for partnerships with the field of anthropology in this 'living laboratory' approach to teaching. Much that was accomplished through creative workgroups in environmental art, due to the special focus of the

host University of Art and Design, could also be explored through a partnership with anthropology in more typical university environs. This is an area of great potential for future exploration, particularly for the study of urban cultures.

10 Due to the fact that Human Spaces was one of the few open enrollment courses taught in English, there was an unusually high percentage of foreign (non-Finnish) students enrolled in the course, ranging from one-third to one-half of the total. Helsinki natives were usually in the majority.

relegated them to the status of background settings, acting merely as a physical framework for their day-to-day activities. As memory sites, their significance was simply that of delineating home ground. However, learning to appreciate the cultural and historical process that produced these sites, in essence expanding their existence as memory sites from the personal plane to the social plane, often resulted in sudden feelings of revelation. In a similar manner, the Finns from other parts of the country often tended to see these sites as static markers, identifying Helsinki as *the city* and serving, in a sense, as memory sites demarcating the urban center of the country. Once seen in a larger context, they were more easily able to relate to the sites as a part of their own broader national culture. The European students naturally tended to interpret the Helsinki sites through the lens of their own home place memories, a process which sometimes relegates new sites to a secondary status and attributes them with qualities from better known sites regardless of their suitability. However, during our discussions they were often able draw new connections and contrasts that revealed an increased appreciation of both the commonalities between and unique attributes of each urban culture. This process was, if anything, magnified for the Asian students, many of whom related to Helsinki through a mix of home sites that included both Asian and western influenced elements of urban culture. In their case, however, it often proved difficult to overcome the sense of *other* in these sites, and their reflection tended to focus on larger issues of how more general cultural perspectives drawn from sources in the west could be applied to Asian sites.

While each of the four groups approached this two-part exercise from different vantage points, they shared a common process and end point. The lectures initially served as an additive memory process, exposing the students to new information and ideas about the history of urban culture. In this way, one might say that new memory sites were added to their personal memory networks, and that some new details were added to more familiar memory sites that may have already existed therein, such as Athens and Rome. The students were also exposed to cultural theories that had the potential to link these disparate memory sites into something larger and more meaningful, what might be described as a network of memory sites connecting those from the past with the sites they inhabited in the present. However, the addition of this new information and the exposure to these new theories represented little more than unrealized potential until they also learned how to relate to them on their own terms – how to close the circle and connect to the network of historical memory sites from the vantage point of their own network of living memory sites. This was the goal of the second, on-site discussion group part of the course, which both proved successful in its own right and also had the effect of encouraging the students to become more active during ensuing lectures, thus building a continuously more interactive learning community.

The final part of the course was intended to build upon the foundation laid by the lectures and discussion groups, and to link the students' new knowledge and understanding of the past more directly to their own accustomed learning methods and future work; in other words, to integrate their abstract learning into their active lives. In order to accomplish this it was necessary to provide them with the means to experiment with the main concepts of the class in a concrete, hands-on manner, to move beyond the theoretical study of the material world of the past and allow them to experiment with the material world of the present. Considering the natural focus of the students at an art and design institution on creative work, the last third of the course was thus devoted to an art workshop. This was perhaps the most innovative step taken by the Human Spaces courses, and certainly the most challenging for me as an instructor. As it involved exploring teaching methods usually associated with the creative arts, I felt that the best way to achieve the desired results, and to establish the credibility of the exercise in the minds of the students, was to form a partnership with an artist also interested in exploring urban culture. Fortunately, I found just such an enthusiastic partner in environmental artist Catherine Kuebel, who had recently completed her MA thesis on experience and memory in urban culture at the University of Art and Design Helsinki.<sup>11</sup> Working together, we created a format in which the thirty students were divided into small groups of 3–4 individuals, each of which chose one of the main themes of the course to explore through artistic means.<sup>12</sup> At the end of the semester, the students would also be responsible for displaying their works at a week-long public exhibition hosted by the university.

Although these teaching methods were as unfamiliar to me as they would be to most archaeologists when I began this project, I quickly saw how effective they were as ways to explore material culture. In order to facilitate an active exchange of ideas and provide a firm footing for the artistic elements of the workshop, each group was composed of individuals from different fields wherever possible, although always including at least one artist and ideally one with experience in environmental art. The traditions of environmental art have a strong element of public interaction and intervention, meaning that the works are often created and placed within public spaces with the intent of drawing out public participation and encouraging the exploration of new perspectives on particular topics. These methods were quickly adopted by the students, whose works were usually meant to challenge the participants to reconsider elements of urban culture exactly as they had been asked to do in the course, with the framework for the questions being moved from the past to the present. In effect, the students' works created small,

11 Kuebel 2009.

12 Although the University of Art and design is a small institution (approx. 1500 students at the time), af-

ter the first year the semester enrollment had to be capped at 30 students in order to maintain a manageable workshop size.

temporary memory sites fashioned from their own recently expanded understanding of urban culture and intended to act as bridges between the memory network of the class and that of the public, with the goal of sharing their experiences and thus both enhancing the value of these exterior memory networks and also creating a new, larger network bridging study and practice. This unanticipated effect of the workshop resulted in the students being recruited as agents of cultural communication, having effectively been transformed from outsiders seeking an understanding of archaeological perspectives to adoptive insiders, in turn championing those values to other outsiders.<sup>13</sup> In this way, the divide between the second and third hermeneutic circles, the archaeological and public understanding of the past, was bridged in two different places and fully integrated into the students' lives.

#### 4.1 A memorable day

Although each of the dozens of workshop projects had their own value,<sup>14</sup> in order to illustrate the process I have selected one that has particular relevance to the subject of built space and memory. In the Autumn of 2009 a group of three international students of diverse backgrounds<sup>15</sup> decided to focus their project on the World War I era network of defensive trenches surrounding Helsinki. The trench system was built by the Russians, who at the time controlled the area that would shortly become modern Finland, as part of their efforts to defend their Baltic territories against the Germans. The construction was carried out from 1914–1917 on an ambitious scale, with an estimated 100 000 Russian soldiers, Finnish laborers, and conscripted Chinese, Kirghiz, and Tartars working alongside each other.<sup>16</sup> The massive undertaking would ultimately prove futile, as the

13 One of the best examples of this was a project called "Building a Nation" by Juuso Janhunen, Sami Pekkala, and Charlie Richardson). The students used a fictional flag, designed to combine differing iconic elements such as an 'Islamic' green color as a background for a white 'Christian' cross, to explore how symbolism can come to represent concepts of socialized space. The flag was flown at various public places, and even received some media attention, but due to the natural deference given to flag bearers the students were never interfered with. The final step in the project was to take the flag to a local primary school and ask the students there to write about the type of place the flag might represent. The English-language International Baccalaureate class had an unusual mix of nationalities represented in its student body, and the ensuing debate was en-

lightening as to how early such concepts of spatial symbolism become embedded in our consciousness.

14 Many of the same students from the 2009–2010 academic year also participated in the expansion of Human Spaces called Epic Spaces, a course in which we explored the role of spatial settings in story-telling throughout time (telling stories about, with, and through places) with lectures such as "The Man from the Tigris, the Tiber Bitch, and the Tatooine Kid?"

15 Sisko Hovila (Finland), Charlie Richardson (UK), and Mayu Takasugi (Japan).

16 These types of trenchworks are known as 'Running Graves' (*juoksubauta*) in the Finnish language, and tradition holds that a large number of workers dies during the construction of these particular works, however the etymology of the term is unclear.

Russian defense collapsed in the face of combined pressure from the Russian revolution, a German landing, and the eventual Finnish declaration of independence in 1917. In the decades since, the sites were gradually worn away through sale of material, looting, erosion, and neglect, and in more recent times the surviving remnants often served as local dumping grounds. The goal of the student project was to transform one of these sites into the grounds of a community festival, attempting to restore the memory of the abandoned spaces to the local residents. The title of the project reflects this perspective: originally called “A Memorable Day: A Musical Happening in a Forgotten Place”, it was eventually changed to the more succinct “Revive”.

Combining interests in environmental art and music, the students thought that they could use music both as a way to recreate the original atmosphere of the place and also to draw in the public. Insofar as was possible they attempted to recreate the music of the time that the trenches were constructed, although researching the music of the Asian workers proved difficult. Their efforts proved very successful and the day was well attended by local residents, who were not only exposed to a carefully cleaned up area of trenches, which they had taken to avoiding as unclean, but also to music that set a background to short walk-throughs and talks on the history of the site. The effects of the project were immediately apparent, as it was revealed that the majority of attendees had believed that the trenches had been created as defenses *against* the Russian invasion during World War II, rather than by the Russians themselves during the previous world war, and the role of the Finnish and Asian workers had been all but forgotten. Despite a rainy day, the event in fact proved so successful that the residents contacted the group a year later to recreate the festival. While this unfortunately did not prove possible, it is a strong indication that the students’ efforts had, in fact, ‘revived’ this forsaken place and restored a forgotten memory site to the present. In the process they had also encouraged the residents to rethink what had been viewed as a vaguely nationalistic site in broader and more vivid cultural terms, thus informing and enriching the culturescapes of both groups.

#### 4.2 Spirit of place

One of the advantages of developing the creative workshop as a teaching tool was that it made it much easier to explore other partnerships in the arts. Perhaps the best example of this was when, in the Autumn of 2009, American architect Travis Price came to Helsinki in search of local participants in his award-winning *Spirit of Place* architectural workshop.<sup>17</sup> Spirit of Place is a ‘design-build’ program, meaning that students both de-

17 Information on the Spirit of Place project can be found here: <http://spiritofplace-design.com/spirit-of-place/> (visited on 22/03/2017).



Fig. 2 A section of the Helsinki trenches before the project cleanup.

sign and actually build the architectural structures and installations that are the joint product of the class. The unique element of the Spirit of Place program, which is hosted at the Catholic University of America (Washington, D.C.), is that the design phase of the course is based on the study of the spiritual culture of the host country, and the goal of the workshop is to create built space that directly reflects that culture. The host country changes with each project, of which Finland would be the fifteenth since the program's inception in 1992. Although Price had never been able to include students or faculty from the host country in these projects, the existence of the Human Spaces courses, whose aims and methods were closely related to those of the Spirit of Place program, allowed us to participate and contribute.

Through the support of the University of Art and Design Helsinki, I and three Human Spaces students<sup>18</sup> were able to take part in the Spirit of Place project. The course began in January of 2010 with a nine-day design charrette hosted by the Embassy of Finland in Washington, D.C., during which the students attempted to distill the mythical elements of the Kalevela (the Finnish national epic poem) into architectural forms. This interactive process was complimented by study groups and lectures on various topics, including the historical evolution of 'Belief Spaces,'<sup>19</sup> and after long days of intense

18 Sarah Alden, Wilhelmiina Kosonen, and Inka Saini.

19 It is interesting to note that, of all the examples given, the architecture students were most fascinated with the Neolithic site of Göbekli Tepe. Their instinctive questions about the structures and building program at the site were remarkably similar to those posed by archaeologists, and included: Who came up with the idea, an individual or a group?

Who was in charge, the person with the 'idea' or the person with the practical experience, or someone outside the building process? Where did the building material come from, and how did it get to the site? How did they manage their workers? Why did an apparently successful program come to an end? Given the appropriate framework, the students

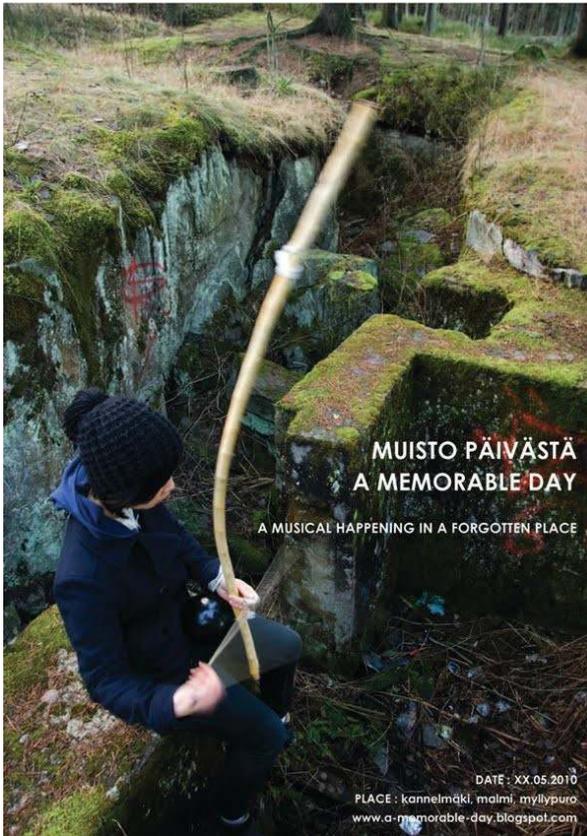


Fig. 3 The original poster for the 'Memorable Day' festival, showing project member Mayu Takasugi playing an improvised string instrument fashioned from materials gathered at the site.

work eventually produced the model for an installation that would later be built on the historical museum island of Seurasaari in Helsinki. Finally, after a semester spent designing the actual structural plans, which involved weekly teleconferencing sessions for the Finnish students, the group was reunited in Helsinki for another intense nine days of building. In honor of its source of inspiration, the structure was named the *Kalevalakehto* – the Shaman's Haven.

During this time I was able to witness a process that archaeologists can usually only speculate about – the weaving of cultural meaning into the physical form of a built site. Although I had often attempted to decipher such meaning from too-often fragmentary artifacts preserved in equally fragmented ancient environments, it was an eye-opening

were thus able to steer the discussion along paths that were both meaningful to them and upon which

archaeology was able to provide guidance, if not definitive answers.



Fig. 4 A later poster for the re-named “Revive” festival, depicting the trench works and locations of various activities.

exercise to witness artisans striving with such energy to imbue static forms with elements of music, chanting, and symbolism taken directly from myth. For the Human Spaces students, this process strongly reinforced the main message of the course, that the study of history and culture can and do play an influential role in the creation of materiality. In a similar vein, the archaeological perspective on built culture provided by the partnership with Human Spaces hopefully deepened the experience of the Spirit of Place students.

The choice of the site on Seurasaari island was itself significant, and represents a rich exploration of overlapping culturescapes or memory site networks. The island was dedicated as an open-air architectural museum in 1909, before Finland declared its independence from Russia but amidst a widespread stirring of interest in defining and preserving the roots of Finnish culture. The goal of the museum was to preserve the old wooden buildings that even then were in danger of disappearing, and today the island hosts 87 structures ranging from farmsteads to boat houses to churches from various historical periods. The northern tip of the island, which is also designated a bird sanctuary, was chosen to be the site for the Kalevalakehto; in this way, the structure would be integrated into the history and purpose of the island but would also lie somewhat outside the museum area, identifying it as different from the other buildings. In a place of consciously preserved culturescapes of the past, it serves as a reminder that culture can also inspire the future.

The Kalevalakehto thus represents not only the creation of a new memory site, literally built from the cultural memories of the Finnish people (as intersected by those of American architectural students), but also the expansion of the network of historical memory sites represented by the island. This new site is in turn host to a continuously



Fig. 5 One of the volunteer musical groups which participated in the “Revive” festival, setting the historical mood with period pieces.

expanding population of local residents, tourists, and students, all of whom are given the opportunity to ponder not only the value of preserving the past but also how the material culture of the present can interact with it in a meaningful way.

#### 4.3 But is it archaeology?

Although the material results of the Human Spaces creative workshops would not be identified with archaeology in the traditional sense, we can ask whether archaeology contributed to the learning process in a unique and perhaps even irreplaceable way, and whether the students eventually participated in a historical process guided by values provided by archaeology. In this sense I believe the courses can be judged successful, in that the students were exploring deep-rooted cultural themes which could only be developed through archaeology, and were consciously focused on studying the interaction of historical and present-day social forms expressed by and embedded in the complex materiality of urban space. In the case of at least some of the projects, such as “Revive”



Fig. 6 One of the volunteer guides who participated in the “Revive” festival, talking about the history of the trench site.



Fig. 7 A depiction of the various lectures and workshops held at the Finnish Embassy in Washington, D.C. during the nine-day design charrette. The students are shown working on their individual models, which were meant to represent their interpretation of key elements of the Kalevala and would later come together to produce the final metaphorical model.

presented here, the work also involved a conscious mediating between historical sites and the public, albeit from a sometimes unconventional perspective.

While there has been interest in exploring the potential for an artistic perspective on the archaeological process for some time,<sup>20</sup> and some archaeologists have even gone so far as experimenting with on-site environmental art themselves<sup>21</sup> or incorporating artists into their fieldwork,<sup>22</sup> the potential for partnerships in education is perhaps even

20 For example Renfrew 2003. As well as a review of that work: Hamilakis 2007. Also Kümmel, Müller-Scheeßel, and Schülke 1999.

21 Tilley, Hamilton, and Bender 2000.

22 Brodie and Hills 2004.

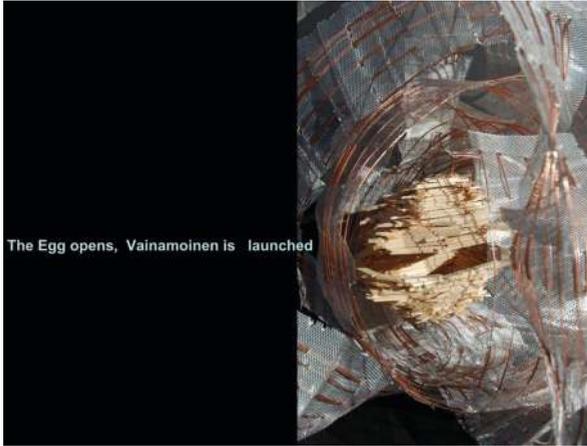


Fig. 8 The final metaphorical model, meant to incorporate: the mythical elements of birth, creation, and voyage, seen as key to the meaning of the Kalevala; the natural elements of wood and metal that are so strongly represented throughout Finnish folk tales and in modern Finnish design; and elements of the traditional music and chanting which were the oral foundation of the Kalevala cycle, through the number of structure of the wooden and metal elements.



Fig. 9 The final architectural model, translating the metaphorical model into a structure and situating it on the island of Seurasaari.

stronger. These cooperative teaching partnerships are effective in three ways. Firstly, as the Human Spaces experience shows, they are able to provide an innovative platform for the communication of archaeological meaning to a wider audience of students, as well as the potential for public outreach. Secondly, should a partnership with a field project prove possible, it would be all the more effective if it was founded upon an existing relationship of mutual understanding created by long-term cooperation in the classroom. Finally, while the challenges posed to the archaeological educator when pursuing such partnerships should not be underestimated, neither should the potential for



Fig. 10 The finished Kalevala-kehto structure, which was opened to the public and has often served as a site for musical events.

improving on the archaeologist's own understanding of material culture. In the same way, although there has recently been a vast growth in archaeological research on the evolution and sustainability of urban culture,<sup>23</sup> we should not ignore the potential of our urban spaces as educational laboratories which could also serve as testing grounds for research linking the lessons of the past with the trials of today.

Ultimately, however, the end result of the five-year Human Spaces program was a new population of future artists, designers, architects, engineers, and even economists – the people who will be building the material world of tomorrow – whose personal culturescapes now include experiences drawn directly from archaeological teaching that was fully integrated into their world view and path of practice. As they progress through

23 For example the *Urban Mind* project at the University of Uppsala, a part of the IHOPE (Integrated History and future of Peoples on Earth) initiative: [http://www.arkeologi.uu.se/Research/Projects/Urban\\_Mind/Introduction/](http://www.arkeologi.uu.se/Research/Projects/Urban_Mind/Introduction/), (visited on 22/03/2017); Sinclair et al. 2010.

their careers, the memory of the names and specific details may fade, however hopefully the knowledge that the past can meaningfully inform the present will not.

#### 4.4 Practice and pursuit

As a final point, this approach embodies what I have come to think of as the difference between the *Practice* of a field and the *Pursuit* of its broader meaning. Practice involves all that is necessary to define the field itself, and for archaeology includes the vital skills of survey, excavation, recovery, restoration, research, reporting, and analysis of artifacts of all sorts – skills without which archaeology would not exist as a scientifically defined and responsible field of study. However, the Pursuit of archaeology involves much more. It involves finding an active place for the field within society, and participating in the broader debates of the day.

While we can be trained in and master the Practice of archaeology, we must continuously strive to find new ways to contribute to its Pursuit. For when archaeology fails to create convincing and compelling narratives about the past, we abandon the meaning of the past to other parties – whether they be entertainers, tourist agencies, corporations, or politicians – who by their very nature are motivated by competitive self-interest. And yet as frustrating as this can be professionally, it has a much deeper impact than simply playing witness to occasional triumphs of commercialism and political agendas; it is, quite literally, a contest for the control of mankind's memory of itself.

Yet this is the great irony of archaeology, that although we have devoted ourselves to the discovery and understanding of what has been lost and forgotten about past cultures, the vast majority of our learning remains lost to our own culture. Ultimately, however, archaeology does not simply have the opportunity to prove itself more interesting or valuable by effectively communicating the meaning of the past, it has a broader cultural responsibility to provide balance to the public perspective on the past and to have a meaningful impact on the public life of today.<sup>24</sup>

24 This essay is an expanded version of my similarly titled lecture at the 17. September 2011 Annual Meet-

ing of the European Association of Archaeologists in Oslo.

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## Illustration credits

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