

2019 EAA Bern Statement: Archaeology and the Future of Democracy

The European Association of Archaeologists is a non-governmental membership organisation with participatory status at the Council of Europe. EAA members were actively involved in the creation of the Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage (Valletta 1992) and the Framework Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society (Faro 2005) which together form the basis for the contribution of archaeology to democratic societies.

EAA is fundamentally committed to the Council of Europe's understanding of cultural heritage as a framework source of collective European ideals, principles and values. These are derived from a shared experience of past conflict and its impacts, and a knowledge of the progress that has moved Europe forward through peace and cooperation. EAA, as countless other organisations, shares the common objective of Europe for peaceful and stable societies, founded on respect for **human rights, intellectual and academic freedom, democracy, cultural diversity** and the **rule of law**.

Archaeology translates the material remains of the past into histories. The narratives that archaeologists create can reflect, relate and inform the social and political structures and actions of the present. By re-constructing past worlds, archaeology reflects the knowledge and values of today's world and is influenced by its social and political values. Archaeology, by interpreting the past, therefore reflects on existing and potential social and cultural conditions of present and future worlds. This is why archaeologists as citizens have a political responsibility.

Archaeologists gain particular insight into human conditions (physical, environmental and social) and human social organisation from a deep time perspective. Archaeologists therefore can predict to some extent a great range of possible developmental scenarios for the future, together with their trajectories and conditions.

It is from this professional background that we regard it as our civic duty, along with other experts, to engage in political debate, to present our knowledge, options and consequences of social and political actions. To fulfil our societal role effectively, we require the unrestricted environment of academic freedom and institutional independence. That freedom must be protected. In this way we can assist in informing the decision-making processes of our democratic institutions in a context of freedom of expression and dissemination, and intellectual independence. Respect for diversity and the broadest possible inclusion of all kinds of cultural diversity is the litmus test of any democracy. Political discussion in our democratic institutions is based on freedom of expression and the media. It involves pointed language that clearly expresses singular positions and perspectives, but it does so with a fundamental respect - and, critically, it does so without denying the human rights of other people.

Using the power of historical analysis archaeology can analyse how social transformations have taken place and the conditions in which they take place – such as flight, migration, conflict, de-industrialisation, globalisation or digitalisation. From this knowledge archaeology can propose ways how the well-being of pluralistic societies can be achieved peacefully. These lessons from history include the values of equality and diversity.

Cultural heritage is open to many interpretations and perspectives. Some of them are currently informing a growing and divisive historical revisionism. It is characterised by social and ethnic

exclusion and a negation of human rights, democracy, cultural diversity and the rule of law. Archaeologists and heritage specialists are academically trained experts that have the intellectual capacity and duty to reflect on such developments and critique any such readings of the past. Archaeologists within EAA will not accept any form of a political use of history for propaganda purposes, especially where archaeological issues are taken out of the context of their standard academic discourses (including scholarly debates) and used for the purposes of divisive nationalistic, anti-democratic, exclusionary or chauvinistic argument.

Responsible archaeology seeks to widen discourses and respectful dialogue by seeking to focus on the social relevance of its discipline in the modern world and to include all social groups within open and democratic societies. Archaeology creates accessible, diverse, dynamic, participatory knowledge. With its analysis, critique and its well-argued range of reflections archaeology cannot but be political in its ethos. It is a political position that EAA therefore seeks to promote with an integrity based on the unassailable democratic values of an open society.