

Mirrors and Windows 2022

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Guests

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Introduction

After 20 times putting together a year report, we decided it was time to do things differently: we did the year report as a podcast. **EXARC Chair Dr Peter Inker leads our director Roeland Paardekooper through the year that passed.** Of course we also comment on the future! For our more than 400 members around the world, 2022 has been a difficult year, where the ones who could respond quickest to the changing circumstances were successful. This counts for museums, freelancers, students, craftspeople, and university members. But work could not stop: museums kept on building, experiments were executed and school groups as well as tourists were entertained with living history. On the EXARC website, we showcased 300 events worldwide, and the EXARC Journal has 180,000 reads per year, all open access. We welcome fresh ideas from countries like Brazil and also look at sustainability, more broadly than just climate change.

Transcript

It's a new year, which means it's time for our annual episode of Mirrors and Windows where leading members of our EXARC community look back at the amazing events and activities from the last 12 months and also look forward to our exciting plans for the year ahead.

Peter: Welcome everybody to this podcast, where we will see what EXARC has accomplished in the past year 2022 and we'll also take a look at what's coming in the future year. I'm Peter Inker and I'm here with Roeland Paardekooper and we're going to talk through some of the developments that have taken place over 2022. So, Roeland, would you like to introduce what EXARC is?

Roeland: EXARC is a large network, mainly on open-air museums, experimental archaeology and themes around that like ancient technology, interpretation, education. We have about 400 members in over 40 countries, most of them in Europe and North America, but not just there. Many of the members are individuals who work in open-air museums or at universities with experimental archaeology. But it's a very, very diverse group. You will find with us academics next to artists and students next to craftspeople at our conferences, but also in our whole network.

Peter: That was one of the things that really excited me about EXARC and I think archaeology as a whole, that it's a really multidisciplinary group of people. You can work with people from diverse backgrounds, working in diverse fields that provide a kind of richness to the human experience that oftentimes very nuanced or very specific academic fields don't capture that whole essence of human experience.

Roeland: Archaeology is, let's say, the key between a lot of our members... Archaeology is about the path of humankind. It's about all aspects. It's not just about making a building or casting an axe or so, it's about all aspects of human life. And that's why I think it's so important also to learn from the past for the future.

Peter: We've now heard what EXARC is. Why don't we introduce ourselves?

Roeland: I studied archaeology in the Netherlands at Leiden University. Later I did my PhD in what you can call archaeological open-air museums in the UK in Exeter. After that I worked as a museum director in Germany and in Denmark. I was also one of the founders of EXARC back in 2001. What I like best in both being a director of a museum and also in EXARC is to enable people, to get them to do their thing, help them with the context they need, the activities or the materials and to structure a bit, asking them questions. Why do you do this? That's why a network like EXARC really fits well with me. What about you, Peter?

Peter: Well, I began working in archaeology straight out of high school, actually. I was working on an open-air excavation as well as reconstruction in Wales, in the UK. That really excited me about archaeology and studying the past. So I went to the University of Wales, did my undergraduate and postgraduate degrees there. Had a wonderful time. My postgraduate degree was in the analysis of metalworking technologies and culture change. And really since then I spent 30 years working in museums and universities, both in the field and in the academic sphere. Currently I'm the chair of EXARC and I've been in that role this year. So that's one of the first accomplishments of my EXARC year this year. My day job is Director of Historical Research, in the USA at Colonial Williamsburg Foundation, the world's largest living history museum. I think it was way back in 2016 that we met, Roeland. I can't believe it's been six years already...

Roeland: Yeah, it really is! But if I look back at 2022, then yes, the last two years have had a big impact on us, EXARC, and on our members, '21-'22. Not just Corona and what we think is maybe the end of the period of the pandemic. There were more events in a lot of museums, but much dependent on how different countries regulated everything around Corona. In some countries you still had to show that you were tested negative for example. And then, what not many people may have expected, the invasion of Ukraine, the war there. The financial crisis leading to less people travelling. The whole world has become a more, I would almost say, more chaotic place. But on the other hand, what a lot of museums in EXARC notice that people stay local. They go maybe to the next country, the neighbouring country, but usually they travel a lot in the local area and that is for a lot of museums a big change. Also last year, the summer of '22, in Europe was very hot. That meant that it was, again, very difficult to foresee how many people would come. But I think in general, '22 has for many members been a better year than '21. But 'under the hood', a lot of things

were happening. Members had to be more flexible, faster shifting gear for example. They had to be more creative in taking opportunities. Yes, it has been a good year, but has been very chaotic for some members.

Peter: There's been two wins from the Covid period though, and I think that's really shown in the past year. One is that open-air museums are attractive to people because they do not combine a whole lot of people in a small space. So the open-air experience is one where people can gather, but in a much broader environment. The second one, which we've seen come to fruition during the Covid period was really the move towards digital and online and really producing a kind of hybrid approach to telling the story. EXARC has done an excellent job in that, in connecting with both our digital and our in-person meetings and discussions. We'll talk a little bit about that later on in the session today.

Roeland: What I can see here in Europe is that a lot of bigger, also open-air events attract maybe two third of the amount of people they used to attract. People are less eager to meet in large groups.

Peter: Well, internally, EXARC has also seen one or two changes. I think the most important of which was EXARC developing an office in Leiden and employing an office manager. Her name is Stefanie. Maybe we can talk a little bit about her role and how that's gone.

Roeland: Yeah, there was a kind of turning point about two years ago when we had a big experimental archaeology conference in Italy and we realised that EXARC could hardly grow any larger with the structure we had at that time, a hundred percent volunteer structure. So we did several things then. We got a lot more volunteers. We already have a lot in the EXARC journal editorial board, but then we decided to include a lot more volunteers in, for example, creating the podcast and other things. The other thing we did was we said, okay, we need to have an office, because everything was still at our home in boxes, and it was too limited. We also decided to have an office manager. Around that same time we moved to Denmark, that was in '21. We had 20 or 30 people applying for the position of office manager. We hired Stefanie and of course it was quite a challenge to keep EXARC afloat, but she did a really good job. It's quite a responsibility. We have a European cooperation project, we have another Dutch cooperation project, we have dozens of volunteers. We have a lot of authors in the EXARC Journal. As I said before, we have about 400 members and other activities. Stefanie was at the heart of that for, I think, 15 months and we are very happy with what she did there. At the end of '22, she told us she was looking for new challenges so she said goodbye to us. We will look early '23 okay, how are we going to continue? We'll probably need some new volunteers also for our hybrid conference, which we'll talk about. So there's new possibilities again, but having set that step with more volunteers and a linking pin between those, was I think, a very good choice of '21.

Peter: Well, I think I can speak for the board in saying Stefanie was great to work with, sorry to see her go, but I wish her really the best of luck in her new direction. Another exciting development for 2022 was EXARC developed some new members. Maybe, Roeland, you could give us a little bit of an overview?

Roeland: Well, numbers sometimes can be boring, but if you look at them more carefully, you can see some trends and that's interesting to look at. We got, for example, about 60 new members last year, and if you look back at the Covid year, '21, it was much less. We also noticed that both our individual members and our institutional members keep going on with activities. There was a TV show in the Netherlands called the Story of the Netherlands, where a lot of our Dutch members played a role or some parts of the shows were recorded in open air-museums, which are some of

our members. In the UK at Butser Ancient Farm, they opened an Anglo-Saxon Hall and in Brazil a new experimental archaeology lab, for example. In Italy in Parco Livelet, they had done a lot of work on inclusiveness. Also if we look at our website, we have about half a million page views per year. It has thousands of pages. Just our 400 members are on there, each with an own page. We have a lot of events on there, a lot of articles, more than 600 articles. What is interesting is an old project we had, called Delphi House of Questions, which is more than 10 years old by now, where people could ask the most frequently asked questions in open-air museums. And they were answered by our members. I think we have about 300 of those questions. And then you see that people are interested in the day-to-day life in prehistory, in the Middle Ages, in the modern times, compared to their own living. The most frequently asked question last year was, 'what did prehistoric women do when they had their period?' There's more than 6,000 people wondering about that. But also questions about 'how old did people get in those days?'. Other things which get a lot of attention are, for example, the iceman from the Alps and reconstruction attempts of his bow and arrow material, the quiver or, for example, a Mongol era bow, based on historical facts and ancient technology. Also our calendar of events is visited a lot, something I will mention later a bit more about. So those are the top-10 most visited pages on our website. Very much about daily things, the things people can identify themselves with.

Peter: I think that's a great example of where EXARC is really strong, in that it is very much focussed to the questions that people have today. For a lot of people who are visiting who maybe aren't specifically experienced in particular areas, they can see that EXARC does provide this real picture of the world of the past from the human experience. And that means that they can find us really accessible, and I think that goes to the real success of that web page.

Roeland: Yeah, I think so. A colleague of mine asked 'Okay, so what kind of archaeological experiments are now the hit in '22 in Europe?' and that's difficult to say. We have several ways how we find out about what's happening in experimental archaeology. Several museums are building new buildings for example, like the Scottish Crannog Centre, who are moving to a new site on the other side of the loch next year. And in Germany, they were experimenting with casting bronze, or in the Netherlands they were doing Stone Age cooking experiments. One of the nice things we have is that one of our members, John Kiernan, is sponsoring an Experimental Archaeology Award. That's 500 euro each, two awards last year. 500 euro can already be the difference in doing something or not doing it at all. So in '22, we had two winners, one of them was Phoebe Baker, who will experiment with making and using Neanderthal footwear. And the nice thing is it's handwork, you really have to craft those sandals or those shoes. She's using them in the lab and outside. She's doing research both on the street and in the laboratory. Timothy Baumann, the other winner, he's from the United States and he's looking at prehistoric pottery. If you excavate that, you can often find a little bit of residue on these sherds. And he is wondering if we can analyse that residue and say something about the occurrence of beans in the New World. For that he has to do a lot of cooking because of course he has to compare the archaeological sherds with reconstructed material. So that's a nice approach and maybe we can find out more there.

Peter: Yeah, these are all very exciting projects and going back to this relevance to today, I think that Timothy's looking at prehistoric pottery, for instance, really goes to the heart of telling the story of the modern United States moving away from a kind of colonial, western-centric way of looking at things and moving past that to intangible histories that only can be discovered from archaeology and archaeological reconstruction. Now, a lot of this is captured in our EXARC Journal, which I think is a very strong element of EXARC and I know from my own experience it's one of those things I can hand to somebody who is unfamiliar with EXARC and immediately, they can kind of dive into the great work that our EXARC members do.

Roeland: I think the EXARC Journal is one of our gems. We publish already for more than 10 years, I think, 75 articles per year. It's free, it's open access, it's all online, and it's very diverse. It's about all phases of the museum work. It's about these experiments I just mentioned. I'm very happy that it's open access, we have really lots of readers. Last year, in '21, we had 180,000 articles which were read at some time. Anybody can publish with us. You have experienced professors, but also students who have never published with us before, or artists or living history people. And we have a large team of editors, again, all of them are volunteers and they help with every aspect of publishing, from making proper references to literature, to what illustrations you should choose or what you are not allowed to use, for example, nowadays on the internet. So there's a lot of aspects and we can make something of every manuscript almost. So that's very helpful for a lot of people. If I would pick one, two, three articles, then there's one which comes to mind. It's about early medieval Irish ards, an ard is something to plow with. That's a project from 2019 when EXARC had a twinning project between UCD in Ireland and museum Lauresham in Germany, where they started making a light medieval ard for plowing the land. And they realised there were so many aspects to that, it was not just making the iron parts, making the wooden parts, but training the animals, the land they were tilling. So even if it was just a simple, relatively light tool, it represented a huge number of skills. That was really nice to put a university together with an open-air museum and see how each of them looked at it from another perspective.

Then the other one, which I was really fond of, was an article from Brazil called *The Experimenter's Body*, where Thaisa Martins starts with the question 'when the only thing we have is the archaeologist's body, how can we do archaeology?' At the beginning you think, yeah, so where is this leading to...? But she engages with quite good methodologies and theories from, for example, the field of dance to analyse the experimenter's body in experimental archaeology research. And then she tries to explain the movement of artefacts where she reaches what archaeologists actually excavate. It's fascinating how in experimental archaeology sometimes the focus changes from a pure technical approach, like baking a pot, to testing hypotheses by constructing a hands-on immersive comparison with the past. So it's not anymore just about that pot, but the people who made and used that pot. It can be practical, useful, but especially for me, it's innovative and an interesting approach to look at things very differently.

The last example I would like to add is, we sometimes have discussions in the EXARC journal where we try to have several people with different background discussing a specific subject which is relevant to experimental archaeology or open-air museums. And we were looking at inclusivity in historical interpretation. Then you get questions like 'what is authenticity and how much does it matter if you talk about race or gender?' and, 'what if a museum presents a past where people got discriminated against?' That's something which does not just count in Europe, but also in other parts of the world. Yes, we are in the present, with today's standards, but what are today's standards? They differ from country to country, from group to group. It's important what kind of message our museums are bringing to the public. We need very much a dialogue about what images we produce. Sometimes I realise that our museums or the people in our museums are not aware of the kind of images they produce and they share with the public, the kind of messages they bring to the public. It's more important than one thinks, because people who visit our museums, they think that what they see is very close to reality. I think that's a quite important dialogue that you're aware of the power of the stories we tell in our museums.

Peter: I totally agree with this approach. It's something that the US has been grappling with for a number of years now, actually. So maybe we're a little bit further ahead, because of our cultural background than Europe. One of the key things is bringing together people of very different backgrounds, very different spheres of experience, academics, practising artists and living

historians. It means that we're actually democratising the past, as it were. Inclusivity allows more voices to be seen and heard and be part of the conversation, which will ultimately mean that the interpretation of the past is both a better representation, but also something that is far more relevant to the people of today.

Roeland: Maybe 10, 20 years ago in certain museums, they would tell only one story or one view of a certain event in the past or a certain period in the past. Right now, depending on the public and depending on the museum, there's three, four, five different ways of looking at it. I like that it's more diverse and people can easier say, 'well, yes, but have you looked at it this way?' The public is maybe asking more questions than 20 years ago.

Peter: Yes. We are public historians, we are presenting the past to the general public, and then they have to take their part, their role in that understanding of the past too. It's definitely a conversation that has to be had. Now, I know in 2023 looking forward, there are some pretty promising articles coming up. Can you tell us a little bit about that maybe?

Roeland: We can see that there are coming good new articles. They will be just as diverse and we expect more articles in '23 than in '22. I think that's also because Corona is more behind us and people sort of got more used to the chaos we have in the world right now. So people have returned back to writing again.

Peter: Well, that's excellent. That's something for us all to look forward to.

Roeland: There are more things to look forward to. There's something called the European Archaeology Days. I think we started with this in 2019. It's not us who started it, but our French colleagues who had already the National Archaeology Days in France for 10 years. They thought it was a good idea to try to go European with that idea. In those three days, somewhere mid-June, anything archaeological-related can be organised if the public can come and visit, like an open excavation or an open-air museum or, even theatre plays et cetera. Those three days in June, we give extra attention to events happening across Europe. I think last year there were about 30 European countries who participated. So I would say almost everybody including Sweden, Armenia, Albania, but also Germany, France, Denmark, the Netherlands, the UK, et cetera. We have our own coordinator volunteer for those days, that's Ligeri, and she cooperates with our event calendar manager to get everything online. Because it's not just to have it online on our website, but also on the project website of the European Archaeology Days. More and more EXARC members are participating. I think in '21 we had about 13, and now we have about 18. It's a nice weekend, start of the summer almost, so it attracts a lot of public. But Peter, you also have some things happening EXARC-related, where you are...

Peter: That's right. Every year the Colonial Williamsburg Foundation has produced a fellowship in association with EXARC. So we support an EXARC member to come to Colonial Williamsburg in Virginia and work on a project. Way back in 2019, our winner was Giovanna Fregni. Then Covid happened and there's been a couple of years where we had to postpone the fellowship. But luckily enough, Giovanna was able to visit us in 2020. She came to us and had an excellent time, really working through the whole process that EXARC incorporates. So from the beginning, she started off, doing research in our library, the John D Rockefeller Jr Library, specifically on how gemstones were cut and polished in the 18th century. This led to her developing, with our trades department, a tool, a lathe of sorts with grinding and cutting and polishing wheels. Then they built the tool, using 18th century techniques. I think she was using a kind of walrus hide as part of the wheel. After a week of experimentation, taking her research, developing a research question, and then working with the tools, the grits and the grinding wheels, she was able to do some actual experimental

archaeology, which she then finally was able to spend a week developing and speaking to the public, presenting her interpretation. She did an excellent job, very welcomed by Colonial Williamsburg and did a wonderful presentation of all of those aspects that EXARC is well-known for. So anyone who's listening, we will be releasing the Colonial Williamsburg fellowship for 2023 coming up. So please look out for that on the EXARC or Colonial Williamsburg websites. We look forward to your applications!

Roeland: What we also have on the EXARC website is an event calendar, events mainly from our members. Over the past three years, we had about 300 events there every year. It's difficult to say what events can be on that list and what not. I usually say, well, if it's worth travelling for or if it's inspiration to others, then it can be on that overview of activities. It's also nice if you say, I'm going on holidays to Spain and what's happening there. We've had workshops, bow making, for example, on that or large festivals, like there's a large festival every year in Biskupin in Poland, or a good lecture on bronze casting, for example. We also share conferences and special events of non-members. For example, our cooperation partners like NEMO, the network of European Museum Organisations or ICOM, the International Council of Museums, or ALHFAM, the Association of Living History, Farming and Agricultural Museums, we also post their larger events. Here again, we have one of our volunteers, Josephine, who collects these events from the internet, from everywhere and publishes them on our website in English.

Another project we have and that's a mainly Dutch project - because we're based in Holland - is Putting Life in Late Neolithic Houses. That sounds very specialistic, but it's actually quite interesting because it's a group of researchers who dive into how life was like in those days, in the late Neolithic and also how it has been presented in books over the past decades. They do a lot of research into usewear analysis, pottery analysis, cooking experiments, but they also continue to do experiments like making a log boat together or right now they have an artist making detailed visualisations of, for example, recycling, to help questioning what archaeologists think they're seeing in the archaeological record and just keep asking questions about what do we see and how relevant is this also to the present days. It's a fascinating wide array of research activities, which is combined in one project. The project is coordinated by the University of Leiden and EXARC's role is to help asking those questions to the public, but also to other colleagues and museums elsewhere. What was life like in those days? I think that is one of the most important questions.

EXARC is not just about our members, we also link with other networks. I mentioned already ICOM. They have every three years a big international meeting, general conference they call it. Three years ago it was in Kyoto in Japan with 5,000 participants. This year, in Prague there were good sessions on things like lgbt, colonialism and other relevant subjects. And finally, that was real milestone, we all approved a new museum definition. Yes, of course it includes references to the core task of a museum, like researching, preserving, exhibiting. But it also has some more up to date phrases like accessibility, inclusiveness, diversity, ethics, participation of communities and much more. So it's very much a view on the future, a prospect on the future. And I think that's important for a group like ICOM. It's a very large body of museum professionals who are very active in global museum politics. So it's very interesting to meet people and they're sitting on the other side of the globe and actually they're having the same issues.

So that was the global overview. A little later, we had the luck to go to the NEMO conference in Portugal. NEMO is the network of European museum organisations and there were not 5,000 people in Portugal at that conference, only about 200. NEMO is very much on top of the current issues in the museum world. The urgency of the climate crisis was taking a lot of attention there, but also the chaos caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine, which led to problems in everybody's

backyard. So, if we have to pick up one of those problems and try solving it, then the realistic question is, what else should we drop and let go? We discussed also failures in museums where people cannot adapt fast enough to the changing world where people are not able to work with digitization, for example, or where internal and external communications sometimes fails big time. One of the most important things I took home from there was that museums are no machines, but they're living systems and they're as strong as the weakest link. And that was very comforting to recognize those issues from the daily work back home in museums elsewhere in Europe. It's important to work towards the future and feel strengthened by these colleagues and by NEMO and ICOM as an organisation.

We recently received news that we got accepted as new members of the so-called European Heritage Alliance 3.0. That sounds like, what? Well, it's an informal European sectoral platform with over 50 members, and some of them I already mentioned, it's again ICOM, it's NEMO, to name just a few. Their agenda includes items like support for Ukraine, the Heritage Movements for Climate Action. And 2023 is called the European Year of Skills. So those are all themes where we have an opinion about where we want to support that. We are very happy that we were allowed to join the European Heritage Alliance, where we will meet several times a year in Brussels or elsewhere in Europe to discuss those important issues.

The last cooperation I would like to mention is just starting up. It's ALHFAM, the Association of Living History, Farming and Agriculture Museums. There's also another group called AIMA, which is the International Association of Agricultural Museums. We were linked to those two by one of our members, Claus Kropp from Germany, who brought representatives of all three organisations together in a live session, where we discussed what we have in common with ALHFAM in mainly the US and AIMA all around world, is the safeguarding of all techniques used in, for example, agriculture, but also construction of buildings and ancient crafts, which one can, for example, witness in living history and experimental archaeology. We noticed there's a big diversity of people and science connected this way, and it's very exciting to see there's more people than just in EXARC working with those, themes. We will see in '23 how we can cooperate with ALHFAM and AIMA on the longer term and how that can benefit our members.

Peter: Absolutely. I think, one of the interesting things over the past year has really been how podcasts have developed, really running on a system now where there's 10 to 12 podcasts each year. You are listening to a podcast right now. I think EXARC has been really strong in providing podcasts as yet another way for people to present their data and information that they have in a different format to the kind of written word. Many people rely on things like auditory learning methodologies. And so it's an excellent way for our EXARC members to gain access to an understanding of what all of the other members of EXARC are doing.

Roeland: We have such a wide variety of guests and such difference in themes like tattooing or experiments with glue last year, or a project called The Year on the Field. Doing this as a podcast is a much, much more easy way of getting the information across, getting people interested in subjects. We have craftspeople, we have academic researchers speak as equals and I think that's very important. What we would like to try more in the future, is to see if we can engage more with the audience. In the early stages of the podcast, like two years ago, we recorded them live with also a live audience. That became a bit complicated, but we can try a few things like, ask your questions in advance, so we can get some questions through social media which we wouldn't have thought about ourselves. We should find a way of getting more interaction with our podcasts. The audience is getting larger all the time, so that's very good.

Peter: Earlier in the podcast, Roeland spoke about ICOM, the conference in Prague. Well, alongside that, EXARC was also doing some podcasts, available on YouTube, looking at A Sustainable Revolution for Open-air Museums. This was a broad range of papers that really looked at the work that we do as archaeologists, as people who study the past and how they can be aligned with the Sustainable Development Goals and really making EXARC relevant to the future in terms of sustainability. Roeland, would you like to tell us a little bit more about that?

Roeland: If I think about what EXARC members have in common, the interest in history and archaeology, that means many of us have also a bit long-term perspective. And with that long-term perspective, this sustainability aspect is getting more important. We started two years ago when we thought, okay, we have the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. They're actually quite intimidating if you look at them for the first time. So with the help of our volunteers and our members, we put together a simple list of 10 actions you could do to support a more sustainable future. Then you actually realise, when you read those examples, many of us are already doing it anyway, so it's just a matter of structuring it a bit so we can talk with each other about that and incorporate easier. During the ICOM General Conference in Prague, with our online conference, there's one presentation which I really liked. It was about the Scottish Crannog Centre with Frances, their curator, who mentioned how they included the Sustainable Development Goals in all aspects of their current and also future Crannog Centre. They're talking about four pillars, flourishing environments, thriving societies, nurturing people, and prosperous economies. I think it's good to see that the Sustainable Development Goals are much more than just the natural environment we live in. The projects they are developing they're developing them with local stakeholders where archaeology and crafts are a means, but towards a greater goal. They have, for example, expert-led community-built structures. They reintroduce traditional skills and instil them on young people. Everything they use in the new museum, which they're currently building, is going to be from less than three miles away. That's quite a difference from other museums across Europe. Their belief is that if environmental, social and human sustainability are all in place, then naturally the economic sustainability could follow. With this attitude, they get full support from many local and national stakeholders. For example, the new building site where they will construct their new museum, they've got it for a very low fee instead of the usual market price, because they incorporated this approach with sustainability. That I think is very important as an example. EXARC can use a Sustainable Development Goals strategy to improve some of our members, to also to network between our members and also to have an open line with other networks across the globe, because the Sustainable Development Goals are not just relevant in Europe, they are relevant everywhere. We, together with others, can make a difference. We can learn from our members, but we can also discuss that with others elsewhere in the world.

Peter: Yeah, I agree. I think it's really important to remember why we study the past, right? That it's not just an academic exercise, that actually it can be more than that. We can learn the lessons of the past, both good and bad, and then develop those into the future. So sustainability helps us as a tool, as a methodology for really framing the past and understanding it, and then moving forward with the lessons that we can learn.

Roeland: Yeah, agree. There's also one other aspect of EXARC's current activities which is important for the future, and that's digitisation. That's partly because a lot of the museums we know in the EXARC world, they are losing, so to say, their past. Often there has been a founder who founded the museum 10, 20, 30 years ago. And when that first generation of museum managers is leaving, then also a lot of knowledge and experience is disappearing. What we are trying to do with the project, which is called RETOLD, is to make sure that those places that document their buildings or activities in a way which other people can follow. Once information is digital, it can be

used in so many other ways. It can be reused, it can be shared in many ways. It's not just having a 3D model of your house on Sketchfab, for example, or a video of somebody making a knife in your blacksmith. But it can be much more than that. Reusing that information is an amazing way of telling the story again in different ways. In that project we have three museums and we are now working on a tool where we can document and digitise everything what happens in such museums on-the-go, so to say. And we hope to be able to share that, when it's ready, with other museums, so everybody can use that tool in the future. But I think digitisation, I don't think we even have started yet very much into that way of thinking, into that way of working. But it can lead to many exciting new offers, for the future.

Peter: Absolutely and I think one of the paradigms that we need to shift out of is that the way of recording the past is through developing a paper, having it printed and bound into a book. The way that technology has developed in the past 40 years has shown us that there are many other ways of capturing information, capturing intangible and tangible information and digitisation is a great way of showing us that not only can we capture things that cannot be captured in print, but also then as you say, we can transmit them then to the world. So again, it democratises what we're doing and provides an opportunity for people who otherwise would've been held back from accessing that information. We've talked a lot about podcasts and the website and accessibility. This is one more element of providing that accessibility to people, both now but also in the future.

Roeland: Yeah and I think that accessibility is also a strong aspect of our biannual conferences. We have a long conference every two years on experimental archaeology, and when in 2021 we had Covid hitting the world, we decided to go online with that conference. And thanks to sponsors, we could do that. And we actually were amazed about how many people from all around the world, not just Europe and North America, but also Latin America and Asia joined that conference. I think we had 3,000 views within four days and 6,000 views after one year on all kinds of aspects of experimental archaeology. And that's what we are going to try to do again in May '23, early May, where we will have a hybrid conference on experimental archaeology. So some people will be in Poland, at the conference itself, and many more people, I think, will join us online. Thanks to sponsors, we hope to have everything open access again, and otherwise, or afterwards, everything will be online again. There's a lot of interest from people wanting to present there and again, from all over the world. So not just from Spain and Germany, but also the US and Argentina. We're talking about Viking ships, about tablet weaving, about flint knapping, all these kinds of aspects. That is another challenge for EXARC for the near future where we want to have a hybrid conference which is meaningful both to the people in Poland and to the people around the world who are attending. We hope to open registration quite soon and we hope to have a lot of participants, following all these presentations.

Peter: Yeah, it's really exciting, the conference coming up in Poland. I know everyone I've spoken to about this mode of conference, who are unfamiliar with EXARC, have been really excited about that. The fact that we can have a rolling conference that runs throughout the day that includes people from across the world. It doesn't mean talking about sustainability. It doesn't mean they have to travel from Australia or fly hundreds of hours across the world, that we can really get together in a meaningful way that doesn't always have to be face-to-face, although the face-to-face component is also an important part of it.

Roeland: Yes, for the ones who are able to come over to Poland, that's indeed a very important aspect. And otherwise we will have also an online way of interaction between all the participants.

Peter: Well, I think we're coming up to the end of the podcast now and we are talking about the year 2022, but, Roeland, I know there's been a Year in the Field project that's also been going on, so this would be a good way to kind of round off the podcast.

Roeland: This is also a project, coordinated by an EXARC member, Claus Kropp from Lauresham, Germany, where he has been able to bring a quite diverse group of people together without funding. And the Year on the Field is an agricultural project, a loose cooperation between farmers growing a crop and in '23 it will be flax. These are people who experiment with it, experimental archaeologists, but also textile producers who make linen the old way and indoor and outdoor museums, living history people wearing those costumes. So the focus is not just on cultivation and the technical approach of the crop, so to say, but also how was it used in different regions of the world in different periods, the relevant and the fascinating aspects of this crop for agriculture in today's society, because we also learn a lot about the diversity within the crop. Within flax there's a lot of diversity and it's about rediscovering an appropriate appreciation of the products of this textile plant, which is so central alongside wool and cotton. We as EXARC like this project very much because it connects partners from different parts of the world. Some of them have a more agriculture background, others are doing research as a university. It's a lot of different people and if you think flax to linen there's a huge number of steps you need to take. We hope that we will publish something about this in the EXARC Journal like we already did, about From Flax to Linen. It's also very much about keeping old crafts alive and works with a diversity of flax varieties around the world. Claus Kropp and his colleagues, they're happy to include anybody who's interested in that subject.

Peter: Yeah, this is a wonderful project. I know Colonial Williamsburg is participating in this as well and it's exciting. What Claus is doing is mirrored by what EXARC is doing: bringing together lots and lots of different people, lots of different approaches and methodologies and trying to develop a much broader, holistic approach to the past and subject matter. Looking back over the course of this podcast, we can really see just how broad a reach EXARC has. We talked a little bit about how difficult the year was running from Covid into the new year. How much EXARC has still provided an opportunity for members and individuals to access the research that's been going on, either via the website or via the podcasts. We've got the journal as well, which provides an excellent entry into what EXARC is doing. But also all of those broader connections that EXARC has with AOAM, with NEMO, with ICOM. It really shows that EXARC has a broad reach into many different areas and it is truly a network of individuals with a diversity of backgrounds and experiences.

Roeland: I couldn't agree more.

Peter: Well, thank you, Roeland. This has been an excellent review of the year. I'm excited about what's coming up in the next year. I'm excited to be there for the conference in Poland and, well, watch this space and I'm sure a year from now we will be reviewing an amazing range of things that we'll be discussing in 2023.

Roeland: Thank you and goodbye.

Peter: Goodbye.

We hope that you enjoyed this overview of EXARC's past and future plans. Join us again soon for one of our many activities and make sure to listen in to our monthly podcast episodes. To keep up to date with current events don't forget to follow us through exarc.net and our associated social media channels.