Introduction

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ABSTRACT

This text presents the background and overall aims of the project Experimental Archaeology – Between Enlightenment and Experience, the contents of this book in general and also the preceding regional workshops held in Norway, Sweden and Denmark. The concluding vision is that the project will contribute to the initiation of a true and unlimited experimental archaeology that is given a possibility to thrive in both academic institutions and archaeological open-air museums in local, regional, national and international contexts.

The project and its aims

The project Experimental Archaeology – Between Enlightenment and Experience has created a network of researchers and archaeologists with experience from the fields of experimental archaeology and public communication within the Nordic area. For some time it had been obvious that experimental archaeology had lived its own life in relation to the ongoing theoretical debate about archaeological theory in general. This obvious discrepancy between a lively theoretical debate and a subject stuck with scientific ideals emanating from positivist traditions from the 1960s and 1970s (see e.g. Outram 2008), made us wonder about the situation today and how the discussion among experimental archaeologists in the Nordic area was formed. No full picture of the actual role of experimental archaeology in the Nordic area has been presented before. The debate on experimental archaeology and partly alternative approaches has in recent years primarily been given a voice in a British context (cf. Cunningham et al. 2008; Millson 2011) and also on a broader European level via the journal EuroREA published by Exarc, a European organization of archaeo-
logical open-air museums and experimental archaeology (www.exarc.net). The continuation of the scientific and positivistic tradition within experimental archaeology is also present among fairly recent publications (see World Archaeology, issue 40:1 on experimental archaeology published in 2008, and especially the introductory chapter by Alan K. Outram).

With this background we, the editors of this book, saw the need and decided to start a Nordic network project on the development of new approaches within experimental archaeology. We designed a project together with partners from three Nordic universities: Lund University in Sweden (Bodil Petersson and Anders Ödman), the University of Tromsø in Norway (Gørill Nilsen and Reidar Bertelsen), and Copenhagen University in Denmark (Henriette Lyngstrøm), and also together with partners from three archaeological open-air museums: The Museum of Foteviken in Sweden (Sven Rosborn), Lofotr Viking Museum in Norway (Lars Erik Narmo) and Lejre Land of Legends, formerly Lejre Experimental Centre, in Denmark (Marianne Rasmussen).

With the explicit aim of arranging a series of workshops in the Nordic countries involved – Sweden, Norway, and Denmark – we received research funding from NOS-HS (the Joint Committee for Nordic Research Councils for the Humanities and the Social Sciences) to perform one out of three planned workshops, the first one in Northern Norway. We succeeded, however, in obtaining additional financing from the Einar Hansen Research Foundation, enough to arrange another two regional workshops, one in Lund and one in Copenhagen, all on the theme of experimental archaeology in the Nordic area, its present traditions and possible future perspectives. The project started in October 2008 and has now come to an end, or more correctly, has reached some kind of conclusion for the future, in 2011.

We have examined how experimental archaeology works in close collaboration with public archaeological activities. One aim of the project was to combine perspectives concerning experimental archaeology with museum studies and public perspectives. We have therefore explored experimental archaeology and its potential to connect scientists, museums, artisans, and the interested general public, as well as connecting science and humanistic research. Our establishment of a Nordic and international network provides us with the ability to run future projects that involve researchers in academic institutions as well as at museums and centres
where experimental archaeology is conducted in public. For research, teaching and public activities with a focus on experimental archaeology, it is necessary and desirable to have a continuous exchange of experience between academia, museums and centres.

Another aim of this project was to discuss new communicative forms for experimental archaeology that work better than traditional written publications, enhancing the possibilities to communicate experiences from experiments. Experimental archaeological activities often involve artisans who do not feel comfortable with academic writing. The results from experiments are in those cases either briefly described by a secondary source or, more often, not documented at all. Results from experimental archaeology are well suited for communication through images. New approaches are then needed to monitor, document and understand the experimental experience and to disseminate the results.

At a time when society has shifted from traditional enlightenment ideals, based on knowledge acquisition and strict factual communication of knowledge, towards a greater focus on experience and emotional impression (Jensen 1999; Howes 2005; Magelssen 2007), it is interesting to see how experimental archaeology also has a great opportunity to change. Experimental archaeology has always been at the intersection between scientific knowledge and the ideals of a more humanistic research tradition (for a discussion of this see Petersson 2003:207ff.). A consistent experimental spirit has thus been difficult to maintain within archaeology, partly because of the state of the source material, where the archaeological remains that the experiments are based on do not provide enough substance for the precision that is characteristically required of scientific experiments in general. Nevertheless, experimental archaeology has mainly been carried out with these clearly scientific ideals (cf. Coles 1979; Meldgaard & Rasmussen 1996; Edblom 1997; 2002; Mathieu 2002).

We have found a number of important points of contact and merging of ideals when it comes to the future of experimental archaeology, giving the following combinations:

- scientific ideals and a humanistic research tradition
- research and communication
- different traditions within experimental archaeology
- scientific experimental archaeology and public perspectives
Current research

Much has been written about the role of experimental archaeology within research and a few pieces on the importance of conducting experiments in relation to public activities (e.g. Coles 1979; Jameson 1997; Grønnow & Rasmussen 1999; Stone & Planel 1999; Mathieu 2002; Jameson 2004; Rasmussen 2007; Svanberg & Wahlgren 2007). However, ways of collaboration between experimental archaeology and public display are poorly elucidated. Investigation and exploration of this field requires collaboration between academic institutions and public archaeological institutions such as museums and centres, and also the teaching of archaeology where the aim is experimental archaeology. We have tried to initiate this kind of interaction with our project workshops and networking on a regional level.

A common view is that experimental archaeology and public communication are fundamentally different matters, but that research could possibly be delivered to the interested public. The archaeologist Peter Reynolds avoided interference by perspectives of “living the past” in experimental archaeology when he ran the English archaeological experimental site Butser Ancient Farm (Reynolds 1979). However, he observed that “there is undoubted value and profits to gain from some forms of re-enactment in the fields of education and interpretation” (Reynolds 1999:129). It is from this insight that our project proceeds – there is a not yet realized but very important dimension of experimental archaeology at the intersection of enlightenment and experience.

The starting point for this collaborative research effort is that the dividing line between science/research on the one hand and work performed together with or in front of the public on the other hand is a construct. It is instead in the meeting between archaeologists, craftsmen and the interested public that the really interesting questions arise. It is the actual doing and performing, including emotionally based experiences, unexpected results, and documentation (which does not have to be communicated as written words) that is pushing forward both research and communication. This is not happening all by itself but requires active development of research and communication.
Today experimental archaeology is primarily conducted at institutions that are not academically related, except for occasional academic courses offered on a regular basis that have an experimental archaeology approach (e.g. at the University of Exeter and the Universities of Lund and Copenhagen). However, experiments are carried out primarily by graduates with a research orientation, or by established researchers from within academia. There is rarely any continuous cooperation between academic institutions and museums and centres where experimental archaeology is conducted, nor is there a clearly established relationship between researchers and archaeologists in public activities and the interested group of people who are eager to contribute their practical skills in the experimental work.

This project theoretically and methodically builds on the traditions of experimental archaeology within and outside the academic field in the Nordic area. In addition to this, aspects from the disciplines of ethnology, tourism studies, art history and history, and economic perspectives, are also considered.

**Future opportunities**

In our time particular experiences of different kinds are in high demand. Experimental archaeology has always offered sensory and emotional experiences, but this aspect has often been seen as something secondary or have even been denied by scholars and others in the academic field, since the experience aspect has been considered to have little knowledge value. Today there is a focus on experience, especially in educational connections and also within the cultural heritage and tourism sector. Here too lies the potential of this genre. Both research and teaching and the dissemination and communication of experimental archaeology are very heterogeneous today. The creation of a network of people that are working within this area is a great change and renewal through exchange of ideas and experiences across borders and genres. It is in the role as a meeting place that the greatest value of this project is to be found. At the same time, the project is enhancing contacts through its network between academia and other public institutions performing experimental archaeology.

This research initiative contains key individuals both within academic research and from the field of experimental archaeology outside academia in the Nordic countries. This makes the project a strong cohesive force
offering renewal at a Nordic level, where experimental archaeology can be developed to work as a tool for both knowledge and experience. Through its members and participating museums and centres, the project has direct contact with Exarc, which makes the experiences and goals of the project accessible to a European experimental archaeology community. However, we primarily see the development of a strong Nordic cooperation.

A currently fragmented environment that performs experimental archaeology from different points of departure in the Nordic countries comes together in this network. It offers closer collaboration possibilities between institutions and individuals within the field. This leads to a larger contact area and improves communication, leads to renewal of research, teaching and communication with the public.

The project expects increasing contact between the scientific knowledge and the humanistic ideals that today cause the division of experimental archaeology into two parts, one knowledge-focused and the other experience-oriented. By giving greater weight to experience, sensory and emotional aspects, and by taking account of people’s experiences of the past in connection with the conducting of experiments in archaeology, we believe that the

Fig. 1. Nusfjord fishing village in Lofoten, northern Norway (Photo: Wikimedia Commons 2005/GNU Free Documentation License).
genre will be fundamentally changed. Through this Nordic collaboration the perspectives widen from national to international. Through this project, experimental archaeology in new forms will be given a possibility to be truly explorative due to new opportunities beyond national boundaries.

The workshop in Lofoten in 2008

In October 2008 we arranged a workshop in the fishing village of Nusfjord, Lofoten, Northern Norway (Fig. 1). The workshop had 19 participants from around Scandinavia, discussing the aims and contents of Nordic experimental archaeology (Fig. 2). We received an array of contributions concerning different traditions within experimental archaeology today, examples from both education and research going on around Scandinavia. The presentations were either extracts from ongoing experimental research and education, or thoughts about the role of experimental archaeology as a result of several years’ experience within the field. Papers were presented on subjects relating to explicit themes as follows.

As an introduction, some presentations were held on experimental
archaeology between enlightenment and experience by Bodil Petersson and Lars Erik Narmo, on experimental archaeology between enlightenment and experience in a Scandinavian perspective by Bodil Petersson, on experimental archaeology in Europe by Roeland Paardekooper, and we also had an introductory lecture on the local historical setting around Lofoten.

Fig. 3. Reconstruction of the Skjoldehamn costume, an example of experimental archaeology in a local context (Photo: Lars Erik Narmo 2008).
from the historian Alf Ragnar Nielssen. The next theme was experimental archaeology, local identity and tourism development. Gørill Nilsen gave a presentation on the theme: What is the target group for experimental archaeology? Is it researchers, tourists or the local people living close to the area where the experiments are performed?

In the evening we had a live experience of a newly developed concept at Lofotr Viking Museum, performed together with the Hurtigruten cruise ships along the Norwegian coast, where visitors get the opportunity to visit the Lofotr Viking Museum to take part in a “blótgilde” with historical theatre and food in Viking manner. Is this a pure commercial experience, or what? A discussion was initiated on regional development, research and communication emanating from this experience.

The employees at Lofotr Viking Museum performed presentations from several angles on the local activities at the Viking museum in Borg, Lofoten. The event arranger, Kjersti Skaufeldt, together with museum director Geir Are Johansen, gave a presentation on the possibilities and challenges of the concept of “blótgilde” in relation to experimental archaeology and historical theatre with the serving of food.

The museum economist Inge Elvebakk gave us insight into the economic perspectives of a local museum. Director Geir Are Johansen told us about the production of experiences and how experimental archaeology can play a role in relation to tourism. The next theme was handicraft as time travel. Lars Erik Narmo, research director at Lofotr Viking Museum, lectured on experimental archaeology and handicraft as time travel, on the combination of experimental archaeology, research and communication as performed at Lofotr Viking Museum. The chieftain and person responsible for the Viking Age farm at Borg, Terje Bøe, presented experimental archaeology as it is performed in relation to the use of the Viking ship *Lofotr*, a replica of the Gokstad ship, and how the people in charge of the ship are sailing and maintaining it. The local farmer Odd Nicolaysen, who has contributed to experiments in Lofotr Viking Museum with his own labour, told us about his experiences of beer brewing, how experimental archaeology can be performed in the context of local business development. Dan Halvard Løvlid, a Norwegian archaeology student from the University of Bergen, told us about his experiment with replicating the Skjoldehamn costume from an archaeological find from northern Norway, a presentation on experimental archaeology performed in a local context (Fig. 3).
The ending theme of the conference was experimental archaeology and research, where we were given several examples of how experimental archaeology is conducted in the Nordic area today. Lars F. Stenvik from the Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU) in Trondheim, Norway, told us about experimental archaeology and research status from a mid-Norwegian perspective. Lotte Eigeland from the University of Oslo proceeded from experiments relating to south-east Norwegian Stone Age research. Lena Edblom from Umeå, Sweden, former leader of Gene Fornby Iron Age farm in northern Sweden, presented her view of experimental archaeology and Swedish academic archaeology from a northern Swedish perspective. Kjel Knutsson from Uppsala University contributed to the theme with a long-term perspective on experimental archaeology as performed in mid-Sweden over 30 years, and how the subject has interacted with academia during this period. Henriette Lyngstrøm from the University of Copenhagen gave us a presentation on the role of experimental archaeology within academia in Denmark, and Anna S. Beck gave us insight into theoretical perspectives on experi-
mental archaeology as performed at Lejre Land of Legends (Sagnlandet Lejre, formerly called Lejre Experimental Centre).

Adding to the perspective of old handicrafts and techniques and ways of life in the past, we also had a guided tour by the owner around Nusfjord fishing village where our workshop was held. Nusfjord was a very special setting for a workshop on experimental archaeology, as old traditions are still clearly visible and can be perceived by the senses, the whole place being more or less a display of past life, today transformed into a very special kind of unintended museum setting (Fig. 4, see also www.nusfjord.no). The Nusfjord experience strengthened the implied role of local traditions and atmosphere as important in a lot of settings that are giving a framework to experimental archaeology.

Regional collaboration and exchange
Other results of this project are intensified collaboration between the University of Tromsø and Lofotr Viking Museum within experimental archaeology, where some experiments were conducted, for example, on the extraction of oil by boiling seal blubber in a boiling pit (Fig. 5, see also the article by Gørill Nilsen in this volume). The arrangers were Lars Erik Narmo together with Gørill Nilsen from the University of Tromsø, the collaboration being part of an attempt to intensify contacts between academic educational efforts within experimental archaeology and archaeological open-air museums interested in the same matter. In this case students had the opportunity to come to Lofotr Viking Museum and its surroundings to see and perform experimental archaeology with the aid of academic staff as well as staff from the museum.

The workshops in Lund and Copenhagen
Two regional workshops were also arranged in Lund, southern Sweden, and Copenhagen, eastern Denmark, under the heading “Experimental Archaeology in the Öresund Region: Traditions and Visions”. The aim of these two workshops was to explore how education and research in experimental archaeology are performed today, and can be performed tomorrow, in this specific south Scandinavian context, consisting of the universities in Lund and Copenhagen and their partners at archaeological
open-air museums and centres. Students, researchers and representatives from open-air museums and experimental centres in the Öresund region took part in presenting and discussing education and research in this area (Fig. 6). The activities were co-arranged with the Centre for the Study of Denmark at Lund University.

The first workshop was held at Lund University in May 2009 with 26 participants from Denmark and Sweden. The arrangers were Bodil Petersson, Lund University, together with Henriette Lyngstrøm, Copenhagen University, Marianne Rasmussen, Lejre Land of Legends, and Anders Ödman, Lund University. The themes for the presentations concerned the hobby aspect of handicraft in experimental archaeology, the properties of specific ceramic vessels, tar-making, bronze casting, iron smelting and forging, and also a special case of experimental archaeometry relating to a case study on strontium isotopes in the archaeological material. Anders Ödman, who is in charge of the experimental archaeology education in Lund, gave us a presentation of the facilities provided to the students in experimental archaeology at Lund University.
The second workshop arranged by the same group of people was held at the University of Copenhagen in November 2009, with 15 participants from Denmark and Sweden. The subjects elucidated on this occasion were the reconstruction of textiles, the use of flint tools, children and the knapping of flint, soapstone experiments for lamps and food, the construction of a public past with the aid of experimental archaeology, perforated cylindrical pots for firing and their practical use. All the participants also had a guided tour of the facilities for students in experimental archaeology courses at the University of Copenhagen, where Henriette Lyngstrøm is in charge.

As an overall result from these workshops, we see an enhanced understanding of the setting for experimental archaeology as performed in the Öresund region. The overview gives a good platform for developing and expanding the field of experimental archaeology in the future.
Contributions to this book

To make the platform more solid not least in the Nordic area where experimental archaeology is not so often published but more often practised, we decided to publish this book on the subject.

The making of a book always takes its own direction. Some of the contributions in this volume emanate from the workshop in Nusfjord, Lofoten, in 2008, and others have appeared afterwards. Some of the contributions from the Norwegian workshop never ended up as texts in this volume, since they were work in progress, not yet ready to be published. As a final result of our common efforts, we now have a good blend of examples from ongoing experimental archaeology around Scandinavia today.

The articles in this volume concern general perspectives as well as research, education, communication and historical perspectives. It is not possible to give a systematic overview of the contributions. They represent examples of experimental archaeology performed on a scale from controlled, modified controlled, contextual to uncontrolled and unexpected experiments with different results, also describing different possible approaches to the concept of experimental archaeology today. Instead of telling the reader how things ought to be in a definite way, this book is to be seen as giving inspiration about the array of possible approaches and developing a truly experimental sense. And the approach is not the same every time. One major result, though, is the obviously unexpected outcomes that appear almost every time in all experiments, and that there is a need to discuss how to handle this experience.

In the article “A Journey in Time” Bodil Petersson and Lars Erik Narmo points out different traditions within experimental archaeology, and the directions of development that can be seen in present-day traditions and visions.

In his article “A Time for Poets: Experimental Archaeology in Götiska Förbundet” Pävel Nicklasson makes a journey back in time to Sweden and the Nordic area in a period when experimental archaeology was not invented, but when early antiquarians nevertheless had an experimental approach, coupled with an interest in emotional aspects of the past that well suits our present-day approach to the subject of archaeology and past worlds in general.

Roeland Paardekooper gives an overview of the role and performance of
experimental archaeology in his text “Experimental Activities: A European Perspective”. As an active member of the European organization Exarc, an organization for archaeological open-air museums and experimental archaeology all over Europe, he is well up-to-date concerning the role of experimental archaeology in a European context.

In the article “Experimenting with the Unknown” Tine Schenck reflects on some of the unknown things that come up when you are performing controlled experiments, things you are not always sure how to handle, and the knowledge that can be extracted.

Lotte Eigeland elucidates the role of experimental archaeology in southern Norway in her text “State or Status Quo? Experimental Archaeology in East Norwegian Stone Age Research”. Her perspective is Stone Age research, but her general finding is that there is both a lack of money and sometimes a lack of academic interest in the subject of experimental archaeology that affects the possibilities to perform it.

Henriette Lyngstrøm gives an overview of the form and content of the teaching traditions in experimental archaeology in her article “Teaching Experimental Archaeology at the University of Copenhagen, Denmark”. Her text shows how it is possible to combine good theoretical education with a strong hands-on perspective. This good combination comes as a result of close collaboration with the open-air museum in Lejre, formerly called Lejre Experimental Centre, today named Lejre – Land of Legends. Here researchers and students get the possibility to perform experiments provided with a good infrastructure.

In the article “Under the Same Roof: Experimental Research and Interpretation with Examples from the Construction of House Models” Marianne Rasmussen discusses how archaeological open-air museums can contribute to research and to public communication. This is an area for questioning instead of giving answers to specific research questions.

Anna S. Beck devotes her article, “Working in the Borderland of Experimental Archaeology: On Theoretical Perspectives in Recent Experimental Work”, to the relation between what is named controlled and contextual experimental archaeology, and how the different approaches emanate from and are affected by archaeological traditions relating to processual and post-processual/contextual archaeology.

In “The Unexpected” Lars Erik Narmo draws attention to different experimental archaeology projects that have come up with unexpected
results from the sideline. The focus is on the unexpected results of experiments that were set up to say something else, but in addition there are often also unexpected directions and tendencies that are worth considering. He also contributes to the debate on how to communicate results from archaeological experiments in different and untraditional ways.

Kjel Knutsson gives a historical survey of the traditions and consequences of long-term performance of experimental archaeology in education and research at Uppsala University over a period of 40 years. In his article “A View from the Inside: Experimental Archaeology at Uppsala University 1971–2008” we get an overview of the development of a tradition and what is needed to keep things going in the long run.

In her article “Doing Archaeological Experiments in an Ethnic Context: Experimental Archaeology or Experiential Activities?” Gørill Nilsen explores the role of experimental archaeology in a local context, and how the involvement of the local community affects what is often conceived of as pure science. Nilsen shows how a multi-ethnic context affects the concept of science.

Lars F. Stenvik discusses iron production experiments performed in close collaboration with the local community in his article “Experiments with Iron Production in Trøndelag”. We gain insight into the combination of science and culture within experimental archaeology.

Finally, this project and the workshops and experiments performed within its framework since the start in 2008 have now come to an end. My hope and belief is that this project is only the beginning of a new era when unlimited experimental archaeology is given the chance to thrive in academic institutions and in archaeological open-air museums and centres in local, regional, national and international contexts.

References

**Introduction**

*EuroREA Journal of (Re)construction and Experiment in Archaeology* 2004– (ongoing). Publisher: Exarc European Organization of Archaeological Open-air Museums and Experimental Archaeology.


