

## **CARARE conversation on the New European Bauhaus**

Connecting Archaeology and Architecture in Europe ([CARARE](#)) is a non-profit association that brings together agencies and organisations, research institutions, specialist digital archives and creative companies with an interest in the archaeological and architectural heritage. We aim to advance professional practice and work to support the creation, connection, enhancement and use of digital archaeological and architectural heritage resources for work, research, learning and enjoyment. One of CARARE's aims is working to foster appreciation of the digital cultural heritage and its potential uses by the wider community.

Each year CARARE organises an annual conference which showcases technologies and shares experiences of making the archaeological and architectural heritage collections accessible online. This year's conference, which took place online on the 24<sup>th</sup> June, included a session dedicated to a conversation about the New European Bauhaus. This paper summarises the findings of our conversation.

### **Conversation**

The conversation was organised as part of a conference session and had around 45 participants including members of the CARARE association, representatives of cultural heritage organisations, researchers, students and professionals. The conversation was guided by Kate Fernie of CARARE, who acted as a facilitator.

Following an introduction to the New European Bauhaus and its concepts, four panellists with differing backgrounds and experiences shared examples which represent the New European Bauhaus to them. The panellists and conference participants were then invited to respond to a set of questions focussing on what the New European Bauhaus for archaeology and historic buildings. The panellists were:

- Eleanor Kenny, Head of Communications and External Relations at [Europeana](#)
- Eimear Fox, Landscape Architect at [Transport Infrastructure Ireland](#)
- Henk Alkemade, Historic Landscapes specialists, [Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands](#)
- Ann Degraeve, Head of Archaeological Heritage at [Urban.Brussels](#) (Brussels regional service for Urbanism and Heritage) and Vice President of the [European Association of Archaeologists](#)

### **Setting the scene**

Eleanor Kenny, Head of Communications and External Relations at Europeana began by noting that Commissioner Maria Gabriel has described the Bauhaus as 'a bridge between the world of art and culture on one side and science and technology on the other.' Co-responsible Commissioner Elisa Ferreira touches on the idea of shared experiences and the idea that the New European Bauhaus is about how we live together, our values, our common spaces of work and leisure, our collective and private experiences. Both commissioners connect the Bauhaus with the European Green Deal and how we live.

The initiative is calling on all sectors and communities to contribute to designing those ways of living together. Both Europeana and CARARE believe that the cultural heritage sector and our community's unique perspective really needs to be part of that discussion.

Kenny remarked that she has taken part in a number of conversations about the New European Bauhaus and what people seem to be encouraged by is the value driven nature of this initiative. A point that resonates and comes up time and time again is the idea of **using the past to shape our future**. The idea that you can transfer the knowledge and experience of the past in new ways to connect the present and future; connecting local skills, experiences and competences to today's challenges around sustainability and the environment; and the intergenerational potential of that approach. Kenny concluded her introduction by saying 'I really believe that the values of the New European Bauhaus already exist across our sector'.

## Sharing experiences

### Europeana Collection Days – at the Shannon Hydroelectric plant

Eleanor Kenny went on to share Europeana's experience of running collection days and of a specific event relating to the Shannon Hydroelectric plant in Ireland. Collection days are events where communities are invited to bring along personal memories and memorabilia. As part of a project called Europe at Work, [Collection Days](#) brought together the stories of personal working lives across Europe with archival material on industrial and labour related heritage. If you think about it work and our places of work aren't just about what we do, it's also about who we are and where we come from, and our relationship with our community. It's an integral part of our cultural heritage.

Europeana worked with the Hunt Museum in Limerick and partners including the Irish Electricity Supply Board and its Archive to engage with wider communities and record the stories of the people who helped shape Ireland's first national renewable hydro-electric power scheme. One of those collection days took place on site at the Shannon Hydroelectric plant others took place online last year.



Foreman and Drill Bore Technician, Shannon Scheme, 1927, Marie Dennehy, Europeana Foundation CC-BY-SA

This 1927 photo illustrates one of the stories shared at the event, the man to the far left of the image was called Jack Dennehy. The story was shared by his daughter Marie Dennehy. Her father was a foreman, his brother John Joe worked on the scheme and, her mother – Jack’s wife Ellen – took in boarders and lodgers who also worked at the scheme. Ellen also ran what’s called a shibeen (an unlicensed bar). Through Marie’s story, and many others, which are available via Europeana, we all now have access to stories about how this feat of industrial and sustainable engineering played a part in the life of this family, their loved ones, this community as well as in Irish history.

The significance of the Shannon scheme in Irish History has always been well documented but sitting this alongside the personal element of these stories does something more. **Stories forge connections and convey the culture, values and histories that communities can relate to.** That’s important especially with large scale projects like this.

Kenny noted that she shared this as a really good example of how the heritage sector came together with the cultural heritage sector and other actors to digitally connect communities with their heritage and their environment, and to do that across generations. She remarked that she thinks this encapsulates a lot of the values that we would like to see in the New European Bauhaus and our sector’s role in it.

### **Communities and sustainability**

Eimear Fox, Landscape Architect at Transport Infrastructure Ireland, began by saying part of the Bauhaus to me is everyone speaking together. While we all have our own professional or personal views, the more we talk to each other the more we can have communal approaches to all of these elements.

Fox shared the example of Ireland’s [Tidy Towns](#) competition noting this started about 60 years ago as a tourism competition but has grown to become an environmental and sustainability initiative. In 2019, 918 towns and villages took part – approximately 50 additional communities becoming involved during the Covid pandemic perhaps as a direct result of the chance that everyone has had to acknowledge and value their local environment.

One of the towns involved in the scheme is Abbeyleix, in the midlands of Ireland near the Shannon scheme; it would probably have been one of the first places to get electricity. Abbeyleix has a sustainable communities plan driven by the community with funding from local government and the local authority. Most of the actions in the plan are community and voluntary led. The heritage elements include getting people’s stories about buildings that are recognised as having heritage value because of their listing in national inventories - talking to people within the community and recording their history with these buildings.

Fox went on to share the example of a project where the community did a review of the orchards in Abbeyleix. They did a genetic testing for orchards that were over 150 years old to see how the heritage of food production in Abbeyleix and its history. The community then built on this by planting new community orchards.



Abbeyleix community group, Rights reserved

This picture shows a community group who are collecting apples at one of the orchards. Abbeyleix now has an apple festival every year where there is a communal apple press, and everyone can bring their apples to get apple juice.

Fox noted that Tidy Ireland is an organisation that's on the ground, which is **a model for sustainability where communities are at the core**. She remarked that the element of competition also forms a link with the New European Bauhaus suggesting that prizes are a good way to get people engaged.

### **Landscape under pressure**

Henk Alkemade, Historic Landscapes specialist at the Cultural Heritage Agency of the Netherlands (RCE) originally trained as a physical geographer but has worked in IT for several decades. His current project is allowing him to tie these threads of his professional life together through the establishment of a national landscape monitor for the Netherlands, which allows changes in the landscape to be tracked. This is important to do so because our landscapes, not just in the Netherlands, are under pressure.

There are many challenging claims on the landscape, and we have to decide what to do, where to do it. For example, there is a demand to get off fossil fuel.





Wind turbines and windmill, RCE

The picture illustrates one of the solutions – large wind turbines. These dwarf the historic windmill that you can see in the photograph and have a huge impact on how you experience the landscape around. These wind turbines and solar panel fields are going to fill a large part of the Netherlands.

Buildings encroaching into the countryside is also a problem in the Netherlands, which has to build about a million homes in the next two decades to accommodate the growing population. Another pressure is agriculture, which is turning towards a more cyclic, a more sustainable form takes more space than the high productive mono-cultural fields we have today. This helps to meet biodiversity targets.

There is a piling up of claims on the landscape. The great challenge, which is connected to the European Bauhaus, is how as a cultural heritage sector we can help the countryside go through these big changes while at the same time preserving the historical values which are present. These values include historic buildings but also old parcelling, old roads, archaeological sites, and more.

Alkemade noted that on the other hand, it is possible to get **inspiration from the past to solve the problems of today**. For instance, if you're turning to circular agriculture you might learn something from the old mixed farming systems of the past. For example, the use of commons. These are ideas, he would very much like to discuss in the Bauhaus context.

One more thing to discuss is the importance of landscapes, which are by far the largest and still living archive of the interactions of cultural and natural processes. We can learn a great deal from them. They are the place where everything comes together, the spatial and temporal relations between archaeological sites, historical buildings, where you have your roads, where you live, are all connected. Alkemade concluded by suggesting we need to have some kind of holistic approach, a holistic solution to address all the challenges.

## **Archaeology and Well-being**

Ann Degraeve, Head of Archaeology at Urban.Brussels and Deputy Chair of European Association of Archaeologists spoke about archaeological heritage and well-being, which is central to the Bauhaus principles. The [NEARCH](#) survey found that many European citizens link archaeology to a remote past and do not feel a very strong attachment to it. However, Degraeve's experience is that when citizens can participate in activities they do so massively and subsequently report positive personal well-being benefits.



Public archaeology in Brussels

In 2019 Urban.Brussels organised its first archaeology hot-spot activities as part of the [European Archaeology days](#). The picture shows members of the public ‘puzzling’ (piecing together) sherds from a 17<sup>th</sup> century well. The public response was overwhelming, activities were fully booked within hours and many persons wanted to come back again and again. The fact that they could touch real 17th century sherds and the amazement they experienced were the reasons behind this real success story.



Brussella 1238

Degraeve noted that it's all about how you identify yourself with what you consider to be your heritage. The archaeological site of Brussella 1238 in Brussels is a good example. The picture shows the situation in the city – it's not really inviting, difficult to access, open only one day a week on demand although the site is on the route that tourists take to go to the Grand Place and thousands of tourists (before Covid time) pass every day. Currently the site is being restored as part of the renovation of the Stock Exchange, which gives an opportunity to completely reconsider the access. The plan is for a new underground entrance by the side of the Stock Exchange and for a new roof. This will mean a lower visitor trajectory but also means cutting into some walls to let the visitors pass and an archaeological excavation because of the future lower ground level etc.

Degraeve went on to say that, the proposed changes have been very badly accepted by the archaeological community around this site. One person started a Facebook campaign assembling signatures against the demolition of the archaeological site – Save Brussella 1238. She remarked that the people signing to save the site, many from Brussels but also other cities in Belgium, had exactly the same wishes as we the managers have - **preserving the site and making it accessible to all**. The reactions said it all, Degraeve giving a translation of one of the comments 'we should absolutely preserve our heritage, not wall it in or destroy parts of it, but we should enhance it and make it accessible and a real tourist attraction. Progress shouldn't be achieved by despising our past or our heritage, **now more than ever it is important to show the site to our younger generation**. Make them accessible so this younger generation can have a view on what happened in the past and how it explains today's world. If we forget our past we will really regret it'. These are the reactions of the public.

Degraeve remarked on the continuous use of the word 'our'. It's our heritage, our past. This example shows how the public relates to the archaeological heritage as being their own. Degraeve encountered this same feeling when running an open-door Sunday on the largest excavation ever in Brussels. People from very different origins, perhaps living in the neighbourhood for one year only or less, saw the excavation as **their place, their heritage and their past**.

The question is how can we use this information and this knowledge into the new Bauhaus? It is clear to the public that the past is part of our future.

## **Discussion**

Participants in the session were then invited to comment on the question 'what does the New European Bauhaus represent to you?' The responses were captured using Sli.do and are illustrated bellow.



As a result of the emphasis placed on **Community**, **Collaboration** and **Inclusivity** were emphasised by participants a discussion followed about community planning and how to make this really work.

Eimear Fox noted that, in the Tidy Towns example there is not only a strong respect for the communities and the work that they do, but also a structure through the appointment of community leaders whose voices are heard and who are involved in making decisions. In the discussion participants identified less successful examples where community consultations have taken place, but these are perceived by the public as ‘nobody is really listening to us, they’re only asking us to hear what we say’. The discussion concluded that key to successful community-based planning is when the public have a real sense that their voices are not only heard but acted on.

The theme of **learning from the past to tackle the problems of today** came up in discussion. Daniel Pletinckx of [Visual Dimension bvba](#), remarked that when they make reconstructions of historic sites, they always try to make what they show relevant for the public of today, especially the children. Green energy and recycling were something they had to do in the middle ages - they had no choice. Showing medieval orchards and how people used them - how they went through winter, how they had relied on them for their food supply and the local economy. We use examples of climate change and how this influenced history, sometimes in quite a severe way, to make people aware that this isn’t just about a little bit more rain, but it does really affect our society. Many of these issues ring a bell, especially with the younger generation.

Pletinckx suggested what the Bauhaus initiative can do is making cultural heritage relevant in its good and its bad aspects. So that as a community we understand better what heritage is and what is important for us. **Heritage is important because we need to learn from it**, to



see the examples of what happened in the past and so on. He went on to say ‘in my view this is what cultural heritage can do for the broader society, it is a very important piece of our being, our identity, of our way of living.’

Eimear Fox noted that it ties in historically – communities’ cycles revolved around food production which comes back to the issue of climate change and more extreme weather events. It all ties in to how, as Henk Alkemade was saying, we live on the land, our actions and the way the planet has been treated. She remarked that whole linkage between the past, the future and what’s ahead of us is key.

Participants went on to discuss the notion of **spatial innovation**, which related to the Bauhaus concept of improving the quality of experience in towns. Anthony Corns of the [Discovery Programme Ireland](#) noted that there’s a well-known line, **we have to be a bit more innovative about how we use these heritage spaces and heritage buildings**. We have to make sure that buildings aren’t just cocooned but become useful into the future. The challenge is how we do that so that buildings maintain their cultural value but have decent environmental and low impact.

The idea of **commons**<sup>1</sup> was discussed. Henk Alkemade noted that ‘commons’ are especially applicable to landscapes but can also apply to sharing ideas. Eimear Fox noted that TII is looking at the possibility of having productive landscapes along transport corridors; establishing these will require reducing the use of pesticides which in turn improves biodiversity.

Eleanor Kenny shared a lovely example that relates to the point about **finding ways of using historic buildings today in a sustainable way**. The [Epic Museum](#) is based in an old warehouse in the docklands in Dublin. It’s an area that has a lot of water level problems and the museum is partner in a project which is creating a roof garden on top of the building using different sustainable means as a way of addressing the issues around water. This is not the museum on its own, it’s the museum with the other organisations in the building and with the city, that community infrastructure. The building houses some big tech companies, so there are different organisations coming together to create this roof garden to try to solve a problem which is related to the climate and to ameliorating the local environment. What’s really interesting is that this is a pilot project so the idea is that they would then be able to take it further out into the community, people would be able to learn from what’s happened and recreate it and become self-appointed guardians of their own roof top gardens in other parts of the city also trying to solve the same problem.

Eleanor Kenny went on to say that so much of what we try to do in Cultural Heritage comes back to some kind of Commons - whether it be online or elsewhere. It’s that idea of being open and inclusive, of being able to share across sectors and organisations. But the Cultural Heritage sector is currently not always in the group or in the conversation where these things are being moved forward with regard to the New European Bauhaus, we need to make sure that our sector makes itself part of those groups so that we’re part of the wider conversation and the framework that develops to take this initiative forwards.

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<sup>1</sup> In medieval times commons were areas of land where the owners of nearby properties had rights to graze animals and to collect wood or other resources. Commons survive in some regions today and have a unique wildlife, landscape and archaeological value

Marinos Ioannides of Cyprus University of Technology remarked we're talking about Cultural Heritage and the new idea of the Bauhaus. He reminded us that Plato wrote about some of the ideas that are reflected in the Bauhaus. For example, Plato describes<sup>2</sup> the conversation that an Egyptian priest had with a Greek when he visited Athens. When he saw the results of the climate change on the culture, the Greek culture, the Greek society, the Egyptian priest criticised the Greek by saying '*you will never learn from the past*'. Whatever is happening, each time there is a fire, each time there is a high level of water, raining, earthquakes and so on your memory is lost and you don't take any measures to protect that. Ioannides went on to say that it's important to document not only for re-use but also to protect and preserve and keep for the generations, and to remember lessons learned from the past. He concluded by saying if we really learn from the past because we document, digitise, create all this big data, it will help a lot and even make the Bauhaus.

The group went on to discuss **which is more important for archaeology and historic buildings** – quality of experience, sustainability or inclusivity. All agreed that the sustainability and inclusivity are equally important as the quality of the experience (the visuals, planning and the architecture). It's not possible to put one first, for example if an historic building is not safe for people to go in, it can't be inclusive; if it's not sustained, no-one has anything to look at. The concepts are like a three-legged stool, if you take one of them away the stool collapses.

Taking this holistic approach, the group went on to discuss “**what are the main challenges for archaeology and historic buildings?**” This brought issues around funding prioritisation and the need for long term sustainability and access to resources. Lack of awareness and the hidden heritage (including buried archaeological remains) were also mentioned.

Anthony Corns of the Discovery programme, Ireland mentioned the '[Adopt a Monument](#)' scheme as an example of a community-based approach to tackling sustainability. This scheme has been established in the UK for quite a few years. More recently the Heritage Council has been replicating some of that scheme in Ireland. The scheme involves local communities and empowering them to look after their own local cultural heritage, upskilling them, providing resources and support so that ultimately local people become the custodians of sometimes neglected heritage sites. It's more sustainable if local people monitor and look after local places and more efficient than paying for rangers to go around and look after these sites maybe once every five years.

Kate Fernie remarked that the examples from the UK include communities looking after prehistoric sites. The work on the ground, shows that people are really able to connect with remote history if it's in their local patch. They become very attached to their local monuments and sites.

The conversation closed with a discussion about funding for the New European Bauhaus and where culture and the cultural heritage is likely to sit. All agreed on the importance of participating in the co-design phase so that culture and the cultural heritage on all their levels, not only aestheticism, but also their value for communities and individuals in their connection with places and people, in local skills, in connecting the knowledge and experiences of the past with today's challenges, quality of life and more.

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<sup>2</sup> This description appears in Plato's 13<sup>th</sup> Book, Timaeus: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timaeus\\_\(dialogue\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Timaeus_(dialogue))

