

Die Wissenschaft und ihre Lehre ist frei



Problems for a professional archaeology in Austria

Professionalisation: a tightrope walk

- **I am all for professionalising archaeology**
- **but also for public participation in archaeology**
 - Professional and participatory archaeology
 - can support each other
 - but also conflict with, even exclude each other
 - Professionalisation allows
 - to improve disciplinary quality standards
 - archaeologists to lobby as a group for archaeology
 - to improve working conditions, wages etc.
 - to raise public trust in and appreciation of archaeology
 - but can also
 - infringe fundamental civil (or constitutional) rights
 - lead to elitist and self-serving ,professional‘ attitudes
 - lead to exclusion of non-professionals (aka ,the public‘)
 - reduce public trust in and appreciation of archaeology

Austrian professions

- Organised in ‚Chambers‘ („Kammern“)
 - membership compulsory by law, except for civil servants
 - 3 large ones with many subsections each, e.g.
 - **Arbeiterkammer** („worker’s chamber“)
 - » responsible for all private sector employees not members of another chamber
 - Wirtschaftskammer („chamber of commerce“)
 - several smaller ones for ‚free professions‘, e.g.
 - Rechtsanwaltskammer („lawyer’s chamber‘ / bar association)
 - Architekten- und Ingenieurkonsulentenkammer („architects‘ and engineering consultants‘ chamber“)
 - for professional self-organisation and -regulation
 - e.g. Arbeiterkammer also responsible for consumer protection
 - e.g. Ärztekammer for medical ethics and professional standards
 - lobbying group for their respective profession(s)

The Austrian archaeological profession

- no Archäologenkammer
- **Arbeiterkammer**
 - archaeology is ,too small‘
 - c. 1.200 ,archaeologists‘ in Austria on 1 June 2013 (source: DISCO Austria 2012-14)
 - does not have a section for archaeologists
 - not even for ,heritage workers‘
 - when inquiring at Arbeiterkammer, told they would fall under „freie Berufe“ (,free professions‘)
 - Catch-all section for ,we don’t know what to do with these professions and honestly don’t care‘
- no proper professional archaeology representation, self-organisation or –regulation possible within existing legal framework

Who is a ,professional' archaeologist?

- § 11 (1) Austrian Heritage Protection Law (DMSG)
 - Any search for archaeological monuments in situ, whether by excavation or other means, requires a permit by National Heritage Agency, which can only be issued to archaeology graduates (at least MA).
 - usually interpreted as
 - applying to all archaeological fieldwork
 - including any excavations
 - and survey (including purely visual)
 - and also metal detecting
 - to locate any archaeology under the surface of the soil
- Would seem to imply:
- **archaeology graduate = professional archaeologist**

Some added complications

- fundamental pillar of Austrian civil society is **strict prohibition against arbitrary interference** by state
 - fundamental constitutional freedoms of citizens **must not** be restricted by the state without (exceptionally) good reasons (e.g. an overwhelming public interest)
- Staatsgrundgesetz 1867
 - part of the Austrian constitution
 - defines the fundamental freedoms of all citizens
 - **scientific and scholarly research and teaching**
 - defined as one such fundamental freedom in Art. 17
 - does **not** require any qualifications
 - except for the freedom to teach at public (higher) education institutions (= Habilitation)

Whither ‚professional‘ archaeology?

- Usual interpretation of § 11 (1) DMSG unsustainable
 - § 1 DMSG clearly defines that
 - the law only applies to monuments whose preservation is in the public interest due to their exceptional significance
 - public interest in the preservation of a monument is established by scheduling according to §§ 2, 2a or 3 DMSG
 - scheduling establishes public interest
 - public interest provides reason for state to restrict freedom of research to professionals (≈ graduates)
 - **Law only applies to scheduled monuments!**
- But: only c. 1,000 scheduled archaeological monuments in Austria
 - not much of a need for a profession! („graduate‘ or not)

Professional Austrian archaeologists

- There are professional archaeologists in Austria!
 - most Austrian archaeologists have excellent training
 - most conduct their work according to national and international quality standards
 - much of it actually being of outstanding quality!
 - But
 - the legal framework for professional self-regulation gives them no proper standing as a profession
 - the legal framework for heritage protection does not help them to establish themselves as one either
- Thus, they have no proper lobby
- and often feel powerless and not sufficiently valued

The consequences

- Creating and maintaining professional identity
 - thus requires some means of distinction other than
 - membership of self-regulating professional body
 - (publicly) recognised superior quality of work
- bringing out the negatives of professionalisation
 - not always, but at least sometimes, if not often
 - distinction from ,others‘
 - not based on quality of work but academic achievement
 - by group tribalism: „we“ (the good) vs. „them“ (the bad)
 - territorialism and exclusion of others
 - leading e.g. to unsustainable interpretations of the law (to provide us with privileges, so that there is at least something we can ,control‘ as a profession)

Are there ways forward?

- Proper professionalisation direly required
 - to give the profession a voice as a profession
 - to enable professional self-regulation
 - particularly of professional ethics and conduct
 - and for professional standards of quality of work
 - progress on this front: introduction of minimum standards of excavation in 2010 due to emerging commercial sector
 - but: only excavation permit requirement, not ,professional' standard
 - to end the need for being exclusionary to maintain disciplinary (rather than professional) identity
- unlikely within existing (legal) frameworks in Austria
- **,external' solution only way forward**
 - IfA membership?
 - International professional archaeology association?