

Editorial

We are happy to invite you to read and engage with the 31st issue of *Current Swedish Archaeology*. The journal, which started its journey in 1993, celebrates 30 years of existence this year. Now, as then, it publishes current, high-quality archaeological research to both a national and international audience. It also promotes contact and debate around issues that Swedish archaeology shares with the larger international field. To continue this work and ensure the journal's future publications requires a dedicated readership as well as financial support. We are therefore pleased to announce that we have been awarded a grant from the Swedish Research Council (*Vetenskapsrådet*). The grant sends a clear message that journals within the Humanities are qualified to produce research of the highest quality. Such messages enable creativity and knowledge growth, and recognises the Humanities contribution to contemporary society. This has not always been the case.

One important issue where the humanities at large, and archaeology in particular, has a lot to contribute, is that of digital infrastructures. What does the future hold in regard to the increasing development, use of and dependence on infrastructures that support, and importantly also co-produce, archaeological knowledge? Although such infrastructures have been in the making for a number of years, actually decades, we thought it timely to discuss this topic in connection to the development of SweDigArch, a new national infrastructure for digital archaeology in Sweden. The project has been awarded 65,900 KSEK from the Swedish Research Council for a period of 6 years (2022–2027). The resulting digital infrastructure is built to ‘... ensure that Swedish archaeology is part of the data science revolution’ (SweDigArch 2023). The lure of these infrastructures, the revolutionary potential, lies in the manifold ways data may be combined and then re-combined with other data, in order to reach new understandings

and possibilities for interpretation. However, when the infrastructure is built on data that by necessity is aggregated and harmonised, it needs to be acknowledged and investigated how these procedures affect the resulting archaeological knowledge. Ultimately, digital infrastructures concerns the way we make the world, and the effect this making has on the world, including the variety of stakeholders that may be both human and non-human (see also Barad 2007:381). To better understand what they are and what they do is a matter of urgency, especially at a time when archaeology is trying to challenge boundaries in thinking by engaging with Anthropocene and posthuman realities.

Jeremy Huggett delves deeper into these ethico-onto-epistemological issues in a keynote entitled ‘Deconstructing the Digital Infrastructures Supporting Archaeological Knowledge’. Elegantly and thoroughly, he uncovers and accounts for what infrastructures are, how they act as emergent phenomena and how they during their unfolding may encounter unexpected changes, created by limitations that could not be foreseen or by unanticipated demands, for instance. He stresses that there is a general lack of discussions about the social and cultural aspects of infrastructures, although they have been recognised as much more than things, in fact as bundles of relationships that have lived implications. He rightly calls for critical and extensive overviews of infrastructures’ infiltration, influence, empowerment and constraints on archaeological practice and thought. His call is eloquently answered, challenged, debated and elaborated upon by Nicolò Dell’Unto, Agiatis Bernadou, James Taylor, Bodil Petersson, Monika Stobiecka and Isto Huvila. In a final reply to these responses, Huggett sends off the discussion of the timely and critical evaluation of how infrastructures work, with the demanding and appropriate question: - ‘If not now, when?’

In this issue you also find three research articles that provide new and deepened insights on different aspects of Scandinavian prehistory as well as the Swedish apparatus on contract archaeology. Firstly, Matthias Toplak and Lukas Kerk present us with an interesting analysis of bodily modifications of skulls and teeth in Viking Age Gotland. They demonstrate how these embodiments relate to, communicate and negotiate varieties of social identities. Jan-Henrik Fallgren, in his paper, delivers an alternative view of the establishing of the estate system in Scandinavia during the early medieval period (c.400–1000 CE). It is contended that incentives to create estates in Scandinavia were not at hand before the Christianisation process. Lastly, Matthew Nelson analyses contract archaeology in light of recent changes and tensions. He contends that it in order to create positive outcomes and values in society from contract archaeology, communication efforts need to be more dialogical and inclusive, taking into consideration the conditions of local contexts and interests, as well as the needs of communities. After the

articles follows a section with important news from research projects and events, as well as reviews of books and theses. Fredrik Svanberg explores Vivian Smits' PhD dissertation *Kulturarvsparadoxen* (2022), which examines how Swedish contract archaeology creates knowledge and how this can be made relevant in the broader public space, including government agencies and the general public. Magdalena Naum, in turn, takes a closer look at Martina Hjertman's PhD dissertation, *Afloat and Aflame* (2022), which investigates the discourses of marginalization in Gothenburg in the late eighteenth-early twentieth century.

It is our sincere hope that you find this year's issue to be both interesting and stimulating. News for next year, from 1st Jan 2024, is that research articles will be published online as soon as they are approved in the peer-review process. We thus welcome you to send in your research article as soon as possible and at any time of the year. The full issue is always published as usual in December.

Ing-Marie Back Danielsson & Elisabeth Niklasson
editors of *Current Swedish Archaeology*

REFERENCES

- Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham, N.C: Duke University Press.
- SweDigArch 2023. *Swedish National Infrastructure for Digital Archaeology* <https://web.archive.org/web/20230612072941/https://swedigarch.se/> [Accessed: 24 November 2023].