PROJECT DESCRIPTION

PROJECT DETAILS

PROJECT TITLE
Telling Different Stories: innovative approaches to the publication, interpretation & archiving of linear infrastructural projects

PROJECT SUMMARY

This studentship is a collaboration between Bournemouth University (BU) and Museum of London Archaeology (MOLA). The project seeks to draw upon recent developments in archaeological theory and the digital humanities in order to engage in a more creative, ambitious fashion with the vast quantities of archaeological data that are generated by the most ambitious of current commercial fieldwork projects; those responding to large-scale linear infrastructure, such as HS2 and the A14. The aim is to develop wholly new ways of approaching, interpreting, presenting and archiving the wealth of archaeological information generated by such projects, and through these generate in turn new interpretations of the past. Specific aims are to:

1. Challenge and unsettle existing commercial approaches to the post-excavation, publication and archiving of large-scale infrastructure projects. This is by revealing, critically evaluating and challenging the core assumptions and frameworks that underpin them - ideas of linearity and progression coupled with notions of 'tracing' as an interpretative activity (see below).

2. Explore the ways in which new, and potentially radical, developments in archaeological theory, critical cartography and digital story-telling can be used to not only reveal different pathways into, and through the datasets generated, but also create different kinds of interpretative scaffolding.

3. To step back and examine the ways in which emerging trends in archaeological theory and critical thought can be brought into productive dialogue with the realities and exigencies of large-scale commercial fieldwork, to the benefit of both.

4. To develop new ways of engaging with the datasets yielded by large-scale infrastructural work; approaches that can help shape future post-excavation and publication practice as well as allow wholly new archaeological narratives and interpretations to emerge.

This project explores the complex relationships that exist between theory and practice; how these come together in acts of interpretation; and what we do with the material we excavate and archives we create. Archaeological practice is dominated by a focus on excavation--the physical extraction of material remains. This is especially so in the commercial archaeological sector, where property and infrastructure development dictate where, how, when and what material remains are extracted. At the heart of this (and to date notably under theorised) is a tacit concern with forms of linearity; in what we do, how we do it and - of critical importance - the interpretations, representations, narratives and archives we generate as a consequence. It is through the latter that we not only make sense of the past, but share and communicate that knowledge and make it available for the general public as well as future generations of researchers. Nowhere is this more evident than in large scale developments such as major road and infrastructure projects, which involve billions of pounds of investment of public monies and years - or decades - of labour by archaeologists and archaeological contractors. The scale of resource is matched by the scope of the archaeology itself, stretching across vast landscapes and hence spanning an array of sites and chronological periods. In such projects there is a risk that the inherent linearity of the task becomes embedded in the monographs we write and archives we generate. Like the schemes they document, these outputs start and end 'somewhere' whether with the earliest/latest remains uncovered, geographical nodes marking the start and end points, or some blend of the two. This is despite the fact that archaeological fieldwork itself often disrupts this sense of linear progression – with archaeological work often jumping forward and back in advance of development proper, both anticipating (and to a degree shaping) the projected path. The more erratic, non-linear mode of intervention that characterises the realities of commercial field practice can, however, be smoothed out in the process of post-excavation and publication. It is at this stage that the inherent linearity of the task may become embedded in the

outcomes of the work.

The nature of our archaeological (digital) archival systems also seems to reinforce this predilection for journeying along a fixed route. Categories and pathways into exploring the data are predefined, typically conforming to international standards in order to make them interoperable. The aggregate effect of this excavation-biased, linear and highly codified archaeological practice is, arguably, a set of outputs that are locked rigidly into a particular way of conceiving of, and talking about, past worlds. Put simply, such linear schemes produce reams of data which may or may not be subject to meaningful post-excavation activities. And where these activities are conducted, the very nature of the linear approach arguably conditions us to engage with the data in a very particular way; a linear story, or a journey along a defined route.

Current debates in archaeological theory have begun to emphasise that whilst undoubtedly comfortable - insofar as such work conforms to accepted norms and expectations - this linear mode of creating interpretations and archives might be more limiting and restrictive than we think, denying the inherent complexity, messiness and inherent relationality of the pasts we seek to understand. A useful way of thinking about this is through the contrasting notions of 'tracing' and 'mapping' proposed by Deleuze and Guattari (Jervis 2019 *Assemblage Thought and Archaeology*: 67). Tracing is a passive process of following pre-existing pathways and lines – effectively 'making a copy'. Mapping, on the other hand, is an active process of intervention through which new connections are drawn, new patterns revealed and new understandings actively created (Crellin 2020 *Change in Archaeology*:178). Practices of mapping can reveal new topologies and linkages within our data, allowing other voices to be heard and other pasts to be written. We would argue that at present the monographs and archives generated by major infrastructure projects trace those projects instead of map them. The irony is that it is the profound linearity of such projects that makes them so perfect for exploring ways in which to challenge linear tropes. What if we could produce archives and published accounts that encourage their users to move through them in unexpected ways? How might we generate maps of the archive that encourage users to get lost within them and, in so doing, free up new and wholly unexpected archaeological narratives? Mappings that encourage the reader to fold and knot the line instead of slavishly follow it? What kind of excavation monograph would emerge from a mode of engagement with fieldwork data that draws different kinds of linkages within the data generated, and values circularity, messiness and ambiguity as much as clarity and direction? That create spaces for alternative voices, for discomfort and disruption? The results have implications not only for our end-products - the interpretations and archives, but also the theoretical frameworks that purport to shape these new engagements as well as the field practices that gave rise to the data in the first instance. In short, this project aims at a new and highly relational way of conceiving the productive interplay between emergent trends in archaeological theory and commercial practice. The key research questions to be addressed include:

- Is a profoundly non-linear approach to the interpretation and publication of the data generated by linear infrastructural projects possible and if so, how can it be implemented?
- Does such an approach result in different kinds of interpretation and publication?
- What are the implications of this for developments in New Materialist thinking of the kind espoused by Crellin and Jervis - i.e. can large-scale commercial fieldwork practice shape emerging trends in archaeological theory?
- What are the implications of this for the way in which MOLA structures and carries out its post excavation, publication and archiving practices - i.e. can emerging trends in archaeological theory shape large-scale commercial fieldwork practice?
- Can we create supplements to our digital archives of linear schemes of investigation that steer their users into rambling through them, into getting lost in them? What would an archaeological map of a road-corridor look like that encourages its reader to fold and knot the line instead of slavishly follow it?
- What kinds of publication and interpretation would emerge from a mode of engagement with the fieldwork data that values circularity, messiness and ambiguity? Or that creates spaces for alternative voices, for discomfort and disruption?

The project will involve a combination of: direct participation through embedded placement working alongside MOLA teams (in order to gain vital experience in the on-the-ground commercial realities of such work and the challenges involved in effective digital archive design and implementation); more traditional documentary research into current practices in the interpretation and publication of such projects (to provide context); research into emerging trends in archaeological theory and the digital-humanities. Working with two different MOLA-affiliated infrastructure projects - one complete, and whose archive has been established -- and one 'live', whose archive has not yet been codified -- this PhD will involve a combination of ethnography (working with and amongst the team actively creating the archive and site publications) as well as archive design and construction (exploring how these new theoretical developments can be productively folded into large-scale commercial practice). Ultimately, the project will query whether and how linear infrastructural developments can disrupt, unsettle and challenge our contemporary ways of

writing histories and building archives. This project is therefore all about realising the productive space that can emerge when you creatively combine (the most academic of) theory and (most commercially ambitious and challenging of) practice. The key outcomes of the research can be summarised as follows:

1. the creation of a new, non-linear framework for the analysis and publication of large-scale infrastructure projects. [This will offer the intellectual shape and methodological structure to the student's research, and form the first part of the written thesis.]

2. the design of a series of blueprints and narrative toolkits for engaging with digital archive data - that can be drawn upon by academics, practitioners and the interested public alike - in order to realise outcome 1 whose value is illustrated by the publication of a series of new interpretations (in the form of vignettes). [The core applied work of the thesis.]

3. a critical analysis of the fall out (in terms of new or revised ideas, and new or revised commercial practices) of combining theoretical approaches usually developed in the context of very small-scale research projects with very large-scale, extensive commercial infrastructural investigations.

ACADEMIC IMPACT

The project will comprise an ambitious attempt to bring together cutting-edge developments in archaeological theory with current commercial practices and the unique challenges posed by major infrastructural projects. It is designed to create a two-way bridge that will allow the former (theoretical archaeology) to benefit from exposure to large-scale commercial workflows and datasets, and the latter (commercial archaeology) to draw constructively on what these new theoretical frameworks can offer in terms of completely different approaches to interpretation and dissemination. Theoretical ideas are usually incubated in the context of restricted academic research projects (that bear little relation to the exigencies of current commercial practice) and/or published datasets. Commercial practices are time dependent and constrained by external factors that create little space for conceptual experimentation. The research will thus be of benefit to all archaeologists involved in fieldwork, theory and the commercial sector.

Beyond the discipline of archaeology, the theoretical contribution will be of interest across the humanities, sciences and social sciences where the same theoretical debates and discussions are taking place. These are debates that foreground issues such as relationality, process and emergence, and there will be considerable interest in the results of research carried out to stress test these ideas in the context of direct practices on such a scale.

The benefits of the collaborative framework are to ensure that new ideas and ways-of-doing are allowed to emerge through a genuine blending, blurring and interweaving of the two areas, rather than solely at a predetermined interface or boundary at which pre-cooked theory is tested against large-scale commercial workflows and practices and vice versa. It also challenges the idea that the University is the sole provider of theory and the commercial partner of data (whether in terms of material things, digital archives, or established workflows).

SOCIETAL IMPACT

Despite the notable attempts of researchers such as Edgeworth and Lucas and the inspiring work of the Cambridge Unit, the rarefied worlds of archaeological theory and day-to-day commercial field practice are rarely brought together. The project comes at a key juncture. First, we are at the beginning of a period of dramatic infrastructural investment, with a host of multi-billion-pound linear developments either planned or taking place. The concomitant archaeological investigations are going to be of a commensurate scale and will generate vast quantities of data. Second, archaeological theory has reached a state of maturity, where archaeological ideas are developing in what Thomas has referred to as 'real time' rather than retrospectively. Archaeologists are contributing alongside thinkers in a range of contexts (rather than retrospectively applying their ideas) and perhaps most excitingly, archaeology is becoming a vital context within which new ideas are developing (e.g. see Thomas, J. 2015. Why 'The Death of Archaeological Theory'? In C. Hillerdal & J. Siapkas (eds). *Debating Archaeological Empiricism: The Ambiguity of Material Evidence*: 11-31. London: Routledge & Crellin, R. et al. 2021. *Archaeological Theory in Dialogue: situating relationality, ontology, posthumanism & indigenous paradigms*. London: Routledge). Third, the full interpretative potential of digital archives and born-digital datasets is finally being realised, as are the dynamic possibilities of digital archives to challenge the idea that archiving marks an end-point in the interpretative process, with archives little more than static repositories of data.

DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The student will take advantage of the opportunity that MOLA offers to enable mentorship with expert field and post-excavation practitioners. Over the course of the three years, they will spend 4 months of years 1-3 working alongside MOLA post-excavation, archival and project management teams who are currently dealing with infrastructural projects, as well as field teams carrying out work as part of such projects. We envision a shadowing approach, where the student is embedded in teams for five to ten days, matched to a mentor who will be identified by Dr Perry and Dr Spanou (as they oversee the relevant teams). The student will contribute to the day-to-day

activities of the team, which is crucial to understanding the practicalities and challenges of working in the developer-led context. Their mentors will simultaneously become facilitators of their research, working with the student to think through how best to realise their ideas in practice.

Alongside the MOLA-specific training, additional training will be focused around digital archive design, emancipatory digital archaeology and digital story-telling and narrative approaches (drawing on the expertise of BU's Faculty of Media and Communication). This will be achieved through a combination of training courses identified by the BU supervisory team, attendance at conferences and workshops sessions (with the student tasked to look out for relevant opportunities and broaching them with the supervisory team), and a week-long placement with key supporting institutions.

A training needs analysis template will be used by the team to initially identify development need. We will then use regular supervisory meetings and the annual review process to ask the student to identify and discuss with supervisors the 4 areas of the researcher's development programme.

To create opportunities to develop skills and experience the student will need for future careers we will use a combination of our Doctoral College Researcher Development Training programme which has over 50 different sessions and is based on Vitae training with access to extensive Epigeum online resources, and bespoke opportunities within our department. Students are expected to do a minimum of 10 days per year, e.g. data management plans, project planning, academic writing for publication, ethics. We will enable our student to engage in academic debate by regularly publishing their work. Where appropriate for their research projects, we will ensure they consider an integrated thesis, which is a combination of published outputs and contextual information. The student will work with BU and MOLA to coordinate a communications programme for their research over the course of their studies, entailing use of MOLA's blog, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn profiles. We envision at least one professional reflection piece published on MOLA's LinkedIn page, and a blog post per year. Depending on the evolution of the research programme, we also aim to produce brief monthly glimpses into the student's engagements with the archive through Facebook or Twitter.

SUPERVISORY TEAM	
First Supervisor	Prof. Mark Gillings – Professor of Archaeology (BU)
Additional Supervisors	Dr Sara Perry - Director of Research and Engagement MOLA Dr Sorina Spanou - Director of Infrastructure MOLA Prof. Kate Welham – Professor of Archaeological Sciences (BU)
Recent publications by supervisors relevant to this project	

INFORMAL ENQUIRIES
Please contact the lead supervisor on the following email for informal enquiries:

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA
This AHRC funded PhD Studentship is open to UK, EU and International students.
CDP doctoral training grants fund full-time studentships for 45 months (3.75 years) or part-time equivalent. The studentship has the possibility of being extended for an additional 3 months to provide professional development opportunities, or up to 3 months of funding may be used to pay for the costs the student might incur in taking up

professional development opportunities.

This studentship includes a fee waiver for 45 months. The National Minimum Doctoral Stipend for 2021/22 is £15,609, plus an additional CDP maintenance payment of £550/year and a further £1000/year as the student will be working at a London-based organisation while at a non-London university. The student will also be able to access research-related expenses of up to £1000pa from MOLA.

Candidates for a PhD Studentship should demonstrate the following outstanding qualities:

- outstanding academic potential as measured normally by either a 1st class honours degree (or equivalent Grade Point Average (GPA) or a Master's degree with distinction or equivalent

- an IELTS (Academic) score of 6.5 minimum (with a minimum 6.0 in each component, or equivalent) for candidates for whom English is not their first language and this must be evidenced at point of application.

- We welcome, and regularly interview, candidates from diverse professional backgrounds who may not have traditional academic qualifications.

ADDITIONAL ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

n/a

HOW TO APPLY

Please complete the online application form by Monday 21st June **2021**.

Further information on the application process can be found at: www.bournemouth.ac.uk/studentships