

IRFD Project Description • DFF-projektbeskrivelse

DIS/PLACE

An archaeology of German displacement during and after World War II

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Introduction and aims

At the end of World War II, about 250.000 of German refugees were displaced from their homes in the North Eastern part of Germany as a consequence of the Soviet offensive and ended their traumatic journeys in big refugee camps in Denmark. The significant numbers of German war refugees caused a unique situation in Denmark. After the last refugees left in February 1949 (Gammelgaard 1993), the camps were closed and reused, and the traces of the German presence were superficially erased. Erasure that has enhanced a certain oblivion but an archaeological approach to this can ensure a re-installment of the material memory of this darker chapter of Danish history. This is why an archaeological excavation with community engagement is primordial and pressing to unearth this specific past of ours, both on a symbolic- as on a concrete, material level. The aim of DIS/PLACE is to explore the everyday of both displaced groups behind the barbed wire and their internal material responses. DIS/PLACE will retrieve, record and analyse the material traces left by the German Luftwaffe and later the refugees, from one kind of displacement to another, through archaeological investigations at *Dyrehaven* in Skanderborg.

Such a study provides an insight into the construction of a new social space from the material perspective, as well as the material response of both groups to this space. In that sense, DIS/PLACE will, through a poignant case study, contribute with new knowledge to the fields of archaeology of displacement, and to the fields of internment and conflict archaeology internationally.

The researcher's PhD (de Vos 2020) focused on the repressive use of space during the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist dictatorship; skills that are now being used to build up a project that opens up new scientific ground.

The use of the barbed wire in the creation of a controlled space keeping the outside world out, offers new perspectives on the archaeological definition of internment as a practice in organizing both space and material culture with the aim of controlling and limiting a group of people (Myers & Moshenska 2011: 2). After the occupation, it was the turn of the German refugees to take over the barracks inside the barbed wire, this time with a new power balance of between "them" and "us" on each side of the barbed wire. This development makes Dyrehaven in Skanderborg a unique place to carry out an archaeological study of the material remains from both settlements and thus represents a completely new empirical material from an archaeological point of view.

Theoretical framework

The philosopher Lefebvre (1991:28) once highlighted the tendency of the Western world to overemphasize the written sources and the spoken word in the illumination of the construction of social spaces, underemphasizing the materials. Although materials in general has come to play a much more prominent role since then, the statement highlights the problem of omitting archaeology in the study of places that are inextricably physical, social and mental (ibid:5-14). The social and mental space can in that sense be found materially anchored within the barbed wire of Dyrehaven. This approach revolves around core concepts such as material memory (Olivier 2011), social spaces (Lefebvre 1991), control, rebellion, punishment and re-education, as well as structural violence and the social construct "the Other" (Galtung 1990), using materials to offer new insights into the organization and every day of the camp.

Following the theoretical framework of McSparron (et al 2020), groups of 'very high agency' (the German Wehrmacht), dominating the host community, do not have the need to distinguish between the internal or the external sphere in expressing their (material) culture (e.g. military uniforms). On the other hand, groups of low group agency (the refugees) develop strong internal (material) expressions as a response of adaptation or resistance (Mytum 2013; Moshenska & Myers 2011). *Dyrehaven* offers the possibility of studying the swift between being a site of very high group agency, self-protecting from attacks from a resilient host community by fencing their headquarter with barbed wire, into a site of very low group agency, structurally dominated and isolated.

State-of-the-art

While WW2 and the German occupation in Denmark has been a treasured subject in the historical research historiography, the German refugee camps in Denmark have been addressed scarcely. Information about the refugees has been touched upon by historical and oral sources focusing on the refugee situation propaganda, economy, laws and integration from a high level, political point of view (Kjærbøl 1950, 1959; Havrehed 1987; Klatt 2001; Harder 2020), while a variety of German researchers (e.g. Karasek- Langer 1959; Tolksdorf 1990; Carstens 2000) have focused mainly on the returning to Germany and their reintegration. Critical voices have attempted to tell the refugees' story (Gammelgaard 1981, 1993; Lylloff 1999) and locally, oral testimonies and diaries have been recovered from the refugees (e.g. Jakobsen 2011).

What the oral- and document-based research fail to explore, is the knowledge retained in the materiality (understood as things, structures, and landscapes) in situ and dispersed. Materiality is a source to other more diverse, more intimate stories about the German experience in Denmark, and – by extension – about the material response and human conditions of displaced people. The role of archaeology in this particular field in Denmark has so far been neglected, though it is broadly known that archaeology contributes to the knowledge production of conflicts in the recent past in

significant ways, narrating overlooked, material stories that should be bodied up with the already existent sources in the creation of a more nuanced past.

Inspiration can be taken from other related, archaeological studies. 'Lapland's Dark Heritage' has explored German WW2 remnants in Northern Finland, combining landscape surveys, excavation, historical and oral sources and working with local communities and successfully shown nuances of the German military experience. The German soldiers in the military bases of Lapland created a symbolic barbed wire fence to exclude the wilderness and create an ordered world inside the camp as a way of coping with the displacement (Seitsonen 2017:23) and differs from the Danish cases where the internal camp life had to be protected from the hostility of the local community.

DIS/PLACE will also draw on literature from the field of internment archaeology where remnants have been explored for instance as intimate stories and small signs of resistance (e.g. Rydén 2017) or 'artifacts of loss' (Dusselier 2008) as therapeutic endeavours. Often the camp creations are objects of 'Recyclia' (Saunders 2003:183-186) made to keep busy and to recreate the world the interns left behind (Carr 2011) as ways of homemaking and strategies of dominating the surrounding world and maintain personal integrity. Since the site of Dyrehaven offers particular, defining characteristics, DIS/PLACE aims to add significantly to these existing discussions.

Methods. Stage 1: Background research

Dissemination will run across all stages, for instance by a Facebook page to disseminate the process of excavation and findings directly to the public and for them to engage with the site.

Literature more broadly and oral testimonies, documents, diaries, *mémoires*, photographs, interviews, letters and objects will be gathered, mostly from the archive and collection of Skanderborg Museum (see Pedersen 2017). The refugees' dispersed material signatures left elsewhere will also be consulted, as for instance a series of objects found at *Skanderborg Mølle*, related to the refugees. The museum collaborates with a hobby detectorist who has a collection of war memorabilia from the area that will also be included, as will his knowledge about the site.

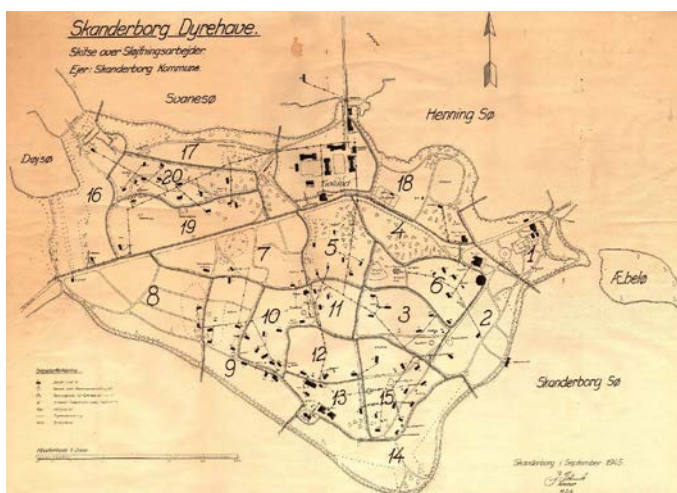


Figure 1: Map of Dyrehaven, Skanderborg. (With permission from Museum Skanderborg).

Fieldwork will be prepared and while only a few barracks are visible on the surface and partial elements from the fences surrounding the headquarter, Skanderborg Museum holds a map of the *Luftwaffe* base (fig. 1) that shows the exact location of the barracks. Two small rescue archaeological excavations were done in 2011 (area 10, fig. 1, field report SBM1213) and in 2019 (area 4, fig.1, field report: SBM1703). Both revealed many objects relating to the use of the site (ammunition, cognac bottles and fragments of porcelain and small jars of personal hygiene) that will also be included in the study. These finds indicate the area's great potential to make a scientifically based archaeological excavation and recover remains from the German soldiers and civilians in the area.

Methods. Stage 2: Fieldwork

The excavation is planned as a community dig unfolding during the month of October 2021 in collaboration with Skanderborg Museum, which already has significant experience planning and performing community digs (e.g. Søndergaard 2017). This method is known to be extraordinarily useful and enriching in the context of recent conflict (Thomas 2019). It is based on the ethical principles of reciprocity in community participation and ensures mutual beneficial effects (Moshenska 2017). Thereby this inclusive archaeological method possesses reciprocal goals of addressing multiple histories connected to a site by participation and at the same time, the local heritage is also returned to the public through participation.

Museum Skanderborg contributes to the excavation with working hours of museum staff, while DIS/PLACE will cover other expenses related to the excavation. The fact of being a community dig, reduces the costs of excavation and thereby enhances the feasibility of the project.

Landscape survey and test pits will be made previous to the dig in order to locate possible rubbish dumps and more unclear barracks. This excavation will be centered on the southern area around the admin barrack (areas 13 & 15, fig. 1). The excavated units and findings will be registered with a GPS, while field notes and photographs will document both the archaeological fieldwork and the ethnographic one.

Methods. Stage 3: analysis

The initial phase of registration of findings will be done in Skanderborg, while during the stay abroad at the INCIPIT of the Spanish National Research Council (CSIC) in Santiago de Compostela (Spain), the data will be organised and analysed in the light of the research questions and theoretical framework of DIS/PLACE and other remaining sources.

During the stay abroad, the researcher will receive training collaborating with a world leading research group in contemporary conflict archaeology, led by senior researcher Alfredo González Ruibal. The researcher has formerly collaborated with this team in several projects in Spain, but has

not had the opportunity of a closer, long term, collaboration based on Danish material. This stay abroad as crucial for the development of this project as an exchange of knowledge where this project will bring a new kind of empirical sites into an established framework of investigation by a variety of research activities at the INCIPIT. This group of researchers is world leading within the investigations of archaeological internment and economies of punishment and repression. Their long-lasting experience of analyzing findings from a variety of archaeological sites of internment (e.g. the concentration camp of Castuera) makes this specific group a perfect match to achieve new skills in material analysis of artefacts related to internment camps. The timing is important, since this particular research group is strengthening their focus on conflict archaeology in the department at the research council and are initiating new investigations on post-civil war internment in the Valley of the Fallen (Madrid), which will reinforce this mutually beneficial collaboration.

Tasks	Description	Year 1 (September 2021-August 2022)												Year 2 (September 2022- August 2023)											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1	Skanderborg Museum																								
2	INCIPIT-CSIC																								
3	Background research																								
4	Fieldwork/ data collection																								
5	Analysis																								
6	Dissemination													DL1	DL2	DL3				DL4				DL5	DL6

Figure 2: Research plan. DL: delivery

STAGE 4: dissemination and expected outputs

Museum Skanderborg. Stage that consists mainly in dissemination. DIS/PLACE aims at publishing two international journal articles with theoretical and methodological focus that will be presented to the Journal of Conflict Archaeology and Journal of Community Archaeology and Heritage (DL4-5). The results will be disseminated at the CHAT conference 2022 (DL3), the EAA annual meeting 2023 (DL6). Nationally, the outcomes will be disseminated by one publication presenting the findings in *Tings Tale* (DL1) with the specific aim of reaching a broader museum audience in Denmark. The research results will also be disseminated locally in the yearly publication of Skanderborg Museum and through exhibiting posters at the museum (DL2).

DIS/PLACE will apply field methods of survey examination, excavation, GPS mapping and community involvement subjecting them to an archaeological analysis that makes it possible to describe and illuminate the material remnants of the German soldiers and refugees and their respective social spaces to get an insight into this unique situation. Dyrehaven offers a unique archaeological opportunity to explore the material remains of two of the more ambiguous, complex and overlooked experiences of war displacement. DIS/PLACE thereby contributes to a more nuanced picture of the past through neglected and complex stories of displacement and the everyday life of displaced Germans in Denmark during the occupation and its' aftermath.