



Fig. 1 - 1889 Neuchâtel, Switzerland (Musée d'art et d'histoire, Neuchâtel, Switzerland). ■

On the responsibilities of accurately interpreting prehistoric life in full scale

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● The author summarises the development of the concept of an open-air museum and calls for discussion, which should formulate quality criteria.

The desire to get under the skin of prehistoric man and to extend ones knowledge of history by escaping the present is strong and not new. The sources for this are meagre, but this has not stopped repeated attempts to portray life in the past, sometimes romanticised, sometimes experimental (*Kaeser 2004:*

69-73; *Schöbel 2004:* 223) (**fig. 1**) but occasionally also knowingly falsified in order to serve political and ideological ends.

Dealing with history creates identity but also serves as a justification for social and political systems. This does not begin in the classical period but

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was probably already happening in the Palaeolithic period. Legends and myths create experiences that could reinforce perception of the present but they can also be a means of escapism.

At archaeological open air museums and open air events as with children's play, the artefact, the tool, the human being in his way of life and of course his dwelling with a direct relationship to the surrounding countryside are paramount.

This is a matter of interest for the trained archaeologist and museologist as well as for the layman with an interest in prehistoric life (*Andraschko and Schmidt 1991: 69*). According to archaeological knowledge, different models emerge which more or less reflects the assumed reality. Despite the fact that we never know for sure, we can judge which are better or worse solutions. Bad sources spoil the result as much as wrong methods or incompetent scientists and craftsmen.

In one project (**fig. 2**), local history enthusiasts tried to imagine and to rebuild the life of their region in full scale. They wanted to know how Stone Age man lived and they wanted to demonstrate this to their friends and especially

to their children. The joint effort involved in building the reconstruction was considerable. The construction materials, especially the reed matting from the local Do-It-Yourself store used for the roof, were considered lavish. There were plans to run regular educational courses including bread baking and basket weaving. Archaeological finds and items of clothing were reconstructed. The result was worthy of a big article in the newspaper's national news section.

What is amazing is that no scientists were consulted during this reconstruction; neither were archaeological results concerning settlements in this region taken into account. Apparently it is possible to "produce" the Stone, Bronze and Iron Age without scientific back up. Is this reconstructed Stone Age dwelling a museum according to the statutes of the World Museums association? I quote the definition of a museum, ICOM Statutes Article 2, paragraph 1: "A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution serving society and its development, open to the public and collects, preserves, researches, conveys and exhibits material evidence of mankind and its environment for study, educational and entertainment purposes". (ICOM code of professional



Fig. 3 - 1922 Attersee, Austria (Museum Kammer, Austria). ■

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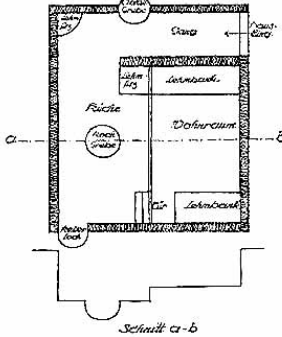


Fig. 4 - 1918 Roessen, Germany (Hahne 1919). ■

ethics. Paris 1996). It is surprising but it seems that, except the point that a museum should be scientifically managed, even this hut fulfils the criteria of a museum according to the ICOM statutes. So how much care is necessary for the portrayal of pre-historic life in full scale? A brief historical overview since Hazelius might help to demonstrate this. It is interesting to see what the reasons were for founding open-air museums, and where the responsibility towards the public and science stems from. It was not before time that we created the EXARC statutes in 2001, which can serve at least as a rough pattern for this.

In 1873 **Artur Hazelius** founded the Nordic Museum in Stockholm as a first scientifically managed “folklore” museum and in 1891 (*Roth 1990: 68; Zippelius 1982: 88*), the open air establishment Skansen near Stockholm. He wanted to create a living museum to commemorate and to preserve rural culture at the brink of industrialisa-

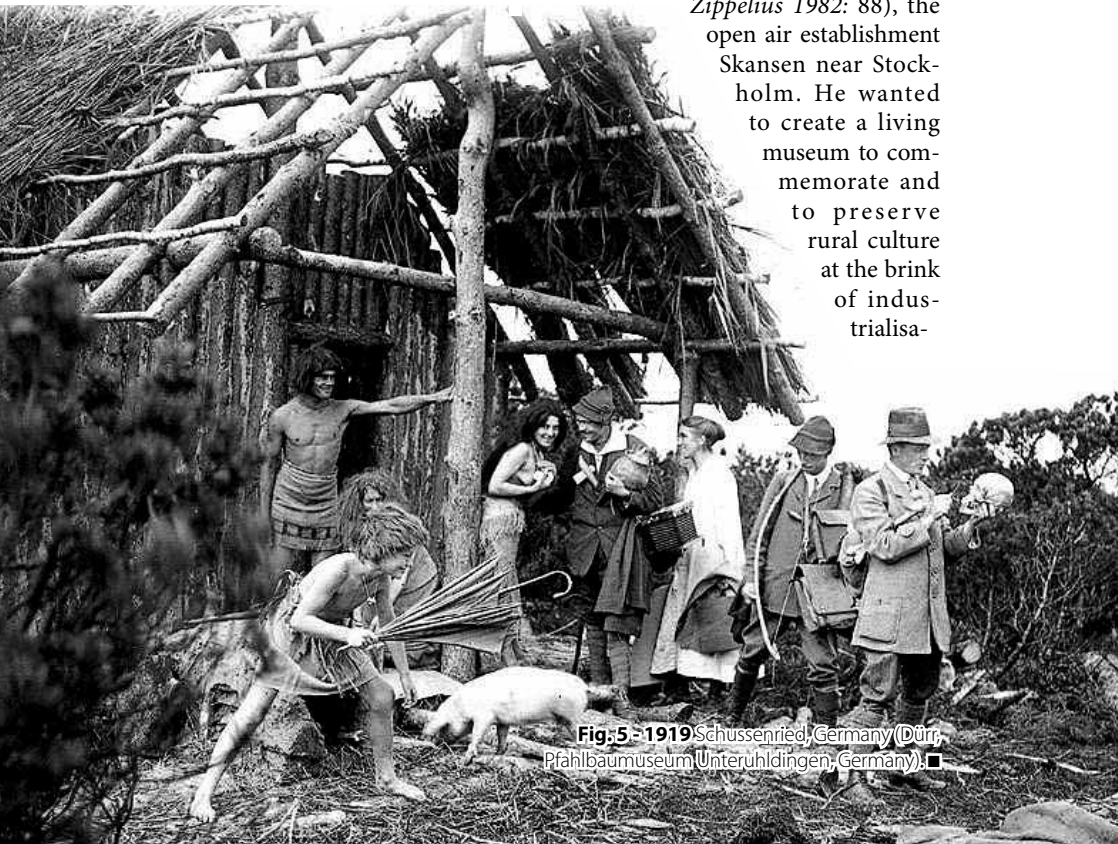


Fig.5 - 1919 Schussenried, Germany (Dür, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen, Germany). ■

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Fig. 2 – 2000 Göppingen, Germany (Stuttgarter Zeitung, Stuttgart, Germany). ■

tion. A similar conviction was carried by his German counterpart **Rudolf Virchow** who founded after the model of the Nordic Museum in 1889 in Berlin the “Museum for German Folk Costume and Domestic equipment.” The portrayal of a culture became important alongside the mere viewing of an object.

In 1902, in the new building of the “German National Museum“ in Nuremberg, **Otto Laufer** (Roth 1990: 151–153) recreated the interiors of farmhouses. In an essay he wrote, he planned an open air museum near the Wannsee lake on the outskirts of Berlin as a suitable research facility for science but also as an example for the promotion of national consciousness. In 1910 **Heinz Bodmer** and **Paul Karchow**, members of the “Citizens association for the Creation of a Museums Project” considered the museum as an “institution for the nurturing of patriotic feeling” and as an example for the “Art and greatness of our Fatherland”. The Linz branch of the association “German Homeland” (Ahrens 1990: 15; Willvonseder 1941: 49) fostered the same ideas when they built 4 lake dwellings (fig. 3) at the Attersee-lake with a nationalistic outlook. The politician **Karl Liebknecht** pointed out the public education relevance of the open-air museum in Skansen on 28th April 1910 and commended this example to the Prussian culture politicians (Roth 1990: 152). They

felt it important “to promote the bringing to life the artistic and scientific treasures, which through a socio-cultural perspective, should lead to a popularisation of the portrayal of history”. So to sum up this first paragraph, up until World War One, first came this national romanticism and then with social and political impetus under the slogan “public education for all” or public education museums, we see the beginning of a wave of open-air museums. Preservation and science were secondary considerations at this time. Instructive were the efforts during the inter-war years. **Hans Hahne** from Halle’s intention was to “stimulate an active interest in the pre-history of the region and of the German people” with his reconstruction of a Stone Age house in Roessen (fig. 4) (Hahne 1919). He sees his full-scale reconstruction also as a very important scientific experiment. Its significance was that building styles and sites, previously only existing in theory, became educational reality. The search for national and international identity is





Fig. 6 - 1926 Unteruhldingen, Germany (Ufa, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen, Germany). ■

also undeniable in the 1919 reconstruction (Schöbel 2002: 326) in the Federseemoor (**fig. 5**) according to the political statements of its builders, despite the fact that here elements of early experimental archaeology were already evident even before the 1922: the reconstructions in Unteruhldingen. Only a very few local open-air museums were created in the time between the two world wars. In Unteruhldingen sequences of an expressionist film were shot (**fig. 6**) (Schöbel 2004: 226). Reform pedagogic started to show an increased interest in the subject of history. In Cloppenburg and Berlin it was considered that the foundation of new open-air museums in remote resort areas could be beneficial to the health of urban populations. Often however, in this economically difficult period, there was a lack of time and money for these museums projects. Only in the National Socialist era there was talk of a targeted expansion of the folkish and pre and early history museums. The combination of school and museum (**fig. 7**), the principle of regional open air museums, the idea of “binding to the land”, as an element of intensive research together with the National Socialist cultural policy triggered a boom to which some older open-air museums like Buchau, Unteruhldingen, Oerlinghausen, Biskupin, Cloppenburg or Lojsta owe their existence (**fig. 8**) (Zippelius 1982: 19; Schöbel 2004: 227). According to **Hans Reinerth**, “each Gau (district) should get an open-air museum based on the model of the Unteruhldingen lake dwelling museum which commemorates its own particular heritage and tribes” (Ströbel 1939: 42; Reinerth 1937; Schmidt 2002: 147). Despite the fact that archaeological finds were imbued with folkish nationalism and Pan-Germanism and that politically pleasing fakes were

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created, there was at least an attempt to produce for each reconstruction an excavation plan, original artefacts or fragments of fabrics. An attempt was also made to present the history of the people in all schools through all possible means. It is important to state that this development in Germany included the requirement of a degree of responsibility for the construction of models taking into account regional and national aspirations, aspects of social politics along with scientific accuracy and all round education. The crime and the irresponsibility in the portrayal was that the interpretation, deduction and induction were aligned with the National Socialist Party programme, the linking of archaeological results and mainstream and the twisting of messages. While in Germany, after the war (**fig. 9**), no open-air museums were built before the construction of Düppel in Berlin in 1975 (Ahrens 1990: 23-69), historical archaeological research centres emerged in Scandinavia through the efforts of a.o. **Hans Ole Hansen** who saw himself as a romantic, an educationalist and an amateur archaeologist. Experiment, education and self-experiment in the living museum created workshop situations, which were to supplement the static museum. Learning by doing, living experiment and discovering for one's self and for the public is surely an approach to the archaeological past or an experimental simulation but not a realistic reconstruction in full scale of prehistoric life. So thinks **Hansen** himself whose quote about the reconstruction in Allerslev, has now become legendary: "...A Stone Age man emerging from his grave would probably have a big laugh at this reconstruction...". Based on this experience, experimental archaeology has tried for some years to connect the



Fig. 7 - 1936 Gandersheim, Germany (German-enerbe 1936, Germany). ■



Fig. 8 - 1932 Lojsta, Sweden (Arbmann, Stockholm, Sweden). ■



Fig. 9 - Post 1945/2002 Unteruhldingen, Germany (Schöbel, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen, Germany). ■

fields of education and research. **Peter Reynolds** with his Butser Ancient Farm open-air laboratory is a leading example of this. There is a remarkable quote from him: "...I also always ask myself how 100 percent of a prehistoric house



Fig. 10 - 1922 Bad-Buchau, Germany (Dürr, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen). ■

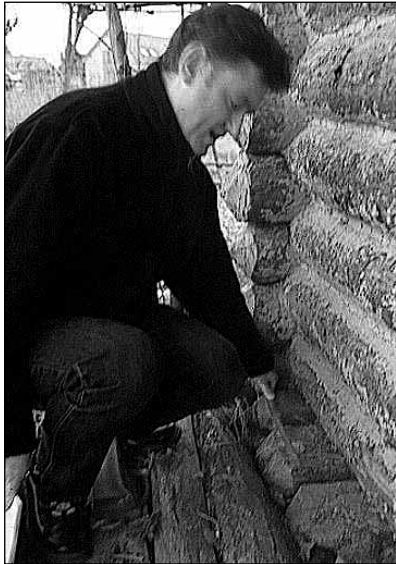


Fig. 11 - 2001 Bad-Buchau, Germany (Schöbel, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen). ■



Fig. 13 - 2002 Konstanz, Klinikum, Germany (Schöbel, Pfahlbaumuseum). ■

can come from 0.1 percent of preserved biomass...". Nevertheless, we find the key to our question of the scientific care and responsibility for the reconstruction of pre historic life, in these critical views of Hansen and Reynolds.

The constant reliance upon archaeological results, the examination using available methods and the model making with its experimental elements (Schöbel 2005) will help us to keep improving our full-scale reconstructions. This is how we become an open-air museum according to ICOM standards, which demands the following from us: *"The title 'open-air museum' can not be denied to a museum of which the buildings, completely or partially, as copies or true to scale reconstructions are rebuilt after original patterns, are properly furnished and open to the public"*.

These concessions can be made only under the condition that:

- 1 the original buildings of the type portrayed are no longer available
- 2 the copies or reconstructions are made according to the strictest scientific methods

(ICOM declaration: 9th July 1956 /1957 Geneva, section 6) (Zippelius 1990: 16; Zippelius 1985: 16)

But which of our open-air museums can declare itself to have used this extreme standard of care? Who meets the required standards? Let us take a brief look at some museums to see what else, besides responsibility for the model making is relevant.

Hitzacker (A. Luke and H. Holsten 1995, Museum guide):

Archaeological-Ecological Centre Hitzacker ... The archaeological centre Hitzacker is an open-air museum, which

fits in a special way into the natural and cultural landscape of the Hannoverian Wendland. It stands in the tradition of archaeological museums at home and abroad, which aim to help especially children, students and young people to experience and understand the research of pre-history. Visitors have the chance to get a living picture of the life and work of our pre-historic ancestors within the natural environment by viewing and trying out their typical dwellings tools, eating habits and much more. This also contributes to knowledge about the work of archaeologists, which primarily shapes our image of pre-historic man...

Archeodrome de Bourgogne

...This building complex is not a museum because it consists only of reconstructed sites, buildings and artefacts which are characteristic of the environment of our ancestors...

Archeon (Guide book 1994)

...Unfortunately the knowledge we have gleaned from archaeology is not always easily accessible to the general public. In Archeon we are trying to show you the true extent of the disappearing past of our country and we hope to stimulate your imagination with the fascinating facets of archaeological study. In this way, the history of our forefathers comes to life again and brings the past to our doorstep...

Europäischer Kulturpark Bliesbruck-Reinheim (W. Reinhard, Flyer 1994)

...Borne of the consciousness of the arbitrariness of modern national boundaries the excavation project "Europäischer Kulturpark Bliesbruck-Reinheim" symbolises German/French friendship and co-operation. In the forefront of its future museal presentation, besides the strikingly ambitious

architecture, is the skilful integration of the archaeological results into the natural environment. Moreover, ongoing excavations provide a close tie to the past and a comprehensive insight into the work of the archaeologist...

Gabreta, Bayerischer Wald (S. Einhellig and G. Moosbauer 2000. In Archäologisches Jahr in Bayern 1998: 150-153)

...In the planning, one could easily have fallen back on finds from Bohemia and Bavaria as a basis for the reconstruction. This site would be possible everywhere in this form. One of the aims of the site is to reconstruct as closely as possible a La Tène period settlement. The other is to present the history of the Bavarian/Bohemian borderland and to make the visitor sensitive to his own past. The project Gabreta enhances the infrastructurally weak region Bayerischerwald/Boehmerwald by creating an additional tourist attraction in the region...

Federseemuseum Bad Buchau (Banghard and Keefer and Schlichtherle 2000: 14)

...At least nowadays, the variety of possible images and associations, which are awakened, are recognized as much as the individual truthfulness at the time of their development. At the same time there is a paradox that nobody can actually say if a village or house in the Neolithic or Bronze Age ever really looked like that. Therefore this archaeological open-air site is also an experiment which acts from and with the time...

Erich Von Daeniken: **Mysteries of the World adventure and education park, Interlaken**, Switzerland (Mystery Park Flyer 2000)

...Questions about our origins and our particularity occupy all of us across all borders and move us over and over

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again. Now and then, archaeological discoveries and results make headlines and raise new questions. But because science has the fatal tendency to ignore this world full of mysteries, they were washed away by everyday concerns...

Ringwall Otzenhausen (T. Fritsch 2001)

...What is missing is the exploitation of the financial and economic potential of those visitors (annually 130,000)... To pay tribute to the duty of care despite economic and political interference an explanation of the sources and methods for each full-scale model is mandatory. Thereafter there has to be detailed discussion and an evaluation.

Excavated floor plans (**fig. 10, 11**) can be reconstructed and the adherence must be examined regardless of whether they date from 1931 or 1998. The burials (**fig. 12, 13**) and the variety of research methods provide information about man and his life in context (**fig. 14**). Artefacts must be accurately reconstructed (**fig. 15**) otherwise it must be noted that they were consciously made smaller or bigger or that they formerly served as film props. Images must be constantly created, examined and if necessary, renewed. False images should not be conveyed without necessary, relevant explanation, regardless of the many hindrances. A fake is a fake (Schmidt 2000: 169,170; Schöbel 2002: 5-8.), a model is a model and a reconstruction is a reconstruction. If we do not discuss this in every museum and in every country and with our colleagues, others – perhaps the leisure parks - will do our job. We should formulate aims and quality criteria for EXARC for the coming years.



Fig. 12 - 2002 Unteruhldingen, Germany (Schall, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen). ■



Fig. 14 - 2001 Unteruhldingen, Germany (Walter, Pfahlbaumuseum). ■

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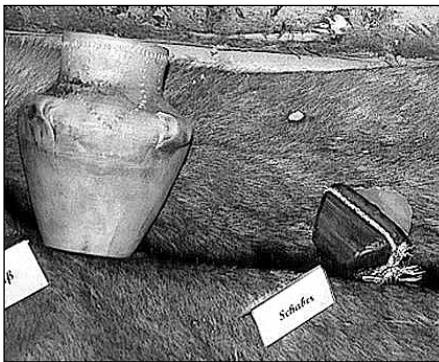
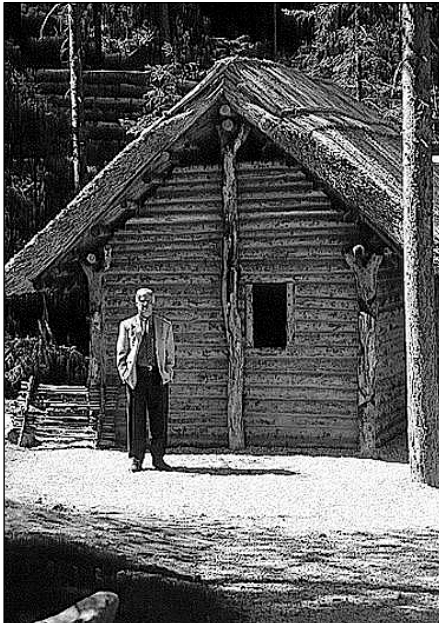


Fig. 15 - 2000 Umhausen, Austria (Schöbel, Pfahlbaumuseum Unteruhldingen, Germany). ■

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Summary

Question de la précision dans les présentations grandeur nature de la vie préhistorique

Le désir de connaître le mode de vie de l'homme préhistorique et d'élargir ses connaissances, ce n'est rien de nouveau. Il s'agit du sujet auquel s'intéressent les professionnels en archéologie et muséologie ainsi que les amateurs de préhistoire. Les données sont rares ce qui n'empêche pas de nouvelles initiatives de mettre en image la vie en préhistoire. A partir de la recherche archéologique, on construit divers modèles qui, plus ou moins, reflètent la réalité supposée. Quoiqu'on ne soit jamais sûr, on peut estimer la vigueur des différentes conceptions. Il est question de l'exactitude dans les présentations grandeur nature.

Les premiers musées de plein air ont été construits pour célébrer et conserver la culture populaire au début de l'ère de l'industrialisation. A cette époque-là, la science et la conservation des monuments n'étaient qu'un intérêt marginal. Entre deux guerres il s'est agi bien sûr de la recherche des identités nationale et internationale. Plus tard, l'expérience et la pédagogie ont enrichi les expositions figées des musées. L'instruction au moyen de l'activité et de l'expérimentation, l'acquisition de l'expérience personnelle et la réalisation des projets pour permettre aux autres d'acquiescer leur propre expérience, c'est une bonne démarche qui fait découvrir le passé, simulation archéologique. Cependant, est-ce vraiment la reconstitution grandeur nature de la vie préhistorique?

Il est important que les musées de plein air, malgré des interventions économiques et politiques, offrent, pour chaque reconstitution, les explications des données et des méthodes appliquées. Les reconstitutions devraient être mises en question ce qui aboutirait à une sérieuse évaluation. Cette discussion est importante pour pouvoir atteindre le plus haut niveau possible des reconstitutions.

Von der Aufgabe, urgeschichtliches Leben im Originalmaßstab korrekt darzustellen

Der Wunsch, urgeschichtliche Lebensweisen in heutiger Zeit darzustellen und das Wissen darüber zu erweitern, ist nicht neu. Er gehört genau so zu dem Interessensgebiet des ausgebildeten Archäologen und Museologen als auch zu dem des an Archäologie interessierten Laien. Die Quellen dazu sind sehr begrenzt, aber es wurden immer wieder Versuche unternommen, Lebensweisen der Vergangenheit auf anschauliche Weise zu schildern. Den archäologischen Kenntnissen entsprechend haben sich verschiedene Modelle herausgebildet, die mehr oder weniger genau eine vermutete vergangene Realität reflektieren. Trotz der Tatsache, dass wir es niemals mit Sicherheit wissen werden, können wir beurteilen, welche Modelle bessere oder schlechtere Lösungen darstellen. Die Frage ist jedoch, welches Maß an Genauigkeit und Sorgfalt notwendig ist, um urgeschichtliche Lebensverhältnisse im Originalmaßstab darzustellen?

Die ersten Freilichtmuseen wurden erbaut, um die ländliche Kultur am Rande der Industrialisierung nicht in Vergessenheit geraten zu lassen und um sie zu bewahren. Am Anfang waren hier Aspekte der denkmalpflegerischen Erhaltung und der Wissenschaft von sekundärer Bedeutung. In der Zeit zwischen den Weltkriegen gab es in der Museumsarbeit eine nicht zu leugnende Suche nach nationaler und internationaler Identität. Erst später ergänzten Experimente, Pädagogik und Mitmachangebote für die Besucher das statische Museum. (Inter-)Aktives Lernen, lebendige Experimente und individuelle Entdeckungen für einzelne Besucher als auch solche, die der Öffentlichkeit zugänglich sind, sind mit Sicherheit gute Ansätze, um urgeschichtliches Leben und experimentelle Simulationen nachzuvollziehen – doch ist dies eine realistische Rekonstruktion der urgeschichtlichen Lebensverhältnisse im Originalmaßstab?

Es ist wichtig, dass jedes Freilichtmuseum – unabhängig von wirtschaftlichen oder politischen Problemen – eine Erläuterung der Quellen und Methoden für jedes originalmaßstäbige Modell bereithält. Anschließend muss es eine detaillierte Diskussion und Evaluation geben. Eine Debatte – um die höchsten Standards für diesen Bereich anzustreben – ist unbedingt notwendig.