CAN THE APPROACHES/STRATEGIES OF ARCHAEOLOGY
INFLUENCE ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE? HOW CAN THESE
PROCESSES ALLOW MY ARCHIVE TO BECOME RICHER IN
TERMS OF REPRESENTATING AND INTERPRETING THE PAST?

Abstract:

An assignment looking into the different approaches, analysis and
representation of archaeology and seeing whether this can influence the
way in which architects work. The essay will conclude to say whether
and how these strategies could help make my archive project richer in
understanding and representing the past through the analysis of the
artifacts.

Studio 7's approach to Middlesbrough from the start has been to take a bottom–up approach at looking at the town. A series of site analysis exercises have allowed us to do this, these included, mind-mapping local's favourite places and being dropped off unknown and map-less and being left to find our way back to the centre. This idea of investigating the details first then zooming out as influenced my intentions for how I intend to look at the archive project and its site. The project came about in reaction to Middlesbrough's willingness to rub out and forget the details of its heritage. The archive seeks to bring together the forgotten, lost and existing fragments of the town's heritage. "*The archaeological site is a place where traces of ancient human activity are to be found. It is the archaeologist's archive, in much the same way as government files can yield a day-to-day record of historical events.*" [1] This essay taking inspiration from an historical context, will seek to explore a sample of archaeological approaches/theories such as 'site' and 'non-site' or 'post-processual' that are used when approaching, analysing and recording sites. I will suggest ways in which this can influence the way architects approach site or interpret the findings. The focus will try to suggest how these archaeological strategies could be used as a way of creating a richer denser Archive scheme. This could be through trying to understand my site and designs by the detail strategies archaeologists' use. In similarity to how the studio has approached Middlesbrough, the essay will address different scaled archaeological approaches to site survey ranging from small scale to large scale examples. These will include surface, geophysical and aerial surveys. Analysing whether the processes archaeologists take when surveying site will be able to be used in architecture? And suggesting how this could be re-interpreted into my archive design? The essay will conclude in analysing how archaeologists record and represent their data and whether their detailed system of categorising and recording

[1] Fagen, B M (1991) **Archaeology, A Brief Introduction**, Fourth Edition, Harper Collins Publishers. Pg 45

through aesthetics or functions is useful to an architect and in particular my project.

The term 'site' originally up until the 1980's in archaeology was taken to be understood as *"places or areas where artifacts are found"* [2] Sites in this respect focus on the high ratio of artefact density. From this a quantifiable amount of artifacts can then be worked out for the whole site. This was originally the way in which archaeologists distinguish which parts of the site were the best places to excavate. A problem of this is that they might potentially miss significant objects in other parts of the site. *"Using site to structure recovery limits data collection to a small fraction of the total area occupied by any past cultural system."* [3] This type of approach to defining boundary edges (the areas of excavation) is different from how architects may define a site boundary. For architects traditionally this is achieved through the idea of the clients red pen or by physical boundaries such as a bush or a wall. *"Architectural projects start with a red line on a map. The client body, having already agreed on the extent of the red line, hand over this map to the architect and so identify the site."* [4] Even though the archaeological process is very reductive due to its restrictive high density ratio concept allowing for the wider context to be neglected, architects could still take inspiration from this. This could take the structure of a looser form of artifact collection, a study of the existing objects on site. Collecting physical artefacts from a potential site may not necessarily give the architect the information as to what has been going on in the past, but could give information as to what the site is currently being used for. Such as empty beer bottles might suggest gangs of youths in the area. This strategy is similar to the 'non-site' model.

[2] Schiffer, M B (1983) **Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory Volume 6**, Academic Press, London. Pg 271
[3] Schiffer, M B (1983**) Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory Volume 6**, Academic Press, London. Pg 271
[4] Butterworth, C + Vardy, S, **Site-seeing: Constructing the 'Creative Survey'** www. field-journal.org. Pg 126

Present view on how a site should be approached, is the opposite of the previous pre-1980's model of 'site' and focuses on using a grid system such as quadrants as a way of fully analysing the whole of the site rather than sporadic density clusters before. This has become to be known as the 'non-site' model, a process in which information can be gained from the whole of the landscape rather than small sections. Nowadays archaeological theories are not just about finding artefacts as it has been in the past. As Charles L. Redman states archaeology is *"the systematic study of the nature and cultural behaviour of human beings through the examination and analysis of the material remains of their past activities."* [5] This is also known as 'post-processual,' a way of analysing not just the artifacts themselves but the process and relationships of the people who used them, about the social and cultural aspects and behaviours of both the lives of those they uncover and those now. It is an *"attempt to go beyond technological and materialist interpretations of the past, to look at objects not only in terms of how they were used, but how their original owners viewed them."* [6] The concept of Agency is also a key theme linking with post-processual in archaeologists thinking. Dobres asks the question In *"Agency in Archaeology, does thinking about agency change the way we do archaeology, not merely in how we dig or survey, but also in how we understand artifacts, sites, and landscapes within our representations of the past?"* [7] This question is also very important to how Agency might influence the archive project. Fully understanding the site and landscape through this act could in turn create a richer, denser scheme through the social and cultural aspects of the past rather than just the display of objects.

[5] Redman, C L (1973) **Research and Theory in Current Archaeology**, John Wiley and Sons, London. Pg 6
[6] Fagen, B M (1991**) Archaeology, A Brief Introduction**, Fourth Edition, Harper Collins Publishers. Pg 201
[7] Dobres, M A (2000) **Agency in Archeology**, Routledge, London. Pg 14

Archaeologists use several methods for analysing and surveying site, some of which include surface, geophysical and aerial; these processes vary in scales and are normative samples of the techniques used. Architecture in this respect, also have normative samples of site-survey methods, these include figure ground or land usage maps however these do not necessarily suggest and show the finer qualities and details of the site, as does archaeological methodologies. However, unlike architecture, archaeology can through some of these surveying methods potentially damage archaeological remains in the process, therefore a need for a method of *"non-invasive assessment of sites…non-destructive technique for the evaluation of sites that provides archeologically significant information."* [8] The potential of possibly destroying a site in the surveying process is key to why archaeologists methodically and in great detail record their sites thoroughly in the process. This issue of trying to protect sites rather than destroying them as come at the forefront of archaeological techniques of today. The process can be very expensive has it tends to use geophysical surveys rather then surface surveys due to the accuracy.

Surface surveys are a type of bottom up strategy which can be achieved in a variety of ways. One example is using a similar methodology as 'non-site,' by the use of a grid to split the site into manageable sections. A grid is placed to allow walkers to carefully search the whole site for finds and record results accurately as they progress. Potentially this process could be transferable to architecture as it allows for a site to be surveyed in minutiae detail at ground level. However this might not take the form of artifact searching (as architectural sites may not have the archaeological treasures) but more of a way of addressing and becoming familiar with the site through surface objects.

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[8] Schiffer, M B (1986) **Advances in Archaeological Method and Theory Volume 9**, Academic Press, London. Pg 311

Aerial photography is large scale site survey, allowing the site to be seen from above and in a wider context. Aerial Photography can reveal intriguing patterns that cannot be seen from the ground. With this top-down approach there needs a balance of a bottom-up strategy like ground-checking to allow for analysis of the areas at ground level. The need for two methods emphasizes what is already being address in architecture. That even though creative surveys are a new form of site analysis that move away from the normative, it is still essential to address the normative as well. Creative surveys become *"an alternate form of site survey to augment and complement the normative model, not replace it."* [9]   Aerial Photography could be interpreted as a way of understanding the topography of a site, due to the creation of shadows from the sun highlighting an intriguing landscape. *"The uses of shadows is most beneficial for adding detail to known sites as very slight undulations in the ground can cast shadows under lighting form low sun."* [10]

Geophysical surveys are the most expensive form of archaeological survey, yet they are the most accurate means of reading a site. Methods such as magnetometer and resistivity are samples of Geophysics. It *"involves taking readings on a regular grid to produce a digital array of numerical values which can then be processed."* [11] How they transform this data into a visual form could be a beneficial way in how I could translate statistical findings into a visual/representation of my site and in turn suggest a potential layout or design.

The recording, presenting and analysing of archaeological finds are an important part of the overall process; this is known as the Archaeological Record. This idea of presenting the past as an archive is a critical part of archaeological work. The importance of this originates

Figure 1: Mapping from Aerial Photographs. Map Shows crop marks.
Image: Lock, G (2003) **Using Computers in Archaeology, towards virtual pasts**, Routledge, London Pg 22
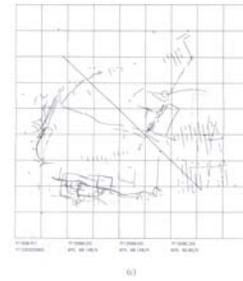

Figure 2: Mapping from Aerial Photographs. Map Is transferred to cad
Image: Lock, G (2003) **Using Computers in Archaeology, towards virtual pasts**, Routledge, London Pg 23
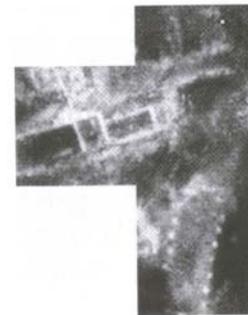

Figure 3: A grey-scale plot, Showing resistivity data
Image: Lock, G (2003) **Using Computers in Archaeology, towards virtual pasts**, Routledge, London Pg 36

[9] Butterworth, C + Vardy, S, **Site-seeing: Constructing the** 'Creative Survey' www. field-journal.org. Pg 126
[10] Lock, G (2003) **Using Computers in Archaeology, towards virtual pasts,** Routledge, London. Pg 17
[11] Lock, G (2003) **Using Computers in Archaeology, towards virtual pasts,** Routledge, London. Pg 33

from two aspects. Firstly, the artifacts can not successfully be interpreted until the analysis has been achieved and secondly the objects need to be fully categorised in order to preserve the remains in which were destroyed in the process of excavating. In some aspects this is similar to architecture in that a design can not be interpreted or suggested for the site until a full survey has been achieved and conclusions have been drawn out. Currently archaeologists use one of two approaches to analysing and categorising the data, either through aesthetic or functional attributes. *"one method involves the explicit definition and recording of each artefacts morphological attributes...weight, size, edge angles...a second...involves the recognition of attributes functionally related to artefact manufacture and use, such as flake scars, situations, or polish."* [12] How findings are represented is important in both of the disciplines. Archaeologists are becoming highly experienced in using computer technology to create examples such as 3-D contour diagrams. Of particular interest is the way in which archaeologist's portray artifacts over time on a map. Due to the different times periods they could be working with diagrams showing time and space allowing for a clearer set of diagrams. *"The densities are in space-time rather than only in space, in order to account for the fact that more artifacts can be expected to accumulate over long periods than short ones."* [13] The mathematical way in which archaeologists record and analyse a site could potentially become an important aspect of Architectural surveying and the design process. The archive project could take inspiration and be built upon the idea of categorising the small details of the site or the statistical information that could be found through archaeological surveys. This notion of categorising is a very important aspect of the way in which an archive currently works, however this could be emphasized and deepened in

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[12] Redman, C L (1973) **Research and Theory in Current Archaeology**, John Wiley and Sons, London. Pg 9
[13] Branning, E B (2002) Archaeological Survey, Methods in Archaeological Method, Theory and Technique, Kluwer Academic, New York. Pg 31

terms of grouping the findings on a social status rather than physical. Adding to this the idea of layering time could help the layout of the archive in terms of layering the artifacts in categories or age.

Overall the notion of 'Site' and 'non-site' could potentially allow architects to understand the social aspects of the area; this doesn't have to be through historical artifacts but the understanding of how the space is used at the moment. Particularly the act of agency, in which through the analysis of how the objects have been used allows for a greater understanding of how socially and culturally people in the past lived. Through looking at archaeological surveys it suggests that the processes in which they use are far more focussed on the detail of the objects, site and outer landscape compared with architectural surveys. The processes of surface, aerial and geophysical surveys could potentially influence my archive project in terms of looking at the finer details of the site and understanding it at this level, this could be re-interpreted in the design through the use of graphical communications such as geophysical results or aerial photographs, or in terms of the shape, layout and the circulation through the building. The way in which archaeologists record, analyse and categorise through the architectural record could also be a valuable asset to my project. The categorising through either aesthetic or functional attributes suggests that my building's archives can be split the same way allowing for a more dynamic, richer scheme focussing on the social aspects of the past for its influences. It seems that there are several processes, analysis and representations that architects can take from archaeology and use within our practice. In particular I think my archive project would benefit highly from the approaches archaeology uses to create a richer, denser scheme through the analysis of the objects and how these might have been used in the past as well as being used now.

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