

Visions, needs and requirements for (future) research environments: An exploration with ERC Grantee Martin Carver

Martin Carver (University of York), Bernd Saurugger (TU Wien)

Researchers are at the very heart of the EOSC: So what do researchers really need to do outstanding research, and produce high-impact research results? Moreover, how do they think could the EOSC support them in their research endeavours? Let's see what archaeologist Martin Carver has to say.

“EOSC helping assembling interdisciplinary projects and avoiding the disjuncture caused by Brexit”

TU Wien: What does your work currently focus on?

MC: My research is focused on European and Mediterranean Medieval people and their experience, using archaeological, bioarchaeological and biomolecular methods. To this end, I have conducted large scale projects in England (Sutton Hoo), Scotland (Tarbat) and currently in Sicily (ERC project with colleagues in Rome and Lecce). I am looking for the intimate experience of the people without history, their mobility, adaptability and resilience under different political and religious regimes. I think this experience is highly relevant to people today.

TU Wien: What datasets are you working with and how do you analyse these datasets?

MC: In the field, I use mostly spatial and descriptive digital records of survey and excavation. In the lab, I initiate analyses of macroscopic and microscopic parameters of artefacts and human, animal and plant remains with my team who use biomolecular determinations, especially of radiocarbon, aDNA and stable isotopes. My ambition is to use these data in pursuit of the appearance, health and life experience of individuals, the history of settlements, the meaning of cemeteries and monuments (and from these

the way that people thought), and the definition of communities, placed in historical context.

TU Wien: What kind of research are you currently unable to do, because you lack knowledge, time or technology?

“I believe my subject needs more creative syntheses. The academic ethos discourages them because they may not be substantiated in the academic mode”

MC: I believe that my subject needs more creative syntheses, and I feel that the academic ethos discourages them because they may not be substantiated in the academic mode. But this means we risk losing support from both the general public and from fellow professionals. The results from Humanities research need to be communicated in multiple media – books, graphic novels, artists' impressions, films. Such things exist, but they need peer review and a higher profile. Properly done these are just as valid as the 'scientific paper' or large synthesis (and based on both) and vital for the health of the subject.

TU Wien: How will research look like in 5-25 years? What will be the effect and impact on research environments like infrastructures, services and policies?

MC: In UK, much depends on what arrangements we have after Brexit and whether or not there is a deal. If there is a deal, UK can participate in Horizon Europe, which will be a welcome opportunity for us. If there is no deal, then I believe we should still align with Horizon Europe, since its priorities reflect the global Sustainable Development Goals of the UN. This seems to me the right way for UK and Europe to go, but it will need a bit of rethinking since most universities are currently organized by traditional disciplines and have an 'individualist' culture for selecting research areas. My guess is that the lead of Horizon Europe will result in an enlarged, flexible research network, which is both interdisciplinary and international; research may eventually be institutionalized by *objective*, rather than single academic discipline, technique or country. We are already moving in this direction. It may be that membership of a particular country or power bloc will one day be irrelevant to research funding. This would encourage the thrust of research to be more global than national. Horizon Europe could also need to give more

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weight to the humanities – although I think it is actually for the humanities to show how they can contribute to modern aims through the 'advocacy of the past'. The close engagement of the humanities is also necessary if the objectives and achievements of the dominating disciplines (i.e. science) are

to be effectively communicated and attract public support.

TU Wien: What does it take to foster interdisciplinary research in Europe and beyond?

MC: Inter- or multidisciplinary is a leitmotiv of the new agenda and archaeology is well placed to serve it, since it equally professes STEM and SHAPE subjects. However the level of multidisciplinary collaboration envisaged in Horizon Europe could probably only be achieved if the ERC panels (PE, LS, SH) were replaced by panels that represented the six new Clusters (medicine, cultural heritage etc., with subsections). Since University departments are not currently organised in these Clusters, assembling research teams would need considerable assistance from the EU. This could be a useful role for a pan-European agency.

TU Wien: Having said all that, what would you need the EOSC to be to support you in your research endeavours?

MC: Perhaps the EOSC could be the body that maintains a professional register of every project and researcher in Europe, including UK and FTA countries, i.e. paradata as well as metadata and scientific data. It could thereby act as a mart where potential partners could find each other and assemble multidisciplinary projects. This might be a tall order, but could be an extension of the digital resource that EOSC already plans.

TU Wien: What could be the main added value that you see in the EOSC?

MC: I assume that EOSC objectives include the maintenance of research databases with links to existing data repositories, with open access to them. If it was appropriate and feasible, I would like EOSC to maintain an up-to-date database not just of research, but of the people doing it, its researchers and their links

to each other. This would greatly facilitate the future building of multidisciplinary research teams with aligned interests. For me, the participants in European research, and especially in UK, are the main assets for us. They have never more international, diverse, promising and important than they are today.



Martin Carver was an Army Officer for 15 years (Royal Tank Regiment), a Commercial Archaeologist for 13 years (just as it was starting), Professor of Archaeology at the University of York for 22 years and Editor of Antiquity for 10 years. Since 2008, he has been a full-time professional writer, public speaker and broadcaster.

His research has been mainly in England, Scotland, France, Italy and Algeria - his more prominent excavations were at the seventh-century royal burial ground at Sutton Hoo in Suffolk and the eighth-century Pictish Monastery at Portmahomack, Easter Ross. In 2014, he began a new project 'Sicily in Transition' (SICTRANSIT for short) in partnership with Alessandra Molinari of the University of Rome Tor Vergata. Like the other two, this project is concerned with what happens to people when a new regime is imposed on them.

He is a Professor emeritus at the University of York and Chairman of the commercial archaeology company FAS Heritage Ltd.