

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Critical Mapping Methodology as an Analytical Tool for the Understanding of Greek Archaeological Production

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Abstract:

The article attempts a critically mapping of the production *process* of Greek *archaeological product*, taking into account both the unexplored, so far, complexity of the process, along with the constantly important social value of the product. Our point of departure has been the challenging of current archaeological notion and practices, which we regard as scientifically suffocating and socially inadequate. In this direction, we attempted a visual panoramic synthesis of the archaeological production process through a critical prism constructed from the reflexivity of archaeological ethnography, the political engagement of militant research and the personal gaze of our autoethnographic approach. Drawing on macroscopic observations and partial comments that have derived from the map, we suggest that the archaeological product of Greece has been long detached from the process that produces it; a fact that justifies both the unchangeable features of the product, as well as the internal fragmentation of the process. We regard our interpretation as only a trigger for substantial dialogue concerning Greek archaeological reality and certainly not as an accomplished research outcome.

Keywords: Critical mapping, Greek archaeology, Archaeological process, Archaeological product

Introduction

The situation in Greece

The foundations of the archaeological discipline in Greece are made of sturdy, solid materials [1], due to the, well known and broadly discussed, unique historic relationship that binds Greek nation to (the) archaeological thought and generates strong resisting mechanisms to any reflexive initiative [2, 3]. Reflexive attempts are also weakened by the absolute state monitoring of the archaeological practice (by the Greek Archaeological Service, founded in 1833), which blurs the role of private capital in archaeological management, as opposed to other countries where complete cultural privatization creates a much more savage setting [4, 5].

The discussion about the construction of national identity and archaeology's role in that process, or the connection of Greek Classical antiquities to modern Greek identity and the concept of *Hellenism* has been extensive and thriving during the last decades [1, 2, 6–19].

Published work, therefore, develops around aspects of the formation, reproduction and consumption of the country's national grand narrative, the abstract and almost metaphysical idea of Greek continuity. The thorny question of why, how and for whom the archaeological product is nowadays produced, usually remains untouched or, at best, briefly mentioned.

Crucial theoretical issues that concern contemporary archaeology and its immediate future addressing the core problems of instrumentalization and professionalization of the discipline, are, thus, avoided in public dialogue and are almost banned from conference sessions and deemed as nonscientific.

Even in those exceptional cases, however, when dialogue does exceed the conventional presentation (recording, dating and evaluation) of ancient remains, it is usually monopolized by less "risky" subjects, such as archeological legislation [20–24], records and annals of the first Greek museums [25–27] and Greek Archaeological Service [28, 29] or aspects of preservation and protection in a more abstract sense.

This institutional unwillingness to discuss archaeology's present role is made even more apparent when it inevitably intersects with society in a more immediate way. Tormenting dilemmas, such as "research priorities versus public interest", "state versus participatory management", "dominant versus alternative approaches", "science devotion versus earning a living" occur in the fields of museum policy, construction projects, archaeological training, public archaeological discourse, or, even, power relations of the discipline itself.

As a consequence, the Greek archaeological process often appears blocked or even purposeless in various different ways. Each of us - two practicing archaeologists and a professor in Museum Studies - in our separate scientific trajectories, has confronted numerous variations of these dilemmas, stumbled upon different kinds of impediments or got lost in the gaps of the archaeological process. We have encountered the many faces of disciplinary conventions, bureaucracy or institutional monopolisation that can occur and we have been repeatedly discouraged by a well-established rigid logic that blocks envisioning. Few of the existing constraints are actually apparent, some are easy to detect, while many thrive concealed, invisible and unstated. Nevertheless, all considerably affect in the end -we have come to realize- the final outcome of our scientific endeavors.

Need of the research

The necessity, therefore, to comprehend, on the one hand, the actual reasons behind detected dysfunctional points, but also illuminate indiscernible practices, methods and strategies, emerged as a common query to us all. A “task” like that could only be fulfilled by widening the scope, encompassing in it every distinct step and procedure, in order to reveal the big picture of the archaeological production system. We decided to contextualize scattered bits of a single process, which includes us, shapes our scientific behavior, attributes social meaning to ancient material and ultimately produces what we will call the “archaeological product”. We focus on the context to interpret the archaeological process, and not isolated archaeological finds, trusting that valuable answers to the fundamental question, mentioned above, of why, how and for whom the archaeological product is being produced, reside in it.

Besides, it is of great interest that, although much has been written and discussed occasionally about several distinct aspects of the existing system of production and management of the “archaeological product”, no systematic attempt has ever been made to contextualize it, let alone question it. The assumption that, although ancient Greek past still affects our self-defining mechanisms, the mode of its production apparently eludes us, fueled our research initiatives and choices. Our research aims, consequently, in the multidimensional investigation of the production and management system of the archaeological product in Greece by utilizing the alternative methodology of critical mapping to digitally capture all of the above on a map.

Methodology

Our research intention goes far beyond a disengaged sociological description and involves intentional action in a direction of contributing to the transforming of the current archaeological reality of Greece. Thus, we could only move within the range of critical ideas offered by archaeological ethnography, autoethnography and militant research that creates a suitable space for subversive attempts. Richard Sennet [30] claims that “... expressive performance is the only hope we have of breaking the power of collective group images, of tacit knowledge which paralyzes our sense of society and of ourselves.” By deploying this liberating blend of theoretical arsenal in the research, we hope to approach the shores of sincere reflection, as a starting point for action.

Archaeological ethnography, autoethnography, militant research

The concept of reflection constitutes the central theoretical pole of the current research, as it bears the potential to provoke ruminations and, above all, to recall the social character of archaeology as a constant question and condition for its existence [31]. Archaeological ethnography’s ability to enable reflexive factors has been acknowledged and explored by various research endeavors in the broad archaeological field. Its multidimensional form that combines ethnographic and archaeological approaches has emerged in recent decades, in order to facilitate the exploration of the current meaning of material past [3, 32–34] and the ways of its perception by different audiences but first and foremost, the political implications of archaeological science [35, 36]. It constitutes, therefore, an ample, convenient

space for interaction of different temporalities (present-future) and various factors (subjects-material residues-landscapes) on multiple levels –a fact that provides the necessary research flexibility to a quest like the one we have embarked on.

The immanent ability of archaeological ethnographies to expand the boundaries of the researcher [3] and promote collaborative research paths is actually a prerequisite in the case of an inherently collective product as the production of a critical map, especially when the interests of the researchers coincide with those of the researched. This last actuality introduces the concept of autoethnography in the project.

In our study, due to the fact that we work in different fields of the archaeological production system, we have chosen to examine our own scientific and working conditions, which we consider adverse both to the scientists involved, as well as to the discipline itself. The need to *frame* the whole process of archaeological production emerged as a twofold attempt, in order to both draw conclusions about the process's attributes, but also comprehend and decode our own scientific choices and actions by emplacing them in it.

While autoethnographic concepts in archaeological research have already been explored abroad [37, 38], or have at least informed studies in a more indirect way [4, 32], they remain completely unexploited in Greece and are even regarded with skepticism by the domestic academic community at times.

Taking into account the controversial nature of the method, autoethnography has not really been a choice in our study, as much as an actuality; an element residing in our research approach. It has accompanied the research from its initial conception, serving as a given analytical prism which unleashed a whole network of significant meanings and implicit knowledge [39] carried within our embodied, extended and ongoing experience. We strived for the unsettling of the well-established division of researcher-researched and the rupture of other stabilized contrasted perspectives between objectivity-subjectivity, art-science or personal-political, as vital preconditions for a genuine discussion on disciplinary gaps and deficiencies.

The same *deconstructing* intention lies in the conceptual heart of “militant” or “participatory action” research. The practice refers to collective attempts of a clear political sign that aim at transforming existing power structures and rupturing the given order, through alternative, anti-authoritarian ways of knowledge production [40]. It constitutes a meeting place where academia and activism blend, by bringing forth, as it has been accurately stated, “a form of knowledge deeply embedded in the logic of transformational practice” [41]. In order to fulfill that goal, dichotomies of modernity are ruled out by definition.

Archaeologists studying the political implications of the archaeological discipline or thinking about ways of making archaeology a more socially relevant enterprise [31, 42] have actually encompassed concepts of militant research in their approach, even if not clearly stated as such in their writings. The research outcomes of such an approach adapt to the needs of the community, group or collectivity conducting the research, either to assess the success of particular tactics or to reflect on structure and process [43].

Critical mapping

If we accept that all the above critical concepts and approaches have been exploited in different ways and levels by archaeological research endeavors, employment of critical mapping with which we have decided to experiment constitutes a totally innovative attempt in the field. We chose to visually depict the structure and process we intend to reflect upon, aiming at a profound critical analysis and not at an objective representation. This seemingly methodological choice, known as *critical mapping*, constitutes in fact the composing terrain where all the above theoretical trajectories are intertwined in a comprehensive research product.

The recognition of maps as social and cultural events -processes rather than products- and their distancing from ideas of representative depictions of truth [44] had been the decisive step towards the emergence of a critical space where science and art intersect with emancipatory perspectives. Although initially emerged mainly through indigenous group struggles, denouncing the cartographic method itself as a hegemonic, oppressive function of the state, critical mapping currently covers conceptually all cartographic attempts that challenge dominant knowledge and hierarchical structures and offer alternative ways of visualizing and understanding the world [45].

The employment of critical cartography to our project has been chosen due to its potential to produce knowledge and intervene politically at the same time, while in terms of methodology it enables dissection, synthesis and finally reinterpretation [46] of a process. It has also served our project in continuously implying our “indigenusness” as researchers, and in being consistent with the required flexibility of the attempt. We believe that critical mapping can operate as a particularly helpful approach in illuminating concealed connections and patterns and in highlighting commonalities and analogies of origins and attitudes, aspects that cannot be easily recognized otherwise.

The concept of visualization lies, as expected, in the heart of critical mapping. Visualization strategies act as cognitive tools, or else, cognitive artifacts [47] in the process of critical mapping, rendering qualitative data and information and finally uncovering patterns that enable critical judgments [46]. Although the final map design is still in progress, our specific pictorial choices for every stage and element included and analyzed in the map, are based on the underlying comment we wish to imply. In other words, selection of color, orientation, scale, shape, and frequency reflects in different ways the critical stance we possess towards the archaeological process and its components. In that sense, we have decided, for example, not to choose typical geometric shapes for the depiction of archaeological stages, which we regard as fluid and variable, but more abstract ones with less strict boundaries. Relative sizes of the presented archaeological stages intend to reflect concepts of time, intensity and specific weight of each one in the overall process, while the chosen texture of lines connecting individual elements in the map, is supposed to tone down strict and absolute linkages.

The Process of Archaeological Production in Greece

Introducing the terms and concepts

In the research we have introduced the term "archaeological product" in order to adequately describe the complex social good that results from the overlapping stages of mental and technical processing of ancient remains. The term does not refer, consequently, to ancient objects themselves, but to the varying forms with which the latter participate in the public sphere, enriched with various meanings; it penetrates the realm of ideology both as an element of the master, national narrative, and also as other minor -counter or critical- sub-narratives about the past and associated concepts [48] it becomes social in the sense of values, attributions, codes and hierarchies but it can also acquire a strong materiality in the cases of reified representations of the past, in situ ancient remains, exhibited objects or even ancient findings derived from archaeological looting.

Another core term we have introduced to describe all these material and intangible ways of representing the past is "archaeological process". By using this term, we intend to talk about the various stages and fields of archaeological activity that forge the outcome in different ways, which in turn trigger its reproduction, over and over again. In fact, the two terms cannot be seen separately: the archaeological product constitutes, in a way, the abstract matrix in which, and due to which, the archaeological process operates, forming its cause and effect at the same time. For reasons of analytic convenience and inclusive adequacy, however, we chose to approach the archaeological process by focusing on the conventional sequence of actions that resembles an actual line of production. Giving prominence to the interconnected spaces of archaeological action, instead of exploiting the idea of archaeological "networking", has been a conscious methodological choice in order to highlight analogies, contrasts, origins and gaps that otherwise would be lost in the plurality of connections; in the meshwork of interwoven lines [49]. The approach is trying to explain mainly the *how* and the *why* of archaeological behavior but takes also into account the *who* and the *where* in order to investigate relations [50]. Relations have been mapped with regard to the actions involved in the process and connections were implied through symbols and metaphors. Nevertheless, the meaning of networking and its connotations has always been present in the study. There is nothing linear in this production process: no concrete starting point exists, no concluding ending either. It is a multilevel and two-way process of spiral or even of an abstract and complex geometry with overlapping and intersecting stages.

Needless to say, nothing occurs in a vacuum, let alone such a socially and emotionally charged process, which underpins national identity and people's self-identification. Educational system, cultural management policies, tourism operation, research orientation, but also moral values, religious beliefs and social structuring, all define the available space of the archaeological process, molding its shape. Given however the fundamental national implications of this particular system and its reproductive and supporting role to modernity's requirements, communication with the sociopolitical context runs both ways.

Introducing the subjects involved

The line of production is operated by different persons, group of actors or institutions, playing the role of either producers, consumers or reproducers. Some of them perform more than one of these activities by producing and consuming at the same time (prosumers), while others retain a more passive role. Although external stakeholders do not take part in the actual production, they control and affect the process in various ways, often critically and decisively.

Actors

Actors were approached according to the qualities of their relationship with the archaeological process or Greek antiquity in general. We thus distinguished four rough categories that obviously correlate and in certain cases overlap each other. The first group includes those with a strict scientific and professional relationship with archaeological discipline, i.e. archaeologists working on different environments and on variant terms: permanent or contract employees of the Ministry of Culture, university professors, permanent, contract or independent researchers and archaeologists working in local authorities or elsewhere. Those archaeologists are the only actors involved who, on the one hand, constitute the “legal” producers -on the base of national monopoly- and, at the same time, have no other occupational option outside the process in question. They are the *experts par excellence* and the ex officio responsible scientists.

Nevertheless, the product is also determined by numerous other actors who participate as actual producers, prosumers or reproducers of the multiform archaeological products. Consequently, we have identified a second group consisting of those who benefit financially from the archaeological production system, such as guides, tourism entrepreneurs, museum experts, cultural managers, excavation workers, administrative staff, designers, conservators, guards of archaeological sites and museums and looters. All the aforementioned actors participate in varying degrees and in different stages of the process. Nevertheless, their professional survival does not depend on the archaeological production system; other alternatives are always available for them. Actors involved in the archaeological process expecting political benefits constitute a third group; apart from the government, the group extends to the political scene of the country, while encompassing local politicians. Lastly, collectors, artists, bloggers, journalists, antiquarians and archaeologists working on non-archaeological fields form another group of actors, associated with the process only in a symbolic way.

Institutions

Institutions involved in the process present a great variety in their nature and field of activity. The fact is indicative of the centrality the archaeological process possesses in Greece and the importance attributed to it by the state. Central and regional services of the Ministry of Culture and Sports, along with public and private museums hold the leading role in archaeological production. Other institutions, playing a major role in the process, are university departments of archaeology and other relevant fields, foreign Archaeological Schools and research institutes operating in the country. The educational system is essential for the reproduction of the dominant archaeological narratives. Local authorities and cultural associations, as well as mass media also constitute strong driving forces of the process, while trade unions of people working for the Ministry of Culture,

influence the operation of archaeological production in a more indirect but essential way.

Agents

Actors, as already explained, produce, consume and reproduce the archaeological product, while various agents work in the background. Market-driven activities in the field of cultural heritage management and tourism intervene in the archaeological process and are being translated into specific choices and practices of archaeology's routine at almost every stage. At the same time, European legislative framework has imposed the involvement of Ministries and private companies, operating in the development and construction sector, in the archaeological production, turning them into the main agents responsible for forcing the process into motion, beating out scientific initiatives.

Following the process

In the following paragraphs we will attempt to give an outline of the successive stages of the production chain. The picture attached (Fig.1) depicts only the first visual level of the map, since each node and line included in the final digital product corresponds to a relevant hyperlink that gives an explanatory comment, which in its turn leads to further information, audio-visual material, etc.

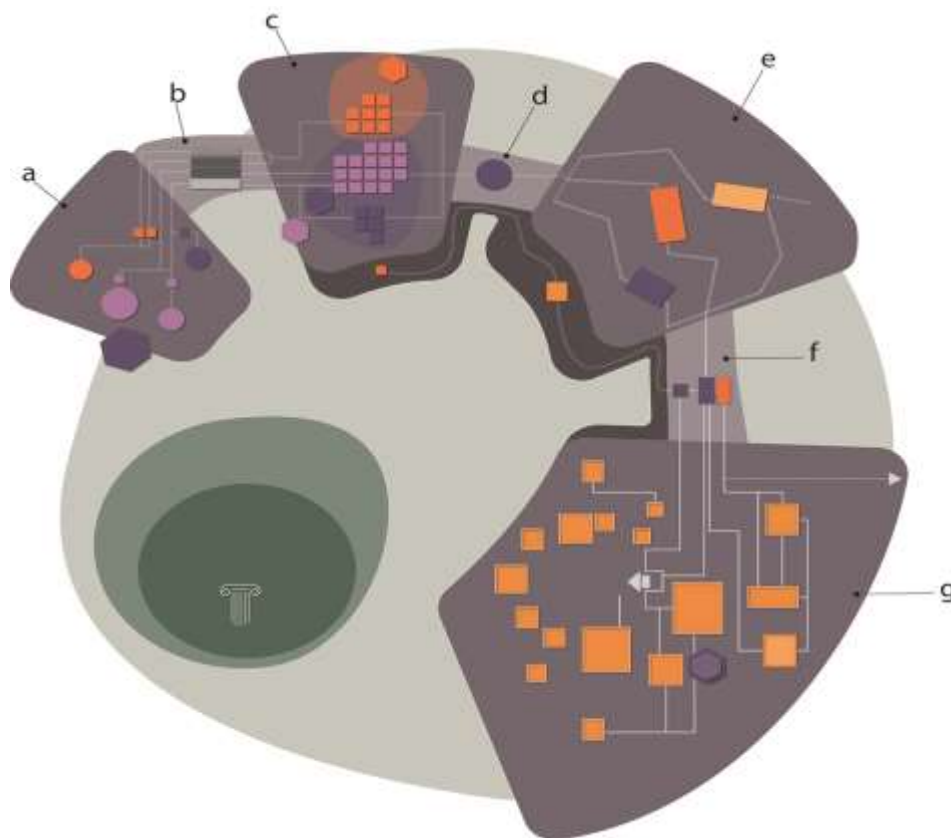


Figure 1: Critical map of Greek archaeological production

The trigger

A production line depends primarily on product planning and design, a strategic decision that precedes all stages of processing, has long term effects on it and defines many of its parameters. This introductory *pre-stage* (Fig. 1.a) includes apprehension of the product's value, definition of product constituents and the way of production and delivery. However, the archaeological process, as highlighted on the map, is not triggered on the basis of concrete scientific desiderata and social priorities; a fact that can justify almost every subsequent identified asymmetry, rupture, or *bottleneck* of the process.

As a matter of fact, in the *after-Malta* era (European Convention on the Protection of the Archaeological Heritage, adopted in 1992 in Valletta, Malta) the majority of excavations occur as a by-product ("rescue" excavations) of major, public or private, construction projects and private small-scale works while scientific interest constitutes an infrequent starting point of the archaeological process. Legal binding of constructor managers to fund excavation, research and publication cost, has provoked in Greece, as in many European countries, a shift of the discipline from academia to the area of spatial planning management [51]. As a result, official representatives and the archaeological state institutions take part in a never-ending, statutory race against economic and developing interests.

Although each of the aforementioned triggers sets archaeological activity in motion through different channels, they all have one thing in common: the approval of the respective Ministry as a prerequisite. State monopoly defines every aspect of bureaucratic procedures and, in final analysis, the archaeological practice itself. In this preparatory stage, the Ministry's supervision takes the form of absolute control and evaluation of any possible submitted request to unearth, out of intention or of necessity, ancient remains. State Archaeological Service authorizes entrance permission to actors involved in the primary archaeological stage, i.e. the excavation process.

Transition

Actors enter the process here as the archaeological working force, through different channels that correspond to the preceding decision (Fig. 1.b). A process that is mostly initiated by non-scientific reasons could only lead to staffing policies with ambiguous characteristics. The significance of this *junction* lies in its formative role on the experience and association processes mainly of contract archaeologists, who constitute the vast majority of the working force and, as such, *customize* significantly this stage of the process.

Although rescue excavation projects constitute the dominant archaeological practice worldwide, Greece presents a strong peculiarity as contract archaeological companies are not allowed in the process. Employment is, therefore, channeled either through online publication of available archaeological posts or "at the suggestion" of permanent state archaeological employees and, lately, contractors, who simply choose the scientific workforce at their own discretion. These two modes of employment have replaced the imperative of *craftmanship* that used to be the ultimate criterion for archaeologists in the preceding era, validated through written exams that were conducted periodically by the Archaeological Service until the 1990's. Craftmanship means quality, the pursuit of which should theoretically become an end in itself [52].

State recruits contract archaeologists according to strict established criteria (that apply to the whole public sector, such as first-degree mark, postgraduate studies, degrees in other academic fields, certificates of foreign languages and computer literacy, as well as working experience up to seven years.), in the case both of construction projects that are part of European funding programs, and of excavations triggered by scientific initiatives of the relevant Ministry. The growing number of unemployed archaeologists, coupled with the pretense of merit relating to this rigid bureaucratic selection process creates a state of relentless antagonism on the one hand, and on the other, a feeling of a deficient personal strategy [53] in the case of rejection. In reality, it is precisely the aim of this “objective evaluation”: to legitimize the failure [52] of candidates that were not selected. In order, consequently, to offset structural inequalities and system’s shortages - disguised as lack of merit, contract archaeologists take part in an exploitative process of continuous training, where degrees and certificates correspond to allocated points; a process that finally incites them to construct a neoliberal meritocratic self [54].

University departments are also obliged to publicly announce archaeological vacancies through the same institutionalized procedure; flexibility, however, in favoring the desired staff is greater, due to less strict selection criteria and minor public notice. Archaeologists nevertheless that participate in academic excavation projects, have to overcome less tangible but more intense mechanisms of an election process, as the onerous continuum of evaluation lies at the core of academic apprenticeship. Craftsmanship here equates to capacity, and this is exactly what is under constant review and assessment. The requirement of chronic mental and physical devotion and unreserved presence that academic employment dictates can sometimes evoke a much more grueling experience than any bureaucratic rigidity or public competition.

On the contrary, private construction projects are allowed to hire the required archaeological staff under opaque recruiting processes, due to the complete and diachronic lack of established selection procedures. Even the *safety valve* provided by law until recently, obliging contractors to recruit the archaeologists suggested by the Ministry of Culture, is no longer valid – a shift that is in line with the current economic policy of the country. Personal acquaintances, thus, and efficient networking stand for the selection criteria in these cases, creating working relationships of dependency and subjection. The smaller the scale of the project, the more vague the selection process tends to become, fostering its precarious aspects and promoting vigilance, alertness and versatility as employment assets [55]. If, in the case of public competition, craftsmanship -as a selection criterion- is replaced by merit [52], in this case of nontransparent staff selection, craftsmanship is replaced by pure availability and need. The process of scientific disengagement, therefore, for the archaeologists involved, has just begun.

Consequently, and in all cases (available today concerning access to the primary stage of the archaeological production), the way in which new scientists enter the world of archaeology goes far beyond a contractual matter of job conditions; it constitutes rather the defining base of their precarious everyday experience, which exceeds working or scientific time and penetrates into the whole space of their lives [56], forming altogether new social subjectivities [55].

Primary stage

Following the analogies derived from the stage of triggering, rescue excavations in the context of construction projects account for the lion's share of archaeological work in the primary stage of the production line (Fig. 1.c). Long term research-led excavations are minimal in comparison, whereas excavation programs of the Archaeological Service that are not associated with technical projects are scarce.

According to the official data of the Ministry of Culture (<https://www.statistics.gr/el/statistics/-/publication/SCI18/2001>) during the last twenty years systematic excavations were only 2090 in total when rescue excavations were 14878; a revealing ratio even for a well-known fact. The basic scientific terrain of research progress, experimentation and education has therefore been transformed into an unbecoming socially, environmentally and politically ambiguous arena of mandatory archaeological performance. Condensed and dissected time along with an enlarged scale in every aspect form the major features of this new reality. The archaeological process follows the fast-track procedures of construction requirements, overexploiting both (the) immaterial and physical labor of employees, in projects where scientific meaning is elusive and detached from daily work. The repetition of large-scale excavations requires large numbers of fixed-termed temporary archaeological employees who have nowadays outnumbered their colleagues covering "fixed and permanent needs". More specifically, the latter picked to a number of one thousand (1084, according to the Ministry of Culture, 552 of which work on a permanent basis and 532 work as employees with open-ended contracts), even when only the actual members of the Association of Contract Archaeologists exceed this number and graduates in archaeology reach almost four hundred every year (personal inquiry).

This not so recent archaeological *precariat* [57–60], is not only abused by physical and emotional exhaustion, intense mobility, lack of scientific initiatives and a stagnant state of apprenticeship, but it is also obliged to almost account for the fact. Paralytic negative value attributions concerning their personal pathways through this structural jungle, are tacitly imposed on them by disciplinary *gate-keepers* [61] who feed on an old but firm scientific imaginary; an impervious system of ideas and notions (self-denial, passion, elitism etc.) that has forged archaeology's character since its institutionalization in 19th century. The shift in the discipline's character, in other words, deriving from the prevailing neoliberal regime, has caused, among other pathogenies, an internal rupture of the scientific community, which occasionally choses to blame the "subalterns" for the abolishment of the discipline's corporate (guild) characteristics, rather than reflect on the actual causes.

Transition

This point often constitutes the end of the process (Fig. 1.d). The (purposeless) accumulation of ancient findings in dark state storehouses originates primarily from the scarcity of scientific triggering of the whole process highlighted by the map and also connects to the alienation all working archaeologists experience due to the reduction of a scientific activity into cognitive automatism regulated by economic rules [62], as already stated. The segmentation of time, following the neoliberal articulation of social life, favors the segregation of archaeological stages and opposes the meaningful flow of knowledge production.

Therefore, all succeeding stages of the archaeological process require personal decision-making, to a varying extent and level, which must, in all cases, be strong enough to resist the passive habitual praxis, get through the narrow “check point” that follows excavation, and hopefully reach a socially relevant archaeological space.

The socio-economic context that shapes this transition point into a bottleneck or even a rupture in the process, translates into practical impediments appearing at this transit center: The expiration of funding coming from private or public construction companies at this particular point of the process, coupled with the total absence of a state research funding program, constitute an unsurpassed barrier. However, it seems that limited access to the study of ancient material, represents an even more discouraging agent: Legislation attempted to regulate research and publication procedures just twenty years ago (L.3028/2002, article 39: *Publications of excavation results and other archaeological research.*), but the problem has not been resolved. The current law provides the excavator with the exclusive right of publication for a long period of time (up to five years), during which access to part of the material can only be granted to other researchers on his/her approval. After this period, access continues to be limited and can be granted on the approval of the Archaeological Service. In reality, even these discouraging terms are usually lost in the matrix of interpersonal negotiations of scientists in charge and excavation material remains inaccessible to the majority of ambitious researchers, continuing to fuel a well-established, distorted archaeological culture of “ownership” which slips through the cracks of legal arrangements and has always thrived among excavators and researchers. It is on these grounds that personal strategic maneuvers and paternalistic relationships of domination and exploitation erode - when they do not interrupt entirely - the process’ integrity by rendering accessibility exchangeable; a gift that produces indebtedness and obligatory reciprocity.

Secondary stage

Behind the fence of guarded findings, a desert of research endeavors lies (Fig. 1.e). Scientists that have obtained access to the next field must now embark on a time-consuming, usually non-profitable and lonely route, on their own initiative. Not every willing subject passes through the gate though. Absence of supportive mechanisms and the dissenting, daring nature of the decision to continue through the process without any considerable safety net, filter the actors that appear in the secondary stage.

Usual research *travelers* are the ones who belong to academia, often participating in ongoing research programs, which offer a minimum safeguard in terms of financial coverage but also a meaningful context of the (research) attempt. Although their journey is much likely to reach a destination even right to the conventional end of the process, it is immersed in the game of apprenticeship where intellectual autonomy is a fictitious ideal. Besides, the vast majority of research endeavors usually forms part (correlates) of postgraduate studies, during which nothing really is produced, but the capacity to produce.

“First class travelers” are archaeologists working on a permanent basis in the Ministry of Culture, and especially high-level officials, whose research terms are much more advantageous, mostly because of direct access to ancient material and relevant information that derives from their working environment, but also due to the provided income, available time and space for conducting the research and tacit tolerance in appropriating physical and intellectual labor of the subalterns.

On the contrary, actors who do not relate to either of the categories above, are those who embarked on the research either as an existential decision, referring to the scientific imaginary of the value of knowledge, or in the context of the established obligatory continuous training. Whatever the cause, they usually experience an isolated and risky journey with long working hours on an arduous road which will not necessarily ever come to an end; their winding route is often lost inside the dense realm of personal implications, feelings of frustration and exhaustion and, eventually, a loss of the original objective.

The research journey appears, thus, to be self-oriented, in all cases and in different ways; an inward-looking process which is not reflected in the final archaeological product.

Transition

Researchers nevertheless envisage a public land of processed data translated into conclusions, assumptions and interpretations. They embark on their research attempts looking forward to reaching this land one day. The only guaranteed destination, however, is a notional depository of initially processed materials and theories (Fig. 1.f). Research outcomes of prolonged, often devastating and sometimes costly efforts will most likely remain accumulated in this liminal point of transition, never transformed into excuses of scientific or social interaction.

By reading the map, thus, a time, energy, cost and emotionally-consuming process appears to conclude more often than not in this abstract construct of no-man's-land – a “hypertrophic” part of the process, or else, another rupture- which is *guarded* by the two principal institutions that have been present in the production, control and regulation of the process since its beginning: the state Archaeological Service and Academia. Their variable presence throughout the line of production, slightly to the rearguard in the preceding stage of research, will eventually culminate in an all-pervasive one, as we enter the succeeding stage of the archaeological process.

Third stage

The last stage of archaeological activity occupies the most extended part of the visually depicted process (Fig. 1.g). It is by far the most complex and crowded and the first to present multiple layers. Although the observation initially appears irrational when contrasted with the preceding rupture identified in the process, it is eventually justified after a closer reflection.

The most important explanatory remark regarding the multiplication of actors who suddenly burst into the picture, relates to their external origins of the line of production as we have traced it up to this point. Different groups of actors, with various interests and points of departure, enter the process when *gatekeepers* open the valuable depository of data and allow entrance of processed, material or immaterial, findings into the arena of interaction. In this field of *disclosure*, however, the same institutional guardians will totally order and control the modes and frequency of interaction, in their multitude and diversity, producing a setting in which the scientific community still holds the leading role: programs of archaeological studies, producing the official producers, conferences and publications of and for the broad archaeological community, but above all material remains displayed in museums and open-air archaeological sites, illustrating a crystallized national narrative.

Archaeological information spill-over into a broader social area, comes only after interdisciplinary interaction and networking has taken place, in a separate lower level, which appears more diverse, less ordered, and in some ways more unpredictable. Legitimate producers who monopolized the whole process up to this point, are mixed with the colorful crowd, deprived of their scientific expertise. The “Panopticon” of authorized knowledge is at this level taken over by the educational system and supported by mass media reproductive mechanisms. Despite the longstanding theoretical discussion and the appeals of experts towards a more participatory archaeological process and museum policy [48, 63], public’s involvement slips through unofficial passageways (social media) or even goes unnoticed under the economic weight of tourism policies.

In any case, as the map has highlighted, the rate of data flow in the third stage of the archaeological process remains very low, considering the amount of deposited research results in the preceding transition point of the map, but also the investment required for these results to be deposited. The depicted situation resembles a knot, a swelling in the body of the process, like the one observed at the point of transition between the triggering of the process and secondary stage, where unearthed ancient material accumulates awaiting to be processed into words. Is the assumption related only to a strict, efficient and continuous guard of the depository and the rigid dissemination channels, or is it another expression of the initial distorted triggering of the process that provokes all major deformities? What is beyond doubt, either way, is that a vast quantity of thoughts, data, information and materials will always remain scientifically untapped and socially inaccessible.

Despite the pluralistic, many-sided nature of this last stage of archaeological process in terms of procedures, aspects of accessibility, places of interaction and actors involved, critically mapping this space brought forth another realization: the majority of these intriguing issues, remains a virgin research territory.

Reading the map

The choice of the mapping itself defined our research questions and approach to a great extent, assuming the possibilities and limitations that it poses, especially when conducted by mapmakers who have not been formally trained [65] like us. The two-dimensional visual display of the process restricts analysis to what could be depicted without confusing the viewer. Although maps have been considered as texts [66], not everything the researcher wants to comment upon can be included in them, as in the case of texts. Verbal analysis may lack in vividness and communicative power, when compared to the image, but seems more flexible in terms of content. Nevertheless, visual synthesis has enabled a fluid emergence of macroscopic observations, which are composed of and supported by the various partial critical depictions of our autoethnographic approach.

The asymmetries of the visual elements and their spatial arrangement used to depict the different features of the archaeological line of production, help to realize the structural deficiency of the process in various different ways. Deficiencies are understood as non-scientific initiations, variable management of time, lack of supportive mechanisms and meaningful coordination or predominance of quantity over quality.

The emerging pattern of narrow transition passages operating as check points of the process after every stage, reflects dysfunctions and obstacles formed by political and economic conditions, legislation, the historical roots of the

archaeological discipline and complex interpersonal relationships, all of which can either delay, block or disrupt the sequence, but certainly deform it in all cases. Most of all, however, these liminal spatial linkages mark the experience [67] of actors involved.

The dominant appearance of specific groups of actors in the production line, coupled with the deafening absence of others - or of the same groups in other stages - indicates, distinctively, issues of accessibility, inclusiveness, legitimacy of knowledge or entitlement to narrate stories about the past, but also underlines an awkward remoteness and withdrawal of “experts” from the final social stage where they are most needed.

Discussion

Reflecting on our managing roles

Critical cartography is supposed to de-stabilize hegemonic visual narratives. In this project, however, our version of the ‘story’ has no reference, no pre-existing visual representation - let alone critical - to negate. There are only verbally articulated approaches limited to what archaeology is, or, more accurately stated, of what it has been and should always be. The fact though, of moving in a virgin land of unexploited possibilities, has not only been liberating and provoking but also increased the feeling of our responsibility and accountability towards the project. Visualizing the Greek archaeological production line through a critical prism entitled us to present our own interpretation of the process [68]. Criticality, however, requires by definition a greater reflexivity [65]. We have been constantly aware of our power positions during this non-neutral process of mapping, as we moved from dissection to synthesis and lastly to interpretation: we generated a story and imagined alternatives over a line, an assemblage that we formed through exclusions, inclusions, evaluations, sorting and prioritization [68]. Besides, *research bias* has been an integrated feature of our research attempt since the conception of the project, as we play the role of both the instigator of the map and of those that are mapped. We realize, nevertheless, that our positioning outside the inner circle of archaeology’s “ruling experts” does not make us a group of delegated representatives. The depicted perspective is partial, and the product is authored [65]; it is a map produced by a small subset of actors involved in the process.

Producing a digital critical map in the pandemic era

While critical mapping requires collective and synchronous work, the exceptional pandemic conditions under which our research was conducted, modified these fundamental preconditions significantly. Meetings in person were replaced by virtual conversations, during which brainstorming follows different channels according to the different temporalities that are produced by virtual mediation and interaction. Our planning of initially organizing our thoughts and suggestions on paper and then work digitally, was also overturned. We will never know the exact deviations from the original idea that finally materialized in the applied process; we can assume however a more energetic contribution of all research members to the actual visual synthesis of the map, even more prolonged hours (of those that occurred) of debates and discussions and, definitely, an

altogether different approach in the data collection process. The last, forms the most significant parameter of the pandemic's effect on the project, as interviews and the recording of various archaeological activities were cancelled. Information integrated in the map came from relative Greek ministries, academic departments, mass media and corporate entities or published research works. We have been particularly alert, however, in avoiding the uncritical reproduction of these entities' meta-choices [65] in what it is recorded, based mostly on our personal knowledge over hidden aspects of the archaeological process.

Personal encounters

The produced critical map views the archaeological process from a remote point, a bird's eye perspective – a feature deriving from geographic maps. Nevertheless, different origins and experiences between the three of us, the map-makers, define our dispersed positioning in the line of production, our separate standing points. One dwells in the primary stage, surrounded by trenches, earth and roaring excavators, standing in hard boots under the sun, looking ahead on a vast trail of stages that do not include her. She does not really know where the process leads but experiences every day the consequences of its origin. Another one of us is seated, studying inside a quite vehicle; the hours are long and the questioning often strong. He has had a glimpse of the preceding wild stages and is now heading for the subsequent; the closer he gets, however, the more he wants to pull back and retreat to his quite vehicle. The land of *negotiation* appears bleak and full of pitfalls. The third one inhabits in this stage. She is paid to freely think, write, talk and interpret but her words seem to echo back at her. Primary stages of the process appear distant and unknown, their fire does not reach academy; its proximity however to the archaeological product offers such a clear vision of it that it despairs her.

The remote spatial perspective, full scope, of the produced map influenced our own perception of archaeological landscape, while our distinct positioning 'inside the process' has been really productive although perplexing and often time-consuming. It helped to question our preconceived ideas and certainties and transgress our ideological boundaries. It also worked as a calibrating agent, helping to avoid strong inconsistencies between stages in terms of analytic scale. More than anything, however, it left no shadow casted on the research: the perspective of one illuminated the blind observation points occupied by the others.

Conclusions

The final product of the depicted process, as we have defined it, refers to the ideological, social and material representations of the past that circulate in the public sphere. But does the process really affect the initial archaeological product of our national narrative which was born and came of age along with the discipline's first steps? Is it actually being produced, ever since, by the archaeological process or is it in reality perpetually reproduced?

Research is meant to promote new concepts, invent new ways of approaching the past, discuss in alternative terms, negate former codes of values, ethics and objectives. However, the two major formative institutions of the archaeological system, museums and education, act in an almost soundproof void, providing the

Greek public authoritatively with different variations (exhibitions) of the same master narrative or duplicates (history textbooks) of its massive original version. Either way, the ideology of Greekness [9, 10, 64] is legitimized and reproduced successfully, almost intact by critical revisions and radical reinterpretations, supported by an increasing quantity of material “evidence”.

This fragmentation in the line of production was the main conclusion reflected in the process of critical mapping, which highlighted the boundaries between different stages and possible ruptures of the process, the lack of integrity, unimpeded flow and intercommunication. The realization that the important comments and thoughts derived from each separate stage, do not actually affect the final product is what is truly revealing. The way in which (how) the production line operates, the constructed world of the subjects involved (who) or the actual spaces of production (where), all seem unconnected with the reasons (why) the archaeological product is pursued and, thus, with the product itself. Neoliberalism has been identified as the prominent feature which transcends and dominates the whole line of production, taking different forms of practice: the fact that the process is mostly initiated as a “necessary evil” in the name of development, the resulting alienation and emotional disengagement of archaeologists involved, the lack of research funding as a non-productive occupation and the self-referential character of archaeological disclosure. Nevertheless, the product retains its a-chronic features; an island that the waves of political-economic turmoils never reach.

In other words, the process, as we know it, does not aspire to an actual product; it appears more oriented towards an internal consumption of its by-products by the competent experts and the indefinite persistence of their role. The already existing product works rather like an abstract signifying container of the process that provides it with a purpose and makes it unquestionable, while constituting it a comfortable commodity for the non-experts who are perfectly content with its crystallized and impermeable nature.

This verified detachment between the process and the product relates, after all, with the lack of a meaningful central policy geared towards the public needs, as far as the line of archaeological production is concerned. This all-encompassing, pronounced conclusion coordinates every partial observation in a comprehensive explanatory realization. The remark, repeatedly confirmed throughout the map, traverses the whole process and defines its shape by adjusting the scale of archaeological stages, producing extra levels and restricting areas or by making group of actors vanish. The fact appears more striking due to its sharp contrast to the strict, national integrated, monopoly character of the archaeological process. The undisputable stranglehold of the state and, in particular, of the responsible Archaeological Service on the production and management of the domestic archaeological product, does not in reality contribute to a coherent and inspired coordination of the process. In fact, the relevant state bodies are either navigated by externally-driven agendas, in the triggering and primary stage of the process, are almost absent, in the second stage of research, or tied to an unreflexive notion of authoritative ownership, in the third stage. In the liminal points of transition between stages, the Archaeological Service appears as a strict guardian who blindly serves bureaucratic orders, restricts the entrance of actors and condemns research attempts to stagnancy.

Future research aims

Critical mapping touched on a plethora of issues and topics that call for further exploration. Many of these have never been the object of research, however intriguing they appear to be. As it has been stated, maps explore truth as subjective, constructed, and incomplete, while critical maps become exploratory research tools, helping the visualization of a larger landscape in order to carve out a smaller territory to investigate more deeply [46]. They do not form finished products at any rate. In this sense, during the process we identified and highlighted all these “smaller territories” which await investigation and study.

Besides, as we have already mentioned, the research project is ongoing. Apart from the data input, which is almost complete, we are still working on the digital form of the map. We hope that the digital background of the map will constitute the basis of a continuous and dynamic process of expansion and enrichment that can be continued after the completion of the present research. With this in mind, we aim to produce a dynamic digital product that will enable commenting, additional data collection and controlled intervention by a wider circle of stakeholders.

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