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Archaeology and communication with the public: archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment in action

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Communication in archaeology is not only about dual dialogue and understanding each other. Communication is a form of establishing and maintaining social relations as well. Some scholars highlighted this aspect of language, calling it a phatic function of communication. Based on this concept, I claim that the crucial aspect of communication between society and archaeology actually might lie in a non-communicative aspect of communication (language) itself. To back up this thesis I rely on my own research into archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events which took place in Poland in 2011-2012.
Keywords: communication, society, archaeological open-air museums, historical re-enactment

La comunicazione in archeologia non è solo dialogo e comprensione vicendevole, ma soprattutto stabilire e mantenere relazioni sociali. Alcuni studiosi hanno evidenziato questo aspetto del linguaggio, definendolo "funzione fatica" della comunicazione. Sulla base di questo concetto, sostengo che l'aspetto cruciale della comunicazione tra la società e l'archeologia potrebbe essere proprio l'aspetto non comunicativo della comunicazione stessa. A sostegno di questa tesi, la mia ricerca tratta dei musei archeologici open-air e delle rievocazioni storiche che hanno avuto luogo in Polonia negli anni 2011-2012.
Parole chiave: *comunicazione, società, musei archeologici open-air, rievocazioni storiche.*

1. Introduction

The database for this article consists mostly of the observations gathered during my research in 2011-2012 when I visited some of archaeological open air-museums (e.g. Grzybowo, Kalisz Zawodzie, Biskupin) and archaeological theme parks (Wolin) in Poland and during my participation in historical re-enactment events (e.g. Leśno, Gniezno, Ląd). The research methodology was based upon ethnographic participant observation (e.g.

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Tedlock 1991). There were events like those in Leśno, Ląd and Kalisz Zawodzie, where I spent only one day observing and talking with historical re-enactors. There were also some (Grzybowo, Biskupin, Gniezno) where it was possibile to do research for two days. In the case of the Slavs and Vikings Festival organised by the Slavs and Vikings Centre Wolin Jomsborg Vineta in Wolin, I was living with historical re-enactors for three days.

I rely also on visitors of archaeological open-air museums and the interviews conducted with some of them. Nonetheless, because of the fact I was able to interview in detail only 20 visitors of archaeological open-air museums, the data and conclusions based upon them do not pretend to be an exhaustive overview of what people think of archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment. I use this data rather as a *cognitive mapping*, as Fredrick Jameson (1991) would have put it, for a theoretical discussion on what I call a phatic function of archaeology.

Definitely, today's archaeology is a global brand (Holtorf 2007). It is almost impossible to open a daily paper and not to find out about new ground-breaking archaeological discoveries: the oldest, the biggest, the first was finally found. The same has to be said about Hollywood blockbusters. Archaeology, archaeological finds and sites are very often part of the plot. For example, this is precisely the case of *Prometheus* (2012) directed by Ridley Scott, the film which was nominated for an Oscar for visual effects, where archaeologists analysing, among other things, the Paleolithic rock art discover that human beings were created by extraterrestrials. These and many other social clichés about archaeology are part of popular culture and of archaeology itself too.

One of the places where one may encounter many references to archaeology and the past in general are archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events that often take place within them. According to the most concise definition, historical re-enactment can be understood as any attempt to recreate a historical event or a specific historical period (e.g. Petersson 2010, p. 75). On the other hand, for the purpose of this study, I follow a definition of an archaeological open-air museum used by Roelend Paardekooper. According to the Dutch archaeologist (Paardekooper 2012, p. 289), an archaeological open-air museum is:

> […] *a non-profit permanent institution with outdoor true to scale architectural reconstructions primarily based on archaeological sources. It holds collections of intangible heritage resources and provides an interpretation of how people lived and acted in the past; this is accomplished according to sound scientific methods for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment of its visitors.*

Fig. 1. A copy of a helmet from Lednica Lake in the foreground, Grzybowo 2012 (author Dawid Kobiałka).

There are archaeological open-air museums which can be dated back to the end of the 19th century (Paardekooper 2012, chapter 2). Nonetheless, it is in the last 30 years or so that both phenomena have become truly popular and widespread. If this process continues developing, and everything indicates that it will, one can imagine a moment when there will be more 'early medieval' strongholds now than there were during the Middle Ages! The increasing popularity of archaeology and the past in general has very paradoxical consequences. This is especially discernible apropos replicas of archaeological finds. A telltale example is helmets which are dated to the Early Middle Ages (IX-XIII AD) in Poland. In fact, up to now, only two actual examples are known. One was found in Lednica Lake (fig. 1), the second was fished from Orchowskie Lake.

The Early Middle Ages is one of the most popular periods among historical re-enactors in Poland (e.g. von Rohrscheidt 2011). When the fearless Vikings fought with the mighty Slavs, e.g. in Wolin or Grzybowo, most of them wore such helmets. My point is very simple: there is contemporary over-production of the material past. In other words, there is

more 'past', for example, copies or replicas of archaeological finds than original finds which they copied. There is no need to add that these copies look better then the originals. One is even tempted to say that copies are *more ordinal* than the original artefacts. This is even more valid about not so much replicas of archaeological finds, but artefacts which only loosely are based, if at all, on archaeological artefacts. Some of the craftsmen complained during the research that wooden and plastic swords, axes, helmets and shields are more popular that their "true replicas" among visitors of archaeological open-air museums (see also e.g. Holtorf, Schadla-Hall 1999): "People more often buy this kitsch than our true replicas" (pers. comm., Marcin, 18 August 2012, Grzybowo; my translation). By "kitsch", the historical re-enactor had in mind all plastic and wooden kitsch material culture that is sold during historical re-enactment events. Following Jean Baudrillard (1994), it is the past itself which is false from a contemporary point of view.

By the same token, it can be claimed that archaeology is about links between the present and the past (e.g. Shanks, Tilley 1987). A particular issue of archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events fits perfectly within the scope of such an understanding of archaeology. In what follows, I will briefly describe how archaeologists usually see communication between themselves and society, in other words, how communication is allegedly a solution to archaeological dilemmas of engagement with the public (e.g. Merriman 2004a; Fowler 2007; Holtorf 2008). After that, I will try to indicate in what sense communication might be a problem. In the last part, I will focus on archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment as a case study, to highlight, hopefully, an interesting paradox of archaeological dialogues with society.

2. Communication as solution: archaeology and society

Cornelius Holtorf (2008) has recently discussed in detail different strategies of communication between archaeology and society (see also Merriman 2004b; Matsuda, Okamura 2011). According to the German archaeologist, there are at least three distinctive models of how archaeologists have been communicating with society: 1) the educational model, 2) the public relations model, and 3) the democratic model.

To simplify, the first model has been most popular among archaeologists (Holtorf 2008, p. 150). It presupposes that citizens should be enlightened by benevolent archaeologists. Even more, the citizens should be happy to hear what archaeologists have to say to them. The task of

archaeologists is, then, to deliver reliable knowledge. That is why communication here hinges on the idea that one side (archaeologists) tells, the second (the public) only listens to what the first has to communicate.

At first sight, this model can be seen as embedded in Enlightenment. However, as it is rightly pointed out by Holtorf, the education model has nothing to do with the true spirit of Enlightenment. As Immannuel Kant (1996, p. 58), the great philosopher of Enlightenment, claimed in his famous *An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?*: "Sapere Aude! Have the courage to use your *own* understanding! is thus the motto of enlightenment" (Kant's italics). Accordingly, many archaeological attempts at communicating with society are then deeply anti-Enlightenment because archaeologists here do not usually increase the courage of the public in their own engagement and understanding of the past. In accordance with this practice, there is only one proper vision of the past; the vision which is accessible to archaeologists and transmitted only by them.

The second model causes some problems too. The public relations model is about improving the image of archaeology in the public and the media. It aims at increasing interest in archaeology and gaining social support for funding of archaeological research, among other things. In this strategy, archaeology is less an academic discipline, but rather a way of finding and making money. In other words, archaeology here is a kind of lobby group. Such understanding of archaeology and its objectives has to cause moral and political objections. People's money should not be more important for archaeologists than the people themselves.

Holtorf calls the third model of communication between archaeology and society the democratic one. This model tries to overcome problems inherent within the two previously outlined. It relies on "scientific responsibility and sustainable development and is based on participatory processes in which non-scientists predominate" (Holtorf 2008, p. 157). By the same token, citizens are asked to actively participate in archaeological research. Local communities should not only e.g. take part in archaeological excavations, they should also be engaged in preparing archaeological projects, in decision making, etc. It can be said, the democratic model aims at truly mutual engagement with experiencing the 'past'. Archaeologists listen to citizens, hear what they have to say, and the other way around (e.g. Högberg 2008). Nonetheless, today all three models can support each other. They are not necessarily in opposition to each other.

The Holtorf models do not pretend to analyse all archaeological ways of engagement with the public. One such way omitted by the German archaeologist is the issue of how contemporary media (especially the Internet) reshape ways of communication between, most generally, scientists

and society. How the Web has changed communication between archaeology and society is the subject of e.g. *Archaeology 2.0: New Approaches to Communication & Collaboration* (Kansa *et al.* 2011). As the authors of *Archaeology 2.0* are convinced, the Web gives new opportunities for popularisation of archaeology and communication with society such as: the possibility of online co-production, an active and dynamic dialogue through blogs, creation and sharing of user-generated content, quick and broad dissemination of archaeological knowledge in the Web, to mention but a few possibilities.

Nonetheless, the three models and new approaches to communication caused by the Web seem to presuppose the idea of finding out better forms of dialogue between archaeology and society. What such perspective entails is that communication is the answer: the more communication, the better it is for the public and archaeology itself. There are different strategies (e.g. the three models described above) to achieve it, but the answer is, to simplify, more communication and mutual understanding. However, what if our comprehension of communication itself is a problem, not so much an answer to archaeological engagement with contemporary society? I will approach this question a little bit more below.

3. Communication as problem: the unbearable voice of silence

There are few researchers who had such an impact on the humanities in the 20th century as Roman Jakobson with his structural analyses of language (e.g. Jakobson 1930). What characterises the late Jakobson is, however, a shift in his research interest. His late works offer a more general, theoretical and comprehensive view on language and communication than his earlier work, more oriented to an analysis of Slavic languages. Although structural analyses of language are *dead*, Jakobsonian ideas on communication functions and language are still valid in today's humanities (e.g. Adams 2009; Bradford 2013). They might be of some help in discussions on archaeology and communication with society as well.

According to Jakobson (1981), every verbal act of communication consists of six elements. First, there is the addresser; second, who sends a message; third, to the addressee. To be properly understood, the message required the fourth aspect of a verbal act of communication, a context. Fifth, all sides of communication must share at least partially the same code which enables one side to encode and the other to decode the message. The sixth and the last element is a contact: "a

Jakobson's scheme	An archaeological act of communication with the public
1. the addresser	1. an archaeologist
2. sent message	2. the message about archaeology, the past, cultural heritage, etc.
3. the addressee	3. the public
4. a context	4. a lecture room, an archaeological festival, excavations, or a blog e.g.
5. the same code	5. the same language
6. a contact	6. a contact (e.g. fascination with the past)

Fig. 2. An archaeological act of communication with the public through Jacobson's scheme.

physical channel and psychological connection between the addresser and the addressee, enabling both of them to enter and stay in communication" (Jakobson 1981, p. 21).

Every act of communication between archaeology and society can also be analysed through Jakobson's scheme. Along these lines, the addresser is usually an archaeologist. He or she sends the message about archaeology, the past, cultural heritage, etc. to the public (the addressee). Verbal communication demands to be encoded (by the addresser) and decoded (by the addressee). Such a code (e.g. language understood by all participants) is successful when a proper context is chosen. It can be a lecture room, an archaeological festival, excavations, or a blog, among other places. Finally, if the previous elements take place, then there is this or that kind of contact between an archaeologist and the public enabling communication, and hopefully, mutual understanding (fig. 2). So, the crucial prerequisite of the Jakobsonian act of communication is intentionality: to communicate, I must want to say something. In Jakobson's terms: the addresser sends a message to the addressee.

All of the elements of Jakobsonian act of communication are, as it were, presupposed in the Holtorf models as well. Each of his models has a clear addresser which is usually an archaeologist. All the three models aim at sending messages about archaeology, the past, cultural heritage, etc. This message varies in each model. An archaeologist who believes in the educational model will try to present one correct vision of the past. By using the public relations model, archaeologists worry more about the public fascination with the past and the money that can be earned from it; whether it is scientifically based knowledge may be of less importance.

Those who presuppose the democratic model in communication between archeology and society will, rather, try to discuss issues relevant to local communities and engage them in the process of doing archaeology. The three models share also a belief that the target of archaeological messages is, very broadly understood, society. Some archaeologists (the education model) prefer a lecture room as a context of dialogue. Others (the public relations model) more often use theme parks or archaeological open-air museums as a context of dialogue with the public. As a context of democratic archaeology (the democratic model), an archaeological trench, where one can hear about the relevance of a local place since prehistory, fits especially well for e.g. The last two features of a Jakobsonian verbal act of communication are also shared by the three models described by Holtorf. The same code (e.g. language understood by all participants) and a form of physical or psychological contact are needed in every attempt at communication between archaeology and society.

It is not my intention here to describe in detail all these models. On the one hand, there are things which definitely differentiate them. On the other hand, there are aspects which have to be shared by every act of communication (e.g. the same code, a contact) including the ones which represent the three Holtorf models. I claim that the problem with these models is not the fact that they differ too much, offer opposite strategies, and so on. Quite the opposite, that what all of them share in common should be called into question. In my opinion, one of the most important aspects of the three models which should be investigated a little more is a presupposition of intentionality of communication, and, in consequence, an idea that communication has to be about sending messages.

The intentionality of communication is precisely what the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan (1966, p. 41) questioned. Lacan claims, basing on his psychoanalytic treatment, that every act of communication possesses its own intentionality, the one that goes beyond the consciousness (Lacan 1993, p. 24; see also Evans 2006, p. 27). In other words, by speaking, we tell more than we wanted to. This is the reason why Lacan defines communication as the act whereby "the sender receivers his own message from the receiver in an inverted form" (Lacan 1966, p. 41; quote after Evans 2006, p. 27). Such definition finds its unexpected manifestation within archaeology as well. Is this paradox of communication highlighted by Lacan not, for example, the experience of those who indefatigably struggle for the accurate perception of archaeology in popular culture (e.g. Russell 2002; Fagan 2007)? They claim that archaeology is a serious academic discipline. What is the result of struggle for one and proper vision of academic archaeology? The result

is e.g. films like *Prometheus* where one sees professional archaeologists doing serious fieldwork which enables them to discover quite seriously extraterrestrials...

At first sight, communication means more understanding, less violence and social conflict. It is believed that dialogue, proper relations between archaeology and society, can be even an element of sustainable development (Holtorf 2008, p. 157). Such understanding of communication is criticized by Slavoj Žižek (2008). The Slovenian philosopher sees a problem in desire to communicate with the others at all cost. As he points out (Žižek 2008, p. 59), by referring to Peter Sloterdijk:

> *"More communication means at first above all more conflict." This is why he* [Peter Sloterdijk – D.K.] *is right to claim that the attitude of "understanding-each-other" has to be supplemented by the attitude of "getting-out-of-each-other's-way," by maintaining an appropriate distance, by implementing a new "code of discretion."*

To avoid any misunderstanding, of course, I am fully in favor of increasing communication between archaeology and society. My point is, however, very banal: more communication is not a solution to many of contemporary challenges of archaeology. I believe that precisely this idea is presupposed in archaeological attempts (see the three Holtorf models) at communicating with the public. In short, archaeologists want to communicate with society either because we desire to enlighten society, get more money for own projects, or be relevant to local communities. Whatever the goals of archaeological communication with society are, what is presupposed is the idea that communication is the answer. However, it should be kept in mind that sometimes the answer is its own question.

It has recently often been said that archaeology alienates itself from the public (e.g. Shanks, Pearson 2001; Moshenska 2006; Högberg 2008). Once again, what alienation here entails is the fact that there is not enough mutual engagement, dialogue, communication, etc. between archaeologists and society. The problem lies not only in comprehension of communication though. Alienation itself is not, to put it very simply, so bad a thing as is usually claimed. This is the point also made by Žižek (2008, p. 59) in *Violence*, where he claims:

> *European civilization finds it easier to tolerate different ways of life precisely on account of what its critics usually denounce as its weakness and failure, namely the alienation of social life. One of the things alienation means is that distance is woven into the very social texture of everyday life. Even if I live side by side with oth-*

ers, in my personal state I ignore them. I am not allowed to get too close to others. I move in a social space where I interact with others obeying certain external "mechanical" rules, without sharing their inner world. Perhaps the lesson to be learned is that sometimes a dose of alienation is indispensable for peaceful coexistence. Sometimes alienation is not a problem but a solution.

A dictum *more communication* is today usually bluntly accepted among archaeologists. It has to be rethought though, as well as the understanding of alienation. There is a quite interesting paradox here. Those who claim that the problem of archaeology lies in its alienation (caused by, among other things, not enough communication) from the public (e.g. Shanks, Pearson 2001; Moshenska 2006; Högberg 2008), do not see how this problem is its own solution. The old proverb a "blessing in disguise" acquires here an archaeological manifestation.

The last point to made apropos communication and archaeology is the paradox of silence itself. It is as if nowadays archaeologists are frightened of silence between themselves and society. Once again, silence in not always our enemy. It can be a first step of truly hearing each other. It is not the same thing to say that 'I do not hear you' and 'I hear silence itself'. This distinction is the most innovative and interesting aspect of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds* (1968).

Recall the moment when Lydia Brenner (Jessica Tandy), mother of Mitch, visits the Fawcett farm in the middle of the film. She approaches the house, goes upstairs and finds there a corpse of Dan Fawcett. He was killed by the birds. What is so terrifying in the scene is the fact that Mr. Fawcett's eyes were picked out by the birds. Then Lydia quickly runs away from the house. And here is the whole genius of Hitchcock. Instead of showing Lydia's hysterical screams, she is unable to scream at all. As many perspicuous critics have already noted e.g. Žižek in *The Pervert's Guide to Cinema* (2006) directed by Sophie Fiennes, this scene is deeply terrifying. Why? The key to understanding this scene lies in the distinction above made: one does not so much hear the screams of Lydia, but rather the spectator hears the unbearable voice of silence itself. By the same token, the old phrase according to which "when words fail, music speaks" has always be supplemented by *when words fail, unbearable silence speaks too*. In the same vein, perhaps archaeologists' emphasis on communication with society is really about this; to not hear the terrifying voice of the other's silence?

Archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment events which often accompanied them can be considered as examples of communication between archaeology and the public that are worthy of closer analysis. I will highlight some paradoxical points about them below.

4. Phatic archaeology

As Roeland Paardekooper (2012) clearly points out, one of the key aims for most of the archaeological open-air museums is education. Educating people means, first of all, communicating with them. In this very sense, communication is at the heart of an archaeological open-air museum. It is also what historical re-enactors say too. Their participation in historical re-enactment events is often motivated by the will to communicate with the visitors of archaeological open-air museums. As a historical re-enactor of the Early Middle Ages explained to me during the research: "I like to show people how the past might have look. I like to speak with them. This is what historical re-enactment is really about for me" (pers. comm., Agnieszka, 18 August 2012, Grzybowo; my translation).

It is not hard to guess that this very will is criticised by some archaeologists and historians. Often historical re-enactment events rather than archaeological open-air museums are met with reproach, as instead of educating, they deliver a simplified vision of the past. Historical re-enactment events, the story goes on, are more a form of ludic carnival than a place where one can hear something relevant about the past or archaeology (e.g. see more in Pawleta 2010, 2011) (fig. 3).

Such critique is a simplification of the complexity of historical re-enactment, however. On the one hand, many historical re-enactors are archaeologists and historians themselves, or the students of these academic disciplines, like Agnieszka who has been quoted above. Of course, they simplify the past in their re-enactment, but the same might be said about academic 'professional' archaeologists and historians. Their vision is nothing but one simplification of the complexity of historical reality as well. Even more, it seems that traditional archaeologists are quite well aware of it. Do all of these conferences about the research history and future perspectives for the research of e.g. Lusatian culture not clearly point towards this direction? That is to say, the underlining idea is that the previous research is out of date, wrong, as ours will be soon. Nonetheless, it does not stop their ruthless critique of historical re-enactment. It is as if historical re-enactors' simplifications are unacceptable, when ours are still acceptable.

For the sake of argument, let us imagine a severe critic (see more in Kobiałka 2013a) who indefatigably complains about the inefficacy of presenting the past during a historical re-enactment event in an archaeological open-air museum. Such a severe critic would be, however, *right for the wrong reason*. Historical re-enactment as a medium of communica-

Fig. 3. An archaeological festival as a carnival, Wolin 2012 (author Dawid Kobiałka).

tion between archaeology and society is ineffective because of simplifications made by the historical re-enactors. But this is the very point of this kind of communication. The problem here is its own solution; disadvantage is its own advantage.

To put it more clearly, Jakobson (1981, p. 49) in his *Linguistics and Poetics* refers to Thomas Stearns Eliot's comedy entitled *The Cocktail Party*. He quotes the opening fragment from it:

Alex: *You've missed the point completely Julia. There were no tigers. That was the point.*

What at first sight seems to be a problem for Julia (*there* were no tigers), is at the same time its own solution (*that* was the point). With regard to the example of a severe critic of historical re-enactment, those who criticize historical re-enactment because of the failure in a proper education and communication between archaeology and society can be challenged by using the underlining paradoxical logic of Eliot's play:

You've missed the point completely my dear severe critic of historical re-enactment.
There is no proper communication between archaeology and the public during a historical re-enactment event in an archaeological open-air museum. That is the point.

Jakobson was well aware of the complexity of language and every act of communication. Additionally, he knew that communication is not only about sending messages. In other words, every act of communication has many functions. The Russian and American structuralist was writing about six such functions: the poetic, the referential, the conative, the expressive, the metalinguar, and – the most important in the context of historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums – the phatic. Communication is about starting and maintaining social relations too. He calls this aspect of communication a phatic one. At this point, what needs to be clearly stated is the fact that Jakobson followed Bronisław Malinowski's (1923) research into language, who was the first to notice this function of language.

One usually uses the phatic function of language during the exchange of day-to-day formulas, chit-chatting, discussions about the weather, etc. Jakobson (1981, p. 24) exemplifies this ambiguous form of communication by referring to Dorothy Parker:

'Well!' the young man said. 'Well!' she said. 'Well, here we are' he said. 'Here we are' she said, 'Aren't we?' 'I should say we were' he said, 'Eeyop! Here we are.' 'Well!' she said. 'Well!' he said, 'well.'

And this is actually what communication is often about. It is not about sharing messages, educating the other side of dialogue. It is also about starting and sustaining social relations. The above quote has no deeper meaning, there is no message to be sent from the addresser to the addressee (see more in Kobiałka 2013b). Through this lens, I claim, historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums should be ac-

Fig. 4. A young Viking during a historical re-enactment event, Grzybowo 2012 (author Dawid Kobiałka).

counted for. So, these two social phenomena are more about generating the curiosity about the past, the strange, cultural heritage, etc. than any concrete and clear message.

For the visitors of archaeological open-air museums, there is no difference between, let us say, a helmet from the 10th and from the 13th century. The message 'now you see a helmet from the 10th century and over there is a bit later one' is important not because the public will from now on know the differences between historical helmets but because there was a social relation between archaeologists and the public. Here the old idea of Marshall McLuhan (1964) that *the medium is the message* works perfectly. This aspect of historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums became clear to me during the research. People did not necessarily want to hear any deep messages from archaeologists and historical re-enactors during historical re-enactment festivals. For example, when I asked one of the tourists who was listening how a historical re-enactor was explaining the differences and chronology of the

helmets in figure 1, only 10 minutes after this short lecture the tourist told to me: "I still do not see any differences in the helmets. They look the same to me" (pers. comm., Daniel, 19 August 2012, Grzybowo; my translation).

The additional argument for such understanding of historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums is the fact that children are mostly fascinated with what they see and experience in archaeological open-air museums (e.g. Paardekooper 2012). Jakobson (1981) noted that the phatic function of communication is typical to infants and children too. That is why, there is nothing banal in saying that historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums should be thought of as mostly for children (fig. 4).

Seeing archaeological open-air museums and historical re-enactment through the phatic perspective does not in any way deny their complexity. They also can be seen as a way of gaining some kind of ontological security (e.g. Giddens 1991, chapter 2). Definitely, they are the embodiment of carnivalisation and commercialisation of contemporary world (e.g. Pawleta 2010, 2011), social fantasy of late capitalism (e.g. Kobiałka 2013c), up to and including a perspective through which they are analysed as an example of time-traveling into a distant past (e.g. Holtorf 2010; Paardekooper 2010).

5. Conclusion

Historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums are among the most crucial fields of contemporary archaeologies. They touch the very problem of archaeological engagement with contemporary world and society. No wonder then that they are seen by archaeologists as important issues which deserve closer attention.

Historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums can be seen as a medium of communication between archaeologists and the public. There are, however, some paradoxes discernable in these attempts. I wanted to indicate some of them in this paper. Without any doubt, archaeologists need different ways of communication with society. But above all, one needs to analyse in detail what communication is really about.

Historical re-enactment events and archaeological open-air museums in Poland were used as a *cognitive mapping* for my argument. These two forms of fascination with the past are probably not the best means of communication between archaeology and society. However, this failure of communication should be conceived as its own success. This is the rea-

son why I described more closely what has been unnoticed in archaeological studies into different strategies of communication between archaeology and society, as far as I know, a phatic function of communication. A successful communication is not only about sending messages, etc. It is also about starting and maintaining social relations. From this viewpoint, the crucial advantage of historical re-enactment and archaeological open-air museums can be especially appreciated.

The conclusion of this paper can be formulated as follows: the less we as archaeologists desire to send clear messages to the public, the better it sometimes is for society and archaeologists themselves.

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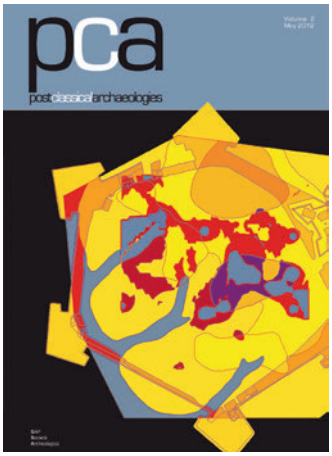

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