

TEA

The European Archaeologist

*The newsletter of EAA members for EAA members
Issue 65 – Summer 2020*

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Editorial

For *TEA*, 2019 ended with reports of the successful Bern AM, and the build-up to Budapest 2020. The arrival of the SARS-CoV2 virus in Europe in 2020 quickly brought those plans to a halt. Now, after months of developing scenarios, testing virtual conference software, and working with session organisers, EAA has a plan for a 2020 EAA Virtual Annual Meeting. The 2020 Virtual AM will be held in the same week as the cancelled onsite meeting, 24 – 30 August 2020, but will have a slightly different order of events. Check the [EAA 2020 Virtual](#) website for details; in particular, the opening ceremony will be held, but on Tuesday rather than Wednesday, and parallel session will be hosted from Wednesday through Sunday. The AM is being held as a service to members, with no registration fee or other charges for current (2020) EAA members. The scientific programme and details about the software ([Hopin](#)) can be found on the conference website.

This issue contains the results of a survey of EAA members on interest in an EAA Community for the Archaeologies of the Americas. The goal of this community is to foster trans-Atlantic connections, networking and cooperation around archaeological research in the Americas. The authors intend to formally establish an EAA Community for the archaeologies of the Americas, so keep your eyes and ears open, and let them know if you are interested in joining!

Another highlight of this issue is the collected interviews of recently-tenured academics, conducted by members of the EAA Early Research Careers in Archaeology (ERCA) task force. We read what it has taken for Penny Bickle, Martin Furholt, Oliver Harris, Daniela Hofmann, Silviane Scharl, Suzie Thomas and Marc Vander Linden to land permanent academic positions in archaeology – a dream for many young EAA members. We thank the members of this EAA Task Force and the interviewees for their commitment to helping their fellow scholars, and for providing the EAA with this valuable resource.

We remind you to vote in the 2020 EAA general elections. Since we are all ‘grounded’ you will not be able to submit a ballot on-site. Current EAA members should have received voting information in an email from the Secretariat. This year, we will elect an Incoming President, a new Secretary, and members of the Executive Board and Nominating Committee. The statements of all candidates eligible for election can be found in this issue.

We also encourage you to take full advantage of the 2020 Virtual meeting by participating in the virtual Annual Membership Business Meeting, and sending your thoughts about the meeting to the Executive Board and/or *TEA*. Please keep an eye on our Upcoming Events section, here in our newsletter and on the EAA website. Many events are being postponed or switched to virtual platforms.

Our next issue, Autumn 2020, has a deadline of 15 October 2020. What do you want to see on the final page of your newsletter? We look forward to hearing from you at tea@e-a-a.org.

Roderick B. Salisbury and Katharina Rebay-Salisbury

Debate

Interviews of recently-tenured academics in Northern Europe: comments on career paths in academic archaeology and some advice for young scholars

by members of the Early Research Careers in Archaeology (ERCA) task force (Maxime Brami mbrami@uni-mainz.de, Stephanie Emra, Jan Kolář, Aldo Malagó, Bogdana Milić, Antoine Muller, Bianca Preda)

The ERCA task force was set up in November 2019 with a view to make early-career researchers feel heard, empowered and supported (Brami *et al.* 2020). Here we explore and present personal experiences of recently-tenured archaeologists. In this first batch of interviews dedicated to Northern Europe - including Britain, Scandinavia and Northern Germany - we asked archaeology researchers who have recently obtained a permanent position (or who are in the process of obtaining one) to tell us about their personal experience undertaking postdocs. We asked if retrospectively they would do anything differently and what advice they would give to new PhD graduates who intend to stay in academia.

One interesting take away from these interviews is that there appears to be no established or guaranteed route to gaining a permanent position. Despite the emphasis placed on international collaboration and mobility in research, there is no standard European career path. We also notice that the length of time spent in 'postdocs' or other activities, i.e. the time between a PhD and gaining first permanent employment, is highly variable, and is less a function of the quality of the candidate (all our interviewees are international scholars with highly-successful research and publication tracks) than of chance opportunities, when a specific job tailored to a particular research profile becomes available.

Despite the highly unpredictable path of 'making it' in academic archaeology, we nonetheless hope that these interviews provide some insight and guidance to young scholars wishing to stay in academia long-term.

Further readings

Brami M.N., Emra S., Malagó A., Milić B., A. Muller (2020), 'Early Research Careers in Archaeology (ERCA) Task Force'. *The European Archaeologist* 63: 16-17.

Heinrich Härke (2006), 'The Good, the Bad and the Ugly'? Ein Vergleich von drei europäischen Berufungssystemen im archäologischen Fachkontext'. *Archäologische Informationen* 29: 117-126.

Dr. Penny Bickle

Senior Lecturer in Archaeology, University of York

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Six years, across which I believe I was unemployed for about eight-nine months in total (mostly straight after my PhD was submitted – in the middle of the 2008 financial crisis). For context, when I got my position about six years ago, this seemed like a long time to be a postdoc (in the UK). However, my impression is that the average number of postdocs and time as a postdoc between PhD and permanent post has since increased.

In the UK, for the most part, a permanent position would start as a Lectureship and then you would be promoted to Senior Lecturer, Reader and then Professor as your career progressed. Some universities in the UK are moving over to the US nomenclature, with assistant, associate, and full

professors. The UK does not really have a tenure track system; though there are sometimes fellowships that could lead to a permanent Lectureship, so your first permanent academic position will normally be as “lecturer”. You can be appointed with an ART contract (which is normally 20% admin, 40% research and 40% teaching) or a teaching & scholarship (with no or little allotted time for research). I have an ART contract and am expected to apply for funding for research to cover 40% of my salary. Recruiting PhD and Masters students is also important to bring in tuition fees.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

My PhD was at a UK university. I was then a postdoc at the same institution for about four years, with a break between two contracts. I then moved to another UK institution for nearly two years, before moving to my permanent job. This story belies a lot of failed fellowship (somewhere in the range of about six-eight) and job applications (of which, I think in hindsight probably only two that were realistic). I had three fellowship proposals rejected in the same week, a month away from unemployment. That was the lowest point.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

I held three separate post-doc positions. For context, during all of them I was employed as a research associate rather than being the PI of the project myself, and for one I was named on the grant application.

In the UK context, once a permanent academic your role changes and you need to balance both research and teaching, which can be challenging. It is therefore tempting to look back with rose-tinted glasses. I miss the freedom to do most of the things I wanted to (go to conferences, workshops, during term time etc.) and my impression now is that I had more time to read and think as a postdoc. I'd also like to stress that my feeling is that I gained the permanent job at the “right” time for me, which has made for a somewhat easier landing into the role than I have seen others have (though it was still stressful). My varied postdocs were important for growing as a researcher, building experience, and gaining confidence.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

I want to start by saying I do not think I have all the answers, and that I have not seen a particular formula which will guarantee success. These are some of my thoughts and conversations I have with PhD students and postdocs:

- 1) *Get the right network/support system, and seek out the right mentoring for you.* I wish I had done this earlier; it would have saved a lot of stress. Only in my final post-doc, I was offered mentoring by a senior female academic outside archaeology and it really was really important in helping me challenge imposter syndrome and some other myths I had let build up about academia. Find people you trust and are neutral to help you talk through your choices.
- 2) *Develop a growth mindset.* Sounds like psycho-babble but isn't – you will never stop learning how to be a better researcher and teacher, and the markers for those will change anyway. When applying for jobs, you need to craft a narrative that shows how where you have come from has prepared you for where you want to go in the future. A lot of the CVs and applications I have read are written along the lines of “this is how brilliant I am” (though you do need to “sell” yourself, watch for under or over selling), rather than here are all the things I've achieved and this is how they prepare me for future research I want to complete/teaching I want to do/collaborations I'd like to form.
- 3) *Publish, but with a balance between quality and quantity.* Don't be shy about sending out early drafts for comment or responses. After finishing your PhD, work towards getting a high-profile paper or two, but also some other publications (papers or contributions to edited conference volumes etc.) showing solid and grounded contributions to the discipline. Don't feel like you need all of this

straight out of your PhD. On job descriptions when they say “appropriate to career level” they mean it – it’s about progression above all.

4) *Get to know the funding landscape and apply for lots of grants/jobs.* Even ones you are not qualified for, but link in with your expertise or could help develop your career. Contact people you might like to work with and see whether you could work up a proposal together, with you as a named postdoc on the proposal. Contact institutions to see if you can apply for a fellowship, but do your homework first – are there people at the institution who you could learn from? What are their current research projects? Could doing a particular project help you to develop new skills? Apply for jobs with the mindset that it’s a way of people getting to know your research, and even if you do not get the job, you may make connections or gain feedback that could help.

5) *Try to understand how your research fits into the wider landscape.* We can easily become concerned with details but try to learn how to scale “up” and “down” your research. Practice this with the public and your peers. This flexibility will be needed in teaching and demonstrates that you can understand and respond to different audiences.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

I would say no, there is no typical path, and, yes, I have noticed some changes. The number of and length of time spent in post-doc positions is definitely increasing, with very few people going straight into a permanent academic position after their PhD, which I think used to happen a lot a few decades ago.

I do not think there is a “right” path, and I’m increasingly seeing people step out of academic roles into the public or commercial sectors, as well as coming the other way. The frequency of job adverts and postdoc positions seem to come in waves and vary with trends. However, speaking to colleagues in academia longer than me, suggests that has always been the case. Flexibility has always been, and will always be, important.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

Not really, along the path I took it never really felt like there were many choices open for me to make in the first place – funders and employers made those decisions! I wish I had got the opportunity to complete an international postdoc, but sadly that was not to be. Most of all, I wish I had just relaxed and enjoyed it more.

Is there anything you want to add?

One thing I’ve been asked about a lot is managing a work-life balance, as well as coping with some of the emotional and mental wellbeing issues academic/postdoc life raises. I think one of the “myths”, and something I believed as a postdoc, was that a permanent position would somehow be more settled and resolve these issues. The challenge of balancing family life and work does not go away once you have a permanent position, and in some ways it can get harder, so do not put your personal life on hold. Academia was invented for and by monks, and it still has a shockingly long way to go to make it truly family friendly (which can effect men as well as women), as well as challenging some of the biases which favour certain masculine behaviours. We can all do what we can in our patches, but I believe there need to be much larger shifts in the funding landscape and career paths. Sadly, I do not think there are quick answers for these problems.

Prof. Martin Furholt

Professor of Archaeology, University of Oslo

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Twelve years.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

I finished my PhD at the University of Kiel, in Germany. After that, I worked there and in Frankfurt in different postdoctoral positions until 2018, when I moved to Oslo to take up a professorship.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

I initially held two postdoctoral fellowships from the German Archaeological Institute (DAI), one was a postdoctoral research grant, the other the one-year travel scholarship which is granted to travel and study archaeological sites worldwide. I then held three research and teaching contracts from the University of Kiel, the last of which was a six-year Lecturer and Research Fellow position, which gave me the opportunity to plan things a little further ahead and write a habilitation thesis (a monograph-sized thesis, traditionally qualifying to teach independently at all levels and practically still sort of a requirement for a professorship in Germany). After completing my habilitation, I was able to obtain a substitute professorship in Frankfurt for one semester. I then got the professorship in Oslo just at the time when my last contract was ending. Being half Norwegian and able to speak the language made the transition relatively straightforward.

Although I stayed in Kiel for a very long time, the German university system forbids to ascend and get tenure on the same institution, in which you finished your PhD and/or habilitation. So it was always clear that I would have to move out at some point. In addition, Germany has rules restricting how many years you can spend in short-term contracts, which makes the situation for postdocs more precarious. There are however exceptions, so technically it is possible to stay in academia without ever obtaining a permanent position. So people are usually for a very long time in this rather precarious job situation, which also involves being dependent on tenured staff when it comes to defining and conducting research. A permanent position in Germany practically means a professorship, and such a position you usually only ascend to later in your career.

The main advantage of the professorship is of course the academic independence, but also no longer having to deal with the anxiety of the precarious job situation during the postdoctoral phase. This concern about future employment rises the longer you are a post-doc, and it makes it difficult to plan your private life. I was personally rather privileged to have this six-year contract prior to my current employment, which is 'long' in postdoc terms. Overall, and all anxiety aside, I was always quite optimistic about my chances of staying in archaeology and finally getting a tenured position.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

People should be clear that it is really what they want to do and that they have the right motivation. If you don't have that motivation, how will you cope with a perspective that could add up to something like 12 years of postdoc? An archaeology career is never going to be highly rewarding financially. Make sure that you can live with the insecurity. I know a lot of excellent researchers who did not manage to obtain a permanent position for a very long time, but still stayed in archaeology. It seems to me that there is a lot of luck involved. To be successful you obviously have to publish a lot, but you also have to find your own niche: try to be true to what you think is important and interesting in archaeology. On the other hand, you have to accept that in the current system, there is nothing you can do that will really guarantee you a permanent position.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

My impression is that those with stamina, i.e. who don't give up, usually find ways to stay in archaeology. They may not always be employed in their dream positions, but still they manage to somehow continue. Even if you exceed the postdoc phase (there are limits on how many years you can apply for postdocs after your PhD), there are still jobs available. Many people I know, who have stayed longer in academia, get permanent positions in their late 40s or even in their 50s. This is true

in Germany and to some extent in Norway, where however there are more permanent positions available earlier in your career.

I am under the impression, from hearsay mainly, that the ratio of permanent positions to non-permanent postdocs was more balanced in the 1980s-1990s. There were not so many people at the postdoctoral level then. Today the competition for professorships and other permanent positions is very strong.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

Not really. I spent many years on post-doc positions at one place (Kiel), which probably was not a good choice with regards to my CV, but I was continuously employed there in good contracts, and the scientific community there was very stimulating and this had, I think, good effects on my academic development.

Is there anything you want to add?

It seems to me that you can really damage your own creativity when you are unable to follow your convictions and do what you are passionate about. I think it is not a good idea to follow too strictly advice about what is wise for your CV and what not. Many say, for example that you have to specialise, that you have to offer a special technical or analytical skill, e.g. micromorphology, stable isotopes or ancient DNA, to succeed professionally. However, this is not necessarily the case. Different places hire different people, and some are explicitly looking for generalists. More important, really, is to do what you yourself are interested in, what motivates you and makes you curious enough to push yourself to pursue novel ideas.

Dr. Oliver Harris

Associate Professor of Archaeology, University of Leicester

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Five years.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

I submitted my PhD at Cardiff University in 2006, and went straight to commercial archaeology for one year. Then I moved to Cambridge, Newcastle and finally to Leicester, where I got my permanent position in June 2011. I have not changed discipline along the way.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

I completed two post-docs. The first was at Cambridge, where my research was integrated in a large project with several other postdoctoral researchers. This was a fantastic experience, especially because it opened up new horizons – the topic and period were different from that of my PhD. The second post-doc was in Newcastle, where I conducted research on my own grant (Leverhulme Early Career Fellowship). There I had a chance to explore topics directly related to my own interest – Neolithic and Bronze Age Britain. In both post-doc projects I had very supportive mentors, who significantly impacted on my academic career.

Do I miss being a post-doc? Unlike permanent positions which involve a lot of teaching, post-docs afford time to focus on research full-time; I sometimes miss that. On the other hand, there were stressful times, and also upsetting moments on the route to permanent employment. I think that post-docs could do without so much stress. I would not go back.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

I find mobility very important, if not crucial in an academic career, although that can be very hard depending on your private circumstances. I would also recommend that you work on your publications strategically and focus on high quality work, because that is sometimes far more important than having a high number of publications, especially in terms of how people are judged in the UK currently. To some extent, one should aim high. Think carefully how and organise your time. Try to find the right balance between publishing and teaching. Another piece of advice is that when applying for jobs, try to convince others that your work is more than just solid or good. Even if, in some cases, you cannot demonstrate that your work will re-write history, you should try to show the impact of your research on the broader field, which is again knowing how to properly “sell” your work.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

I have the impression that it is even more difficult to find jobs today than when I graduated. I can only speak from the British academic perspective. Here getting a permanent job involves moving from your PhD to your first post-doc, or teaching position, and then to second, third etc. post-doc/teaching position, until finally obtaining permanent employment. Some 30-40 years ago maybe there was more possibility to land a permanent position straight after PhD, but that does not seem to be the case anymore. Some people still do, but in general it is hard to compete with people who were appointed to teach, have had post-doc experiences, their own grants, and a number of publications for three-four years.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

No, I think I was very fortunate in my career. I did my PhD on exactly the topic that interested me the most, and I am very happy with my post-doc projects and what I have learned by working on them. If I could change anything, it would be publications, and I think I could have been more serious with starting to publish journal articles earlier than I did.

Is there anything you want to add?

Try to find your own circles, and people that you could write with. These do not necessarily need to be senior researchers, but those that you can work with on the same level, and develop ideas that can influence your career positively.

Prof. Daniela Hofmann

Associate Professor, Archaeology, University of Bergen

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Almost 13 years.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

My PhD was at Cardiff University, where I graduated in 2006. I moved to Wales as an undergraduate after my *Abitur*, the German equivalent of A-levels, to study the ‘Celts’. When I was told that the Celts do not really exist, I decided that my topic was the ‘European Neolithic’. I have moved around quite a lot in my career. My only regret is not having been more mobile as a student. I wish my MA had been somewhere else than Cardiff, in something a bit more sciency, like osteoarchaeology or zooarchaeology – a topic that gives a second leg to stand on and helps building a network early on.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

After my PhD, I had a brief stint in commercial archaeology, then held two postdocs at Cardiff University. It was great being part of Alasdair Whittle’s research group; he was always very

successful at writing grants, so I ended up staying in Cardiff. After the first two postdocs, I moved to Oxford with a fellowship. I was then unemployed for a year and did some teaching at the Lifelong Learning centre in Cardiff, before beginning another archaeology postdoc there. A friend sent me the advert for a Junior Professorship in Hamburg.

I moved back to Germany. A particularity of the German academic system is that postdocs can only be employed at universities for a maximum of six years. When the countdown ends, they must either find a permanent position or acquire third-party funding (for instance from the DFG, the German national research fund) to maintain their stay in academia. My position as Junior Professor at Hamburg University was without tenure-track. I was given the opportunity to interrupt my contract in Hamburg to stand in for a full Professor at Cologne for six months, which looks good on a CV in Germany. Finally, just before my Hamburg contract ran out, I moved to Norway to take up a permanent position at Bergen University.

There are definitely aspects of postdocs I do miss, such as extended periods of time to do research. In a permanent position you end up mostly creating a framework for other people to do research. But postdocs come with a limited safety net; often the research is not even your own. You can manage to carve out a niche while working on someone else's project, but it's difficult. Your job insecurity increases with each postdoc. As the end of one contract looms you are wondering what you will do next. That is when the 'impostor syndrome' kicks in and you start worrying that you have not published enough etc. The pressure to find follow-up projects is really tough. I got a bit worried after a while, but in the end I did ok.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

You really need to balance the pros and cons. Is postdoc life the right thing for you? Think strategically. Consider where people might retire in the near future. Make sure to put your effort in the right publications. What skills could you add to your portfolio? Stay true to yourself, but also be aware that there are 'hot topics', trends, that tend to shift around a lot. Currently there is a trend to have some sort of big data component in your projects, and most universities would now expect you to know at least some GIS and statistics. But this doesn't mean alternative skills or projects cannot work out.

Academic requirements are slightly different from one country to another. In Norway having a teaching certificate is very important. Germany still likes monographs and some departments favour quantity over quality indicators like journal rankings. The UK is all about publishing in the right journals, like PNAS, *Antiquity*, *Oxford Journal of Archaeology* etc.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

Not really. There is a lot of luck involved. You need to have the right set of skills whenever a job opportunity arises. The UK is a bit less predictable than Germany, because there is no compulsory retirement system there. A lot of academic positions are going to be available in Germany over the next five-ten years. It is possible to return to academia after a long stay in commercial archaeology, but that route is very difficult. Some people manage to obtain one postdoc position after many years working professionally, but it can be difficult to maintain the momentum to build a stable career, perhaps because they are lacking publications early on.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path

I was not very wise with publications after my PhD and had results published in obscure proceedings that no-one reads or cites. I had to play catch-up with publications later on.

Is there anything you want to add?

I am slightly concerned by how the people most consistently successful in the academic system are from the same socio-economic background. There is a lot of social reproduction involved. It's no

longer just about ‘men’, but people who do not have the resources to handle long-term insecurity are weeded out of the system.

Prof. Dr. Silviane Scharl

Professor of Prehistoric Archaeology, University of Cologne

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Ten years, but I was never unemployed during this time. I got my position as a professor in 2017 but in Germany this is not an unusual time span. In general, in Germany permanent positions for postdocs in Archaeology are rare, especially at the university. Therefore, archaeologists who want to stay at the university often write a habilitation in order to have the qualification for applying for a professorship (although officially a habilitation is not required anymore). During the last few years, this has changed a bit since more and more professorships start with a position as ‘Junior Professor’ for which you do not need a habilitation. However, not all ‘Junior Professorships’ are with tenure track.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

I did my PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin. I started my undergraduate studies at the University of Regensburg, then moved to Bamberg, to Würzburg, to Oxford and back to Würzburg where I finished my Magister. Afterwards, I moved to Berlin for my PhD, then to Cologne for my postdoc. In 2016 I moved back to Berlin for a temporary professorship. I also spend a lot of time abroad for studying (Oxford University), excavating (e.g. Romania), lecturing (Durham University) and as a travel scholar of the German Archaeological Institute. For some career paths in Archaeology (at least in Germany) you are expected to move a lot. The side benefit of this ‘vagabond life’ is a growing national and international network which can help you to find a job or cooperation partners for project proposals. Moreover, you get to know many different institutions which helps you to develop an idea of how you would organise your own institution when you have a permanent position.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

I held two post-doc positions – one after my PhD at the Freie Universität Berlin for a third-party funded project abroad. Afterwards, I moved to Cologne where I held a position as a post-doc at the Institute of Prehistoric Archaeology. At Cologne, the post-doc position was not a typical research position but rather for teaching, organising Institute-affairs etc. and for writing my habilitation (which I mostly did in the evening or during the weekend). Therefore, I did not have the freedom most post-docs have for research, travelling during term to go to conferences, workshops etc. On the other hand, I learnt a lot about how to manage/organise an institute which is quite helpful when holding a professorship.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

My impression is, that there is no guarantee for getting a permanent position in academia. Sometimes it is just being in the right place at the right time. However, there are several building blocks which help you to enhance your chances.

- try to build a network (national + international);
- try to enhance your profile, e.g. by publishing, presenting a poster/giving a talk on national and international conferences;

- collect a broad range of experiences, e.g. teaching (not too much, since preparing a class is time consuming, but at least one or two classes), organising a workshop, applying for funding, etc.
- finish your PhD in time (after three-four years, five are also ok, but eight or ten are way too long, if you have no excuse like children, a full-time job or the like)

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

I do not have the impression, that there is a typical career path – except for the necessity to do a PhD. I think there were typical career paths in the past. In Germany, if you wanted to become a professor, you tried to get the ‘travel scholarship’ of the German Archaeological Institute, which meant that you had to finish your PhD before the age of 30. Then you tried to get a post-doc position as an ‘Assistant Professor’ at the university, where you wrote a habilitation. Afterwards you applied for a full-professorship. If you wanted a permanent position in a heritage management department you spent semester breaks at excavations, you wrote your master thesis and your PhD thesis on a topic directly related to the cultural heritage department you wanted to become employed etc.

Fortunately, today, career paths are way more flexible, e.g. you can quit archaeology and come back again or even experienced post-docs who never had a permanent position can get one very late in their career.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

No, not so far.

Is there anything you want to add?

Do not give up too early. All colleagues I know, including me, had to face throwbacks like failed applications for scholarships, jobs or grants – sometimes several in a short space of time.

And be aware, that pursuing a career in academia is a very rocky road, you have to work hard, move a lot and combining a career in academia with having a family seems sometimes impossible (esp. for female researchers). However, my impression is that people who really want to pursue this kind of career – at least in most cases – will get their chance.

Dr. Suzie Thomas

Associate Professor (tenure track) Cultural Heritage Studies, University of Helsinki

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

It took four and a half years until I got a permanent lectureship after my PhD. I’ve since then taken a risk and moved to a tenure track post, which means my permanent position is not yet guaranteed until I pass the tenure track stage satisfactorily.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

I did my PhD at Newcastle University (UK), and my first job while I was still finishing my PhD and after graduating was with a heritage charity in England – the Council for British Archaeology in York. Then I got a post-doctoral position situated in a Criminology centre at the University of Glasgow (Scotland), although the project was very closely connected to archaeology issues. Finally on moving to University of Helsinki (Finland), I started off in Museum Studies and am now based in Cultural Heritage Studies. Still connected closely with archaeology, but officially a different discipline.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

My first post-doc was a great opportunity as it was a chance to get into academia after working in the third sector for a couple of years. I was not particularly happy in the post however due to difficult team dynamics and concerns for my long-term future, so I was delighted to get a position in Helsinki. During my time as a university lecturer in Museum Studies, I was 'bought out' for 18 months to work as a post-doc on an Academy of Finland project. This was a much happier experience, mostly due to the wonderful research team I was part of but perhaps also because I knew that I still had a permanent lectureship waiting behind the post-doc. Therefore, the job insecurity had been removed while I still had the chance to focus on a research project with minimal teaching duties for a period of time.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

Be patient – it can take a while to get a position, especially a permanent one. I would also say be prepared to move for your job, it is likely that an otherwise ideal position might be located in a place you would not have considered moving to otherwise. Obviously this is more complicated if you also have family to consider. I would also say that if you do not get an academic position at first and end up working somewhere else (as happened with me), this does not mean that you might not necessarily get into academia later on. However, it is also important to be realistic and to remember that there are more PhD graduates than there are academic positions, so have a 'plan B' that you would also be happy to do.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

This is hard to say as I still feel quite 'new' to academia myself a lot of the time! I guess it seems more these days that employers appear to appreciate candidates that have experience of working/studying in more than one institution, and perhaps in more than one country.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

I think I would have applied more actively for research fellowships in my own right. I think I was quite naïve about the availability of these options, in terms of where to find them or how to construct a good research proposal. If I had been more strategic I think I would have sought out training and advice for applying for post-doctoral research fellowships.

Is there anything you want to add?

Academia is quite a demanding and challenging career path that may take up a lot of your time and energy (despite many people vocalising that it should become a less competitive and tough sector). Try not to have a too rose-tinted view of what an academic career is like, as it probably is not for everyone.

Dr. Marc Vander Linden

Senior Lecturer in Archaeological/(Palaeo)Environmental Modelling, University of Bournemouth

How long did it take you to obtain a permanent academic job from the end of your PhD?

Seventeen and a half years.

Where did you do your PhD? Have you moved to another institution, country or discipline in order to pursue a career in archaeology?

My PhD was at the Université Libre de Bruxelles. I moved to the UK three years after my viva, initially for one year, then ended up staying there for professional and personal reasons.

Tell us about your post-doc experience. How many post-doc positions have you held? Do you ever miss being a post-doc?

Before my appointment as Senior Lecturer at Bournemouth University, I worked for one and a half years in commercial archaeology, then was employed for four years as postdoc on a University of

Leicester project; In 2012 I became Principal Investigator of a five-year European Research Council (ERC) grant hosted at University College London. In the last three years I have held short-term teaching positions at the University of Cambridge.

It was a bit touch-and-go with my career. There were times when I felt that it was too difficult, also at a personal level, to stay in archaeology. I also considered moving full-time to commercial archaeology. One major issue as a postdoc is commitment. Postdocs are under a lot of pressure to fulfil their end of the contract, and often cannot take on more personal projects, like starting an excavation. A permanent position gives more funding opportunities, but also the freedom to plan ahead and think of longer term research goals.

Do you have any advice for new PhD graduates who wish to pursue a career in academia?

There is a very difficult balance to find between what you want to do and what you have to do. Sometimes you have to grind your teeth and go for the strategic option that will bring you a career, in particular acquire the skills needed to progress. Be realistic, it is going to be hard. Don't lose your identity. Try to make the most of each job – try to see how it makes you a better archaeologist.

Is there a typical career path in academia, have you noticed if this has changed over the years?

My impression is that 30 or 40 years ago archaeological careers were more linear. The best PhD students would normally go on to become lecturers. Today that path has gone. It is not true that being resilient and going through three years of postdoc will automatically land you a permanent job. There is so much pressure from universities on generating big contracts like the ERCs that it has created a market for skilled postdocs. To be employable today you need to sell something very new. One option is to be at the forefront of a new scientific technique. The academic job market is especially tough for archaeologists with more traditional backgrounds or who are area/region-specific.

The downside of the 'mercenary path' in academia (as I call it) is that some archaeologists become super-skilled technicians and end up trapped in an endless cycle of postdocs, because they are the right person to do job 'X'. Archaeology is becoming more like physics or chemistry in this respect. From an institutional point of view, archaeology has not yet created jobs for this career profile. I am a bit concerned that the system is creating second-rank archaeologists.

On the other hand, there are archaeologists today, in the UK at least, who have worked in the commercial sector for a while and have managed to return to academia. There are useful skills to be learned in professional archaeology, where time is precious and research is seen as a luxury.

Retrospectively, would you make any different choices in your academic career path?

No, I don't think so. Maybe I would have tried harder to negotiate a permanent position when I had my ERC project in London. Intellectually the project did not belong anywhere else.

Is there anything you want to add?

People who go straight from PhD to permanent job do not necessarily have an easier ride. Colleagues I know who became lecturers early on, often put their own research on hold, and are now playing catch-up. Personally I only felt confident that I could be a good university lecturer five or six years ago, during my ERC, which gave me space to develop intellectually and grow into the role. Again the right balance need to be found between coherence and acquiring new skills.