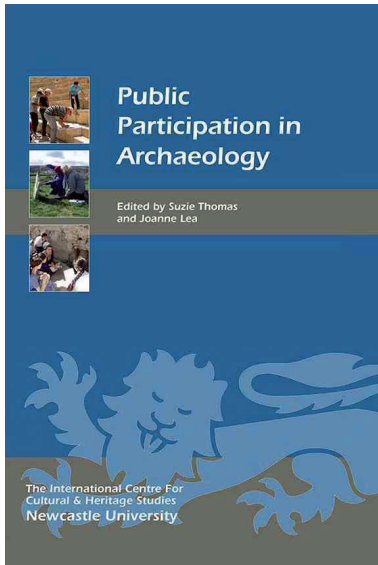


Suzie Thomas & Joanne Lea (eds.): *Public Participation in Archaeology*. Heritage Matters 15. Boydell & Brewer, Woodbridge 2014. ISBN 978-1-84383-897-5. 225 pp.



'Public archaeology' as a term achieved widespread use following Charles R. McGrimsey's book published in 1972 (McGrimsey 1972). Later works by for example Tim Schadla-Hall (1999), Neal Ascherson (2000) and Nick Merriman (2004) contributed to widening the definitions of the term. Today public archaeology is an established sub-discipline in, among others, the U.K. and Americas.

The anthology *Public Participation in Archaeology*, edited by Suzie Thomas and Joanne Lea, is a new contribution to this field of investigation. The book is part of the series *Heritage Matters*, a collaborative effort between the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University and the publisher, Boydell & Brewer. Several of the volumes in the series, including *Public Participation in Archaeology*, discuss the threats to which cultural heritage and archaeology are exposed to in a modern globalised world with its conflicts and declining economies.

Public Participation in Archaeology consists of 16 papers under four different headings; 'Pub-

lic Participation in Archaeology: International Models', 'Public Participation in Archaeology Through Education', 'Public Participation in Archaeology Through Tourism' and 'Public Participation in Archaeology Through Site Management and Conservation'.

The first section of the book approaches overarching models in relation to public archaeology and discusses different facets of the term illustrated by case studies from Great Britain, the Netherlands and Argentina. The multifaceted publics involved in archaeology and their diverse backgrounds draw the attention to the political component in public archaeological efforts.

The second part of the book focuses on public archaeology in education. The majority of the papers present successful public archaeological projects from Canada, Great Britain and the US. The chapter also includes a study from Jordan that functions as an interesting contrast. There, archaeology is perceived as a supplier of stories to the tourism industry rather than a discipline suitable for enhancing critical reflection among schoolchildren.

The Jordanian case study also functions as a natural bridge to the next topic: public archaeology and tourism. The examples presented span from mass tourism in Mexico to small-scale endeavors in Belize. One of the book's most fascinating papers is a case study from Turkmenistan, a former Soviet province – now an independent country ruled by a president. An example from the site of Merve illustrates how a political system governed by a top-down philosophy and limited internet access poses challenges to the outreach of archaeology. Case studies from such context provide important contrasts to the ones presented from more homogenous contexts in western Europe and the U.S., where public archaeology is firmly settled – they broaden the horizon and show the multitude of groups involved in or hindered from participation in archaeology. The example draws attention to the fact that public archaeology should not only be about who participates and how, but who do not and why.

Site management and conservation is the focus of the last section of the book, presenting studies

from Jordan, Turkey, Finland and Canada. Cultural heritage programs that encourage adopting monuments, and the impact of stakeholders to World Heritage listings, illustrates that public archaeology is not only a scientific sub discipline, but also just as much a practice or a way of doing archaeology.

The main strength of the book is its broad geographical scope with contrasting case studies, including both areas where public archaeology is well established and areas where the opposite is true. Studies from countries where public archaeology is debated or contested contribute to a more nuanced understanding of actors and groups that are involved in decision-making, as well as the mechanisms involved in making archaeology either public or non-public. The close connection between politics and the agendas of the decision-makers towards public archaeology, documented in several of the case studies, should have received more explicit attention in the book. To give just one example to illustrate this point: the term 'discourse' is mentioned in the book, but not investigated thoroughly.

A second problem with the anthology has to do with source criticism. For example, Sophie Lampe (2014: 57) concludes her case study from the Netherlands in the following way:

Both non-archaeologists and volunteer respondents want to participate in Dutch archaeology in different ways, but archaeologists are uncomfortable with losing control of the interpretation and decision-making process. According to my findings, they do not want to lose their hierarchical position. The problem is that by not introducing community archaeology in the Netherlands a less accurate archaeology will be created, but archaeologists want to teach the public archaeology as they see it themselves. Archaeology as a science in some ways differs from archaeology as it is perhaps viewed by the public. This is not a problem *per se*, but archaeologists need to acknowledge that the public's outlook and perception are different from their own. Only when people are fully able to take what they want form archaeology will they understand it better.

Lampe presents an interesting dataset, but the conclusion raises many questions. Can one achieve a more accurate archaeology by intro-

ducing more stories? What is the role of source-criticism? A story can be deemed solid within one discourse, but incorrect in the context of a second discourse. For example, an interpretation of a site by a local group may be archaeologically 'wrong', but does this mean that every aspect of that story must be integrated into the archaeological discourse? 'Anything goes' is not always an acceptable interpretation, and it is not necessary to include everything in every discourse to make it 'more accurate'.

Even so, the anthology presents a range of varied and fascinating case studies. As Lea and Thomas (2014: 4–5) themselves conclude in the introduction: '[...] this book represents a snapshot of where we are in the early 2010s'. The case studies are the central motif in this picture, but the theorising is perhaps a little bit out of focus.

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