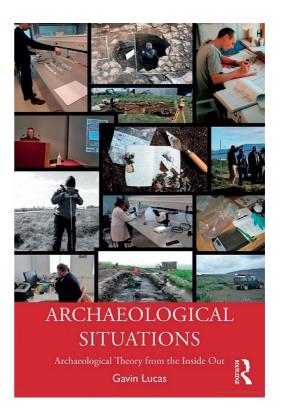


Gavin Lucas. Archaeological Situations: Archaeological Theory from the Inside Out. Routledge, 2023. ISBN: 978-0-367-56545-9 (hbk), ISBN: 978-0-367-56010-2 (pbk), ISBN: 978-1-003-09829-4 (ebk) 208 pp. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003098294

This textbook is aimed for undergraduate students. As I am not a student but a researcher, I have tried to write my comments from the pedagogical perspective. Lucas writes that the aim of the book is 'to introduce archaeological theory [...] at a basic level, that is, as a first- or second-year course, but through a very different approach. It merges theory with method and tries to teach theory as part of the normal process of learning archaeology.' As Lucas says as archaeologists do not do theory we should 'teach theory as archeology, not theory in archaeology'. For me the book became a means for self-reflection as a teacher. While reading, I reflected on my own thoughts about archaeology as a discipline and theory in archaeology and how these can be taught to students and how this textbook is suited for that purpose. The book succeeded in helping me elaborate on my own thinking in teaching archaeology.

As Lucas promises, the book does not repeat the history of archaeological theories. In the chapter Who's Afraid of Theory, the three paradigms of archaeological theory (culture history. new archaeology, processualism, and postprocessualism) are of course shortly introduced, and so are the ways in which archaeological theories have turned from -isms to exploring concepts such as gender or materiality. However, Lucas goes further and concentrates on describing the process of how theory has 'changed its colours and metamorphosized into something more dispersed'. He critically evaluates how archaeologists have defined theory and discusses the relation between theory and data. He further relates the assumptions on facts and data made by archaeologists with the nature of knowledge



as well as the nature of archaeological thought and practice. He clearly describes what theory is and how theory is no longer 'a tool used to assist archaeology but is part of the very fabric of archaeology itself'. To make his point he gives clear and relatable examples for an archaeology student. In the chapters he critically describes, defines, and argues how theory is embedded in thinking, decision-making, production of facts and archaeological knowledge while Doing Fieldwork, Making Records, Writing up, Building a Case, and Doing Research - which all are chapters of the book. He discusses thoroughly every aspect of archaeological research. In the last chapter, Defining Archaeology, Lucas critically reviews the major concepts of archaeology: the past, humans, and material culture. He also discusses heterogeneity of archaeology as science working within a trans-disciplinary setting.

The textbook reviews archaeological thinking and archaeology as a discipline and how these



have developed throughout decades and how they appear now for those working within or alongside Anglo-American archaeology. Lucas also brings in discussions – gendered field work, collaborative archaeology, Indigenous ontologies, and caring archaeology, to name a few – that have recently reminded us that the world can be seen differently from the way the most cited researchers portray. For the breadth of discussion, I would recommend the book to all the teachers and students of archaeology.

While reading one can experience Lucas's fascination over theoretic thought that is inherently part of scientific reasoning. Complex matters are clearly explained. The book is worth its title as it discusses archaeological situations and theory from the inside out. Every chapter offers a few useful exercises for the classroom and a thematically sorted list of further reading.

From the reader's perspective, this is not a book that you read in a couple of weeks, at least not if you want to reflect on the thoughts it represents. Personally, I would recommend that students keep the book with them and read it over a longer period. Indeed, for instance, the chapter on fieldwork will open up the discipline and the way of thinking for the first year student whereas chapters on writing and researching archaeology would go along well with the students who are about to start writing their thesis.

In the preface Lucas gives a taste of his own reflections on teaching theory and how difficult it is. Discussing archaeological thought and defining discipline has been and remains to be fundamental for all the archaeology students. The reason Lucas has taken the difficult task of writing the textbook is maybe found from his confession for loving archaeological theory. Further still, in Coda he finds troublesome the paradox that theory has been a driving force in archaeological research and yet it is difficult to define what theory is. I love paradoxes because in them lie innovation and discovery. We should not be afraid of them but rather explore deeper. In fact, this paradox was the very reason I chose to review the book. Lucas considers how to solve the paradox and opens a path for discussion on whether archaeology should get rid of theory and start 'theorizing'. This may be the right path but I also acknowledge that many paradoxes never get solved, and that is why they are so exciting.

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