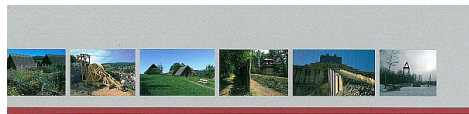


## REVIEWS



### **Integrating Archaeology** Science – Wish – Reality

Social Role, Possibilities and Perspectives of Classical Studies



Antonio VIZCAÍNO ESTEVAN  
Universitat de València

### **Integrating Archaeology** **Science - Wish - Reality** [Ed. Nina Schücker]

*Römisch-Germanische Kommission*  
ISBN: 978-3-00-039661-8  
254 pages

**Summary:** *The book is a compilation of papers presented in the Conference "Integrating Archaeology: Science - Wish - Reality" that took place in Frankfurt in June 2012, and offers different approaches on relations between archaeology and society. Experiences across Europe are shown in order to demonstrate how archaeology can become a useful tool in dealing with sociocultural, political and economic realities.*

It seems clear that, step by step, archaeologists are becoming more aware of their social responsibilities. Archaeology is not only about knowing and interpreting the past and sharing this knowledge with the audience. Archaeology has the chance to influence -even change- reality according to the needs, expectations and desires of different groups in our society. From this point of view, social value has become an important aspect in the theory and practice of archaeology, and many collectives, institutions and organisations are taking it into consideration. The papers in this book are a good example of the changes happening in Europe.

The book: As mentioned above, "Integrating Archaeology: Science - Wish - Reality" is the result of a Conference organised by the Roman-Germanic Commission (RGK) of the German Archaeological Institute as part of the project "Archaeology in Contemporary Europe: Professional Practice and Public Outreach" (ACE), a long-term project whose aim has been to understand and analyse the social significance of archaeology.

Right from the beginning, the book is clear about its main goal; the challenging title suggests the idea of *integrating* different approaches aimed at the *integration* of society and archaeology. Indeed, the central issue of the 44 papers presented in the book is the social role of archaeology and its potential in a wide range of fields, ranging from encouragement of multiculturalism to promotion of work integration, including consideration of the diverse meanings of heritage, therapeutic benefits of archaeology, cultural consequences of new media in public engagement, etc.

The book is divided into seven parts, each defined by a key topic, although boundaries among them are sometimes vague. The first part, "Community and the Public", gives some examples on different ways in which social implication can be understood and applied in archaeology. Most papers presented here talk about practical experiences: the city and its heritage as a tool for the integration of different groups and the construction of identities, as shown in Thessaloniki (Greece) and Saint-Denis (France); the mutual benefits of working with volunteers as an active part of a dialogue with archaeology, seen in the examples of Spessart-Projekt (Germany) and the excavation in Dünsberg *oppidum* (Germany); the role of an association in transferring knowledge and experience to post-graduates, with the particular case of *Archäologie in Rheinessen und Umgebung e. V.*; archaeology as a way to promote consciousness and critical attitudes towards reality, as shown in the interesting paper of Xurxo M. Ayán on the hillforts in Galicia (Spain); or the involvement of local communities in interpreting the past in order to enrich the value of heritage, either by collecting oral histories, as exemplified by the experience at Tell Balata (Palestine), or by accepting and integrating the diversity of contemporaneous meanings in the case of Pomeranian stone rings (Poland).

There are also two interesting theoretical reflections about public engagement in this first part of the book. On the one hand, the paper signed by Raimund Karl gives an overview of the concept of the 'public' and claims for the diversity of its meaning, criticizing how archaeologists have avoided, through different mechanisms, any attempt to compete with the 'official' vision of the past. On the other hand, Cath Neal's paper about community archaeology in the UK is probably one of the most interesting contributions in the whole volume. The author argues that

public engagement requires professionalism and reflective evaluation of its social, political and economic implications. She also states that there are doubts in the real degree of empowerment given to local communities and makes reference to the idea of passiveness and the creation of the illusion of participation. To some extent, this reflection invites us to think about the experiences presented in the book and the ways in which social engagement and participation are understood. And, not surprisingly, a wide range of possibilities can be found, from the more theoretical and distant to the more active and participative, depending, in some cases, on the predominance of scientific or social benefit.

Section 2 integrates, under the generic title of "Different Approaches", miscellaneous papers on topics such as living history, novels, digital reconstructions, temporary -and amateur- archaeologists, and virtual archaeology, as different ways and formats in approaching and understanding the past.

Part 3, "All ages", is devoted to the educative role of archaeology and heritage in relation to different age groups, mainly young and old people. Its possibilities are shown through some experiences implemented both in schools and museums. As far as schools are concerned, Peter Lautzas reviews the potentiality of archaeology in the German education system, while Miriam Sénécheau and Kostas Kasvikis provide two striking papers on how politics influence the image of the past in textbooks from France, Germany and Greece. Regarding museums, successful age-adapted programmes of the *Badisches Landesmuseum Karlsruhe* and the *LWL-Industriemuseum*, both in Germany, are presented.

Economic issues connected with archaeology are assessed in part 4 of the book. Generally speaking, archaeological heritage has been mainly considered as a source for tourism development, so that local groups have taken benefit from it in an indirect way. Without minimizing the importance of this approach (see Franz Schafranski's and Katrin Wunderlich's text about the project LIMES), some papers in this section show how archaeological projects can go further and promote work integration for unemployed citizens, offering training programmes to better facilitate the acquisition of a permanent work position. Good examples of this tendency are the *Archäologisch-Soziale Initiative Niederösterreich - ASINOE* (Austria), the *Gabreta Archeopark* (Germany) and the *Keltischer Ringwall Otzenhausen* project driven by the Terrex company (Germany).

At a more theoretical level, Maria Theresia Starzmann reflects on neo-colonialist practices of German institutions in the Middle East, manifested in the relationship between local workers and foreign archaeologists.

In "Excluded groups", the next part of the book, two different experiences expose the sociotherapeutic potential of archaeology when working with socially marginal groups. An archaeological project implemented in Creglingen (Germany) gave a group of young offenders the chance to take part in the reconstruction of a Celtic house, with the aim of improving their skills and contributing to their reintegration in society. Of particular interest is Rachel Kiddey's experience of approaching contemporary homelessness from an archaeological point of view.

Part 6, "Ethnic groups", offers insights into the role of museums as places for cultural dialogue. According to New Museology, museums have social and political responsibilities, so they must interact with their context and contribute to change realities. Dealing with multiculturalism is one of these responsibilities, and the papers presented here show different initiatives to this end: the European project "Museums as places for Intercultural Dialogue" (MAPA); the *Museum für Islamische Kunst* (Berlin) and its inclusive programme, promoting the diverse meanings in an exhibition of Islamic objects; or the initiatives of the *Museum für Kunst und Kulturgeschichte* (Dortmund), the *Reiss Engelhorn Museen* (Mannheim), and the *Kölnisches Stadtmuseum* (Cologne), aiming to integrate different cultural groups with a migration background. In all these projects, the people involved are not considered consumers but active participants in the construction of meanings and discourses, promoting the dialogue and, as Maria Pia Guermandi argues, trying to go from multiculturalism to interculturalism.

The last part of the book assesses the interplay between new media and social engagement. The papers in this section stand for the potentiality of Web 2.0 and Wikimedia projects in spreading knowledge and facilitating the dialogue in archaeology. Especially suggestive is Diane Scherzler's text "On humility, power and cultural change", where the author states that Web 2.0 requires an attitude change; it is not just a different way of communicating, but a different way of constructing and sharing knowledge, a cultural change that breaks the traditional top-down relationship between the experts and the audiences.

Conclusion: "Integrating Archaeology. Science - Wish - Reality" accomplishes an important goal: to illustrate with real cases the possibilities and limitations of socially oriented archaeology. It is, in this sense, a really good complement to theoretical work concerning public archaeology, and can serve as an inspiration for future projects. However, some limitations need to be considered. Leaving aside the division of the volume into different parts that, in my opinion, are not equivalent at all, I would have found it interesting if I had seen more papers in which the idea of integration would have appeared in a plural sense. For example, in the chapter "Integrating archaeology:

all ages”, experiences are focused on specific and separate age groups -mainly young or old people- and not on the interaction among these different age groups -and others. Only Bernd Werner Schmitt’s paper “Archaeology. A meeting of generations” expresses this idea.

This idea of integration should also be applied in other parts of the book, such as “Excluded groups”, and even others that are not considered in this volume. Most papers in “Ethnic groups” manage to do so, although sometimes the idea of dialogue is understood to be held between a particular ethnic group and the museum, and not among different ethnic groups working together in the museum, in the sense of multiculturalism that Maria Pia Guermandi claims for.

In other cases, what is missing is more variety in the experiences presented. Although the volume consists of 44 contributions on different topics, chapters such as “Ethnic groups” are quite homogeneous -what does not diminish the interest of every experience.

In my opinion, the main weakness of the book is the lack of examples of initiatives from below (Faulkner 2000). Most papers are focused on institutions such as museums, universities and other professional organizations. Without a doubt this is a positive development, since it implies a change of mentality in official institutions. However, it would have been interesting if the book also included examples of projects promoted by popular initiative, in collaboration with experts but leaving aside the top-down guidance. That is why I have found really interesting Cath Neal’s paper on the need to rethink public engagement and its consequences, and Diane Scherzler’s text on the challenges of the Internet on hierarchies and authoritative roles in archaeology. As the author asks at the end of her article, “*are we ready for a new understanding of power and dialogue?*” (239).

Nevertheless, it is important to point out that “Integrating Archaeology. Science - Wish - Reality” succeeds in showing how things are changing in archaeology, heading for a more socially engaged discipline and becoming more aware of its social, political and economic contexts. Principles of Public Archaeology -both in theoretical and practical spheres- are becoming common across Europe, with a very wide range of people and in a very wide range of settings; it demonstrates, without a doubt, that the integration of archaeology and society is moving, little by little, *from wish to reality*.

## References

Faulkner, N. 2000. Archaeology from below, *Public Archaeology*, 1, 21-33.