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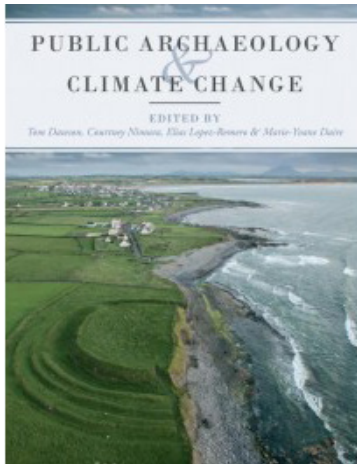
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Online Journal in Public Archaeology

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REVIEWS



Floor HUISMAN

Public Archaeology and Climate Change

[edited by Tom Dawson,
Courtney Nimura, Elías López-Romero
and Marie-Yvane Daire]

Oxbow Books, 2017
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185 pages

UN Secretary-General António Guterres recently called climate change “the defining issue of our time” (Doyle, 2019). The effects of human-induced climate change, including sea-level rise, planetary warming, drought, and an increasing number of extreme weather events not only affect socio-economic development and the environment, but also threatens many cultural heritage sites. Archaeologists and heritage professionals have started to address this issue, most notably through initiatives which engage communities and employ citizen science.

Public Archaeology and Climate change, bringing together a collection of papers presented at the 2015 Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists, provides examples of such approaches. It presents a range of case studies from across the world which examine the intersection of climate change studies, public archaeology projects and cultural heritage management strategies. Together, the papers not only demonstrate the scale of the issue we are facing, but also the strength of different public archaeology approaches. This makes this timely volume a useful resource for those involved in climate change studies, (public) archaeology or heritage management.

The introduction, written by editors Courtney Nimura, Tom Dawson, Elías López-Romero & Marie-Yvane Daire, discusses several key concepts, including climate change, heritage and public archaeology. It describes several major challenges to studying the intersection between these concepts, particularly various stakeholders' different priorities and understandings of heritage at risk; bringing them together is often difficult. Yet, as the summary of the papers in this volume demonstrates, there are numerous ways to find common ground, which helps manage and protect cultural heritage threatened by climate change.

'The growing vulnerability of World Heritage to rapid climate change and the challenge of managing for an uncertain future' discusses the different ways in which climate change impacts major World Heritage Sites and related intangible heritage. Adam Markham emphasises the need to monitor, understand, communicate and respond to these climate threats.

The subsequent chapters are arranged geographically, beginning in Europe, before moving to Iceland and Greenland and across to the USA and South America, and ending with case studies in Australia and Japan.

Chapters 3, 5, 6, 7 and 9, focusing on coastal heritage in England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland and France, discuss a number of large-scale citizen science projects in which communities and heritage professionals collaborated to monitor and record coastal sites threatened by rising sea levels, storm surges and coastal erosion. Through community-based training and outreach programmes, often in combination with mobile applications, these projects created a support network of community volunteers able to identify, report, monitor, survey and record vulnerable sites along UK, Irish and French coasts and foreshores.

'Improving management responses to coastal change' presents the interdisciplinary Arche-Manche project, in which palaeoenvironmental samples, archaeology, photographs and works of art—some provided by the public—were used to increase understanding of coastal evolution and inform future patterns of coastal change along the Channel and North Sea.

'Recovering information from eroding and destroyed coastal archaeological sites', on the other hand, outlines a crowdsourcing initiative in which members of the public engaged with researchers to monitor and record the effects of climate change on a small island in Spain, initiated after local communities urged heritage managers to undertake protection measures.

Chapters 10, 11 and 14 focus on the rich and well-preserved archaeological record in Greenland, Iceland and Alaska, which is threatened now that permafrost is starting to thaw. 'Climate change and the preservation of archaeological sites in Greenland' details the development of a project aimed at systematically engaging communities to support professionals in monitoring heritage located in vast and remote areas. In contrast, 'Gufuskálar: A medieval commercial fishing station in Western Iceland' describes how a creative outreach programme at a single site resulted in a successful collaboration between professionals and the wider public.

Community participation, which would allow local communities to assist with the protection of their heritage, is also on the agenda in Alaska, although there is no clear strategy yet, as detailed in 'Threatened heritage and community archaeology on Alaska's North Slope'. The US National Park Service, on the other hand, employs a very systematic approach, using the 'And-But-Therefore' (ABT) template to create storylines that rangers use to connect park visitors with cultural heritage and climate change ('Every place has a climate story').

Chapters 13, 15 and 17, focusing on California, Bermuda and Australia, describe projects in which researchers and heritage professionals worked closely with local—often native—communities concerned about climate change threats to their ancestral sites and intangible cultural heritage. In California, citizen scientists played a major role in a large-scale archaeological survey of the state's coasts, which successfully identified new sites and recorded known ones. In Australia, local rangers collaborated with professionals to develop a decision tool allowing them to identify, monitor, manage and address climate change impact on their ancestral sites. In Bermuda, local citizen scientists were involved in all aspects of

research, playing a key role in the design, implementation, analysis and application of the research data and findings.

'Archaeological heritage on the Atlantic coast of Uruguay' discusses how heritage management along Uruguay's coast is incorporated into nature conservation planning at coastal protected areas, while 'Perception of the relationship between climate change and traditional wooden heritage in Japan' outlines climate change risks to Japan's wooden historic architecture.

The many case studies in *Public Archaeology and Climate Change* clearly demonstrate the range of climate change impacts, the variety of landscapes affected, and the types of communities engaged, which require different community archaeology approaches. The chapters here outline when and how different approaches—ranging from top-down, outreach-style approaches, to middle-ground community engagement initiatives, and bottom-up, full collaborative involvement—can be used to identify, record and protect heritage sites at risk of climate change.

The systematic coastal surveys discussed in chapters 3, 5, 6 and 9 for instance, rely heavily on volunteers. This 'middle-ground' approach clearly works well in relatively small, densely populated European countries, but is less likely to succeed in larger and more sparsely populated areas like Greenland, Iceland or Alaska, where a more localised, site-specific approach may be more successful. In Greenland, for instance, an initially top-down but very active outreach programme quickly turned into a mutually beneficial two-way relationship, in which archaeologists shared their knowledge with the local community and vice versa.

The more successful engagement projects described in this volume took place in areas where local communities were concerned about climate change impacts to heritage, and urged professionals to help mitigate these. Often, this resulted in a more integrative, bottom-up approach. The crowdsourcing initiative in Spain described in 'Recovering information from eroding and destroyed coastal archaeological sites', for instance, was initiated by concerned local communities, who then played a key role in data collection. In Bermuda too, the local population already experienced climate change impacts, making it easier to engage

them in all aspects of research and shift authority from scientists to community members.

Indigenous communities are often equally concerned about threats to important ancestral sites, frequently resulting in successful collaboration. The coastal survey in California Archaeology ('Racing against time') for instance, relied heavily on collaboration with tribal communities to identify and record important sites. In Australia too, indigenous communities experienced the impact of climate change on their sites first-hand, creating an opportunity for a true, bottom-up approach, in which professionals collaborated closely with indigenous rangers to develop a decision tool that successfully combines western scientific methods with traditional indigenous cultural values.

Although most authors clearly demonstrate how they have engaged different communities successfully, there are a few chapters in this volume where community engagement receives less attention. In 'Improving management responses to coastal change', for instance, local communities provided some of the data used, but the nature and level of community engagement in this project remains somewhat unclear. Similarly, while 'Archaeological heritage on the Atlantic coast of Uruguay' does demonstrate the advantages of integrating cultural and natural heritage management, plans for promoting awareness of cultural heritage and archaeological site preservation are generally top-down and not truly interactive.

The ABT narratives used to engage people in US National Parks is not a two-way engagement either, but this may be the best approach in the context of the national parks, where the public is diverse and ever-changing. Finally, while 'Perception of the relationship between climate change and traditional wooden heritage in Japan' recognises the potential benefits of collaboration between scientists and the public in Japan, there is little information on how this may be achieved.

Despite many examples of public archaeology approaches which have successfully engaged communities, there are a number of reoccurring challenges faced by many of the authors in the volume, including the integration of work at different scales, administrative and legal restrictions to public involvement in

heritage management, and a lack of funding, which threatens the long-term sustainability of successful projects. Possible solutions to these issues, like integrating cultural heritage management with nature conservation (chapter 16), greater interdisciplinary collaboration (e.g. chapters 8, 15), the use of digital technologies (e.g. chapters 3, 5, 9), or exploring the commercial value of heritage sites (chapter 16) are found throughout the volume, but they are not explicitly recognised or discussed as such.

The future of public engagement in heritage management, which clearly has great potential, depends on finding workable solutions to the above issues, which requires the input and help of policymakers. Yet although the importance of engaging policy makers and making them more aware of climate change threats to cultural heritage is recognised, *Public Archaeology and Climate Change* unfortunately does not discuss in much depth how this may be achieved.

Overall, the book convincingly demonstrates how collaborative public archaeology initiatives may help us to identify, record and protect cultural heritage sites threatened by climate change. It is equally clear that many of the projects discussed have a positive impact on the communities involved, for instance by restoring or protecting important social and cultural knowledge, practices and traditions, which in turn strengthen cultural identity (e.g. chapters 10, 13, 14, 15, 17). This intangible cultural heritage, briefly highlighted in the introductory chapters, would have benefited from a more in-depth discussion as an important outcome and one of the main strengths of public archaeology.

Similarly, although several chapters recognise that cultural heritage sites provide an opportunity to educate people about the impacts of climate change in the past and present (e.g. chapters 1, 2), only a few (e.g. chapters 15, 17) outline how the knowledge gained during collaborative projects may help build the resilience of modern communities in the context of current climate change (cf. Van de Noort, 2013). These chapters show how the discipline of archaeology, despite focusing on the past, may contribute meaningfully to wider climate change debates, and how public archaeology in particular, provides different communities with a voice within these debates by engaging them in archaeological research.

In summary, this volume's main strength is its great variety of useful case studies which demonstrate the many ways in which professionals may engage different communities to identify, record and protect cultural heritage sites threatened by climate change. While it is important to recognise this variety, some approaches clearly work better than others. Moreover, several reoccurring challenges are mentioned throughout the volume, and although solutions are mentioned, they are not discussed in depth. Finally, public archaeology's potential for contributing to the wider climate change debate, for instance by helping to build communities' resilience, remains somewhat underexplored. The volume might therefore have benefited from a final, concluding chapter summarising best practices, discussing outstanding challenges and possible solutions, and outlining public archaeology's role within the wider climate change debate.

Yet even without such a discussion, which admittedly could become the topic of a separate publication, *Public Archaeology and Climate Change* is of great value to archaeologists and heritage managers alike. Its unique focus on the intersection between climate change and public archaeology demonstrates how initiatives at cultural sites threatened by climate change can truly make a difference, both in the protection of vulnerable heritage and the communities involved.

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- Doyle, A. (2019). The heat is on: Taking stock of global climate ambition. NDC Global Outlook Report, United Nations Development Programme and United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.
- Van de Noort, R. (2013). Climate change archaeology: Building resilience from research in the world's coastal wetlands. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

BLOG REVIEWS WITHIN VOL 9

There were no blog reviews during 2019

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Journal article

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Book

Demoule, J. P. 2007. *L'archéologie préventive dans le monde. Apports de l'archéologie préventive a la connaissance du passé*. Paris, La Découverte.

Edited book

Durbin, G. (ed.) 1996. *Developing Museum Exhibitions for Livelong Learning*. London, GEM.

Section in book

McEwan, C., Silva, M. I. and Hudson, Ch. 2006. Using the past to forge the future: the genesis of the community site museum at Aguablanca, Ecuador. In H. Silverman (ed.), *Archaeological site museums in Latin America*. Gainesville, University of Florida Press, 187-216.

Internet reference

United Nations 1992, *Agenda 21*. Retrieved on 29 January 2010 from WWW [http://www.un.org/esa/dsd/agenda21/res_agenda21_00.shtml]

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Work reports and reviews will not need to pass the peer-review process, but will be commented by the editor.

We will be publishing one volume per year (first trimester) and although we are willing to receive papers the whole year, full articles for next-year's volume should be sent before October in order to complete the process with time.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact the editor at: jasarqueologia@gmail.com

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