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Editors:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez & Elena Papagiannopoulou



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Online Journal in Public Archaeology

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REVIEWS



Xurxo AYÁN VILA

**Arqueológicas.
Hacia una arqueología aplicada**
[David Barreiro]

Bellaterra

ISBN: 978-84-7290-616-7

2013, 252 pages

Like a ridiculous narcissist, I will start this review writing about myself, before the author of the book. I know this probably does not fit the criteria of scientific objectivity expected in a scientific review, but it is useful to help the reader understand the context in which this new volume of *Arqueológicas* appears. I was a researcher at INCIPIIT (the Institute of Heritage Sciences at CSIC, Spain) in Santiago de Compostela from 1997 (then known as the Research Group of Landscape Archaeology) to 2012. During these years, I came to know first-hand the making of my colleague David Barreiro's PhD thesis, which he defended in 2005 and sets the basis for this book.

David, a technician with a position at INCIPIIT since 2006, started his research in the mid-90s, having a background in archaeology and geography. It was then that he encountered a still persistent problem in Spain concerning territorial planning, environmental preservation and Galician cultural heritage: the introduction of wind farms in mountains of high natural value. In this context, the author helped design a theoretical-methodological framework to conduct a correct environmental impact assessment of the then initiated Galician Wind Plan (Barreiro 2000; Criado et al. 2000). I must say this was a pioneer work in Spain. The first field test of this know-how was the wind farm of Caretón (Barreiro and Villoch 1997), where I had my first job as a trainee archaeologist. This experience set the basis for the improvement of the methodology available to the sector since the very beginning. Moreover, within

the framework of the postgraduate specialization courses held in 2000, 2001 and 2002, young archaeologists from Spain and South America conducted their training on different projects of environmental impact evaluation and correction across Galician wind farms.

All this fieldwork, and perhaps also its socialization side, made the author formulate the questions this book addresses. Those years clearly revealed two conflicting and intense situations: On the one hand, most of the academia did not acknowledge the university's involvement in public works (it was not considered research, good old days!). On the other hand, several political organizations and ecology groups opposed the energy policy promoting wind farms. Ethics, morale, corporatism, activism or just technical work; those were the dilemmas in a context of *modernization* (Barreiro 1997). The author faced this panorama and, as a result, wrote the first chapter of the book. From a critical archaeological perspective, inspired by the Marxist tradition and Bourdieu's theories about science, David describes the highs and lows of the three main archaeological stakeholders involved: commercial professionals (either self-employed or in companies), administration and academia.

This is one of the main values of this book, from my point of view, as it constitutes a strange self-criticism on the part of the academia (CSIC in this case, see Barreiro 2011). Moreover, the author not only diagnoses and critiques the situation, but also proposes alternatives by consensus (Barreiro 2001). David leads by example and has conducted several activities, such as a debate workshop for the commercial archaeological sector (Barreiro 2004), focused on the archaeological activity for the last 15 years (Parga Dans 2009).

Barreiro's proposal (complemented with another book in this collection; Criado 2012) focuses on the defence of archaeology as a "technoscience" (Echeverría 1999, 2005), that is to say a technique for the integral management of cultural heritage combining basic research and applied research (conceiving archaeology as social practice in the present). This applied archaeology is presented in Chapter 2, where an epistemological and axiological extension of archaeology is claimed as a tool for a complete socialization of archaeological heritage. Here, what is especially interesting for non-specialist readers is the concept of *technical rationality*, summarising in plain language the critical theories of authors such as Weber, Lúkacs, Habermas, Adorno, and Marcuse, that influenced the author's thesis.

Chapter 3 addresses the ethical dilemma that archaeology faces: being a tool to critique the system (capitalism, market, and predation) from outside of the system, or a tool to transform the system from the inside. Barreiro articulates a *critical pragmatism* on the latter (Barreiro 2003, 2012). As a practical example, he analyses its application to a technocratic fear, such as sustainable development. These pages offer an excellent overview of the origins, development and application of sustainable development policies in archaeological heritage. His comments on the different critical approaches articulated by authors over the past 25 years are remarkable.

Critical pragmatism is the option selected by Barreiro to act sustainably in a system characterised by the lack of planning, political authoritarianism, electoral optimization, personal interests against the collective, short-term benefits, territorial disruption, and dependence on foreign economic interests (147-8). These pages masterly describe the situation in Galicia before and after the economic crisis.

Chapter 5 shows the applied archaeology developed by Barreiro's research team - in and from Galicia, chosen to try rationalizing the management of archaeological heritage in the described context. Through different socialization projects, the author calls for a *chain of value* as the basis for integral management (Criado 1996; Criado and Barreiro 2010). This is one of the main contributions to archaeology from Spain, fundamental in recognised projects such as the restoration of the old cathedral in Vitoria-Gasteiz (Azkarate 2010) or the Galicia-Uruguay joint project in Tacuarembó (Giannotti et al. 2010).

These five chapters compose an honest book that does not try to dogmatize from ivory towers or coffee rooms, but gives a solid basis to the proposals of a two-decade research trajectory. In essence, it is more a proposal *from* than *towards* an Applied Archaeology. The strength in Barreiro's proposal lies in a correct critique to the system developed before the crisis (for a previous one see Vigil-Escalera 2011).

My only criticism is the late publication of a text that basically composes a PhD from 2005. Despite the effort to update the contents, some of the ideas still lag behind the changing reality of current archaeology.

Besides that, I believe that this book offers a very useful critical reflection, becoming a plea (paraphrasing Barreiro's admired Bourdieu) in defence of a committed archaeological knowledge.

This can be seen from the very first line and its radical truth:

Archaeology that only focuses on historical knowledge, and is unconcerned about its production, management and socialization, is insufficient archaeology.

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