



Editor:
Jaime Almansa Sánchez



www.arqueologiapublica.es

Online Journal in Public Archaeology

PRE-EDITORIAL

Towards a Public Archaeology

Jaime ALMANSA SÁNCHEZ, Editor
JAS Arqueología S.L.U.

It has been a while since I read for the first time the words “public” and “archaeology” together. I had just conducted a survey for my dissertation on the public image of archaeology in Madrid (Almansa 2006). I typed <Merriman> on the catalogue in search of the book “Beyond the glass case” (Merriman 1991) and suddenly “Public Archaeology” came to me (Merriman 2004).

While I was preparing the data for my dissertation I really thought I was discovering a new world, as that represented something totally new for me. Of course, there were some “Vikings” there before me.

Since I started working in Archaeology I had the feeling that things were going wrong outside, but academia was a bubble in the middle of nowhere. Archaeology was public, because it belonged to all us by law. And there was no discussion about that. Actually there was not much discussion about anything. Contract Archaeology was the devil destroying our “public” Heritage. People did not have the information they deserved because museums were bad at that. And of course, there was a clear line between Archaeology and the Public.

I was just another Iron-Age-boy, but this day I started to transform into a Public-Archaeology-boy (although I think the transformation started before I even realised). Since then, I started to delve deeper in the field mostly thanks to Amazon Ltd.

But this journal is not the story of my life (or not just that). AP: Online Journal in Public Archaeology has been born to complement the growing but still limited number of publications in the field.

Probably the main barrier for a better spread of Public Archaeology is the definition since it can be addressed from different points of view, and although its aim and scope are clear, I find it difficult to explain. Since Public Archaeology was presented in the 70s (McGimsey 1972), definitions keep being fuzzy and all-encompassing (Schadla-Hall 1999; Ascherson 2001; Merriman 2004). We have

started to discuss other parallel issues while many colleagues still do not understand some of the lines we follow and which is the common link for the latter. Why do we call this archaeology... “Public Archaeology”.

The aim of this journal is to explore every issue related to Public Archaeology, and so, I hope there will be an opportunity to discuss different topics such as a new concise definition or the theoretical background where Public Archaeology lies. Right now, I will use a broad but short definition that will set the editorial line of the journal. It probably falls in the same weaknesses I mentioned before, but still keeps the doors open in only four lines.

If Archaeology tries to create new knowledge from the study of past societies’ material culture, Public Archaeology intends to study all the relations between this Archaeology and present society, in order to improve the general understanding and cohabitation of Archaeology.

Hence we can highlight two main ideas: Theory and action.

Theory has probably become the most important worry in my life as daily situations put us in the dilemma of the right, the wrong and the expected. Some of the latest “Heritage Issues” happening in Spain are a medley of all kinds of interests from the cultural values to the deepest and darkest political and economical aspects. And that is probably the reason to think over legal issues and our position in the middle of these problems as the last line in the defence and enforcement of our Heritage. So far there are many works focused on theoretical issues in some way related to Public Archaeology, but very few analysing it as the core of their concern (Matsuda 2004, Moshenska 2009). As a result, Public Archaeology is growing in a vast field that lacks theory. And we cannot directly apply any archaeological mainstream without butts. That is the reason why theory will represent one of the two main editorial lines of the journal.

The second idea is action. A probable explanation of this lack of theory I have just addressed is that Public Archaeology is an action-based-discipline. Its development from the first community approaches has become a reference for its extended image. The idea is not wrong, but Public Archaeology goes further in action, probably as one of the tools for the reinforcement of archaeology (McGuire 2008). The extending model of heritage management based on capitalized contract archaeology is affecting every aspect of archaeology, from research to its public image. Here is where the second editorial line lies. Work reports are an essential way of knowing what we are doing, but other issues can be addressed in a larger scope.

The final aim is to be able to provide a wide reference for the basis and action in Public Archaeology. Furthermore, there are political, social and economical issues that are closely related to the field and can be addressed in the journal. But over all,

we can share our experiences and knowledge in an open forum that still respects the rules of academic research.

To sum up with this first message from AP Journal, I would like to thank you all in advance for your support and participation in the journal, and hope it will become an useful tool of engagement for us.

Now I would like to remind that you that the rules for contributing to the journal can be found in the section “How to contribute” and you can follow us freely on our web site, as well as on Facebook, Twitter and Blogger. Hope to see you all online soon.

And welcome to AP Journal.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Almansa, J. 2006. La imagen popular de la arqueología en Madrid. *Arqueweb* 8/1
- Ascherson, N. 2001. Editorial. *Public Archaeology* 1/1, 1-4.
- Matsuda, A. 2004. The concept of “the Public” and the aims of Public Archaeology. *Papers from the Institute of Archaeology* 15, 66-76.
- McGimsey, Ch. 1972. *Public Archeology*. New York, Seminar Press.
- McGuire, R. 2008. *Archaeology as Political Action*. Berkeley, University of California Press.
- Merriman, N. 1991. *Beyond the glass case: The Past, the Heritage and the Public in Britain*. Leicester, Leicester University Press.
- Merriman, N. (ed.) 2004. *Public Archaeology*. London, Routledge.
- Moshenska, G. 2009. What is Public Archaeology? *Present Pasts* 1, 46-48.
- Schadla-Hall, T. 1999. Editorial: Public Archaeology. *European Journal of Archaeology* 2/2, 147-158.

AP: Online Journal in Public Archaeology

Editor:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez

Email: almansasanchez@gmail.com

Assistant editor:

Elena Papagiannopoulou

Edited by:

JAS Arqueología S.L.U.

Website: www.jasarqueologia.es

Email: jasarqueologia@gmail.com

Address: Plaza de Arteijo 8, T-2, 28029 - Madrid (Spain)

Copyright © 2010 JAS Arqueología S.L.U.

ISSN: In process

Quotation:

Almansa, J. 2010. Pre-editorial: Towards a Public Archaeology. *AP Journal* Vol. 0, 1-3.

AP Journal is a new peer-reviewed journal devoted exclusively to Public Archaeology. It is freely distributed online on the Website:

www.arqueologiapublica.es

You can also follow us on:

Blogger:



<http://arqueologiapublica.blogspot.com/>

Twitter:



<http://twitter.com/APjournal>

Facebook:



<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=283718532317&ref=ts>