

10 years

Editors:

Jaime Almansa Sánchez and Elena Papagiannopoulou



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Online Journal in Public Archaeology

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FORUM:

CHATTING ABOUT THE FUTURE OF PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY

With the tenth anniversary of the journal we wanted to take a deep breath and look into the future.

This forum consists of short pieces from colleagues around the world that discuss general and specific issues regarding public archaeology in the coming years. We asked for an open format, trying to grasp a fresher approach than the one usual academic writing permits.

As with other forums in the journal, we will keep it open from now on in case any of you want to participate too. It is a good occasion to debate the current and coming role of public archaeology and we hope this selection of papers helps to foster it.

We originally invited 50 people to participate. However, these difficult times made it difficult for some to do so. Nevertheless, we have a good set of contributions that will be of interest to you all.

Enjoy it (and participate if you feel you have something else to say).



Laugh now,
but one day
we'll be
in charge.

BANKSY

FORUM: Chatting about the future of public archaeology

PUBLIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN NEPAL: NOW AND IN THE NEXT 10 YEARS

Neel Kamal CHAPAGAIN

In Nepal – and perhaps true in other South Asian countries as well, the term ‘public archaeology’ is not very frequently used among heritage professionals. Though it exists in limited use, largely the heritage practice including archaeology in Nepal is experts or authority driven. Perhaps the primary reason for this is the lack of a critical mass of archaeologists and broader heritage practitioners as well as a general lack of awareness among the public. There are disciplinary crisis situations prevalent across heritage related studies and practice areas in Nepal. However, with the increasing landscape of academic programmes and professional awareness among younger generations, we can be hopeful. Hence, I would expect that we will be able to create sufficient interests among students and younger professionals towards archaeology and heritage.

On the other hand, those of us who are in the field, are still pre-occupied with the ‘authorised heritage discourse’ – to borrow from Laurajane Smith, syndrome in our thinking and practice. Recently - thanks due to community groups and activists, some silver lining is observed. For example – in the post-2015 earthquakes reconstruction scenario, heritage activists and community groups have taken interest in restoration of important monuments (hence archaeologically important sites) like Kasthamandapa and Ranipokhari – among others, where they have demanded clarification on random restoration plans, and have been successful in demonstrating the wish and scope for public archaeology. Municipalities like Bhaktapur have been demonstrating keen interest on the matters of archaeology and heritage/monuments restoration. Though some of the patriotic approach may not resonate with the core idea of public archaeology, one can appreciate the state’ recognition of it as an important area – thus indicating a hope for receiving

some support from the state on archaeology and heritage. These incidents and a gradual increase of emerging young professionals make me hopeful that the seed of public archaeology has been sowed in Nepal, and we will see a significant change in the scenario of public archaeology in Nepal in the next ten years.

My major concern – as related to Nepal, is the lack of critical discourse on archaeology and heritage practice. Archaeology and heritage have so far been seen only as a state-led project. Until and unless it is a matter of concern for public, the idea of public archaeology is a distant idea. With the scattered evidences here and there, I am hopeful that we will be able to engage meaningfully in the broader ideas of heritage with a reasonable proportion of our public.

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