



Universiteit
Leiden
The Netherlands

Imprint of action : the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology

Boom, K.H.J.

Citation

Boom, K. H. J. (2018, October 16). *Imprint of action : the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology*. Sidestone Press, Leiden. Retrieved from <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/66266>

Version: Not Applicable (or Unknown)

License: [Licence agreement concerning inclusion of doctoral thesis in the Institutional Repository of the University of Leiden](#)

Downloaded from: <https://hdl.handle.net/1887/66266>

Note: To cite this publication please use the final published version (if applicable).

Cover Page



Universiteit Leiden



The handle <http://hdl.handle.net/1887/66266> holds various files of this Leiden University dissertation.

Author: Boom, K.H.J.

Title: Imprint of action : the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology

Issue Date: 2018-10-16

Introduction

Imprint of Action studies the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology. It does this through the analysis of survey data from three case studies – ‘DOMunder’, ‘You(R) Archaeology’, and ‘Invisible Monuments’. The analysis and interpretation of case study data is based on a newly created methodological framework which finds its roots in the broader culture and arts sector. Imprint of Action is the first large-scale study on the exclusive subject of sociocultural impact in the archaeological field and, as such, is explorative in nature; it provides unique insights in the workings of interaction and participation in archaeological events, and answers calls for the open sharing of such research data.

This research takes place within the European NEARCH research project, in which the Faculty of Archaeology of Leiden University is a partner. A follow-up of the European ACE-project¹, which aimed to promote contemporary archaeology at a European wide level, by emphasizing its cultural, scientific, and economic dimensions, and its diverse interest for the wider public, the NEARCH project aims to “explore the various dimensions of public participation in contemporary archaeology and bring to the field, which is strongly influenced by economic and social developments in society, new ways of working and collaborating”.² The NEARCH project is financed by the European Commission through the ‘Culture programme’ framework. The focus within the project lies heavily on the interaction with and the involvement of (local) communities and larger audiences, and on *new ways* of engaging with these. As a result, case studies within the project have a societal and interactive nature; two of these are used within this research, the You(R) Archaeology case study (chapter 4) and the Invisible Monuments case study (chapter 5). By incorporating two NEARCH case studies, this study forms part of the projects’ deliverables in that it provides insights into the activity effects and outcomes. Furthermore, by connecting sociocultural impact research with Sustainable Development (see later), it also provides a theoretical analysis for one of the major research topics within the NEARCH project; ‘Archaeology in a changing economy: towards sustainability’.

In order to contextualize the research, this introduction chapter will begin with a section on the value of cultural heritage and archaeology (1.1). This section explains

1 See <http://e-archaeology.org/doing-archaeology/projects/ace-archaeology-in-contemporary-europe-professional-practices-and-public-outreach/>

2 See <http://www.nearch.eu>

how the public values cultural heritage and archaeology and how this valuation is captured as a process. Furthermore, it describes how, in the cultural heritage management sphere, a shift can be observed away from expert and academic values towards more societal values, and how this relates to, and is dependent on, a similar shift in international developments, as well as development policies.

The second section (1.2), will deal with the theory behind the analysis of sociocultural impact. It will explain how values and impact are often used synchronically, but are, in fact, two distinct concepts which are intrinsically connected. It will also discuss the history and applicability of sociocultural impact analysis in the cultural heritage sector and how inspiration from the broader culture and arts field resulted in the creation of a methodological framework for the current research.

This methodological framework is elaborated on in section 1.3. An existing framework from the arts sector in the United Kingdom, developed by François Matarasso (1997), is used as a basis for the methodological basis of Impact of Action, combined with inspiration from studies similar to this one, but smaller in scale and focused on either a specific benefit, or audience. Combining the aforementioned aspects led to the formation of a list of sociocultural research subjects, or 'headers', and the identification of several indicators which were translated into survey questions.

Section four will summarize the research question and objectives. These are partly based on the objectives and deliverables of the European NEARCH research project³, in which this study is situated, and partly based on the previously mentioned lack of data needed to increase our understanding of the sociocultural impact of archaeology.

A brief survey of the contents of this thesis, is presented in section 1.5.

1.1 The value of cultural heritage and archaeology

Cultural heritage can be defined as a broad concept consisting of a variety of ways in which people deal with their past, including past event, folklore, physical objects, mythology, literary associations, and places (Ashworth *et al.* 2007). As the way people interact with their past changes over time, so does the concept of cultural heritage, hence no unambiguous nor absolute definition of cultural heritage exists (Skeates 2000). In this research, the definition for cultural heritage as mentioned in the Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005) is used, which states that "Cultural heritage is a group of resources inherited from the past which people identify, independently of ownership, as a reflection and expression of their constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge and traditions. It includes all aspects of the environment resulting from the interaction between people and places through time".

Currently, the main interest in the value of cultural heritage lies in its growing role in today's society (Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015; Blessi *et al.* 2014; Ander *et al.* 2013). The importance of cultural heritage, which includes archaeology, is recognized as serving an important role in European societal development (Council of the European Union 2014a). There has been a shift away from the predominant economic paradigm towards an emphasis on the sociological aspect of cultural heritage and its impact on society (Scott 2006). This is part of a

3 <http://www.nearch.eu>

growing pressure on governments to deal with sociological aspects which are mainly based on rapid social change; social cohesion, citizenship, and connectedness are but a few spearheads politicians use to emphasize the importance of the building of a collective trust (Scott 2006). The Council of Europe's Faro Convention, for example, sees cultural heritage as "a reflection and expression of [peoples] constantly evolving values, beliefs, knowledge, and traditions" (Council of Europe 2005). In a recent communication from the European Commission to the European Council titled 'Council conclusions on cultural heritage as strategic resource for a sustainable Europe' the societal importance of cultural heritage is emphasized. The document "presents a holistic approach to cultural heritage and recognizes it as a resource for enhancing the social capital in Europe" (Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015, 52), and can be seen as the European Union's reply to the Faro Convention (Florjanowicz 2015). However, this broad and embedded view was not yet considered in the 1960's and 1970's, when archaeological heritage management became an established practice through the creation of various legal and advising documents. Archaeological heritage was, fueled by the narrow view of the 1964 Venice Charter, considered to be strictly a group of significant heritage objects with their own intrinsic historic and aesthetic values. In this time, conservation was primarily focused on the preservation of physical remains through interventions and legal protection (De la Torre 2013), and awareness raising (McGimsey 1997); the authentic nature of heritage material was considered to reside in its material (Viñas 2011). Some decades ago, as a result of many discussions on the innate character of heritage and its constituent values, it has become apparent that archaeological heritage conservation was not an isolated practice, but a matter of societal importance. The Australian ICOMOS Burra charter, for example, stresses the importance of social values attached to cultural heritage and the ICOMOS Nara document⁴ acknowledges and pushes the importance of cultural diversity in relation to cultural heritage authenticity (ICOMOS 1988 and ICOMOS 1994, respectively). Both these and other charters and texts lead to a better understanding of the various values involved in archaeological heritage management and thus, of its importance for society.

The exact societal relevance of archaeological heritage, while generally accepted and stressed as important, is hard to grasp and demonstrate, and as a result forms an interesting. The importance of archaeological heritage for society is best understood through a concept called the values-based approach (Lafrenz Samuels 2008, Van der Linde 2012), in which a statement of significance is made based on the various values stakeholders' attribution to an archaeological site. This assessment is an important tool in making informed decisions on the conservation and investment planning of an archaeological site (Mason 2002). We now understand that because of the subjective nature of archaeological heritage, which is "dynamic, and related to the aims and goals of actors in the wider social context" (Van der Linde 2012, 33), values are always attributed, multiple, mutable, incommensurable, and often in conflict (de la Torre 2013, 155). However, based on the recognition that access to cultural heritage is considered a human right, we can also view cultural heritage as 'inclusive' (Fairclough 2009); a notion included in the objectives of this PhD research. Randal Mason (2002) provides

4 The Nara Conference on Authenticity was held in Nara, Japan, from 1-5 November, 1994

us with a comprehensive insight into the types of values attributed to archaeological heritage by the various stakeholders involved. He divides these values in economic and sociocultural; this typology will be used in the current study, with the latter value as the main focus area.

This dissertation investigates the sociocultural impact through public activities in archaeology as they provide a perfect setting, being organized to connect the public with archaeological heritage. In doing so, they encourage participation and interaction, which engenders sociocultural impacts, seen in for instance education (Lewis 2014), skill development (Henson 2012), and critical thinking (Rubertone 2007). Both the concept of Public Archaeology and Community Archaeology revolve around public participation but the former is broader, including all layers of the public and provides sociocultural aspects such as social involvement, pride, and health, while the latter describes the intersection of exclusively (local) communities and archaeology and provides aspects such as community empowerment and social inclusion (Nevell 2013). Important to note, however, is the fact that many public involvement activities are open to, and often visited by, people from different layers of society, and can even be targeted to a specific audience in the hopes of generating certain interest – values are not exclusive to one group of visitors. Following this line of reasoning, public activities form a potentially perfect melting pot of the societal values mentioned above and as such are a relevant and valuable opportunity to analyze sociocultural impact.

1.2 Theoretical framework

Understanding how and why these values are attributed to archaeological heritage is essential in gaining an understanding of the relation between people and heritage. However, this relation does not only flow from people to heritage. On the contrary, interacting with archaeological heritage also has the potential to create an *impact* in people's lives. Where values are “morals, principles, or other ideas that serve as guides to action (individual and collective)” (Mason 2002, 7), impact can be understood as “those effects that go beyond the artefacts and the enactment of the event and have a continuing influence upon, and directly touch, people's lives”; it is a “dynamic concept which pre-supposes a relationship of cause and effect. It can be measured through the evaluation of the outcomes of particular actions, be they an initiative, a set of initiatives forming a policy, or a set of policies forming a strategy” (Landry *et al.* 1993). This means that both value and impact describe the interaction between people and heritage, but have two distinct vantage points. They do, however, influence one another because they are two sides of the same ‘coin’ (Bollo 2013). Indeed, value and impact are intricately connected (Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015, figure 1.1).

However, Pendlebury *et al.*, note that impact is not generated automatically, it can only be created when it is actively pursued (2014). In their study on built cultural heritage in the United Kingdom as a force for social inclusion, they note that cultural heritage should be seen as an “opportunity space in which social regeneration occurs” (Pendlebury *et al.* 2004, 12). This presupposes that heritage is a conduit, which has the potential to create impact and that clear objectives and definitions have to be in place for this impact to occur (Pendlebury *et al.* 2004). Therefore, Impact of Action

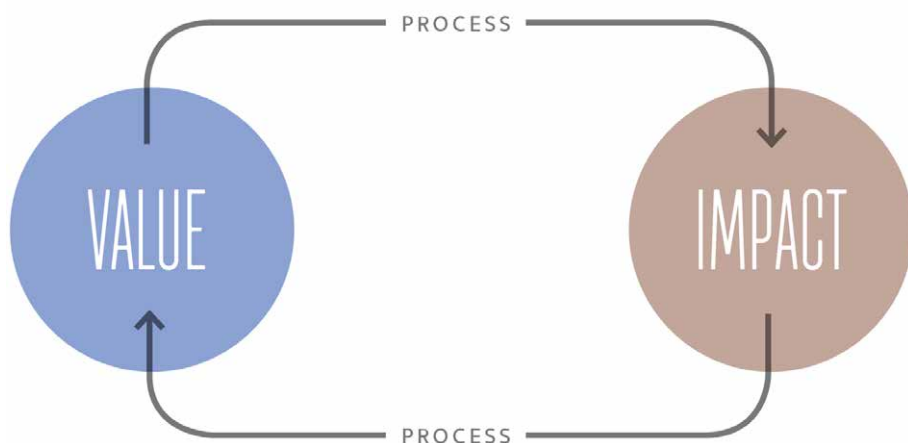


Figure 1.1: The relationship between value and impact as sides of the same ‘coin’. Source: Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015, 53.

studies the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology; the notion formulated by Pendlebury *et al.* forms an important hypothesis against which research outcomes can be tested.

The heritage sector is increasingly being held accountable for the spending of public funds and is pressured by local governments, international policies, and funding institutions to contribute to societal issues. Answering these challenges from a heritage perspective might be challenging, but I would argue that it is this shifting perspective that creates a platform for the sector to show its impact on society. This is in-line with Chatterjee *et al.*’s (2009), observation that the heritage sector can potentially contribute to mental and general health care. It also links to the goals and objectives of the NEARCH project, which aims “to highlight the societal component of archaeology, considered as the expression of a wider community rather than a restricted academic domain” and wants to “foster archaeology as a means to socially involve citizens and develop a sense of European citizenship” (NEARCH 2013).

It is argued that cultural heritage impacts four domains; culture, society, environment, and economy; the overlap of these domains is synergized in the concept of Sustainable Development (Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015). The focus of this study lies in the former two aspects, as these provide a link to the growing pressure from governments to deal with rapid social change (Scott 2006), and their increasing expectations for the heritage field to help tackle these societal shifts. Indeed, some studies have already proven that cultural and archaeological heritage can be utilized as a ‘sociocultural tool’. Pendlebury *et al.*’s study shows that cultural heritage can be used to enhance social inclusion (Pendlebury *et al.* 2004), while Fujiwara (2014) and Van den Dries *et al.* (2015) show that cultural heritage boosts community participation. Furthermore, studies have shown that cultural heritage contributes to Quality of Life (Maer *et al.* 2016; Clayton *et al.* 2014), and Well-being (Blessi *et al.* 2014; Fujiwara *et al.* 2014; Ander *et al.* 2013, 2011; Fujiwara 2013; New Economics Foundation 2009). According to McLoughlin *et al.* (2006), the significance of cultural heritage’s social value can be studied, expressed,

and proven by impact studies. These can show the advantages, but also the disadvantages of interacting with a particular heritage site, and outcomes can be extrapolated for future endeavors (McLoughlin *et al.* 2006).

The difficulty of studying sociocultural impact is that these intangible benefits are hard to express. This is different from, for instance, maintenance costs, which are much easier to assess (McLoughlin *et al.* 2006). Tested methodologies such as Stated and Revealed Preference Techniques, Contingent Valuation, and Travel Cost Analysis merely capture the economic value and benefit of cultural heritage, but in general fail to incorporate intangible benefits into the equation (Burtenshaw 2014).

To overcome the issues mentioned above, a new framework was created for this research. It is based on the work of François Matarasso, who studied the social impact of the arts sector in the United Kingdom (1997). In his study, titled '*Use or Ornament? The social impact of participation in the arts*', Matarasso showed that arts can contribute to social policy objectives (Reeves 2002). His work is still cited today (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016; Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015; Taylor *et al.* 2015) and is relevant for this research because it deals with much of the issues described previously. Matarasso used Generic Social Learning outcomes for the creation of an indicator bank, which consists of a list of 50 social impact indicators, based under 6 different so-called headings; Personal development, Social cohesion, Community empowerment and self-determination, Local image and identity, Imagination and vision, and Health and well-being (Matarasso 1997). These headers and indicators are used as a template for this research, but are translated to connect with the goals and contexts of the three case studies, a step necessary for an accurate analysis (Bollo 2013); no template exists that can be consistently used across all situations (Reeves 2002).

1.3 Methodological framework

To pursue the research objective of Impact of Action, it was decided to create a cumulative and commensurable dataset based on Matarasso's work discussed above. In general, impact assessments within the cultural heritage field use a combination of methodologies in order to gather both quantitative and qualitative data (Bollo 2013), what Mason (2002) calls a 'toolbox approach'. While some researchers use a set methodology with 'hard' indicators, such as Social Return on Investment, or Cost-Benefit-Analysis, this research makes use of both online and face-to-face surveys to gather data. A combination of the two approaches allows for the use of specific advantages. Most notable advantages for online surveys are greater speed and lower costs (Duffy *et al.* 2005), and a more visual, flexible, and interactive workflow (Taylor 2000); interviewees of face-to-face surveys tend to answer more directly and clearly, they are less inclined to answer 'don't know' or 'neither/not sure' (Duffy *et al.* 2005).

For the creation of a methodological framework, the procedural steps put forward by Bollo (2013) were followed;

1. Defining goals, outcomes, and targets;
2. Identifying indicators;
3. Developing and executing a methodology for collecting data;
4. Interpreting;
5. Improving planning and evaluation.

As impact should be measured against the aims and goals of an activity or institution (Bollo 2013), defining case study goals and targets is the first step in the creation process. As stated, three case studies are included, and for each research goals and activity goals are posed. The former is based on the overall research goals of this study; the latter are goals set by the initiators of the case study activities; for DOMunder, this is Foundation Domplein 2013, for the You(R) Archaeology case study this is the Instituti per I Beni Artistici Culturali e Naturali (IBC), and for the Invisible Monuments case study this is the Aristotle University of Thessaloniki; the latter two are partners of the NEARCH project. As a second step, both sets of goals are combined in order to create a list of applicable indicators, based on the previously discussed framework of sociocultural impact created by François Matarasso (1997). Based on the North East Regional Museums Hub Tool⁵, these indicators are then translated, via a 5-tier process, via the broader, theoretical first tier, step by step, into case specific survey questions (figure 1.2). After this process, the survey questions were included in the specific surveys and reviewed by the activity initiators.

The questionnaires included open and closed questions and had both a qualitative and quantitative focus. Open questions were included to provide interviewees with the opportunity to annotate some answers, thereby providing qualitative comments for quantitative questions. Closed questions were used for demographic data and for questions only having a select number of relevant answers. These answers were mostly based on a 5-point Likert-scale – a very common tool in sociological studies and surveys which uses a graded scale for answers (Likert 1932).

The surveys of the three case studies provided different, yet comparable, sets of data which were analysed with various techniques, such as bar charts, weighted averages, and statistical tests, in their corresponding chapters; the discussion chapter includes a section in which the case study data is compared and extrapolated.

1.4 Research objectives and deliverables

The objectives described below are based on the research question of this thesis; **what are both the depth and breadth of the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology?**

The main research objective is to show both aspects of the sociocultural impact of public activities in archaeology, and to discuss their implications for the field. This objective suits and follows the contemporary shift in EU policy and governance to emphasize the subjective and more qualitative aspects of society in order to create a better understanding of its current and future functioning (European Commission 2009; 2010). It also follows the discourse change in the cultural heritage field and its goals to better study the societal values and impacts in order to validate public expenditure and to show the value of cultural heritage. Furthermore, by creating a commensurable dataset on the sociocultural impact of archaeology, this research addresses the acute need for more data, which is as yet lacking (Crossick and Kaszynska 2016; Cultural Heritage Counts for Europe Consortium 2015; Burtenshaw 2014, 2013; Van den Dries 2014; Nevell 2013; Heritage Lottery Fund 2010; Labadi 2008; Selwood 2002).

⁵ <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/generic-social-outcomes/additional-gso-resources>

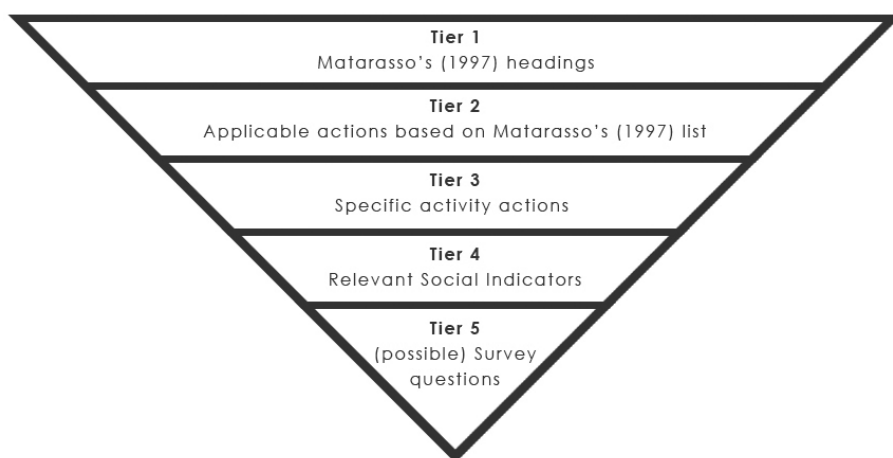


Figure 1.2: Translating Matarasso's headings to relevant indicators, and finally into case specific survey questions. Scheme after the North East Regional Museums Hub Tool (source: <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/generic-social-outcomes/additional-gso-resources>).

Because there currently is insufficient understanding of how to measure and interpret sociocultural impact, and this study is the first to analyze sociocultural impact in archaeology on a commensurable scale, this research is explorative in nature and as such, results are indicative rather than absolute. However, by providing both case study data based on a unique framework, and commenting on the practicalities of performing impact research, this dissertation provides the heritage sector, politicians, and fellow researchers not only with a comprehensive insight into sociocultural impact measurement in the cultural heritage sector, but also with a practical tool for future research.

1.5 Contents of this thesis

Chapter two covers both the theoretical and the methodological frameworks on which this research is build. It provides an extensive discussion on the valuation process of cultural heritage and how a shift can be noted away from historic towards more societal values, in both the heritage management, and European policy fields. The chapter covers the workings of sociocultural impact in cultural heritage and these are connected to project's goals and contexts. The former topics lead to the creation of a framework, providing this research with an operational foundation.

In chapter three, the first out of the three case studies is discussed. Called 'DOMunder', this case study deals with a unique visitor experience in the Netherlands and analyses the sociocultural impact of that activity for three different audiences; visitors of the DOMunder activity, residents living close by, and volunteers working at DOMunder as tour guides. This case study functioned as a pilot project while the NEARCH projects were still under construction; both methodologies and practical approach were tested in the field. Results will show that sociocultural impact among these audiences varies, and that this might be dependent on the context of the activity, as well as the reasons for visiting or participating.

Chapter four covers the You(R) Archaeology case study. This case study is based on the creative contest held in 2016, which was part of the NEARCH project. The contest invited European citizens to provide their own creative ideas about archaeology and what inspires them by submitting artworks such as photographs, paintings and drawings, and videos. Participants were questioned in order to gain insight into the sociocultural impact their participation in this activity engendered. While in this case only one stakeholder group was present (the participants), differences in impact can still be noted which seems dependent on a variety of factors, including age and time investment.

Chapter five covers the third case study; Invisible Monuments. This activity was held in 2016 in Thessaloniki, Greece, and revolved around hidden or obstructed monuments being made 'visible' for the public in order for them to both appreciate these historical artefacts and turn them into places of living memory. By combining digital social media and mobile phone technology to raise public awareness, and combining this with a walking trail, visitors were provided with a unique public activity and experience. Both tourists and residents of Thessaloniki joined this activity; results show that by providing a local context and setting, visitors feel more connected to local archaeology. It also reveals a connection between how strongly people are impacted in their knowledge, and the positive impact on personal emotions, such as happiness and usefulness.

Chapter six covers the discussion. It is divided into three sections; the first section provides a comparison between the three case studies and discusses both the similarities and dissimilarities in corresponding data. It also connects case study outcomes with data derived from literature studies and similar case studies in order to better understand both the outcomes and their implications. It then discusses how sociocultural impact can be housed under the concepts of Quality of Life and Subjective Well-being, both gaining importance in cultural heritage management and in European policy making, especially in relation to social and economic development. The last section discusses how sociocultural impact, through the fields of Quality of Life and Subjective Well-being, contributes to Sustainable Development.

The final chapter (seven) summarizes the relevant conclusions which can be drawn from this study and which are valuable to future research and policy making.

