

STRONGER TOGETHER: INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATION IN HERITAGE MANAGEMENT¹

As I write, the largest and most destructive bush fires in recorded history encircle Australia. NASA (<https://climate.nasa.gov/>), not notorious for exaggeration, reports that September Arctic sea ice is now declining at a rate of 12.85 percent per decade; sea levels have risen around 0.25 metres over the past 130 years, leaving millions of people vulnerable to flood risk or loss of land. Landscapes have been transformed by modern interventions; to cite only one example, the Appalachian Mountains have been radically affected by mining. The Environmental Protection Agency in the USA estimates that valley fills have buried 2000 miles of headwater streams, and destroyed 1.4 million acres of native forest. «Rubble fills valleys to the depth of six hundred feet. Blasting and bulldozing have lowered ridges and mountaintops by as much as six hundred feet as well. A steep terrain with sharp contrasts between high ridges and low stream-cut bottomland is becoming a broken and strewn average of its original topography» (PURDY 2019, 49-50).

We are acutely aware of the impact of the Anthropocene. With this awareness of the fragility of landscape has come an increased concern for the fragile landscape of the past. This manifests itself in at least three ways, all reflected in this volume. First, we seek to mitigate the impact of our current activities on existing archaeological sites. Second, we look for indications of fragile landscapes in antiquity, and third we search for the ways that humans in the past have responded to this fragility and potential or actual catastrophe.

The study of ancient climate change is now advancing at some pace. It is increasingly clear that over the long period of the Roman empire, changes in rainfall and temperature had an overall impact on fertility and disease. In the late Iron Age and into the Republican period, these changes seemed to have improved agricultural fertility in central Italy, and are perhaps not coincidental to the rapid development of that area. Conversely, towards the end of the Roman period, there is some evidence for falling productivity (HARPER 2017; MANNING 2018).

These macroscale changes and developments need to be understood at the micro-level of landscape use and change. The real impacts include desertification, flooding, malaria, hillsides denuded by deforestation, landslides,

¹ I am very grateful to the organisers of the event which gave rise to this volume for inviting me to contribute. The event occurred whilst I was a Visiting Professor at the University of Milan Statale, and I thank Prof.ssa Giovanna Bagnasco Gianni and the Dipartimento di Beni Culturali e Ambientali for their kind hospitality.

increased marginality and so on. In each ecological niche, without the buffering of modern industrialized and globalized production, advanced distribution networks and relatively guaranteed living conditions which prevail in many of the countries once part of the Roman empire, life was more balanced on the edge of disaster.

At the same time, parts of the Roman empire shared some of these so-called modern characteristics. Specialized agriculture, Roman roads, and redistribution networks such as the *annona* were part of the mechanisms by which both the inequalities and exploitation for many, and the security for a few, characteristic of globalization, can be identified as persistent themes in human history (JENNINGS 2011; VERSLUYS, PITTS 2014; DE HAAS, TOL 2017; HODOS 2017).

However, this encourages us to look harder at the consequences of failure. On the one hand, it seems clear from surveys that site discontinuity is relatively common (this was the subject of a workshop at the British School at Rome, to be published shortly as *BIELLA in press*). In what Horden and Purcell identified as patterns of intensification and abatement, we should expect to see variation over time (HORDEN, PURCELL 2000). Moreover, the work of survey tends to show the landscape as more full than we used to expect, so we can assume attempts to maximise potential return. Even catastrophic events like the Vesuvian eruption were followed by resurgent agriculture in areas outside the lava fields (FREDERIKSEN 1984, several updates to the *Carta Archeologica* have been published as supplements to the *Atlante Tematico di Topografia Antica*. A new synthesis is much needed).

Two papers in this collection in particular demonstrate the very diverse nature of the archaeological landscape. The Tarquinia Project is revealing the nature of the settlement pattern of an important central Italian city across an extended plateau. One of our real challenges is to understand the nature of urban landscapes. How full were they? Were they indeed always unified? Or were discrete centres really very discrete? Was it anticipated that they would fill any fortified enceinte? Were planned towns, like Falerii Novi for instance, different from older towns? And if settlement did fill the urban landscape, what happened in the later empire? How did abandonment show itself? The Tarquinia Project has made a huge step forward with the establishment of a town plan, demonstrating it to be one of the relatively rare untouched Etruscan urbanscapes. More is surely to come.

The project at Adulis in Eritrea reveals a different trajectory. Here we have a site dependent on water, the seasonal watercourse of the Haddas. Yet this water is also a threat; flooding was always a danger and it may have eventually destroyed the site. What brought the people of Adulis and the neighbouring villages to risk such precarity? Were they driven to it by need? Or were they so attracted by the benefits that the disadvantages were always outweighed?

When we look at our determination to build on flood plains, or dwell under the shadow of volcanoes, we can hardly condemn the foolhardiness of the people of Adulis. Instead, their resilience reminds us of the largely unwritten history of Africa before the modern period (FAUVELLE 2018).

Landscape archaeology is now entering a fascinating moment. It has traditionally addressed issues such as fragility, continuity and change, which are now of considerable topical interest (BARKER, MATTINGLY 1999-2000). We must be careful not to drive it into a corner of banal “relevance”; nothing would do a greater disservice to the decades of careful study of landscape variation and the picture of infinite complexity which has emerged, than to seek to reduce it to a simple prophecy for our own time. Yet the obstinacy, resolve, innovation, adaptability and intelligence that sustained centuries of land use in sometimes highly marginal contexts is reminiscent of what we see, and no doubt will see more of, in our own times. As Vigotti says, marginal landscapes can be both fragile and powerful. Inevitably, this makes the failure of the human experiment all the more troubling. Whether one is a catastrophist or a gradualist, the late Roman empire and the post-Roman period appears as an unnerving reversal of a period of relative stability (the two sides of the argument are well represented by WARD-PERKINS 2006 and WICKHAM 2009). For this reason, it is important to tack the gains and losses. Did the loss of Roman central control necessarily diminish the prospects for all, or were there advantages in returning to more local conditions of production, and flatter hierarchies? (JONGMAN, JACOBS, KLEIN GOLDEWIJK 2019, 138-150). Here landscape archaeology is helpfully teaming up with other scientific disciplines, palaeobotany, osteoarchaeology and so forth, to provide multi-proxy analyses of these complex phenomena.

Where landscape and other archaeology is hugely impactful is on cultural heritage management. It is clear that the absence of heritage and conservation activity has negative impacts on landscapes and society. In an ideal world, where heritage and conservation are taken seriously, we find a mutually beneficial cycle. The presentation of archaeological material in an accessible and attractive way drives tourism, increases income to local areas, provides jobs, improves well-being and in turn supports further archaeological research. This is a sort of holy grail, but it is in fact relatively rarely achieved. There are always downsides. The massive tourist numbers at Pompeii bring their own hazards and challenges. Increased willingness to travel has also increased our global carbon footprint. Sustainable tourism is not necessarily profitable in the short term. And often it is not local stakeholders who benefit the most, but travel companies, international hotel chains and so forth. Distributing the benefits of tourism to the most famous sites so that they reach other sites too is controversial and difficult (BILLE LARSEN, LOGAN 2018).

This volume gives several examples of important conservation activity. At Aswan, and in Algeria, Armenia, Sultanate of Oman, Iraqi Kurdistan

and the Philippines, international teams have used archaeological discovery and scientific advances to preserve difficult and fragile environments. The important lessons are collaboration and dissemination. Piacentini, Pozzi Battaglia and Abd El-Moneim give an excellent account of one such project. A topographical survey mapped 226 tombs from the 7th to 6th centuries BCE to the 3rd century CE. Targetted excavation permitted the recovery of material damaged by tomb robbers. Conservation work has begun, using a full array of modern techniques. The article represents part of a publication strategy, and is shared with the Egyptian Ministry of Antiquities. In due course we will hope to see the valorization of a site near an important mausoleum to the third Aga Khan, who died in 1957.

What is central to all such projects is the importance of the engagement of local stakeholders. The Pyu cities, such as Sri Ksetra, discussed by Vigotti, are still inhabited. Armenia is a country which is seeking to grow its profile as a tourist destination as well as a site for cutting-edge research (EVANS 2018). The most successful projects work with the grain of local economies and priorities. They are also international. If we now know that we need to bring many techniques to understand the ancient world, so we need to utilize all our skills and capacities to protect it. The list of threats to heritage covered in this volume include everything from violence to water damage, from tomb robbing to mechanized agriculture, and even tourism itself. Successful heritage projects protect fragile landscapes by understanding them in all their complexity.

Marino's powerful and helpful essay brings all these issues to the fore, and his insistence on building communities and recognising local skills all ring true to me, as I reflect on the successes of the British School at Rome's engagement in Herculaneum. That project brought a multitude of partners together; it created a community in Herculaneum and it strengthened the community of Ercolano (the Herculaneum Conservation Project, and the town it has helped to sustain, is brilliantly described in WALLACE-HADRILL 2012).

These are all projects where respecting the past sustains the present and offers hope to the future. We have seen that studying ancient fragility can help us reflect in an informed way on our own fragility, but also on how much greater is the pressure we are now exerting on our world. We have also seen how caring for the fragile past can build community. These are examples of how heritage brings us together, for the past is a shared responsibility. Respect for ownership, and support for sustaining the past, are common duties. What we lose if we do not care for our past is a way of being connected to each other across borders, as much as it is a loss of connection to our specific histories. Indeed it is arguable that given the challenges we face, losing shared ground is perhaps the greater loss.

As I write this, ICOM and ICOMOS have felt the need to remind all parties of armed conflicts of the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of

Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. In that convention, States Parties agree that «damage to cultural property belonging to any people whatsoever means damage to the cultural heritage of all mankind, since each people makes its contribution to the culture of the world» (ICOM 2019). It is a tragedy that this needs to be restated, but a reminder that the past is fragile. By its nature, the past is moving further away from us in time; but it is also all around us, as the shared ground on which we stand and air we breathe. The lesson, which is as terrifyingly visible in the destruction of untouched rain forests in the Amazon and Australia, as it is in the destruction of Palmyra, is that what has lasted for centuries can vanish in a moment.

Cultural heritage can never repair the losses inflicted by time; we are mortal and that is a condition of not only our individual existences, but of our collective experience. But what it can do, when it is done well, when it is done with respect for local conditions and with international ambition, is to create communities and new memories. It is the new present which will become the past. This volume offers case studies in the hope that future generations will believe that we tried to make the understanding of the past a condition of our present and a gift to the future. And enunciating that hope as a vital part of our shared humanity, as this volume does, is, today, a grave and solemn duty.

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