Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities,
(eds.) Bryony Onciul, Michelle L. Stefano and Stephanie Hawke,
(Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2017)

Annette B. Fromm

Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities, (eds.) Bryony Onciul, Michelle L. Stefano and Stephanie Hawke, (Woodbridge, Boydell Press, 2017) ISBN 1783271655

Annette B. Fromm
Ph.D, Independent Scholar, USA

Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities is a collection of eleven chapters investigating different approaches to heritage and community and six interviews with leaders in different fields related to heritage and/or museums and community work. Interesting interpretations of the terms 'heritage' and 'community' are raised in the six interviews while at the same time they set the stage for diverse approaches to community and the nature of community engagement discussed in the chapters. Most of the interviews include the same questions. Each of the speakers was asked to reflect on their involvement with community engagement and heritage and provide a definition of heritage. According to urban geographer John Tunbridge, heritage is *...the selective use of historical resources for contemporary purposes...* (p. 47). Shatha Abu Khafaja, professor of archaeology at the Hashemite University in Jordan, equates heritage with the past, specifically with archaeology.

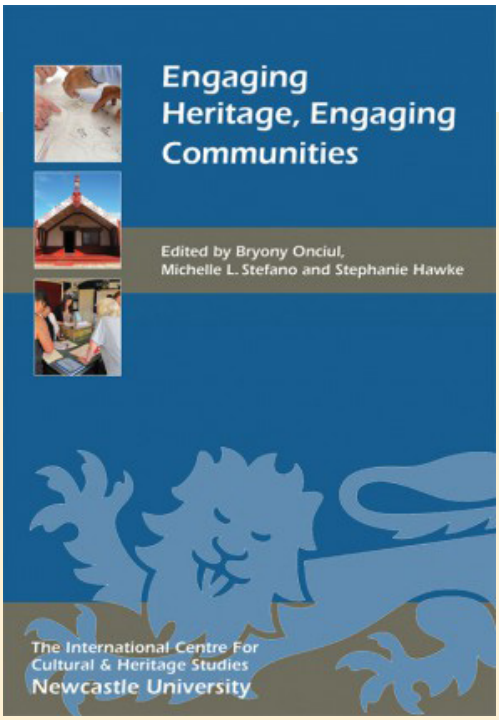
Other issues addressed in the interviews include whether community engagement is meaningful, the role of the Association of Critical Heritage Studies, the speakers' relationship to museum work, and what the future holds. Some interviews also include questions tailored more specifically to the individual speakers. For example, Ashley Minner, a Native American community-based artist, is asked

about her work with indigenous heritage in the Eastern United States. Two museum professionals were included in the interviews: Evita Busa, from Puerto Rico, and Conal McCarthy, Director of the Museum and Heritage Studies programme at Victoria University in New Zealand.

The late Gregory Ashworth refers to *the widening gap between theory and practice, the thinkers and the doers* (p. 52) in his interview. He continues to define the doers as those involved with the *creation, management and interpretation* ... (Ibid.) without questioning why they do what they do and what consequences follow their activity. Ashworth recognises that the thinkers are *talking to each other* (Ibid.). This discussion is significant to the chapters in the book which have been written by them both and thus express distinct approaches to heritage, community, and engagement.

The chapters in section one address 'Engaging Concepts'. Bernadette Lynch, a British museum professional, addresses the current concept that museums should be places of collaboration with their audiences and with their neighbours in order to play a stronger role in society. In so doing, museums should be venues not only of enjoyment or happiness, but of questioning and struggle (p. 26). Perhaps the concept that anthropologist, Philipp Scorch, writes about is established curatorial approaches and research into museological practice in the South Pacific. He recognises that community engagement (involvement) has been paramount in museum practice in this region. Elizabeth Pishief's chapter also draws on work in the South Pacific and identity. She addresses the archaeologists working with the Maori to map significant indigenous locales. The dichotomy between the different points of view of the two groups comes to the fore when considering the sites with emphasis on identity, ownership and empowerment (p. 64). Closing the section, Helen Graham considers research into participation rather than engagement, particularly from the point of view of power and political practice.

Two chapters comprise section two, 'Engaging Creatively'. Gemma Tully reports on an exhibition project at the Saffron Walden Museum in 2013-2014 in the U.K. which drew upon what she calls *collaborative archaeology, collaborative museology, and collaborative curation.* Artists working with the museum involved local school children to organise the exhibit, 'Re-Imagining Egypt'. The artists led the school children in workshops with original



artifacts. The exhibit then included the interpretive artwork which was exhibited alongside the historic items.

Chapter ten moves to a creative mapping project in the eastern United States. Michelle L. Stefano and Nicole King write about how maps of a rich industrial area which no longer exists were created through extensive interviews with community members and former workers. Through this intensive process, intangible cultural heritage in the form of *the knowledge sets, values, beliefs, expressions and memories* (p. 122) in an industrial region was used to recreate the tangible. Both chapters address distinct ways of engaging different facets of community to reach the goals of both the museum and the mapping project.

Chapters in the final section of the book address 'Engaging Challenges'. The topics covered by the authors who contributed to this section include battlefields in the U.K. and their management, the safeguarding of a traditional dance as an eco-museum, subaltern sports, and issues related to digitalisation. Differences of interpretation of engagement and community arise in these chapters. In her interview in the previous section, Native American artist, Ashley Minner, presents one point of view of community engagement, *an invitation from a community for an outsider to come in and work with its members* (p. 140). Sikora's discussion of battlefields finds that there exists a multiplicity of communities with interests in these sites. Stefano's analysis of the Rapper Dance, which originated in the U.K. and went through a number of changes in format and participants and is now found across the Atlantic, illustrates how, through its natural life, the community safeguarding and supporting this art form has changed. The final two chapters by Hartley and Lythberg, et al, open the doors further to the definition of audiences and community and the extent of engagement with the growth of social media and digital applications.

Engaging Heritage, Engaging Communities contributes to the growing literature about heritage and community. It is the twentieth in the 'Museum Matters' series published by the International Centre for Cultural and Heritage Studies (ICCHS) at Newcastle University. Questions raised from the different and varied case studies include basics such as what is heritage, what is community, and what is engagement? Also central to the volume is the role of two players in this game, as Ashworth put it, the 'doers' and the 'thinkers'. This thin volume provides much to think about.