



Geoethical implications for geoarchaeology. The Laacher See and AD 536 case studies

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Environmental catastrophes represent profound challenges faced by societies today. Numerous scholars in the climate sciences as well as the Humanities have argued for a greater ethical engagement with these pressing issues. At the same time, several disciplines concerned with hazards are moving towards formalized ethical codes or promises that guide not only the dissemination of data but oblige scientists to relate to fundamentally political issues. With its starting point in the recently proposed geoethical promise, this paper reports on two case studies of how past natural hazards have affected vulnerable societies in Europe's past. We ask whether cases of past calamities and their societal effects should not play a greater role in public debates and whether geo-archaeologists working with past environmental hazards should be more outspoken in their ethical considerations. We offer no firm answers, but suggest that geo-archaeologists engage with debates of human-environment relations at this interface between politics, public affairs and science. We argue for greater communication between the human and natural sciences and further suggest that outreach institutions such as museums – both natural and cultural – could and perhaps should play a key role in staging such engagements.