# discussion article

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## Can an archaeologist be a public intellectual?

*Sarah Tarlow and Liv Nilsson Stutz**

In the contributions that follow seven archaeologists, of different backgrounds and working in different ways and places, attempt to answer the question 'Can an archaeologist be a public intellectual?' This discussion follows a special forum, sponsored by this journal, held at the European Archaeologists' Association annual conference in Helsinki in 2012. The participants in that forum were Åsa Larsson, Layla Renshaw, Ghattas Sajey, Audrey Horning and Thomas Meier, who was unfortunately unable to offer his contribution for publication. The published discussion is supplemented by contributions from Cornelius Holtorf, Fredrik Svanberg, Nathan Schlanger and Jaime Almansa Sánchez. We hope that this special section captures some of the spirit of lively debate that characterized the forum.

The term 'public intellectual' is a slippery one and it has been noted that there are few people around today who would choose to describe themselves that way. People have their own ideas about what a public intellectual is – or even whether it is a meaningful term at all. By way of introduction we would like to offer a few thoughts in that direction. First, by 'public intellectual' we mean something more than a person who popularizes their subject or interprets specialist knowledge for a general audience in a way that gains them popularity and recognition with the general public. A television presenter who fronts a programme about the academic area in which they are also a professor is not necessarily a public intellectual. Second, a public intellectual is more than somebody who is a brilliant thinker. There has to be an attempt to talk to wider publics and to broader issues than the normal parameters of academic discourse enclose. Intellectuals have powerful minds. They can reason, criticize, articulate. But this alone does not make a public intellectual: there must also be an active, outward-looking component, a desire to engage and influence, to shape events or at least to challenge the way that their society represents events by introducing new perspectives in a way that influences the public debate.

One of the key problems we faced in framing this discussion was to distinguish the archaeologist who is a public intellectual from a person

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who is a public archaeologist. The journal's editors were keen to encourage our panellists to explore not simply how best to engage the public about archaeology, or communicate archaeological knowledge, but how one's expertise in a particular field might enable one to participate in public debate and discussion on wider issues.

Some definitions of intellectuals include:

> [Intellectuals] must belong to an intellectually autonomous field, one independent of religious, political, economic or other power … [and] they must deploy their specific expertise and authority in their particular intellectual domain, in a political activity outside it (Bourdieu 1989, 99).

> someone whose place it is publicly to raise embarrassing questions, to confront orthodoxy and dogma (rather than to produce them), to be someone who cannot easily be co-opted by governments or corporations, and whose *raison d'être* is to represent all those people and issues that are routinely forgotten or swept under the rug (Said 1994, 11).

> someone whose claim to attention rests … on a mastery of words and ideas (Skidelsky 2008).

> intellectuals who opine to an educated public on questions of … political or ideological concern (Posner 2002, 2).

> One might do worse than to say that an intellectual is someone who does not attempt to soar on the thermals of public opinion. There ought to be a word for those men and women who do their own thinking; who are willing to stand the accusation of 'elitism' (or at least to prefer it to the idea of populism); who care for language above all and guess its subtle relationship to truth; and who are willing and able to nail a lie. If such a person should also have a sense of irony and a feeling for history, then, as the French say, tant mieux. An intellectual need not be one who, in a well-known but essentially meaningless phrase, 'speaks truth to power'. (Chomsky has dryly reminded us that power often knows the truth well enough [see Chomsky 1967].) However, the attitude towards authority should probably be sceptical, as should the attitude towards utopia, let alone to heaven or hell. Other aims should include the ability to survey the present through the optic of a historian, the past with the perspective of the living, and the culture and language of others with the equipment of an internationalist (Hitchens 2008, 46).

We have been accustomed in recent years to hearing economists, sociologists, political scientists, philosophers and natural scientists contributing ideas and opinions through public platforms, with the intention of shaping debate and policy. But could archaeologists make this kind of contribution? Archaeology has high visibility in the media and tends to have strong support from an interested public. However, the narratives we are expected to provide to the public are generally about the past, and rarely about the present. Many archaeologists even feel that the popularity the field holds with the public ironically contributes to stacking the odds against their making a contribution to a debate about contemporary issues, since the expectations of what an archaeologist is supposed to do are simply so clearly

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articulated in the minds of both the media and the public that it requires an extra effort to challenge those assumptions and make a contribution beyond the staked-out territory of the past.

In theory, archaeologists should be able to take the long view and to question (or promote, depending on one's political position) the natural, inevitable or fixed nature of inequalities, ethnicities and conflict. This would appear to be a strong position from which to challenge popular understandings of the world. Yet the voices of archaeologists are rarely either sought or heard in these contexts. Archaeological expertise is often considered irrelevant to contemporary questions despite the fact that the past is frequently mobilized in the construction of current identities, ideologies and political projects and has played an essential role in nationalist and colonialist mythologies.

Can we make our voices heard? Should we make our voices heard? (The history of archaeologists moving into the political sphere is not an entirely glorious one.) Do we have anything worthwhile to contribute to current debates? Can archaeologists operate powerfully enough to make interventions in the public sphere, and why has this not happened more often? Finally, what are the risks and dangers of such interventions? Are there lessons to be learned from cases where such interventions have occurred, sometimes with deleterious results?

In recent decades, public archaeology, as a movement within the field, has gained increasing momentum, to the point of constituting a strong current within contemporary archaeology. However, this form of engagement does not exactly take the form of public scholarship in the way we are seeking to discuss here. What we are interested in here is not just the promotion of archaeology to the public, or the involvement of the public in making heritage decisions, but the ways in which the archaeologist's particular involvement with the life of the mind, the world of ideas, could make a contribution to local, national, regional or global political and cultural life. 'Public archaeology' also has a tendency to be directed more specifically toward engagement with particular and often targeted groups. While we value this effort and direction very highly and consider it to be fundamental for the place of archaeology in the contemporary world, we are looking for public engagement in a more general sense of the term – one that more generally influences the contemporary political and cultural debate and engages also the broad issues in today's world, issues that lie beyond the territory of the past that we, in collaboration with media and the public, have carved out for ourselves. What we ultimately want to ask is: does our expertise in thinking and articulating ideas give us authority in public life? If so, how can we use it?

The term 'intellectual' is not always one of approbation. Different European countries have different histories with regard to the esteem given to intellectuals. France, for example, has a strong tradition of public intellectuals, people who were happy to intervene in public life, and whose recognized intelligence and education gave them authority. The French people, in our stereotypes at least, enjoy debate and discussion of ideas. By contrast, the English treat their intellectuals with much more suspicion, or even derision:

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'intellectuals' are, in the popular English mind, removed from the real world, impractical, abstract, utopian, even 'too brainy', 'eggheads'. In other parts of Europe, like Scandinavia, intellectuals are often implicitly understood as people engaged with the creative arts (artists, film directors, writers), while academics are seen as operating in an ivory tower with less of a platform for public debate, and thus likely to be insufficiently relevant or interesting to be given a voice in that public debate. Of course, these are overdrawn stereotypes: it is possible and in fact normal within heterogeneous societies to use the term 'intellectual' in both positive and negative ways.

Our panellists all have their own ideas about what constitutes a public intellectual and whether an archaeologist can be one – or should aspire to be one. But there are surely things about our intellectual discipline which could fit an archaeologist for the role. Maybe, above all, the intellectual has breadth. Enough geographical and political understanding to take a distanced and critical perspective on the fashionable opinions, hysterias and rhetorics of the day. Enough historical breadth to be aware of the range of possibility and the way that long-term trajectories are playing out.

When *Prospect* magazine published a list in 2005 of a hundred leading public intellectuals it included no archaeologists, although there were a few historians (*Prospect*, 115, October 2005). A new list published three years later had no more archaeologists or historians on it. The large number of Muslim clerics near the top of the 2008 list, headed by Sufi Turk Fethullah Gülen, suggests a rather uneven demographic composition – as one might predict of any list compiled primarily through the use of that well-regarded research method the online poll.

An editorial in the journal wondered whether the success of an orchestrated campaign to influence an Internet poll might indicate that the model of a public intellectual as somebody who influences with their words, ideas and willingness to speak out is out of date. Nowadays, mused Nuttall (2008), influence is perhaps more easily attained through personal networks and the Internet than through institutions and publications. However, if the role of public intellectual comes down to the ability to mobilize influence, rather than the quality of critical thought deployed, is there still a place for the public intellectual in the style of Emile Zola or Alexander Solzhenitsyn?

It is undoubtedly the case that the channels used by mid-century intellectuals to make their voices heard are less available and less significant now. Public broadcasters now make far fewer high-level discussion programmes, preferring game shows, soap operas and reality television. Non-specialist journals which deal with complicated matters of culture, politics and thought generally have tiny circulations. And perhaps the wider public is less willing to engage with difficult ideas, or complex debates, than in the past. It could be that our stereotypes of what constitutes a public intellectual constrain our ability to recognize minority and diverse kinds of intellectual. The fact that fewer than 10 per cent of the names on *Prospect*'s list were women's may reflect a preferred style of communication, or the relative difficulty of getting women's voices heard, or the reduced political and cultural authority of women's voices in many parts of the world, including Europe. Or may it be that a female novellist, for example, is less likely to be considered an authori-

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tative voice on wider intellectual questions than a male one? The discussion in this issue of *Archaeological dialogues* aims to open up some of these questions.

The forum explicitly aimed at giving a platform to archaeologists who have gone beyond desire or reflection about these issues and actually engaged in different ways with the public and political spheres to take the role of a public intellectual. For that reason, some of the contributions (Larsson, Svanberg) focus on the 'how' in the title, and provide instructions on how actually to reach out and create a place in the public eye and mind. Other contributors take on the difficult distinctions, and the important places of overlap, between public archaeology as a strong subdiscipline within the larger field of archaeology on the one hand, and the voice an archaeologist can have as a public intellectual on the other. Finally, several of the contributors to this discussion offer their own experiences of working in politically charged situations where archaeology is often at the heart of contested and controversial histories and are much invested in the construction of communitarian, sectarian or personal identities. Of particular note in this respect is Sayej's description of the work of the Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group, Renshaw's reflections on the role of forensic archaeology in revising recent Spanish history, and Horning's discussion of the reification of difference in the heritage of Northern Ireland. As we write this introduction (early winter 2012), riots on the streets of Belfast about when and where a flag is flown remind us that these are contexts where cultural developments can have serious and immediate effects.

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## To be or not to be? Public archaeology as a tool of public opinion and the dilemma of intellectuality

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### Abstract

Stating the value of archaeology for contemporary society is a very difficult task hardly undertaken by archaeologists. Work with a contemporary record directly linked to local communities, and the approach of public archaeology, have helped to bring society and archaeology closer together. However, the role of a public intellectual goes beyond archaeology, delving into current social worries. Is it possible to play this game from archaeology? The multiple and complex relations between archaeology and society open the door to participation in public debates, but we stand to lose our essence. We face a Shakespearean dilemma, a choice between having an influential voice in the present, or just an expert opinion.

### Keywords

public archaeology; contemporary society; opinion; influence; social media; public intellectual

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*I sentence you to be exposed before your peers! Tear down the wall!*

Pink Floyd, 'The trial' (*The Wall*, 1979)

## Introduction

In times of crisis, budgets are indiscriminately cut and culture is usually one of the first victims. In political discourse, this situation answers to the classical misconception of utilitarianism (Mill 2012, 14), which sees utility opposed to pleasure and so culture as useless. However, as politics are not ruled by logic, there is always a need to offer qualitative values for everything. Moreover, the commoditization of daily life transforms these values into an economic category that also affects archaeology.

In this context, archaeology has been reduced to an oriented service that fills some legal obligations and the whims of the public. Research remains in the background, or entrenched in countries where commercial archaeology has not yet appeared. Meanwhile, some sectors of academia do not realize the seriousness of these matters hiding behind the scientific wall and are disconnected from reality.

According to Lonely Planet, one of the mainstream tourism advisers worldwide, many of the most-visited places are in some way related to heritage/archaeology (www.lonelyplanet.com). From Stonehenge to Las Vegas, the 'archaeo-appeal' defined by Holtorf (2005, 150) is the reflection of a market that we did not directly open, where alternative archaeologies took control. This has distorted the image of archaeology to a point where John Carpenter, George Lucas or Ridley Scott have become spokesmen of our discipline, following the path of classic authors like Lovecraft (Frigoli 2010) or the mysterious imagination of other moderns like Sitchin or Von Däniken (Fagan 2006).

What do people know about archaeology? There are not many published surveys, but those we do have are interesting (e.g. Ramos and Duganne 2000; Almansa 2006). There is an evident interest in archaeology, but its image among most interested people answers to wrong conceptions. However, basic concepts like 'past' and 'heritage' remain clear. It is from them that we can find some of the most extended values that archaeology has for contemporary society. In a survey I am currently conducting among Spanish students, to the question 'What is archaeology good for in real life?', stereotypes like 'knowing the past in order to improve the future' appear constantly. 'Knowledge', 'roots', 'heritage', 'tourism', 'identity' or 'nothing' are some of the other answers.

What is the message we have been delivering?

## Talking to a wall . . . and tearing it down

Excluding important exceptions like Sir Mortimer Wheeler (Moshenska and Schadla-Hall 2011), archaeologists have been disconnected from society, only giving 'facts' about the past and heritage for people to consume, alongside internal and external misuses of the past that led to political and economic abuse of archaeology. Current critics from within public archaeology acknowledge the problem of trying to get closer to local communities and making archaeology more understandable (Simpson 2008).

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However, the impact of those approaches is still too narrow to really affect society in a wider perspective. Are we even capable of changing public perceptions about archaeology?

During the summer of 2012, two movies broke the box office in Spain: *Prometheus* and *Tadeo Jones*. (Spoiler alert!) In the first, as a prequel of the Alien saga, Ridley Scott takes the theories of intelligent design and alien intervention to explain the origins of humankind and supports it with fake archaeological evidence (the main character is an archaeologist). In the second, a Spanish production, the Odyssey affair and its repercussions in the media (Rodríguez Temiño 2012, 389–402) influenced the plot of the movie. The main character is a construction worker (and amateur archaeologist) who usurps the identity of a real archaeologist and ends up fighting professional looters, but keeps the image of the treasure hunter. Like it or not, these are the images that permeate society.

Today, the Internet has become a real tool of communication, and social media represent an opportunity for archaeology. However, there are still shadows in the use and misuse of the Internet and some authors are already drawing attention to that (Morozov 2011), even in the field of archaeology (Richardson 2012). There have been some examples of successful engagement with the Internet, like the Prescott Street Project in 2008, which used its own website (www.lparchaeology.com), or Torre dos Mouros in 2012, which extended the action also to social media (torredosmouros.net). Anyway, one of the main obstacles to success, even on the Internet, is audience.

Measuring fans, likes, shares, followers, pins, etc. is still ambiguous. The relationship between the number of followers, likes or shares and the actual impact of messages is not clear. Liking a page on Facebook is a one-moment action that might be forgotten in an overcrowded wall. The same happens with Twitter feeds, when a user follows hundreds of profiles. If there is not a real concern (previous, or properly built by the network) it is very difficult to keep a loyal audience.

In my experience of the publication of a controversial book (Almansa 2011) and its associated blog, lack of participation is a worrying issue even for concerned archaeologists. If engaging *them* is difficult, opening to the wider public can be even more so. The Internet is not such an efficient tool as we may think, but it helps. It is through direct work with the community that we mainly interact with people. However, this does not seem to be enough, and although projects with public and community archaeology programmes are rapidly increasing, the gap between archaeology and society is still large.

We have started to tear down the wall, but should we stop here?

## Finding new values in contemporary contexts

Archaeology has a problem in its name. The science of the old is now becoming a contemporary activity intruding into the present. Little by little some archaeologists become 'too' contemporary even for their peers, and this situation makes us face in a clearer way a range of social, political and economic issues that affect our practice and its context. The political misuse of archaeology in nationalistic discourses, and the commoditization of ancient remarkable sites for economic reasons, are well known. What is

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not as obvious is the political potential of urban archaeology or the social implications of foreign missions in developing countries.

I like to define public archaeology as the study of and action in the multiple relations between archaeology and society (Almansa 2010). It is probably due to this approach that I started to look around myself when working. The context of our work is the context of contemporary society, with the same circumstances. Filling the gap between archaeology and society must start from this reality and our place in the site. What else can we (or should we) do while doing archaeology? Work with the community and wider society should not only be archaeology-related. Learning about the site and our work is an advance in the recognition of archaeology as a profession, but in certain contexts we can actually do more (McGuire 2008; Stottman 2010). The living conflicts and connections between many archaeological sites and current society have opened a line of action that directly interacts with contemporary social reality. But what happens when there is not a clear link?

In 2010, the regional government of Oromia (Ethiopia) contracted me to consult on a pollution problem in Melka Kunture, a prominent Palaeolithic site that aims to be the country's next World Heritage Site. After a first survey, we realized that the problem went far beyond heritage to a serious health issue in the area. What should we do? We modified the project to use the site as a tool instead of an end, making archaeology useful for a local community totally disconnected from it (Almansa and Degeffa 2011). This example shows us that we do not need a contemporary site, but a contemporary approach.

## The role of public archaeology as a tool of opinion in contemporary society

We do have a voice in the present, but we still haul a heavy weight of fears and other baggage. Letting people participate in archaeology only fills the gap in one direction, but public archaeology lets us engage with society from a critical perspective, able to offer something beyond the archaeological record.

Is that the way to become a public intellectual? It is difficult to define what a public intellectual really is today. Big names like Chomsky, Dawkins or Krugman are still present in major media. Others like Negri or Bourdieu stay only on the shelves of other intellectuals. In the 2008 Top 100 Public Intellectuals Poll conducted by *Prospect* magazine and *Foreign Policy* I hardly recognize any among the first ten. Meanwhile, on political television shows, the general public only gets to listen to local polemicists, or other influential celebrities like Jon Stewart from *The Daily Show* or his equivalent in Spain, José Miguel Monzón (El Gran Wyoming) from *El Intermedio*.

With a recognized crisis around public intellectuals (Drezner 2009; Etzioni and Bowditch 2006), it is extremely difficult to become one, at least a recognized one. As mentioned before, the expansion of the Internet has changed the panorama completely. A computer and an opinion can build a public intellectual anywhere. But what is a public intellectual anyway?

As archaeologists we are not accustomed to being identified as public intellectuals, even when we do have an opinion on many political, social and economic issues, not only related to our sites, but to more general issues. However, we still stand dumb in the current conflicts that affect our work.

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When the regional government of Madrid proposed the new draft law of heritage, which is negligent, less than twenty of the more than five hundred registered archaeologists in the region were concerned to plead (Ansede 2012), approximately the same people who worked for the frustrated labour agreement. After the distorted news of Angela Micol's discovery in Egypt, it was me, as an individual, who called the attention of the newspaper (Delclòs 2012), and so on.

I ascribe this situation to several factors (in Spain at least). First, to the wall that has been built around archaeology for decades. Second, to the distant message we provide the public with. Third, to the fear to do anything that goes beyond archaeology. But mainly to an extremely polarized collective that is not able to agree on the most essential ideas. These factors make it difficult to express opinions when first questioning, and opposition comes from your peers. Hopefully these problems seem to answer to a generational factor, and new trends in Spanish archaeology support this idea.

Anyhow, using public archaeology as a tool of opinion in contemporary society is not only a way to interact with communities in a different way. It also requires a radical, critical approach to the reality we are living in. Actions should involve politics and being consistent with our thoughts might create conflicts at different levels. Standing against your local administration, or some urban development, are normal situations in the life of an archaeologist. These situations are extraordinary contexts within which to set ourselves as public intellectuals, explaining the reasons that made us take certain decisions. Instead, we do not communicate: silence gives rise to the notion that we are an obstacle to development, or treasure hunters, utopian bookworms or evil human beings who do not understand the needs of people (all real descriptions I have documented).

Here, the value of public archaeology is essential, not only as a tool of communication and understanding, but also as a tool of opinion that can make a difference at the local level. Our expert opinion is essential for planning policies, rural development, identity disputes and many other situations of contemporary life. Generally, we are not yet giving this opinion, although it is becoming extremely necessary – for us, first of all.

But are we ready to go further?

## Discussion

Education and mass media, and now social media, have given everybody the possibility of expressing their opinions at the highest level. With so many voices telling 'truths', we have, on the one hand, an elite of public intellectuals (or celebrities) in television and newspapers, and on the other, noise.

In April 2011, Aleix Saló, a Spanish illustrator, published a very interesting comic, which was promoted with a YouTube video about the real-estate bubble in Spain (Saló 2011). The video turned viral on social media, with more than 5 million visits in one year, and the comic became extremely popular. Today, all major media in Spain use Saló's comics to talk about the crisis and he has become a kind of public intellectual whose opinion matters. Several archaeologists have pointed out some of these issues from

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the relationship between construction and archaeology, but there has been no impact. Gaining influence should be the first task, but how can we do it?

If we try to write a 'handbook' of 'how to become a public intellectual from nothing (archaeology)', we need to take two facts into account: first of all, that besides any survey, interest in archaeology is not as high as we may think, at least as we understand archaeology; second, that we need to make a lot of noise in order to be heard. Only then will we have the opportunity to be listened to, but this would not ensure our permanence. A traditional way to become a public intellectual would take years of strong research in contemporary politics, economy and social trends, and a series of writings to be valued and reproduced by peers.

In any of the cases, would we still be archaeologists? Hugh Laurie, the famous actor and musician, is also an archaeologist, but nobody tags him as one. I myself was once tagged as a sociologist instead of an archaeologist for doing public archaeology. We risk losing our professional identity for a name in a list. So the first question in the dilemma of intellectuality is, why do we want to become public intellectuals?

If becoming a public intellectual means leaving archaeology to one side, and if we consider that, as archaeologists, we still have certain professional responsibilities, then the value of becoming a public intellectual would not be comparable to becoming a recognized expert in reference to our area of work.

I personally do not think that we need to be public intellectuals, or at least that that should be our goal. Maybe it would be enough to be public archaeologists. We have the tools and need only the attitude. Transforming our daily work into socially committed action can set our profession up as something more than a stereotype. However, the difficulty of conducting projects of this kind is determined by contexts of commercial archaeology or low budgets.

Archaeology is important, and useful. We know it, but we fail to make others know. Before giving opinions on other topics we must learn to communicate the multiple values of our work and its reality. Empowering archaeology in the social (and political) arena helps to improve the image and value of our discipline. Participation in daily matters where we should have a voice facilitates engagement with communities and brings archaeology closer to reality. Also, activism and political action on the part of archaeology promote new values closer to people. This is the way to build a loyal audience. All these are goals of public archaeology, and a way to go further.

Would we need to go further if we accomplished a real public concern for archaeology?

Concluding, there are, in any event, two essential premises that we need to fulfil before considering a step forward:

- Commitment/collectivity. The weakness and polarization of our profession makes it very difficult to progress as a collective and as public figures. It is critical to bring positions closer and to commit to common goals. Corporatism is essential for the profession. I understand this premise as essential from Plautus' *Homo homini lupus*. In order to succeed as a group

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and as individuals, we need to work together. Civil war is not helpful to get a recognized voice in the public sphere.

- Influence/audience. Delivering our message to the wider public is not as simple as we normally think. Once our first role as researchers is accomplished, we can start thinking about building and influencing our audiences. Social media are a great tool of communication, but not the only or the best one. We need to learn to communicate, and after that, to cultivate the loyalty of our audience. Only then can our audience start to grow, and so can our influence. Without a public listening to us, we have nothing to say.

When we have achieved these two premises, public archaeology as a tool for opinion in contemporary society can be successfully practised as a collective. We may not be public intellectuals, but we will have a voice and an acknowledged audience. With patience and commitment, the collective value of archaeology will increase, preparing the ground for other individual progresses in the public arena. In order to become some kind of public intellectuals, keeping our essence as archaeologists, we need to grow together. Meanwhile, public archaeology provides us with a tool of opinion in matters of public concern beyond the archaeological record, and this is something we must use (figure 1).




**Figure 1**

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# The need and potential for an archaeology orientated towards the present

*Cornelius Holtorf**

## Abstract

The question 'Can an archaeologist be a public intellectual?' appears to express both an unfulfilled desire and a secret hope of an entire professional corps to count among them at least a few public intellectuals. I suggest that the state of the discipline of archaeology makes it harder, compared with other disciplines, for its professional representatives to address present-day issues and relate to public debates. I also suggest that maybe the most significant effect of the fact that society's public intellectuals generally do not have degrees in archaeology is that participants in public debates and policy makers are unaware of how various applications of archaeology and cultural heritage can benefit contemporary society. This potential will therefore have to be realized in different ways.

## Keywords

Public archaeology; archaeology in society; new heritage; applied archaeology

The question 'Can an archaeologist be a public intellectual?' appears to express both an unfulfilled desire and a secret hope of an entire professional corps to count among them at least a few public intellectuals. It sounds a little as if there is an expectation that at least some archaeologists, through their education and professional experience, somehow, ought to have both the skills and the will to assume the role of public intellectuals, i.e. to contribute to shaping the terms of public debate and to some extent policy. There have, of course, occasionally been archaeologists in politics but they were perhaps not usually public intellectuals. There have, however, only rarely been archaeologists among the public intellectuals of national or indeed international significance. Given the small size of the discipline in society as a whole, is this something to be concerned about? Indeed, can we be certain that the famous public intellectuals in continental Europe do not secretly wish they had become archaeologists instead?

Theoretically, any intellectual might become a public intellectual. Since archaeologists generally do not become public intellectuals, and assuming (in the spirit of this forum) that this is neither satisfactory nor inevitable, one of the questions that is at stake here appears to be what, if anything, our society is losing by its public intellectuals generally not having completed degrees in archaeology. In this way the question about archaeologists as public intellectuals is linked to the question about archaeology's role and function in society and the field of public archaeology.

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Before turning to this question I wish to address briefly another pertinent question, namely whether the state of the discipline of archaeology somehow makes it harder, compared with other disciplines, for its professional representatives to address present-day issues and relate to public debates or to recruit the kind of students who would like to address present-day issues and relate to public debates. Might there be public intellectuals in society *despite* their education as archaeologists?

**Why are archaeologists obsessed with the past?**

Archaeology is not only a particular academic and scientific practice, but more fundamentally it is a distinctive cultural and social practice in the present (see also Nakamura 2012). Yet archaeologists tend to be reluctant to engage directly with the present (although there are notable exceptions, e.g. Gould and Schiffer 1981; Rogers 2004; Leone 2005; Gould 2007). Archaeologists are usually preoccupied with the past rather than with what the past has to tell us in the present. Why is this so? In other words, why are archaeologists often choosing to reduce the significance of archaeology to a concern with the past alone? In my experience, it is not actually very controversial among archaeologists to state that the past only matters in the present, and that archaeological research questions are always motivated by particular interests in the present. Yet archaeologists are notoriously struggling to answer *why* the past matters in the present and *precisely which* present-day interests they are addressing (other than the vague interest in learning about the past). We often read fairly meaningless platitudes along the lines of 'without knowing the past we cannot plan for the future' (see also Spennemann 2007). But since when have archaeologists ever been particular good at planning for the future? We also find that large public debates, for example about feminism or about the state of our planet, have unwittingly been affecting the research agendas of archaeologists (Wilk 1985). But it is sometimes unclear precisely what the original contribution is that archaeologists have ever made to these debates in the present. There is clearly room for developing and sharpening archaeological contributions to existing public debates.

Some archaeologists seem to think that it is for others, including public intellectuals with other disciplinary backgrounds, to tease out the societal significance of archaeological research in the present. However, when this actually happens and archaeological research enters public debates about present-day concerns, the archaeologists themselves are easily displeased, as demonstrated, for instance, in the debate about the synthesizing works of Jared Diamond on the global historical development of humankind (Powell 2008). One important reason for this situation could be that archaeologists like to focus in their research on their particular data sets and the particular methodologies they use in its analysis. They are often satisfied with relatively narrow research results regarding specific aspects of past realities, whereas outside commentators like Diamond like to gloss over the details in favour of the bigger issues at stake, related to the present day, in their research outcomes. This is not the place for a historical and perhaps sociological analysis of why many archaeologists are so obsessed with their data and

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methodologies and work so happily with narrowly defined research agendas. One reason may be the enigmatic character of material culture and the lack of advanced theorizing in large parts of the discipline (compare this with the high degree of theorizing in the neighbouring discipline of human geography!). Still today, archaeologists usually specialize in the material culture of finds and features either of a particular region or of a particular period (or both), or alternatively in a particular method of analysis, but they do not tend to specialize in a particular theoretical framework or in a specific present-day issue. There are obviously exceptions to this generalization, and the most notable is the North American tradition in which archaeology is not only a natural part of anthropology at large but also a field in which explicit theorizing has been promoted for half a century – though I am not sure whether that has meant that there are more public intellectuals coming out of North American archaeology.

The overall state of the discipline of archaeology may thus indeed make it harder, compared with other disciplines, for its professional representatives to address present-day issues and relate to public debates or to recruit the kind of students who would like to address present-day issues and relate to public debates. This raises the question of how the discipline of archaeology (its curricula, job descriptions and funding criteria) could be opened up to issues of direct relevance to present-day society. It is not merely a question of additional training so that archaeologists can learn to communicate more successfully what they are already trying to say. I suggest instead that it is largely a question of changing the overall orientation of the discipline from telling stories about the past that may or may not in some vague way relate to present society to realizing and foregrounding the ways in which archaeology, heritage and the past substantially matter in present society (see also Högberg 2007).

Instead of speculating here about the right kind of tactical manoeuvres in the discipline to achieve this, it seems more pertinent to discuss the actual potential for an archaeology orientated towards the present rather than the past. In other words, what might we gain if some of our public intellectuals had completed degrees in archaeology and thus could help realize archaeology's potential in society? This requires addressing archaeology's role and function in society and the field of public archaeology.

## Applied archaeology: the potential of archaeology in present society

It is essential for archaeologists to understand better in which ways their subject matter and professional practices are meaningful and valuable to people and how an applied archaeology can provide concrete benefits in contemporary society, beyond amassing ever more objects and knowledge of the past. These issues have recently come to the fore again (e.g. Ronayne 2007; Högberg 2007; Sabloff 2008; Dawdy 2009; Stottman 2010; Holtorf 2012), although they had already been addressed in a number of previous projects. William Rathje's classic Garbage Project is a well-known highlight (Rathje and Murphy 1992), as are Clark Erickson's (1992) experiments with the ancient technique of raised-field agriculture in South America, and the archaeologically informed marking of US nuclear waste disposal sites

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(Benford 1999, part 1). Christian E. Downum and Laurie J. Price's (1999) summary of the state of applied archaeology at the end of the 1990s provides further examples.

Arguably, archaeological objects and practices can assist us in negotiating our social realities and our understanding of what it means to live in the world today. For example, stories about the past allow human beings to make sense not only of the past but also of their own world in the present. These stories may be mystery or adventure stories about archaeologists making discoveries or investigating remains of the past (Holtorf 2007), or they can be stories about past events and processes that acquire particular meanings in the present. In stories of both varieties, contemporary audiences may feature as characters in plots that give meaning and perspective to their present-day lives; it is such stories that I have referred to elsewhere as 'meta-stories of archaeology' (Holtorf 2010). These meta-stories explore what it means to be human: what do all humans have in common? How does each of us cope with existential issues such as death? Archaeological meta-stories explore also who we are as members of a particular human group. Which community do we belong to and what does this entail? Archaeological meta-stories explore how we engage with the world: which investigations and adventures are we pursuing in our own lives? Finally, archaeological meta-stories explore how we might be living under alternative circumstances: can we improve our lives today by drawing inspiration from the past? Crucially, in all such stories it is not the past as such which attracts interest and gains social significance but rather the broader issues that an engagement with the past raises. What matters most is not so much the scientific accuracy and empirical richness of the story itself but the extent to which the story draws us as characters into the plot of a meta-story and thus touches us. Such meta-stories make archaeology and heritage function as media of social practice (Barrett 1994, 35). They make us reflect upon our actions and motivations, and they influence our behaviour in contemporary society.

Today many archaeologists are concerned about quality issues in contemporary archaeology (e.g. Andersson, Lagerlöf and Skyllberg 2010). I agree with this concern and suggest that the most important quality we are talking about is that archaeology and indeed heritage, as media of social practice, can raise many social, cultural and political issues that are significant to contemporary society. Excavation, for instance, can have additional benefits besides those it has as an academic method to secure evidence that helps academics reconstruct the past. Digging for, and discovering, clues from the past create opportunities for reflection and dialogue both among different participants and between participants and onlookers. Excavation is an exciting and multifaceted approach to investigating what metaphorically lies 'beneath'. It affects those digging in more ways than merely by providing data. Recovered artefacts can trigger memories and make the past tangible, even bring history to life by evoking past individuals who may have handled the very same piece last before you did. If the artefacts come from the recent past they may refresh memories and facilitate sharing these with others, whether or not all these recollections are actually historically accurate. If they are from a more distant past, artefacts can provoke more general reflections

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and evoke the kind of meta-stories I mentioned earlier. All this does not only provide beneficial experiences for each individual but can also meet important social and cultural aims by giving pause for thought about the grand questions of the course of cultural evolution and human society and by stimulating contact and conversation across different generations and communities, past and present (Svanberg and Wahlgren 2007; Burström 2007). As a consequence, archaeological projects can relieve racial, social, gender and other community tensions. Through digging, neighbours who belong to different communities can come together and learn to communicate with each other, whatever they may actually find and find out about the past (Synnestvedt 2008).

Archaeology and cultural heritage in present-day society can mobilize many social groups and benefit their lives in a variety of ways (Holtorf 2012). Any archaeological and heritage-related project should therefore start with a clear vision of how it addresses and advances such qualities (Goudswaard *et al.* 2012). An agenda that is exclusively dedicated to gaining academic knowledge, that wants to decide alone what is and is not important for everybody about archaeological heritage, and that does not wish to consider various other interests of living people is all too limited.

## The new heritage: putting living people first

Traditional concepts of cultural heritage have focused on cultural monuments, often historic buildings and archaeological sites, taking for granted that remains of the past, as best understood by experts such as archaeologists, are inherently valuable and therefore deserve to be preserved for the benefit of future generations. Heritage conservation practices have therefore focused much on policies and techniques to preserve monuments and artefacts as such, valuing cultural heritage for its intrinsic merits, and making it accessible as symbols of national (or indeed European) pasts. But a fixed and exclusive national heritage (the 'Story of England', for example) is no longer plausible for fast-changing, multicultural populations of citizens and other residents, with varying backgrounds and diverse collective identities (Holtorf and Fairclough 2013).

In recent decades, a 'new heritage' has been emerging accompanied by a discourse that dwells much less on the objects of heritage, and their assumed intrinsic worth, and much more on a view of heritage as an interaction between people and their world, and between people themselves. This process originated in critical debates during the 1990s concerning established national narratives posing such questions as 'who owns the past?' and 'whose heritage?' (e.g. Layton 1994; Chippindale *et al.* 1990). Subsequently, the values of heritage became an area of intense debate. The core values of heritage are increasingly deemed to reside in the cultural meanings and values humans invest in monuments and landscapes, not in their physical substance or in a historical significance best understood by experts (Loulanski 2006; Fojut 2009; Fairclough 2009; Smith, Messenger and Soderland 2010; Araoz 2011). It is now understood that heritage, like landscapes and culture at large, must serve wider constituencies of people and indeed society as a whole. In

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addition to the strictly academic values of the scholars engaged in research, non-academic stakeholders and the way in which archaeology and heritage are meaningful and valuable to them therefore need to be taken seriously throughout heritage management and even by professional archaeologists themselves. Significantly, heritage is accepted as valuable for a range of new reasons, including relaxation and rehabilitation, conflict resolution, economic regeneration, citizenship education, and sustainable development (see Smith 2006; Samuels 2009).

Acknowledging specifically the appropriation of heritage by communities, the significance of heritage for addressing social processes and conditions, and the growing acceptance of heritage as a public commodity, the president of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS), Gustavo F. Araoz (2011), has been speaking of a new paradigm for heritage in society. As a consequence, the objectives of heritage management will need to be revisited, so that its primary aim becomes the management of change in the present, not simply the protection of fabric at the 'best' sites. A living heritage is a changing heritage. For new heritage, the overall objective is not necessarily preservation but the management of change, for which preservation is just one means. The large scale of current changes in the world seems daunting, but instead of seeing these exclusively as threats to the fabric of heritage, it calls for recognition that heritage is actually a part of those processes, and indeed potentially part of the response to them. The bywords need to be social sustainability (sustainable development as a cultural rather than an environmental measure) and social change expressed by and reflecting cultural heritage. It has long been assumed without much reflection that heritage is to be preserved for the future, whereas in reality it is preserved for the present, as present-day social values and attitudes govern the way in which we define, manage and indeed construct heritage.

The new heritage lends matters of heritage a different importance and influence in contemporary society than previously: rather than heritage being seen as of intrinsic merit with values that 'society' has a duty to protect, now heritage serves multiple social actors' various interests and desires (Araoz 2011; Holtorf 2012; Holtorf and Fairclough 2013). The new heritage fulfils important functions in society. It enhances the population's health and quality of life; it strengthens global solidarity and reflection about the values we live by; it makes our management of the environment more sustainable; it improves a sense of belonging, social cohesion and democratic participation in diverse and segregated societies; and it boosts regional development through the impact of increasing tourism.

The Faro Convention (Council of Europe 2005) has given these ideas and social values of heritage new force in Europe (Fairclough 2009). For the Faro Convention (hereafter Faro), people's heritage does not begin at the ticket kiosk of a heritage tourist attraction or at the gates of a historic city centre, but with ordinary things at the threshold of their homes as they step out into their street and into their personal landscapes. This people-centred perspective makes Faro different to most previous heritage conventions of the Council of Europe and from most UNESCO conventions. The Faro view of heritage is concerned with how people interpret – and interact with – the world

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around them. It is about the process of using (and making) cultural heritage for broader social benefits. Faro has already started to affect academic and political debate, community behaviours and policy. Seeing cultural heritage as a resource (not merely as assets), as Faro does (Article 2), carries the implication that it exists to be utilized, even if in the process it might be eroded or even used up if necessary. The existence of a resource automatically presupposes the existence of users, people who will benefit from its use or merely its existence, individually or in heritage communities, which gives heritage its broader social relevance and value. New heritage tries to put these people at the centre of the discussion. It is not the objects themselves that matter but what those objects mean to people in a myriad of ways. Value is attributed to things for all manner of social, economic and personal reasons; few of these values reside intrinsically in the thing itself.

## Conclusions

I asked at the beginning of this contribution whether the state of the discipline of archaeology makes it harder, compared with other disciplines, for its professional representatives to address present-day issues and relate to public debates or to recruit the kind of students who would like to address present-day issues and relate to public debates. I then speculated that this may indeed be the case and argued that the challenge lies in changing this.

In the second half of my ruminations, I discussed at some length the potential of an archaeology and, by extension, of a cultural heritage orientated towards the present rather than the past. I demonstrated that the potential is as varied as it is enormous; it can be subsumed under such terms as 'applied archaeology' and 'new heritage'. Crucially, both are focused on the needs of living people rather than on the remains of dead people and can make many unexpected contributions to present-day society. Knowledge and experience of this potential among those shaping the terms of public debate and policy is what we are potentially losing by our public intellectuals' generally not having completed degrees in archaeology. It means that this potential will have to be realized in different ways, probably through individual projects, and thus less effectively.

Archaeology and cultural heritage are hardly the only answer to the world's problems and people's needs in the present but they can certainly make contributions. Whether in the future more archaeologists will be adopting the role of public intellectual and thus fulfil their latent potential remains to be seen. More important than a head count of public intellectuals among archaeologists is to create conditions within archaeology at large that facilitate an engagement with present-day issues and public debates and actively support valuable applications of archaeology and cultural heritage in contemporary society.

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# Exerting influence? Responsibility and the public role of archaeology in divided societies

*Audrey Horning**

## Abstract

Can, or should, archaeologists adopt the mantle of the public intellectual and bring archaeology to bear on contemporary issues within divided societies? The line between the archaeologist and the citizen is never clear-cut. How do we balance the recognition that our knowledge and expertise allow us to exert influence with the necessity to act as responsible members of our own societies? I define a public intellectual as one who is not afraid to step outside professional circles and comfort zones and to engage, challenge and comment on issues of broad relevance in the present. Employing Northern Ireland as a case study, I argue that archaeologists have a responsibility to provide leadership and commentary regarding the fraught relationship between past and present.

## Keywords

Northern Ireland; Troubles; authority; contested past; conflict; divided society; public engagement; Ulster Scots; identity

## Introduction

By definition, a public intellectual is an authority, someone who not only wants to be heard, but is perceived as worth hearing. Do archaeologists have anything to say that is worth hearing? I certainly hope so, because it is our business to know about the past and the past matters in the present. But we struggle with authority. Following a model of epistemic inclusion, to borrow a phrase from David Cooper (2006), we instead endeavour to make up for the sins of our discipline through according ownership of the past to the world beyond academia. Why question someone else's construction of the past, even when it bears little resemblance to what we dig up and understand? Arguably, because our training lends us a certain perspective, and because we have a responsibility to those people whose pasts we represent without consent or consultation. But there is an even more fundamental question which arose in discussions in Helsinki. Is there a line between being an archaeologist and being a citizen? Do we have a moral obligation as experts not only to share our knowledge, but to put that knowledge to work in the present? The question of moral obligation is of particular resonance when dealing with contested histories, and particularly in conflict-ridden and post-conflict societies. Archaeology in these contexts is no mere esoteric, academic enterprise, unless one never leaves the ivory tower or publishes anything that might ever be read by an ordinary mortal. Engaging with the past as a public

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intellectual of any stripe can carry risk in the present, but also the potential for transformative social benefit.

## Archaeology and post-conflict society in Northern Ireland

By way of illustration, I'll draw upon work in Northern Ireland. The archaeology I conduct in Northern Ireland specifically focuses upon early modern British expansion. I am interested in examining late medieval Irish life and the subsequent interactions between the Irish and the (mainly) English and Scots who settled in Ireland as part of the late 16th- and early 17th-century processes of plantation. I do so in full recognition that this period and these interactions remain contested and constitute the root of the dichotomous historical memories that gave rise to thirty years of violence during the Troubles (1968–98), and which continue to structure everyday life. Broadly drawn, contemporary Northern Irish society is dichotomous – divided between roughly equivalent populations that self-identify as either Catholic/nationalist, heir to the Gaels, or Protestant/unionist, heir to the English and Scots planters of the 17th century. Importantly, and despite the general equivalency of voices, both communities self-identify as minorities. The educational system continues to ensure divided identities, insofar as over 90 per cent of schoolchildren in Northern Ireland continue to be educated in either maintained majority-Catholic or controlled majority-Protestant schools (McCully and Barton 2009; Hayes, McAllister and Dowds 2006).

While outbreaks of sectarian violence are increasingly confined to known flashpoints, one doesn't need to scratch far below the surface to find widespread evidence of unhealed wounds. A recent investigation into mental health in Northern Ireland discovered that fully 39 per cent of the adult population experienced a traumatic episode directly related to the conflict, which has resulted in higher rates of post-traumatic stress disorder suffered today than reported by comparable studies anywhere else in the world (Ferry *et al.* 2011). But a weekend visitor to Belfast is unlikely to detect these scars. Since the signing of the St Andrews Agreement in 2006, a power-sharing government has been continuously in place, bolstered by the historical decision taken by the Protestant firebrand Reverend Ian Paisley of the Democratic Unionist Party (DUP) and the former IRA commander Martin McGuinness of Sinn Féin to stand alongside one another in government as first minister and deputy minister respectively. Physical traces of the conflict have been partially erased, marked by the decommissioning of British Army bases, the removal of checkpoints, the reopening of central Belfast streets to automobile traffic, and a softening of the once hard-line sectarian imagery on Belfast's legendary painted gables. Tourist numbers are up. The city, once served mainly by a network of small guest houses and the Europa hotel, once fondly known as the most bombed hotel in Western Europe, now boasts over a dozen high-occupancy hotels, from the cheapest Ibis to the five-star Fitzwilliam Hotel, to a boutique Malmaison housed within a former Victorian seed warehouse. To connect with the Belfast of old, many visitors thrill themselves with a bus or black taxi tour of Troubles hotspots, a voyeuristic journey through the back streets of North and West Belfast where

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over a thousand people lost their lives in sectarian violence (Sutton 2001). In cruising past the many 'peace walls' which continue to divide Belfast neighbourhoods, few visitors are likely to guess that the majority of those living in close proximity to the walls strongly advocate their retention and cannot envision a time when they will not be necessary. Across Northern Ireland, 88 peace lines separate communities, the majority of which were constructed after the Good Friday Agreement in 1998 (Byrne, Heenan and Robinson 2012; McDonald 2009).

The incomplete nature of the Northern Ireland peace process was dramatically exposed to the world when sectarian conflict once again became headline news in December 2012 and January 2013, following a 3 December 2012 vote by the Belfast City Council in favour of only flying the Union flag on 15 designated days per year (McKeown 2012). The vote itself was a compromise between unionist politicians who wished the flag to fly 365 days per year, and nationalist politicians who wished to see it removed entirely. The road to peace has long been lined with such compromises, but for loyalists and many unionists this particular compromise served as a touchstone for underlying anxieties. In a depressingly familiar cycle, widespread street protests soon turned violent. Petrol bombs and water cannons exploded across streets, hundreds of protesters and police suffered injuries, and politicians and media figures were issued with death threats. At the time of final submission of this article (18 January) and in the absence of any acceptable political solution, the violence continues (Macauley 2013). Recent counterprotests led by the self-styled 'silent majority' reflect widespread fears about the damage being done to the recently rehabilitated image of Northern Ireland as a business- and tourist-friendly locale.

In this uneasy context of rapid redevelopment and financial investment in a land marred by unresolved sectarianism and personal trauma, what point is there in worrying about something as inconsequential as archaeology and the positionality of its practitioners? I would argue that, actually, archaeology can play and is playing a serious role in encouraging dialogue and promoting healing. Since directing my first Northern Irish excavation in the 1990s on an early 17th-century plantation-period site, I have believed that a better public understanding of the complexities of the early modern period in Ireland can provoke and enhance understanding between today's two traditions and contribute to the construction of some form of shared, peaceful future. Insights from research on late medieval and plantation-period sites highlight the complexity of cultural interactions in the period and reveal considerable and incontrovertible material evidence for the emergence of shared, syncretic practices drawing upon Irish, Scottish, and English traditions. Physical evidence for shared practice in the plantation period includes the presence of Irish vernacular buildings and ceramic vessels in English plantation villages (Horning 2001); the adoption and subversion of English polite architecture by the Gaelic elite (Donnelly 2005); the mimicking of Gaelic hospitality rituals and use of associated material culture by the planter elite (Horning 2013); the reuse of raths and crannogs by settlers (Brady and O'Conor 2005); and continuity in pre-plantation settlement patterns

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and landscape use, accompanied by documentary analysis highlighting routine interaction between indigenous Irish and incoming settlers (Donnelly 2007; Donnelly and Horning 2002). In the present, such tangible evidence possesses a profound capacity to challenge understandings of the divide between Irish and British identities and contribute to the emergence of a shared Northern Irish identity. That said, it is only through the peace process that a space has been created to openly research the period and to consider the ramifications of such evidence (see Horning 2006 for an earlier discussion).

Despite my commitment to the potential of archaeology to make a serious contribution to reconciliation and the normalization of society, I long questioned my right to comment at all. What authority do I have to speak about the present and prognosticate for the future? Is it not both arrogant and presumptuous to set myself up as someone capable of contributing in any meaningful way to the project of peace? I received a powerful answer to these questions in 2009. Following a public tour I co-led of plantation-period sites that highlighted shared material culture, the emergence of hybrid architectural forms, and even the involvement of Catholic Scots as planters, anonymous feedback was solicited from the participants. The answers were surprisingly direct. One respondent suggested that 'similar tours in future for local people will be useful in promoting better society as a whole', while another stated 'how by involving archaeologists they can exert such influence' (Causeway Museum Service 2009). There is considerable advantage to being perceived as something of a neutral authority, even if as a self-reflexive archaeologist I can't afford to believe in objectivity. In societies in conflict, the perceived neutrality of an archaeologist provides a mechanism for overcoming community division.

While the Northern Ireland population is becoming increasingly diverse through post-Troubles in-migration, the divide between the two communities runs very deep. With or without peace lines, Northern Ireland remains a segregated society. The same study that revealed the reluctance of interface communities to demolish the peace walls also noted that 78 per cent of those polled believed that segregation was the norm, a perception readily borne out by social geography (Byrne, Heenan and Robinson 2012). As the first post-Troubles generation comes of age, how different is their understanding of Northern Irish society from that of their parents? Residential and educational segregation continues to shape people's understanding of their worlds. In the political sphere, the Northern Ireland Assembly is dominated by two parties, the DUP and Sinn Féin, from opposite poles, while the other parties jockey for position in an uncertain middle ground. The political divide reflects the social divide. The uncomfortable reality is that the most significant impediment to the emergence of any sense of shared identity and common heritage is the structure of the peace process itself. Of necessity, the 1998 Good Friday Agreement was founded upon the reification of the two-traditions dichotomy in order to assure parity and equality. In post-Troubles Northern Ireland, everything has to be divided evenly and balanced across both communities. Peace itself is built on maintaining difference, not on overcoming or blending or obscuring difference.

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## Constructing difference? Ulster Scots heritage

To illustrate how this plays out in terms of archaeology, consider the phenomenon of Ulster Scots heritage. Within the Protestant community, some of the most influential voices are those of individuals whose ancestors came to Ulster from lowland Scotland, many of them professing Nonconformist faiths dominated by variants of Presbyterianism. Their understanding of the plantation period is one in which their ancestors came to a wasted, depopulated land – a *terra nullius* – and then transformed it into an agricultural and, later, industrial powerhouse. While the majority of Presbyterian Scots actually came to Ulster in the late 17th century, in memory it is the early 17th-century plantation period that resonates. Over the last decade, we have witnessed the conscious refinement of an Ulster Scots identity, complete with the codification of an Ulster Scots language. According to one critic, the new emphasis on the language, arts and historical accomplishments of (Protestant) Ulster Scots was a direct response to the superior abilities of the nationalist community to unite behind and promote a coherent sense of Irish culture and identity: 'by the mid-1990s Protestant urban communities found themselves nearly a generation behind in the business of grassroots cultural politics' (Dowling 2007, 53). The Ulster Scots Language Society answered the call. As part of the provisions of the 1998 Good Friday Agreement and the 2006 St Andrews Agreement, the Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure began to provide funding to the Ulster Scots Agency, or Boord O Ulstèr Scotch, to promote Ulster Scots language and heritage, in parity with support for the Irish-language body, Foras na Gaeilge.

The identity of Ulster Scots as a language rather than a dialect remains a subject of politically tinged debate, as exemplified in the comments of the *Irish Times* journalist Frank McNally (2012):

> At a press event promoting the Boord some years ago, I asked – out of genuine curiosity – what the effect of the accent on the E in Ulstèr was. Whereupon a spokeswoman admitted it had none: 'we just thought it looked good'. And so it does. But I couldn't help noticing that the accent pointed in the opposite direction from the Irish fada, which was hardly accidental.

Whether or not the use of the backward-slanting accent in Ulster Scots was designed in opposition to the forward-slanting one employed in modern Irish, it does seem important to note that most Ulster Scots speakers did not know that they were speaking a different language from English until they were informed that this was the case, and that they were special, or at least as special as their Irish-speaking counterparts. What we are seeing is *enhancement* of difference, funded by the peace process. In short, the emphasis upon parity between the two communities has facilitated the enhancement of difference through celebrating different cultural traditions, rather than facilitating and promoting elements of *shared* cultural heritage. That the new construction of Ulster Protestant identity as a uniquely Scottish inheritance ignores the considerable English impact on Ulster society remains an unresolved issue. To date, no significant backlash has occurred, perhaps in acknowledgement

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that in a dichotomous society what matters most is support for a Protestant identity, full stop.

Inevitably, an archaeological landscape that materially attests to the processes of plantation and displacement would figure in these new constructions of difference, and that is clearly the case for the Ulster Scots. Recognizing the significance of the built fabric to constructions of identity, and cognizant of a number of plantation anniversaries this decade, in very late 2011 the Ulster Scots Academy (separate from the agency, the academy is a government-funded body tasked with research and development in support of the broader Ulster Scots agenda) put a project out to tender that involved surveying and investigating archaeological sites associated with Ulster Scots plantation settlement. Illustrating the charged nature of this project, the company that submitted the lowest price and won the bid, a United States-based multinational, has now forbidden its staff (albeit not its partners) to discuss the project with the media or with the public. In so doing, they may have avoided any negative publicity in the context of Irish America, where a Catholic voice predominates, but they have thrown away a significant opportunity in Northern Ireland to complicate understandings of cultural relations between the Scots, Irish and English in the early modern period. What we already know about the archaeology of lowland Scottish settlement in the north of Ireland sets up a considerable challenge to notions of Ulster as a depopulated wasteland or of the Scots as necessarily uncompromising in their attitude to the Irish. Work by John O'Keeffe (2008) on the Ards Peninsula has clearly demonstrated how the 1606 settlement of lowland Scots under the aegis of William Montgomery and James Hamilton made considerable use of the existent Gaelic pattern of landholding, transport, communication and even housing. The Gaelic Irish were not banished from the region, but continued to live in the Ards and contribute to the evolution of post-medieval society. As such, investigating the character of their relations with the incoming Scots could have considerable value in the present in terms of challenging the construction of difference. But somebody has to be willing to put their head above the parapet.

Whatever results from the excavations, the Ulster Scots Agency will prioritize what they see as the recognizably Ulster Scots element as they employ the research to promote Ulster Scots heritage. Whatever the personal beliefs of employees of the Agency (and some prominent members are very active in cross-community engagement), they have a job to do. As a government agency, they have to demonstrate that they are spending their monies in support of their defined function and remit. While the funding streams remain based upon a notion of parity between the two traditions, the incentive is to continue to promote and construct an arguably exclusive identity. But there is another challenge ahead. What happens to Northern Ireland's unionist Ulster Scots if Scotland itself votes for independence? Orange Order leader David Hume has called for Northern Ireland's Ulster Scots, as 'stakeholders', to be given a vote in the upcoming Scottish referendum (Hennessy 2012), while DUP deputy leader Nigel Dodds has urged a full campaign against Scottish independence (Moriarty 2012).

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**Running from the past**

What about government institutions which are meant to present the heritage of all communities? The Ulster Museum, reopened in 2010 after a multi-year refurbishment, has unfortunately not shown much nerve in dealing with the Troubles and their roots. The current Troubles exhibit, From Plantation to Power-Sharing, is relegated to a dark corner of the museum, perhaps in the hope that visitors might overlook its existence. The exhibit consists of a jumble of mini plywood house gables. The exhibit text itself is basic and event-centred: in effect, Wikipedia does the Troubles. Accompanying the sparse texts are black-and-white videos stringing together footage from the period, albeit in no particular order. Chronology is confused, with no effort to consider the causes of the Troubles, despite the fact that the exhibit title firmly roots the problems in the events of the 17th century. The richly symbolic material culture of the Troubles is nowhere to be seen, while the greyscale colour scheme suggests that the history of the Troubles can be understood as black-and-white; in effect denying the lived experiences of Northern Irish visitors by draining the colour of blood from their memories. An apologetic statement opens the exhibit: 'The gallery is arranged around particular events and themes. Some of them may be upsetting – most remain contentious. We acknowledge the sensitivity and deeply held views about the issues reflected here . . . We welcome feedback.' Feedback has been scathing and focused upon the museum's lack of courage (e.g. Gray 2010).

This lack of nerve to engage directly with contested histories may go some way to explain the somewhat perverse lure of the *Titanic* story as a central element of Belfast's heritage tourism. Uniting behind the slogan 'she was alright when she left here', Belfast can celebrate its role in the design and construction of the ocean liner, a story told in the brand new multi-million-pound Titanic Belfast, a signature building situated in the historic docks area. Even this isn't straightforward. Just outside Titanic Belfast survive the Harland and Wolff drawing offices where the *Titanic* and hundreds of other ships were designed. Around the corner the 1910 ship the *Nomadic*, the last surviving White Star Line vessel, is berthed. Much of the built fabric of the dockyards, where generations of Belfast families spent their working lives, survives, as do some of their homes in the narrow terraced streets of adjacent Sailortown and East and North Belfast. But these physical survivals are not linked to the *Titanic* story either in the exhibits or in the reconfigured tourist landscape. The drawing offices sit vacant and decaying (figure 1), awaiting the next injection of cash to facilitate plans to convert the building not into a heritage or educational centre, but a luxury hotel. Sailortown's historic 19th-century Rotterdam Bar, a centre of Belfast's music scene throughout the Troubles, lies empty and shuttered, under threat of demolition and marooned within a redeveloped commercial landscape ('Belfast's Rotterdam' 2011) (figure 2).

Whose fault is it that these structures and landscapes play no part in presenting the *Titanic* story? Well, the fault can probably be shared around, but without a strong archaeological voice explaining the significance of what may seem to be unprepossessing, dilapidated buildings and docks, few are likely to care because they don't know what is left to care about. While in this

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**Figure 1** Derelict Harland and Wolff drawing offices (left) adjacent to the new Titanic Belfast building (right). Photo by author.




**Figure 2** Sailortown's Rotterdam Bar. Photo by author.

regard Belfast may be little different to other post-industrial cities struggling with redevelopment, it is the relationship of sectarianism in the maritime history of Belfast that lends particular relevance to addressing the significance of its built heritage. During the heyday of the Belfast shipbuilding industry, the skilled jobs were overwhelmingly dominated by Protestant workers. Discriminatory labour practices gave rise to sectarian riots in the shipyards,

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including an outbreak in 1912, the year *Titanic* was launched (Connolly and Mackintosh 2012; O'Connell 2012). If public interpretation remains focused entirely upon the *Titanic* as a marvel of engineering without addressing the concomitant struggles and conflict associated with its construction by a segregated workforce, few locally are likely to care in the long term.

## Charting the future?

Addressing the city's industrial heritage is now emerging as one of several elements in the new Belfast City Council (2012) cultural framework plan, which will structure future expenditure and programmes in relation to grants and projects and has been drawn up through consultation with members of the public as well as professionals. The document itself, which is subject to the approval of the elected city councillors, only tentatively and obliquely references the value of heritage in post-conflict Northern Ireland: 'People who are knowledgeable about their heritage, history and traditions are connected to the places in which they live and work and feel more comfortable with themselves and with others, even when they identify difference.' Another key element over the next year will be dealing with one more of a series of contentious anniversaries. In 1613, Belfast received its crown-sanctioned city charter. Activities commemorating the charter will need to steer a careful course that acknowledges the development of Belfast as a plantation town but also addresses the pre-plantation history of the settlement as well as the reality that plantation-era Belfast was never an exclusively Protestant domain (Ó Baoill 2011, Connolly 2012).

The 1613 town charter anniversaries are shared by Ulster's other plantation towns, and local authorities have chosen to deal with the issue of commemorating their plantation past in varying fashions. The walled city of Derry/Londonderry built its successful bid to be the UK City of Culture on the back of its 1613 town charter anniversary and its efforts at developing a peaceful future. Yet official plans for the City of Culture are resolutely arts-driven, not heritage-driven, reflecting anxiety over addressing the unhealed wounds that precipitated the detonation of two incendiary devices outside the City of Culture offices ('Derry bomb attack linked to award' 2011). Rhetoric surrounding the surviving early 17th-century city walls, built to defend the English settlement, focuses on 'neutralizing' or 'decommissioning' the walls in the present, not on taking a critical look at their past. The aim is looking forward and not backward. Acts of forgetting can have value in conflict resolution, but the walls themselves remain and have stories to tell.

Elsewhere, the peace dividend has brought an increased willingness on the part of some public authorities to begin to engage with the relationship between the past and present. Subsequent to the 2009 plantation tours referenced above, European Union Peace III monies were acquired by a local authority, the Causeway Museums Service within Coleraine Borough Council, to repeat and expand on the archaeological tours, and to involve local communities in excavations of plantation-period sites. Feedback has continued to be surprising, and encouraging: 'So much has been blown out of the water. Stories and myths that we accepted as truth. Stories we grew up with' (Northern Ireland Community Archive 2012). Other projects

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challenging accepted narratives and consciously bringing together groups from across the sectarian divide include multi-year excavations at Dunluce Castle on the north Antrim coast, a late medieval castle once occupied by the Catholic Highlander Randall McDonnell. Illustrating the complexity of the past is the fact that McDonnell himself was actually a keen proponent of the plantation process which brought Protestant settlers and rule in the early 17th century (Breen 2012). In another example, a community excavation at the site of a Gaelic stronghold and late 16th-century English garrison at Dunnalong, Co. Tyrone, reached not only across the two communities in Ulster, but also across the border into Co. Donegal in the Republic of Ireland. A collaborative project has also reached beyond Northern Ireland, engaging communities in Ulster with those in the Scottish Isles, reconnecting people with their shared medieval heritage.

Returning to Belfast, another cross-community project is exploring the archaeology of the hills that surround the city. Once a no-go area during the Troubles, the Belfast Hills are now recognized as a significant natural and cultural heritage asset for the half-million residents of the greater Belfast area. Investigating the archaeological resources in the hills provides a neutral space for communities to come together. Another project currently under development is the excavation of an enigmatic fortification that is situated near an interface zone in the city. The site may be a late 16th-century English campaign fort, or related to the 1641 Irish Rising/Rebellion, or the 1680s Williamite War. Either way, it will have stories to tell about conflict in the history of early modern Ireland. Involving the unemployed youth of the local communities from across the interface in the excavation is a key element (and challenge) of the plan. Directly dealing with the role of the site in past conflict in engaging with individuals whose own lives have been affected by violence seems to me to be a fundamentally more honest and productive means of engagement than avoiding the issue or whitewashing the past. All of these projects are as much about overcoming social and sectarian division in the present as they are rooted in exploring and sharing the archaeological stories. Some archaeologists may find that balance unacceptable; I do not.

## Finding our voice

I have often been asked by colleagues why I chose to focus on plantation-period archaeology in Northern Ireland, given how much easier it might be to focus on more archaeologically respected periods or, better yet, go somewhere else warm and sunny and, by virtue of being at a distance, conduct research considered by my institution as being of greater international significance. In response, I usually say that far from finding it difficult, I find it very easy. People care about the past in Northern Ireland, even if the past continues to be contested – indeed, *because* the past continues to be contested. There is an appetite to understand. When histories are all agreed, they cease to be a point of conversation. But we don't need conflict to make a difference. We just need to recognize that, like it or not, our identity as archaeologists, as professionals with insight into the past, puts us into a position where we can 'exert influence'. Deciding when, why and how we choose to do that is the hard part.

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In their introduction to this discussion, Sarah Tarlow and Liv Nilsson Stutz ask whether or not 'our expertise in thinking and articulating ideas give[s] us authority in public life'. For me the answer is yes. I believe we have a responsibility to recognize our ability to exert influence, and a responsibility to act as responsible members of our own societies. Sometimes that may mean remaining quiet, but other times it means acknowledging our authority and standing up as a public intellectual. One doesn't have to be charismatic or French or male to be a public intellectual. And a public intellectual doesn't have to be a celebrity, or even widely recognized. A public intellectual is one who is not afraid to step outside professional circles and comfort zones and engage and challenge and comment on issues of broad relevancy in the present. And, like it or not, the past is very relevant in the present and as archaeologists we happen to know a lot about the past. And quite a lot about how it has been, is being and can be misused for political purposes. Surely that has a social value.

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## Participate or perish. Why archaeology must gain confidence

*Åsa M. Larsson**

## Abstract

While other fields of the humanities have often brought forth intellectuals taking part in public discourse, influencing politics and society, archaeologists have been wary of sticking their necks out after the Second World War. However, the tradition of leaving it to others to connect prehistoric narratives to current politics or new scientific results is damaging both to the public understanding of our past and to our own discipline. In this article I argue that preconceptions of human past are guiding much decision making both locally and globally, and that it is therefore our responsibility to take an active part and to problematize this. Failing to do so only means that other people

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will cherry-pick our research for their own ends. More specifically, it will also lead to a drying up of funding in these difficult economic times, as archaeology takes a back seat to anthropology and sociology. I draw on personal experience to offer suggestions on how one could go about becoming part of the public debate and, in the long run, perhaps carve out a position as a public intellectual.

**Keywords**
public archaeology; war; ethics; social media; DNA; science; politics

> *I come here with an acute sense of the costs of armed conflict – filled with difficult questions about the relationship between war and peace, and our effort to replace one with the other. Now these questions are not new. War, in one form or another, appeared with the first man. At the dawn of history, its morality was not questioned; it was simply a fact, like drought or disease – the manner in which tribes and then civilizations sought power and settled their differences. And over time, as codes of law sought to control violence within groups, so did philosophers and clerics and statesmen seek to regulate the destructive power of war.*
>
> Barack H. Obama

The quote above is from the lecture given by Barack Obama in Oslo, 10 December 2009, as he received the Nobel Peace Prize. The reason why I include the quote is the telling part where Obama professes a conviction that war is part of human nature, and that civilization is how we try to get that destructive force under control. President Obama is certainly not alone in this view of humanity's propensity for strife – it is a commonly held belief, supported by renowned philosophers such as Hobbes.

That this is more than a mere throwaway phrasing is evident in the in-depth article by Michael Lewis in the October 2012 *Vanity fair*. Lewis had been given extensive access to Obama and devotes a considerable portion to how the US president dealt with the unexpected prize, made even more complicated by the fact that the USA was then involved in war efforts in the Middle East. Obama wrote the speech mostly by himself while travelling to Norway, after he had discarded an earlier draft by his speech-writers that he felt did not convey his sentiments on the subject of war and peace.

Why war? What for many national leaders would be more of an intellectual exercise is for the US commander-in-chief a very real issue that has led to decades of complicated global politics affecting us all. The question about the nature of war is a question about the nature of humanity, and our view about human nature can have a profound impact on real politics. Because from the question of the nature of war springs the question 'How do we achieve peace?': by brute force, by imposing 'civilization' (however that is defined), by supporting grass-roots democratic movements, by levelling economic inequality, by securing international economic growth, by minding one's own business?

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## Ever since the Stone Age . . .

The question about the root and cause of war/peace is also a question that affects archaeology as the answers tend to draw upon prehistory and the origins of mankind. Explanations of human behaviour, gender roles, society, economy and identity are put forward by research disciplines ranging from neuroscience and microbiology to philosophy, but many of them rest parts of their reasoning on ideas about prehistoric humans. This is only to be expected, but the problem is that these views about prehistory, the Palaeolithic especially, tend to rest on old, outdated or overly simplistic models. That is why, when neuroscientists claim that they find a gendered differentiation of preference for red and blue, they explain this difference as a result of a hunting and gathering past, where these tasks were supposedly gender-specific (Hurlbert and Ling 2007). The merits of the science behind the study can be criticized in themselves, as it seems to gloss over the apparent cultural differences also present, which appear to suggest that colour preference may have more to do with upbringing than with gender. But what I find especially telling is how this is but one of many examples where natural scientists 'explain' their results, and thereby validate them, by using arguments drawn from archaeology/anthropology.

What tends to be common is that this final chain in the line of reasoning does not undergo the same scrutiny or high demand of proof as the technical side of the study. This is even more bizarre as most natural scientists tend to point out in every other forum that the humanities and social sciences are not 'real' sciences, in that their theories and concepts cannot be tested and replicated. But when the need arises to explain various behavioural and biological specifics of humanity, we often see how popularized or controversial concepts of archaeology and anthropology are used without any hesitation or source criticism.

## If we won't, others will

When *Science* published an article on results of DNA analysis on Neolithic human bones from Sweden, it was the method of extracting and analysing ancient DNA that gave the study its scientific bona fides (Skoglund *et al.* 2012), but what was specifically highlighted in both title and press releases was what this supposedly told us about the spread of agriculture to this region. The peer review of the archaeological conclusions, however, hardly went through the same rigorous peer review as the scientific method. Science correspondent Michael Balter (2012) actually pointed out in a separate piece that the archaeological conclusions were based on pretty slim evidence (not a single individual tested actually dated to the early Neolithic) and that there was not enough evidence yet to support the suggested model. This did not stop *Science* either from publishing it, or from launching a pretty intense media campaign to draw attention to this specific article and its 'evidence' for population migration as a cause for the spread of agriculture to Scandinavia.

This should concern us beyond intra-discipline debate, as the discussion also hinges upon how we define present-day Swedes. Different cultures in the Stone Age are portrayed as ancestral or non-ancestral to the modern population. It did not take long for this to find its way onto various Internet

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forums where members of the public are discussing genetics, populations, immigration and ancestry. Scientific articles should be allowed to study difficult and sensitive subjects; however, doing so demands a high level of understanding about the complexity of the terms used to draw conclusions. More to the point, although many archaeologists understand this and stay clear of public discourse on the matter, it will not stop others from making use of these subjects. And unless we take part, they will do so unopposed.

Given the prevailing interest in what makes us human, one would expect that archaeologists hold a strong position as experts and public intellectuals. As we all know, the reality is the opposite. Only rarely do we see an archaeologist in the media discussing anything other than an interesting artefact or a particular excavation. It is apparent that different disciplines have different cultures when it comes to interaction in the public sphere, and archaeology in general seems to suffer from a deeply ingrained inferiority complex. There are many and complex reasons for this, and it is not the aim of this paper to unravel the roads that have led us here. It is an aim, however, to question the validity of this standpoint and to make a case for the need for more of us to take an active part in the public discourse, whether in the media, with local people, with politicians or at university. For the truth of the matter is that these issues will be discussed with or without us – and, more to the point, our own field of research will be used by others trying to make *their* case. Or alternatively, politicians and other decision makers will draw upon their own barely conscious understanding about the past to make assumptions about the present and the future that will affect us all.

So it is not as simple as locking the door to the ivory tower in order to protect the admittedly fallible understanding we have of human prehistory from being used and abused. On the contrary, the less we make ourselves and our field open to debates and scrutiny, the easier it will be to abuse. It should also be pointed out that we live and work in a time where higher education is experiencing much economic cutback and scepticism. What 'use' does society have for people digging up pottery sherds and bricks anyway? And do we really need to spend that much money digging up more sherds and bricks? Aren't our museums overflowing with that stuff already? If archaeology does not contribute to a deeper understanding of humanity, why should any money be diverted to it? Would not the things we already have be better served by being packaged and presented by entertainment experts in a suitably exciting atmosphere?

Archaeologists know how much our field does contribute to our understanding of human history, and how necessary continued excavation is as there is still so much in our material that is fragmentary and poorly understood. However, our reluctance to participate in discussing these issues outside our own seminars and conferences is hurting us and harming our subject. Hence the title of this article – we need to participate or we will perish. That is not to say that every archaeologist should claim a soap box and start handing out pamphlets. Within every subject there are those researchers who are more at ease with and interested in taking a public role. However, it is naive to suppose that structure does not play a part in this. Undergraduate and even graduate courses generally do not include

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any discussion or encouragement of public participation. Students rarely, if ever, get to meet or read public intellectuals who are archaeologists – unlike students of sociology, psychology, philosophy, history or literature. There is still a stigma in archaeology about popularizing the subject, and junior researchers are understandably hesitant about putting themselves on display.

## Where to start?

If we truly wish to transform archaeology into a subject that participates more actively with the public outside the museum, there are structural changes that need to be made. These are not specific to archaeology, but relate to any research discipline, whether in the humanities, the social sciences or the natural sciences. Starting with undergraduate courses, but especially at graduate levels, students should be encouraged to read and discuss current topics and practice writing about and debating these. While many archaeology graduates will not end up doing research, most will find themselves in careers where their knowledge can bring another dimension or a deeper level of complexity to a topic. Public discourse is not the aim and focus of archaeology, but it won't hurt to have our practitioners a bit better prepared when put in such a situation. The best possible outcome would be if we had enough archaeologists acting as public intellectuals for the many different aspects and theoretical standpoints of our field to become visible. The idea is not to present a united front; on the contrary, we would be better served if there were less chance of one or two charismatic individuals presenting as gospel their take on archaeology.

## Think global, act local

This is all fine and well, some of you may think, but journalists, reporters and politicians aren't exactly knocking down my door to get a quote. How do we even get a foot in the door? The best advice I can give is to start by learning how to walk before you try to run. In fact, the most effective way to make an impact is by starting locally, by writing in the local paper where it is usually easier to get accepted. This is also the place where many issues of a principal nature become visible in specific cases, such as ethical considerations about excavating burials, economic questions regarding the cost of archaeology, the way heritage sites may hinder development or help tourism, etc. All these issues are of great importance to local people, and they are also very much on the agenda of local politicians. A balanced and well-formulated opinion piece by an archaeologist can do a lot to sway public opinion and also help overcome suspicion and misunderstanding. The scepticism and outright hostility that many people can feel toward not just archaeology, but researchers in general, is far better dealt with by interacting on this level than in an ever-so-cleverly written article in a national newspaper. Starting locally also means ample opportunity for practice. This should not be underestimated. It is a skill to write shortly and poignantly about difficult questions without becoming bogged down in minutiae and alienating readers. It is also good practice to get responses and feedback which will help you hone your skills of debate. Having established a good base locally, and generated interest and respect from journalists, other offers to weigh in on a greater stage

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tend to appear. Journalists don't like to go hunting for reclusive researchers who may be brilliant but will turn out to be unintelligible in a studio or while being interviewed. They want professional people who have shown not just a genuine interest in debate, but also a definite skill in that area.

**Go online**

Another stage that archaeologists should make better use of is the Internet. Especially with the explosive development of social media the opportunity to break free of the constraints of the physical space you inhabit is too good to ignore. The Web allows for researchers to create and develop their own networks, pretty much independent of the personal introduction needed IRL ('in real life'). Whereas most researchers' experience is that their networks tend to narrow down to a more and more specialized sub-segment of archaeology (e.g. Bronze Age, gender, pottery, phenomenology, etc.), online there can be a meeting of similar interests across both nationalities and disciplines. Questions regarding identity, religion, craft, learning, agriculture, kinship, dominance, change and so on appear across a multitude of disciplines and there is much we can learn from each other. There is much that archaeology can bring to the table.

Research blogs have taken off enormously in the last decade. There is everything from researchers' own personal blogs to more or less professional research bloggers hosted by publishers. The social aspect inherent in blogging, where comments are encouraged and links between blog posts help generate more readers, have resulted in many bloggers forming vast networks across national borders and disciplines. Despite the fact that the humanities should be a haven for those who wish to express themselves in text, it is the science bloggers who have really taken the tool to heart. This is in part because their subjects are less specific to time and place. Still, there is a vibrant and growing community of archaeology bloggers who share information and discuss general themes. Blogs are also an excellent way to practise both at writing fairly short and interesting texts, and in how to interact with comments and responses. A blog is also a bit of digital real estate that establishes your interest in dialogue and possibly debate. Unlike an opinion piece in a newspaper, the blogger is the editor and has full control over what is written and published, and freedom to follow up or continue as he or she pleases. A blog gives you the opportunity to weigh in on newspaper articles quickly and without editorial censure. Since many, if not most, articles today are published online, linking to an article is easy and will show up in search engines. Being interviewed you are always dependent on a journalist to present your sentiments to the public; in a blog, you can take back some power over the word.

Again, while many who start to blog feel a need to do so in English to reach a big audience, I would recommend perhaps starting in your native language if that is not English. That way the blog can start to build a readership by taking part in more local or national discussions, whereas on the global stage it is easy to become drowned under the torrent of blogs and online media outlets. Microblogs like Twitter are also a good complement to blogs, or just interesting social media in themselves. These are more of a

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flow of news, links and consciousness, but they are a quick and easy way to connect both with other researchers and with journalists. The one thing that is absolutely essential for any kind of social media usage is the intent to be *social*. Blogs, forums and microblogs are not about monologues or one-way communication. Nor are they to be confused with publishing. You must be interested in what goes on around you, what other people are talking about and sharing. You must be prepared to interact civilly and genuinely in dialogues on your own blog and preferably on other blogs, by commenting on their posts.

The best way to carve out a position as a public intellectual, or at least as a publicly minded researcher, is by being open, interactive and curious. This is also the best way to make other people interested in what you bring to the discussion. From my standpoint, taking part in a wider forum than my own narrow field has expanded my horizons and helped renew my commitment to archaeology. It is not always easy to remember the passion that brought us to this subject to begin with, and I have found that few things help more than meeting others who are genuinely interested in prehistory. As for the need for participation in current affairs, I would recommend noting in articles, on television and on the radio every time someone draws a conclusion or bases an argument on a notion of prehistory and human nature. It can be anything from what our kids should wear to the roots and causes of war. And then ask yourself if you have something to add to that. Then find a way to do so.

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## The dead and their public. Memory campaigns, issue networks and the role of the archaeologist in the excavation of mass graves

*Layla Renshaw**

### Abstract

This contribution will consider how the practice of archaeology 'brings a public into being'. Drawing on examples of the excavation of mass graves from the Spanish Civil War and the First World War, particularly those cases resulting from activism on the part of memory campaign groups, this paper considers how the act of excavation can serve as a catalyst for members of the public to coalesce and deliberate the complex and far-reaching questions associated with the post-mortem treatment and commemoration of the dead. The necessity to fulfil the aims of particular constituencies, such as the relatives of the dead, or the need to maintain a position of impartiality, may militate against the archaeologist's full intellectual engagement with these questions, resulting in the archaeologist's role being defined primarily by their technical or practical contribution. The concept of the issue network is explored

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as a way to understand the formation of memory campaigns and the archaeologist's relationship with the public. The idea of the network underlines the potential for the archaeologist to make an intellectual contribution that develops and democratizes the debate surrounding an excavation, even if their position is contested, and so bring a wider public into being.

**Keywords**
forensic archaeology; public intellectual; Spanish Civil War; First World War

## Introduction

This article will focus on the growing sub-field of archaeology concerned with the excavation of human remains and associated artefacts of those killed in war or political violence, particularly episodes from the recent past. This work is usually undertaken by specialists in forensic or conflict archaeology and is accompanied by a particular set of challenges in terms of the archaeologist's role and relationship with the public. These challenges are primarily shaped by the possibility that the dead may be uniquely identifiable individuals, with their own descendants living in the present. Other members of the public may possess a strong biographical link to the graves, as witnesses, or even perpetrators, of the deaths being investigated. That these deaths are part of larger historical episodes produces further challenges. The memory and meaning of these episodes are still contested and continue to reverberate strongly in the present day (Verdery 1999). Unlike the majority of archaeological work which proactively seeks public engagement, through press releases, education and outreach initiatives, the excavation of mass graves can find itself the focus of intense public interest and critical scrutiny. In addition to the recent time frames and traumatic histories behind the graves, the visually disturbing and emotionally evocative nature of these discoveries means that mass-grave excavations can elicit strong public reactions, provoking debate and sometimes polarizing opinion.

This article will focus on two recent examples of mass-grave excavations, the Republican graves of the Spanish Civil War and the excavation of First World War soldiers from the Battle of Fromelles. In both these cases, the excavations occurred as the direct result of sustained public activism and campaigning over many years, overcoming the initial resistance of state authorities and some academic specialists. Both cases inspired the formation of concerted memory campaigns, specific issue networks that formed around a shared interest in raising awareness of a particular group of war dead, and pursuing the concrete aims of locating, identifying and commemorating the remains of the dead. This article will explore the challenges and opportunities for archaeologists working in these contexts to make a contribution as public intellectuals. It will also explore the concept of the issue network as a useful analytical tool for thinking about how new publics form around archaeological work and how archaeologists can conceptualize their relationships with these publics. Finally, it will consider what is particularly

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'archaeological' in the archaeologist's potential contribution as a public intellectual.

## Forensic and conflict archaeologists as public intellectuals

As post-war and forensic exhumations become more widespread, and as the development of the discipline focuses primarily on its methodological or technical development, it is possible to forget that the exhumation of the recent dead poses profound metaphysical, ethical and political questions (Steele 2008). Such questions include: will the dead be 'disturbed' by exhumation or 'laid to rest' by reburial? For war dead in particular, can the movement of their remains bring about some resolution or redemption of violent acts committed in the past? Another question arises over who owns the dead, particularly if they died for a cause or a country, and to what extent are the recent dead the private concern of relatives, or are they our shared collective ancestors? Furthermore, to what extent should the commemorative acts and monuments that accompany exhumation and reburial reflect the era in which the dead lived and died, or instead reflect our contemporary values and concerns? Lastly, how can the discovery and identification of human remains provoke new and intense feelings of emotional attachment and mourning, even for individuals whom one has never known, who may have died decades before our own lifetime?

For societies and individuals drawn into the exhumation process, these questions are new, immediate and highly charged (Wagner 2008). For archaeologists working with the recent dead, it is a responsibility inherent in this kind of work to formulate a rationale for exhumation and offer some possible answers to questions of the kind enumerated above, or at least an intellectual framework for debating these questions. As a discipline steeped in the complex relationship between societies and the material traces of their past, the intellectual tools of archaeology must be of value in the process of reckoning with these histories. The intense levels of public feeling, the ready interest of news media to provide a platform for comment, and the necessarily close working relationship with constituencies such as witnesses and relatives should all serve to create a clear opportunity for archaeologists to make a valuable intellectual contribution to these far-reaching questions, but in reality a number of factors may militate against this.

In the discussion that surrounded the original presentation of these papers, on the theme of the archaeologist as public intellectual, a number of speakers reflected the general feeling that archaeology was overlooked as an intellectual discipline, particularly in the mass media and other platforms for cultural commentary. Archaeology is not seen as an area of expertise that confers any particular insights on the 'big' questions, the urgent or complex matters of popular concern. This seems particularly the case when compared with practitioners of a range of other disciplines such as historians, philosophers, theologians, evolutionary biologists or physicists, all of whom possess a subject-informed perspective that may confer insights into broader societal or existential concerns. They are all acknowledged as having their own narrow disciplinary expertise, but also the potential to make far-reaching comments on the broad sweep of time and space, the past and the future, human nature

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and ethics. In considering these comparisons, the important distinction may be that archaeology is still popularly seen as a practical technique or method rather than as a fully realized discipline with a corpus of theory and debate. It is perceived as a primarily physical or material practice, the discovery and recovery of evidence, and therefore something we do, rather than something we think or talk about doing.

It is useful to reflect upon this narrow definition of the archaeologist's role, the archaeologist as technician, when assessing the intellectual contribution of archaeologists to mass-grave excavations. Working on sites that are the focus of such widely constituted and passionately engaged publics, and at the intersection of so many complex political and ethical questions, there is a greater opportunity for the archaeologist to make a significant intellectual contribution but also greater risks and potential controversies associated with doing so, and these risks may prompt a retreat into the technical. In this case, the primary rationale for an archaeologist's participation in a project is that the excavation follows the wishes of a particular constituency generally recognized as having some privileged moral or ethical claim over the dead, be it their family and community or, in the case of military deaths, the army or the state. The archaeologist is the skilled practitioner or operative with the technical expertise to successfully implement the wishes of this privileged constituency to excavate the dead. In this conceptualization of an excavation, the archaeologist becomes an extension of the agency of a particular constituency, and works on its behalf.

Of course, most archaeologists engaged in this work have a number of strongly felt motives or rationales for their participation. Saunders (2002) presents a comprehensive summary of the different rationales for the excavation of mass graves. These include: to allow for an accurate accounting of who has died and reconstruct the cause and manner of their death and burial; to enable legal action against the perpetrators, if applicable to the historical context; to counter historical revisionism or denial that these deaths occurred; to enable culturally appropriate funerary rites to be enacted for the dead; and to bring some form of psychological and emotional solace to the families and communities of those who died. Taken on the general level, as guiding principles, these all appear ethically sound and intellectually valid aims, but in the particularity of each excavation they become more complex: who has the authority to take legal action? Whose version of history constitutes a 'revision'? Which funerary rites are 'appropriate'? How close must a relative be to constitute 'family'?

A further consideration militating against the role of the forensic or conflict archaeologist as public intellectual is the difficult question of objectivity in the discovery and recovery of evidence. In such historically contested environments, it is precisely the apparent objectivity and neutrality of physical evidence that carries weight. Domanska (2006) has referred to this maintenance of professional objectivity as the creation of 'radical distance' between the archaeologist and the dead, pointing to the ethical complexity of this position. The absence of mediation and authorship associated with the archaeological process, widely perceived as an act of discovery, is part of what gives archaeologists their authority to work in

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these contexts. It is understandable, then, that archaeologists may feel that an intellectual engagement with the larger questions of mass-grave excavation may compromise their authority and trusted status as expert practitioners, and worse, that the physical evidence they recover may be tainted by association.

The risk is that formulating an intellectual position on the meaning, political significance, rationale or desired outcomes of a mass-grave excavation could be viewed as partisan, it could alienate certain constituencies from working with the archaeologists, and, by invoking their expert status in formulating this position, archaeologists could unduly influence families and communities as they struggle to reckon with the past. Overall, it is apparent that working on excavations that have strong repercussions in the present confers some intellectual responsibilities on the archaeologist, and that an archaeologically informed perspective may be constructively applied to the metaphysical, political or ethical questions that arise from these cases, yet it is equally clear that to tackle these questions in a public forum invites complexity and incurs risk. In order to think through this, it is instructive to consider the definition of a public and the way in which publics are constituted around particular issues, in order to reassess how the archaeologist's relationship and communication with a public are conceptualized.

## Archaeology sparks a public into being

To consider the concept of a public in more detail it is useful to look at the work of sociologist of technology Noortje Marres, whose starting point is that there is no pre-existing or ongoing entity called a 'public' but instead it is the issue itself – a set of connected problems, concerns or opportunities – that sparks a public into being. Marres (2005) revisits the 'Lippmann–Dewey' debates of the 1920s centred on the growing technological complexity of public policy decisions which it was presumed would lead to a technocratic era at the expense of public engagement in democracy. In an early attempt to explain the formation of public opinion, the journalist and commentator Walter Lippmann wrote on the problems of complexity, the imperfect sources of information that the public had access to, and the role of the expert in shaping opinion. In response, philosopher John Dewey argued that even if complex issues went beyond the expertise or energies of single individuals, communities would form around the issue and engage in collective deliberation. Following this view, fears regarding participation in democracy or the public sphere are misplaced, and, indeed, complex issues should ignite higher levels of public engagement.

In her own work, Marres (2006) has applied these theories to the formation of publics around environmental issues, particularly the adoption of green technologies, studying online activity to trace the mechanisms by which diverse groups coalesce and contribute to issues. This is part of the growing body of work on the significance of the Internet in the creation of new public spheres, and the concept of the network in analysing community and identity politics (Castells 2004; 2008). Working within actor-network theory, she favours the issue network as an alternative concept to a public. Some key points in this approach are that publics are never static or homogeneous, nor

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a passive audience deliberating the issues presented to them by an expert or authority; instead issue networks are constantly identifying new questions and framing the terms of debate. Publics cannot be reduced to their constituent stakeholders, each with a discreet perspective to be addressed, as they are networked and thus constantly acting upon and responding to each other. The model of the issue network means that simplistic distinctions between expert and layperson are undermined as they are both within the network, subject to mutual influence and able to support or contest each other's positions on the issue.

Following the principles of actor-network theory, this approach calls attention to the importance of the material actors within a network (Marres and Lezaun 2011), such as print media and the Internet, and intangible parts of an issue, such as competing theories and paradigms. In the case of those issue networks that form around mass-grave excavations, the material actors would include the sites, artefacts and human remains themselves, as recognized in the Latourian turn in recent archaeological theory (Domanska 2006; Webmoor 2007). The most active publics are sparked into being by issues that are complex, with implications that are far-reaching and distributed beyond the concerns of any single individual or constituency, particularly issues that are novel and evolving, and for which no pre-existing authority or template for action seems to be adequate. This model of an issue that is novel, evolving, which has widely distributed implications, seems well suited to archaeological work and highlights the potency for archaeology to spark a public into being. The emergence of two memory campaigns, surrounding the excavation of the Republican civilian victims of Francoist violence, and the project to locate and identify the remains of missing soldiers from the Battle of Fromelles, appears to bear this out. These cases can be considered in greater detail to examine the role of the archaeologist in relation to these issue networks.

## The Spanish Civil War

The Spanish Civil War from 1936 to 1939 resulted in widespread trauma to the civilian population of Spain. Tens of thousands of civilians were killed by summary execution with victims rounded up, shot and disposed of in clandestine mass graves throughout Spain. The most widespread and sustained political killings were conducted by Francoist forces against the Republicans, a term which encompassed a broad spectrum of leftist and socially progressive political identities (Preston 2012). Following Franco's victory there was an elaborate national programme of commemoration to honour Franco's forces and supporters. In contrast, the mourning or public acknowledgement of Republican deaths was strictly prohibited, with many relatives of the dead experiencing decades of repressive measures under dictatorship. The transition to democracy in the 1970s, although successful by many measures, was accompanied by a so-called pact of silence, a pervading climate of self-censorship that made the revisiting of the events of war and dictatorship taboo (Renshaw 2010a). Although there were signs of a growing consciousness of this repressed history during the 1980s and 1990s, a radical departure from the pact of silence was initiated by the founding of Republican

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memory campaign groups, particularly the Association for the Recovery of Historical Memory (known by its Spanish acronym, ARMH) with its primary focus on locating, exhuming, identifying and commemorating the Republican civilian dead of the Civil War and its immediate aftermath (González-Ruibal 2007).

The origin of the campaign is significant as it started with journalist Emilio Silva attempting to locate and exhume the remains of his own Republican grandfather, murdered in the war (Silva and Macías 2003). He published a brief newspaper article about this endeavour which included his contact details. He was inundated with messages from relatives of Republican war dead asking for and offering practical advice and moral support. He was contacted by well-wishers who were politically or ethically in favour of his endeavour and, crucially, by a group of archaeologists and anthropologists who offered their expertise and equipment for free. The newspaper article clearly sparked a public into being and formed an incipient network that has gone on to be a nationwide organization and a major player in Spanish civil society, frequently commenting in the national press, collaborating with international organizations such as the UN and Amnesty International, and influencing the formation of new legislation, Spain's Law of Memory, passed in 2007 (Ferrandiz 2006).

The Internet enables a wide nexus of interlinked but distinct memory groups associated with geographical regions, trade unions, political parties or university departments. People identify and affiliate with these memory groups through a broad range of identities and interests, and not solely through a familial connection to the past. In fact, in order to produce such logistically complex outcomes as exhumations and reburials, the network is much more diverse, with the significant participation of amateur or local historians, archivists, lawyers, activists and local bureaucrats and politicians. Those motivated to support the exhumations may be ideologically aligned to Republican or leftist politics, be sympathetic to the demands of the living descendants, or view the exhumations as a necessary corrective to the distortions of the Francoist history that dominated Spain during the dictatorship. The network also includes a broad range of academics – archaeologists, anthropologists, forensic scientists – and is financed by NGOs and philanthropists. The exhumations are also the subject of intensive coverage from journalists, film-makers and artists seeking to represent and interpret the process (Ferrándiz and Baer 2008).

Despite the considerable complexity of the networks that form around exhumations, the self-representation of the memory campaign is simplified as a movement that seeks to empower relatives of the Republican war dead to locate and rebury their family members, primarily by connecting relatives with those experts and operatives, particularly archaeologists, who will enable them to realize this goal and rebury the dead. The primacy of the families is fundamental to the success and momentum of the Republican memory campaign. Basing the campaign on the individual rights of descendants, and the norms of decency and respect for human remains, has proved very effective in garnering a wide base of support. It is very difficult for their political opponents to counter this representation without appearing to be inhumane

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or regressive. This position sidesteps the accusation that the Republican memory campaign is a leftist group changing the historical representation of the Civil War in order to gain political capital in the present day (Renshaw 2011).

However, this rationale has implications for the intellectual contribution that archaeologists can make. To take the example of two rural communities in Burgos that underwent mass-grave exhumations in 2003 and 2004, as part of the investigative process surrounding the exhumation, oral history and archival sources built a picture of the political identities of the dead and the political turbulence that preceded the killings. The murdered men had held public office, were members of trade unions and political parties, and had initiated the improvement of municipal facilities. Some of the victims also refused to attend church and rejected organized religion, and there were rumours that some had been denounced to the authorities by local clerics (Renshaw 2011). In addition to this locally specific background information, many of the archaeologists and campaigners working on these exhumations were historically well informed and situated these deaths in the context of the systematic political killings that had occurred in the region, finding points of comparison with other similar mass graves they had previously worked on, both in the modus operandi of the killings and in the ideological and socio-economic profile of the victims.

In contrast, some of the older relatives of the dead, who had experienced repression and intimidation under dictatorship, completely rejected a political reading of the mass grave and of the political identities of the dead. Instead, they offered alternative explanations as to why their relative had been targeted, claiming their particular relative's death as an exceptional case, or a bureaucratic mistake (Renshaw 2011; see also Fernández de Mata 2010 for comparable accounts). In small communities, the precise political motives behind the killings are highly sensitive (Gassiot Ballbé and Steadman 2008) as they may resonate with political divisions and power relations that persist into the present day and could implicate the perpetrators of the killings or their descendants, something that is scrupulously avoided in all public discussion of the graves. The result is that at many sites no explicit references or representations of the cause or circumstances of these killings are made during the exhumation, despite hundreds of people attending the grave site and viewing the bodies.

At key moments in the exhumation process, the relatives of the dead come together to reach collective decisions on the form and content of the commemorative ceremonies, monuments and plaques that accompany reburial (Figure 1). The position of the archaeologists and campaign co-ordinators was that these decisions should emerge organically through debate amongst the network of relatives of the dead and that only relatives should be the arbiters of these decisions. In some locations this process results in reburials that are accompanied by a Catholic Mass or elements of Christian ritual and symbolism. This has attracted strong criticism from some leftist memory groups, with a representative aligned to the Spanish Communist Party commenting, 'If, in a hundred years, all the dead killed by Franco are lying buried under crosses, they are going to think they were killed for being

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**Figure 1** A reburial ceremony for Republican civilians killed in the Spanish Civil War, Burgos Province, Castile-Leon, Spain.

Catholics' (Renshaw 2011, 206). This is a striking phrase as it is a direct appeal to an archaeological sensibility, an awareness of the responsibilities inherent in any intervention which destroys the material record of a historical event and constitutes in its place a new one which will be interpreted by future generations.

The archaeologists and campaigners bring a historical and political consciousness to their understanding of a mass grave, informed by their experience of other grave sites from the Civil War and the detailed background research undertaken at each site, and they use this to contextualize and interpret the evidence they encounter in the grave. This perspective is shared and acknowledged amongst a circle of archaeologists and campaign activists but it is not publicly represented or debated with others in the issue network, such as the relatives of the dead. However, the archaeologists do share their technical expertise on the skeletal remains, location, injuries and associated artefacts in the form of public presentations and widely disseminated scientific reports (Renshaw 2010b). In this way archaeologists are positioning themselves as primarily technical operators, facilitating the work but without a broader interpretation of the graves, or commentary upon the meaning and legacy of the exhumations.

Arguably, this is an appropriate position for the archaeologist, given the potentially explosive and divisive history of these graves, and shows a necessary sensitivity to the extreme emotion and anguish experienced by many relatives of the dead, who may simply want to see their family member get a proper burial without revisiting the traumatic past. But this

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position fails to recognize the breadth and diversity of the issue network that surrounds the Republican dead. It also misunderstands the operation of networks around these issues, as by explicitly articulating an intellectual position on the exhumations, even if this adds complexity or controversy, levels of public engagement are stimulated. Fears about unduly influencing a debate from a position of intellectual or technical expertise are unfounded if all interventions on an issue ultimately serve to democratize it.

## The Battle of Fromelles

In 2010 a new Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery opened in the village of Fromelles in northern France (Summers 2010). It was constructed for the reburial of 250 First World War soldiers, mainly those of the Australian Imperial Force who fought as part of the British Empire on the Western Front. These particular soldiers had fallen behind enemy lines, fighting in the disastrous battle of Fromelles in July 1916 which claimed over 5,000 casualties (Cobb 2007; Corfield 2009). In the immediate aftermath of the battle, their remains were gathered up by German soldiers and buried in mass graves, where they stayed for over ninety years (Lindsay 2008). The complex narrative of the discovery of the mass graves; the painstaking exhumation; the sophisticated genetic testing that enabled identification of the dead; the hugely successful outreach programme to recruit relatives of the dead to submit genetic samples; and lastly the decision to construct a purpose-built cemetery, and soon a new museum, dedicated to these men, are an example of a highly effective issue network in action.

The existence of these missing graves was initially denied, as it was thought that all the dead had been gathered by the recovery teams that operated on the Western Front after the armistice in 1918 and buried at the original commemorative site for Fromelles, the Commonwealth War Graves Commission cemetery known as VC Corner. This cemetery at VC Corner does not take the usual form of individual grave plots with headstones, because the losses of the battle were so heavy and the remains of many were in such poor condition. Instead, there is a shared monument naming the fallen with a number of large group graves surrounding it. Through the remarkable initiative of Australian amateur historian Lambis Englezos, and his supporters, it was demonstrated that not all the remains had been recovered in the post-war period, and the probable location of the missing bodies was identified through aerial photographs (Corfield 2009; Lindsay 2008). Although there are conventions against prospecting for soldier's remains on the Western Front, the compelling evidence for the location of these mass graves and the identity of those buried in them meant this was deemed an exceptional case.

However, in excavating these newly discovered mass graves, a decision was taken not to reuse group burials at the original cemetery at VC Corner. Given the historical evidence for the probable identities of the dead, and the potential to attain unique identifications through DNA analysis, it was decided to construct a new cemetery with the more conventional format of individually marked plots and headstones. Following the remarkable technical success of both the excavation and the subsequent laboratory analysis, half

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**Figure 2** Headstone of Private E.N. Burney in the new cemetery at Fromelles, Nord-Pas-de-Calais, France.

of these headstones now bear the name of the individual soldier buried under them (Figure 2). The burial of the missing soldiers in the new cemetery at Fromelles undoubtedly represents a success for the techniques of conflict and forensic archaeology (Loe 2010). For many of the relatives of the dead, the project has been a source of profound comfort and pride, as well as emotional turmoil, as they seek to resolve this particular strand of their family's history (Whitford and Pollard 2009). However, the Fromelles project also sets some potentially significant precedents and raises a number of intellectual questions that archaeologists need to engage with.

By opting to use current DNA technology to achieve unique identifications for the recently recovered Fromelles dead, a break has been made with the past. This has created a disparity in the post-mortem treatment of two groups of soldiers from the same battle (Leach Scully and Woodward 2012). Taken alongside the much-publicized identification of the Vietnam Unknown Warrior from an American military cemetery (Holland and Parsons 1999), the break with the past made at Fromelles is an indicator not only of changing technological capabilities, but also of changes in commemorative sensibilities

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regarding the significance of individual identity and familial bonds with the dead (Blair, Balthrop and Michel 2011). It is possible to envisage that, in the near future, the principle of anonymous burial may be more widely challenged by issue networks that form around the dead of particular battles or particular cemeteries. This challenge may extend beyond the kind of clandestine mass graves encountered in Spain, or the missing bodies of Fromelles, and also include the thousands of anonymous 'Known unto God' burials in military cemeteries around the world, or the kind of group interments at VC Corner.

Any issue concerning the dead of the First World War will bring a large public into being, due to the number of people who are strongly and variously engaged with this past. The battlefields and cemeteries of the First World War are examples of a shared cultural property which fulfils a pedagogic, commemorative and contemplative role for a broad cross-section, regardless of their personal, familial or national connection to the dead. For some, they are redemptive places of peace, the material manifestation of an authentic collective desire to honour the dead, whilst for others these cemeteries and monuments represent the inadequate conciliatory rhetoric of the same militaristic regimes who led their citizens into war. Since their introduction after the First World War, the 'Known unto God' headstones have become a powerful trope of 20th-century conflict, evoking the double loss of both life and identity (Laqueur 1996). Through their number and uniformity, these headstones form a composite monument to the scale of loss in the world wars. For some people, the 'Known unto God' are a reminder of our shared responsibility to remember all war dead, regardless of our familial affiliations to a particular soldier, whilst for others the anonymous graves represent a task unfinished due to the technological limitations of the past.

## Conclusion

More issue networks will undoubtedly form in the future, committed to the recovery of war dead who are missing, or to bring about changes in the burial and commemoration of those already found. Archaeologists will be called upon to lend their technical expertise but they must also be prepared to offer an archaeologically informed intellectual perspective on the meaning and outcomes of these interventions. The potential intellectual contribution of an archaeologist can be located in some of the interpretive tools of archaeology, particularly the perspectives conferred by an awareness of context and scale, and a highly developed sensitivity to how the meaning of material culture can change through time. An important contribution is to contextualize the archaeological intervention itself, asking why the network has formed and why the proposed excavation is occurring at that particular moment in the history of the site, in order to highlight the extent to which the resulting archaeology will be informed by contemporary society's preoccupation with and framing of the issue. Archaeologists can also highlight the potential for destruction and preservation inherent in any archaeological intervention, offering a longer time perspective on the future ramifications of changing the material record, and the legacy of the commemorative acts and monuments that accompany exhumation and reburial.

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Carrying out archaeology in the name of the public good, or on behalf of a perceived constituency of the public, such as the relatives of the dead, is not the same as a full and authentic intellectual engagement with an issue and the wider network that surrounds it. Archaeologists should formulate an intellectual rationale for their work which acknowledges the full complexity of the debates that can arise around excavations, and which also reflexively acknowledges their own affective or personal involvement in these debates, and represent this position clearly and publicly. The concept of the issue network suggests that the public which forms around an archaeological project is not static, and through their intellectual contribution archaeologists may widen the network and the debate. The model of the issue network also suggests that complicating or problematizing an issue is part of democratizing it, the opposite of the elitist perspective that some aspects of a problem are too challenging or contentious to articulate in public. The archaeologist can advance the public's deliberation of an issue, even if this occurs by the network contesting, or ultimately refuting, the archaeologist's intellectual contribution.

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## Can archaeologists intervene in public debate on urgent questions of a social, cultural or political nature? A reflection on the Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group (IPAWG)

*Ghattas Jeries Sayej**

### Abstract

The archaeologist's role in public life is not limited to only understanding, reflecting and informing on the past, but also should reveal who we are at present and help society in manoeuvring into the future. We are a major part of the public intellectuals who should intervene in public debate, not only in the media but also as a part of the decision-making process. We can contribute to making a difference in many aspects of human life, intellectually, socially, culturally and politically. This paper will aim to shed light on my involvement in the Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group (IPAWG). I will focus on how a small group of archaeologists has contributed positively to one of the most complicated political conflicts in modern history. I will also address an example from Al-Jib to indicate the role of archaeologists as scientists, citizens and public figures.

### Keywords

public intellectual; debate; political conflict; Israeli–Palestinian archaeology; Al-Jib (Gibeon)

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*Life can only be understood backwards; but must be lived forwards*

Søren Kirkegaard, Danish philosopher, 1813–55.

## Introduction

During our round table discussion in Helsinki one fundamental question arose and is neatly formulated by Audrey Horning (in this issue, p. 19). 'Is there a line between being an archaeologist and being a citizen? Do we have a moral obligation as experts not to only share our knowledge, but to put that knowledge to work in the present?' As I see it, the role of archaeologists in public life is a combination of understanding the past and present, and helping societies in manoeuvring into the future. Archaeologists can, and should, contribute to education and cultural awareness, and intervene in public debate. The question is whether to keep our involvement part of publicity or make it part of decision making. At the same time, we are not politicians; we are social scientists who deal with cultural heritage as a part of cultural inheritance. But we are also citizens of our respective societies and it is quite crucial, therefore, to contribute to making a difference in many aspects of human life: not only intellectual changes in the field of archaeology, but also social, cultural and political aspects.

In this paper I will shed light on my involvement in the Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group and I will focus on how a small group of archaeologists has contributed positively to one of the most complicated political conflicts in modern history. I will also present one example from Al-Jib (Gibeon) to show how archaeology has been used to encourage and motivate cultural understanding between local societies (Palestinians), and a period of their past, which represents another ethnic group (the Israelites).

## Archaeology as political power

According to Singleton and Orser (2003, 143), 'descendant communities are generally present-day groups of people whose heritage is under investigation at an archaeological site, or who have some other historical, cultural or symbolic link to the site'. However, the greatest challenges of working with successor communities occurs when archaeologists' interests and interpretations collide with those of the descendant communities (ibid., 149), as in the case of Palestine/Israel.

During the 1950s, archaeology in Israel was used as a national cult and popular movement, reflecting a fanatical quest to create a common history of a national state which had citizens from all over the world (Elon 1997, 41–43). Links between the new settlers and the ancestral land were reaffirmed and sites became symbols of national pride and unity in political, religious and military strategies (Trigger 1984, 358–59; 1986, 6; 1995, 271; Silberman 1989; 1998). The goals of Israeli archaeology have meant that very little state support is accorded to the study of other eras, such as the Christian and Muslim periods, since this would be counterproductive from a nationalistic point of view (Trigger 1995, 271; see also Bar-Yosef and Mazar 1982, 310, 322). This was affirmed by excavations of sites such as Masada, where finds were presented as the outcome of a heroic moment in Jewish history (Anderson 1998, 466–67).

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Masada was interpreted as a symbol of national freedom, based on a selective interpretation of the archaeological and historical material. Misinterpreting archaeological data for political purposes has led to ignorance of equally important aspects of the human history (Trigger 1995, 272).

After the 1967 war and the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the Israeli army created an archaeological office headed by army personnel to control all archaeological sites and activities in the occupied territories.[1] To date, there are approximately 6,000 known archaeological sites in the West Bank and East Jerusalem (Greenberg and Keinan 2009, 3–5). Numerous archaeological investigations have been conducted from 1967 until today, all in violation of the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 and the Hague Convention of 1954 and under the pretext of salvage excavations (Sayej 2010, 61).

The vast majority of excavations conducted by the Staff Officer for Archaeology are either published in the form of preliminary reports, or not published at all. The Staff Officer for Archaeology is more or less the only authority to have full access to the recovered data, though under the Freedom of Information Act in Israel other researchers have the right to access these materials as well.

After the establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1994, the Palestinian Department of Antiquities and Cultural Heritage was reborn. The latter has conducted several salvage and scientific excavations in both the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. Some publications are available and material can be accessed by researchers.

## Archaeology and the Israeli–Palestinian conflict

The idea behind the peace process is to give Palestinians the right to self-determination and to establish their own state which will live side by side with Israel (Tveit 2005). A future state of Palestine will be located within the border of 1967 war – i.e. the Gaza Strip, the West Bank and East Jerusalem. The biblical boundaries of the ancient states of Israel and Judea are mainly within what is today known as the West Bank. Archaeological materials recovered there by Israelis since 1967 were justified as the fruits of salvage excavations, even though many of these 'salvage excavations' were conducted as a result of building Israeli settlements which are, according to international law, illegal. It is thus natural that such material recovered will be claimed by Palestinians through sovereignty. However, the Israelis will also claim these materials as part of their national heritage. For both sides archaeology is a sensitive issue and reflects national identity, and, as Silberman (1995, 257) puts it, 'The emotional power of archaeology in Israel is quite intense particularly when archaeologists link the present to a particular golden age'. It is quite vital to highlight that archaeology may jeopardize any future peace agreements if not dealt with systematically and thoroughly, not only among Palestinian and Israeli archaeologists, but also among other archaeologists who work in the region (see http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/shi/ipawg.html).

Since the Oslo accord was signed on 12 September 1993 (see Tveit 2005, 468–85; also www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,ARAB,,,3de5e96e4,0.

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html), Israelis and Palestinians have participated in immense meetings. Major issues such as security, borders, land swaps and water rights have been discussed, whereas other issues, such as cultural heritage, archaeology and the cultural status of Jerusalem, have been neglected.

Until 2005, no formal preparations were made by either side to deal with these issues. It was vital, therefore, to prepare a common understanding for heritage division by creating reliable data resources that will enable negotiations to take place. The Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group (IPAWG) has taken this responsibility and filled the void (see http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/shi/ipawg.html).

## Who are IPAWG?

According to the late Edward Said (1999, 20), 'There can be no possible reconciliation, no possible solution unless Palestinians and Israelis confront each's experience in the light of the other'. Dealing with the past is an essential issue for achieving peace in troubled regions such as Palestine/Israel. Having this in mind, the Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group was established.

The IPAWG is a small group of Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists who recognize that conflicts and tensions related to archaeological heritage pose a significant challenge to future peace negotiations. A group of three Israelis,[2] three Palestinians,[3] two co-organizers,[4] and two professional mediators[5] have taken the responsibility to solve this issue. The group was set up secretly in 2005 in Vienna and from then it worked systematically and intensively until a common document was published in 2008.

The goal of IPAWG was to deal with issues of archaeology and cultural heritage management. We share common borders and a common history, but who owns what? We were also eager to produce updated archaeological data resources and to somehow help facilitate any future negotiations between the two nations. We were not involved in politics and we were not mandated by politicians to carry out this mission. The main objective of our group was to consider various aspects of the role of archaeology in the Israeli–Palestinian conflict, including the public's perceptions of archaeology, the status of archaeological sites and finds in the event of the implementation of a two-state solution, and Jerusalem as a world heritage site.

## The outcome of the group

Our goal was to pen a paper of common understanding of archaeology and cultural heritage in the Holy Land. This paper can be used as blueprint for those who want to negotiate the future of both nations. The outcome of this understanding was the following:

1 A joint document listing recommendations on the place of archaeological heritage in a final-status agreement.

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2 The creation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem Archaeological Database. This database presents Israeli archaeological activities in the West Bank – including East Jerusalem – between 1967 and 2007.[6]

## Intervention and awareness

In 1997, I became a member of the Palestinian Association for Cultural Exchange (PACE), which is based in Ramallah. During my involvement in this organization, I witnessed the lack of cultural awareness among Palestinians, particularly when it comes to sensitive periods such as the Iron Age – where the biblical stories flourished. There are various reasons behind the lack of knowledge and I have discussed it elsewhere (see Sayej 2010).

One of the major goals of PACE is public awareness. Various campaigns, particularly in rural areas, have been conducted to encourage local communities to safeguard cultural heritage in their regions as a part of their own history. Such awareness campaigns have included diverse lectures, films, meetings and guided tours, as well as preservation and conservation (see Yahya 2005).

One of the most interesting examples is the Palestinian village of Al-Jib (biblical Gibeon). This village is located 10 kilometres north-west of Jerusalem and is the location of the archaeological site of Gibeon. This archaeological site is quite famous due to its water system (the cistern). The ancient water system is a 12th- to 11th-century BC spiral staircase of 79 steps cut into solid rock. During the siege of the city in ancient times, the inhabitants of Gibeon could go through the cistern to a long tunnel, and to a spring outside the walls of city. In this way, they could survive a siege no matter how harsh it might be (see Pritchard 1962).

In modern times, the local Palestinian inhabitants of Al-Jib have ignored this site and used it to dispose of their waste. They did not understand the importance of this site and they viewed it as a justification of the current Israeli occupation. They thought that by doing so they would avoid having to accept the idea that this site might have been used by Jewish inhabitants somewhere around 3,000 years ago. When PACE started an awareness campaign among these inhabitants, as well as restoring the cistern, people became more aware of the cultural heritage of their village regardless of religious or national implications. The inhabitants of Al-Jib see these ruins nowadays as part of their history irrespective of which ethnic group or religion the remains represent. By doing so, PACE have achieved the goal of protecting the cultural heritage of the nation despite the current conflict between Palestinians and Israelis.

## Concluding remarks

As we have seen, the role of archaeologists in public life is not limited to just understanding, reflecting and informing on the past. Our role is also to reveal who we are today and to try to help society move into the future. This kind of involvement is well described by the famous Danish philosopher who said, 'Life can only be understood backwards; but must be lived forwards' (Søren Kirkegaard 1813–55). We are a major part of the public intellectuals who

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should intervene in public debate not only in the media but also in decision making. We should separate our own view of nationalistic archaeology, and rather try to understand archaeology without responding emotionally (Trigger 1995, 277–78). The case of Al-Jib is a good example in this regard. Palestinian archaeologists have intervened in public debate and have protected the cultural heritage of the nation, though part of this site refers to an ethnic group which is seen today as 'the Enemy Nation'.

The Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group was created among regular academics who have absolutely no influence in politics. When our document became publicly known, first among our colleagues and then internationally, the vast majority of responses were positive towards the document. Sensitive issues like Jerusalem, the Dead Sea scrolls and the repatriation of movable objects were often seen as taboo in the past, but when we presented our document such issues became facts on the ground. We risked our jobs and even our lives to achieve this goal, and now it is the only reliable document available to future negotiations between the two nations. Archaeologists can and should make a difference in public debate. We are a small part of the larger society of humankind, but our contribution can make the world a better place to live.

## Websites

For further information about IPAWG document, see http://newsroom.ucla.edu/portal/ucla/plan-brokered-by-ucla-usc-archaeologists-47749.aspx; http://crcc.usc.edu/initiatives/shi/ipawg.html. The document is available as a PDF, for those who wish to download a copy.

For further information about the archaeological database, see http://digitallibrary.usc.edu/wbarc.

Archaeologists' agreement a stride toward Mideast peace (video) available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v = wkRATNj8WDo.

Declaration of principles on interim self-government arrangements available at www.unhcr.org/refworld/publisher,ARAB,,,3de5e96e4,0.html.

## Appendix

The following document became publicly known to the Israeli and Palestinian governments on 21 November 2007, and thereafter became available online on the website of the University of Southern California (www.usc.edu/dept/LAS/arc/sh).

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USC
UNIVERSITY
OF SOUTHERN
CALIFORNIA

COTSEN INSTITUTE OF
ARCHAEOLOGY AT UCLA

November 21, 2007 Re: Israeli-Palestinian Cultural Heritage Agreement

The document accompanying this letter contains policy recommendations for archaeology and cultural heritage developed by a bilateral Palestinian and Israeli group. Its purpose is to inform decisions about archaeology and cultural heritage in a final status agreement. The document reflects recommendations that can be implemented in the context of a peace agreement between two sovereign entities (Israel and Palestine).

This document is an outcome of three years of meetings among a select group of professional and academic Israeli and Palestinian archaeologists and cultural heritage experts. This effort was coordinated by two United States-based archaeologists (the undersigned) and was facilitated by professional mediation and negotiation experts. Funding came from (in chronological order) the University of Southern California (USC) Center for Religion and Civic Culture; the United States Institute for Peace; the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA) Cotsen Institute of Archaeology; the USC Provost's Advancing Scholarship in the Humanities and Social Sciences Initiative and several private donors.[1]

Archaeology is a topic which has not been dealt with systematically by a dedicated bilateral negotiation team in the context of the peace process. This group sought to fill this void because the symbolic meaning of archaeology for people on both sides necessitates a balanced, reasoned approach. For Israelis, archaeology has played a crucial symbolic role in national identity. For the Palestinians, control over cultural heritage within the future borders of the state of Palestine is directly linked to issues of sovereignty that lie at the core of the peace process.

The Israeli-Palestinian Archaeology Working Group included three delegates from each side. While highly placed professionals were among the participants, all attended as private citizens. Each group member realized that their task was to represent an entire constituency. Recognizing that any discussion must be based on actual data, two research groups were established, one Israeli and one Palestinian, in order to identify all archaeological sites and objects that would be affected by the terms of a peace agreement. Because the Palestinian areas were defined under international law as occupied territory, normal Israeli government agencies did not have oversight there. No publicly accessible archive exists about the archaeological work done in the West Bank since June, 1967 when Israeli control was implemented. A database of the affected sites now exists.

Questions about the document or the working group process may be directed to the undersigned.

Sincerely,

Ran Boytner
UCLA Cotsen Institute of Archaeology
Director, International Programs

Lynn Dodd
University of Southern California
Lecturer, School of Religion
Curator, Archaeological Research Collection

[1] These donors are Mary Louise Remy; Jack and Peggy Bryant; Wally and Suzy Marks; and Luis Lainer.

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**Israeli–Palestinian Archaeology Working Group Agreement**
Preamble

This document is based on these assumptions:

1 Sovereign states interacting peacefully.
2 Two-state solution (Israel and Palestine).
3 Cultural heritage interests will be mutually respected.

**GENERAL GUIDING PRINCIPLES**

1 The national territories of Israel and Palestine constitute a unified archaeological landscape divided by political borders.
2 Archaeological resources are not renewable. Both states hold special responsibility to preserve local archaeological heritage as its significance extends far beyond national borders.
3 Each sovereign state defines its own concept of archaeological heritage.

*Joint Recommendations*

1 Both states should make the basic documentation of their archaeological activities and policies accessible to the public, including a national register of sites, monuments and artifacts.
2 All archaeological excavations and surveys should be licensed by the state.
3 States should require archaeologists to comply with professional best practices.
4 Both sides are strongly encouraged to form a bilateral, professional committee in order to consult on cultural heritage issues of joint interest.
5 Both sides are strongly encouraged to cooperate with each other and/or other parties to ensure the well-being of and access to archaeological heritage.
6 Both states are encouraged to adopt relevant international conventions, charters and protocols related to archaeological heritage.

**IMMOBILE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE**

Immobile archaeological heritage includes sites, standing monuments and features that are or were by nature normally a fixed part of a site.

The definition of archaeological heritage is contingent upon its legal definition within each sovereign state.

*SPECIFIC Guiding Principles*

1 Archaeological sites should be treated equally regardless of their period of occupation or any religious, ethnic, national or cultural affiliation.
2 All archaeological sites are the responsibility solely of the sovereign state in which they reside.
3 The physical integrity of archaeological sites should be protected if the international border intersects them.

*Joint Recommendations*

1 Joint Israeli–Palestinian projects should be encouraged.

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2 Both states will make their archaeological sites accessible to the public without discrimination.
3 Where possible, states are encouraged to use multilingual interpretative presentation and maps – particularly in Arabic, Hebrew and English.

## MOBILE ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE

Mobile archaeological heritage includes artifacts and eco-facts from an archaeological context.

The definition of archaeological heritage is contingent upon its legal definition within each sovereign state.

*SPECIFIC Guiding Principles*

1 The artifacts excavated subsequent to June 4, 1967, should be returned to the state in which their original archaeological context is located, either Israel or Palestine, along with all documentation related to their excavation.
2 Artifacts residing in museum collections which were taken over subsequent to June 4, 1967, shall be repatriated.
3 The illegal and indiscriminate removal of archaeological artifacts from an archaeological site should be considered looting.
4 Artifacts which can be shown to have been looted subsequent to June 4, 1967 should be returned to the state in which their original archaeological context is located.
5 After resolution of any repatriation issues, all archaeological artifacts are the sole responsibility of the sovereign state in which they reside. Either state may loan, cede access and consider joint exhibition.
6 Archaeological artifacts should be treated equally regardless of their period or any religious, ethnic, national or cultural affiliation.
7 The above principles apply equally to sensitive archaeological material (see Appendix 1).

*Joint Recommendations*

1 In cases of archaeological heritage that require special facilities which do not exist in the present infrastructure of either state, two options are to be considered: (a) outside entities shall assist financially and professionally in the setup of the required facilities; or (b) such archaeological heritage may be loaned to a party capable of providing adequate care.
2 In light of the destruction of archaeological material by looting we recommend that legal and enforcement parity between the two states be established by legislation in both states that will either a) forbid commercial traffic in archaeological heritage or b) confine commercial traffic to government bodies.

## JERUSALEM

Background: The Old City of Jerusalem and its walls have been designated by UNESCO as a World Heritage Site.

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*Guiding Principles*

1 All guiding principles and recommendations laid out in the other sections (mobile, immobile sections) apply to Jerusalem following the resolution of territorial and sovereignty issues.
2 Regardless of international borders, Jerusalem's World Heritage Site status should be safeguarded.
3 Jerusalem's unique archaeological heritage is not renewable.
4 Both countries hold special responsibility to preserve the archaeological heritage of Jerusalem as its significance extends far beyond national borders.
5 The religious and political sensitivities of Jerusalem should be taken into account whenever archaeological work is undertaken.

*Joint Recommendation*

1 If Jerusalem, or a part of Jerusalem, is divided between Israel and Palestine, then the Guiding Principles noted above in this document shall apply.
2 If any portion of Jerusalem is subject to suspended sovereignty arrangements (a Special Regime), then an archaeological heritage department will be constituted subject to the Special Regime Authority. That archaeological heritage department will be empowered with the requisite authority and will be given the budgetary capacity to preserve and manage the archaeological heritage in accordance with best professional practices.
3 For Cultural Resource Management purposes, a Heritage Zone will be created that reflects the area of maximum concentration of significant archaeological sites in the contiguous urban fabric of ancient Jerusalem (see fig. 1).
   a Regardless of the sovereignty arrangements in Jerusalem, the parties are encouraged to expand the borders of the World Heritage Site to include, at a minimum, the Heritage Zone (defined above).
   b A UNESCO observer will be appointed by UNESCO. All sides will report any activities impacting cultural heritage within the Heritage Zone to this observer.
   c Heritage management does not preclude development but requires mitigation, and protection of, cultural heritage resources.

*Publication of Archaeological Heritage*

This section addresses the issue of publication rights for archaeological material that will be repatriated between Israel and Palestine.

1 The process of repatriation shall begin upon signing the Final Status Agreement.
2 For archeological excavations and associated excavated material, if the material has been published fully prior to repatriation, the material shall be returned immediately.
3 All archaeological material subject to repatriation will be repatriated within five (5) years from the date of signing the Final Status Agreement.

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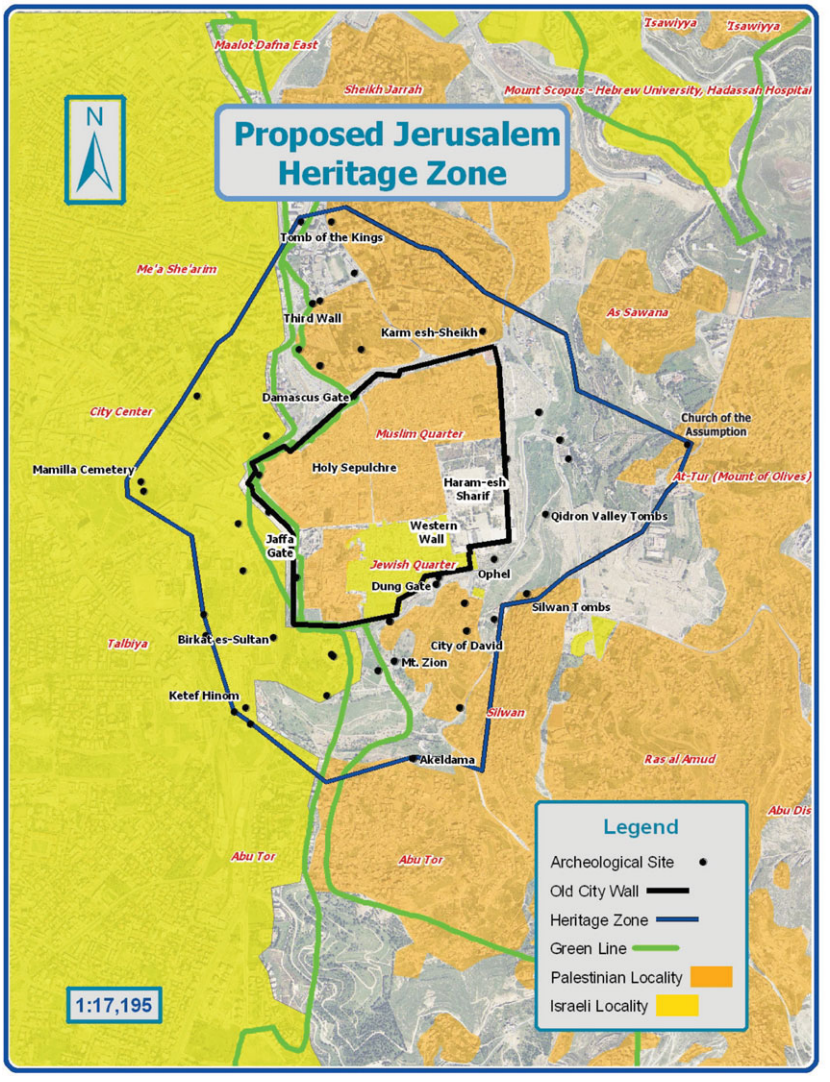



**Figure 1** Map of proposed heritage zone.

4 All publication rights for repatriated material will be terminated ten years after the date of signing of the Final Status Agreement.

## Appendix 1

***Sensitive Mobile Archaeological Heritage*** The principles enumerated for mobile archaeological heritage shall apply and in addition, because both sides acknowledge that there are objects which have extraordinary importance to the other side, the following recommendation should be considered:

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Keeping in mind the deep symbolic value of certain items of archaeological heritage on the one hand, and recognizing the principle of repatriation on the other hand, we recommend that both sides consider loan and exchange arrangements where sensitive archaeological material is involved.

## Notes

[1] The Staff Officer for Archaeology of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria.
[2] Dr David Ilan (School of Biblical Archaeology, Jerusalem), Prof. Rafi Greenberg (Tel Aviv University), and a third archaeologist who does not wish to make his name known for various reasons.
[3] Prof. Nazmi el-Jubeh (RIWAQ), Dr Adel Yahya (PACE) and Dr Ghattas Sayej (Vest-Agder County Council).
[4] Dr Lynn Dodd (USC) and Dr Ran Boytner (UCLA).
[5] Moty Kristal and Sonja Rauschütz, Vienna partners.
[6] Including the work of the Staff Officer for Archaeology of the Civil Administration of Judea and Samaria.

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# Entering history? Archaeologists as intellectuals *à la recherche du temps perdu*

*Nathan Schlanger**

## Abstract

Following some comments on the notion of 'public' intellectuals (can they be otherwise?), this brief paper focuses on the intellectual roles that could be played by archaeologists today. Exposure to the media, usually following some spectacular discovery, serves to confirm the romantico-empirical image of the discipline, but should also lead to an engagement with key public debates. Three such debates are indicated: the idea that 'African man has yet to enter history' as expressed by the former French president; the creation of a Maison de l'histoire de France under the tutelage of the Ministry of National Identity; and, across the Channel, the Localism Bill, which pushes decision making to an untenably low level while promoting a historically and archaeologically questionable view of local communities.

## Keywords

public intellectual; private intellectual; African history; Maison de l'histoire de France; Localism Bill

This may seem like linguistic nit-picking to begin with, but I must admit to being puzzled by this notion of 'public intellectual' that concerns us here. Are not intellectuals by definition inherently 'public'? What on earth would they otherwise be? Well, let us rule out from the onset some 'secret' intellectuals, on the mode of this notorious 'secret footballer' who anonymously tells all about the antics of his profession. The same goes for any possible 'closet' intellectuals, who would be keeping up boorish and bigoted appearances against their

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natural tendencies. We are left then with the antonymic deduction that some intellectuals might actually be 'private'. To be sure, this category can include all those among us who enjoy grumbling about this or that over breakfast, or who threaten to write indignant letters to *The Times*. But, much more ominously, besides such advice-giving *kibitzers* or know-all *pundits*, could there really be out there some 'private' intellectuals – that is, intellectuals for hire, at the service of some corporate interests, agitating in various think tanks or lobbies in support of, say, global warming, the weapons trade, the tobacco industry, the Big Society and suchlike genetically modified organisms?

Well, no, not really. Pushing the concept to its limits helps us prise out its core contents. Intellectuals, we are instinctively reassured, are by definition disinterested, non-partisan, not-for-profit, not on payroll – or so we would like to believe. Far from being commissioned to proffer their opinions, they rather do so out of some essential or inner compulsion, enhanced by an indubitably vainglorious expectation to be heard. Thus intellectuals, when acting in this capacity, are intrinsically 'public' in at least two ways. First, by expressing themselves in the public arena, they seek to broadcast their views as widely and intelligibly as possible; in doing so, they also express their opinions and commitments openly, irrespective of the opprobrium they may subsequently face from their rulers or their employers. Second, intellectuals genuinely (if at times naively) believe that the stance they take is necessarily for the common good, that they have the general interest at heart, or rather in mind, when they bring their specific expertise to bear on some wider issues that are, or should be, of public concern. This moral stance follows from another connection, perhaps more historical in nature, between intellectuals and the public: upon the quintessential 'intellectual' engagement that was the Dreyfus affair in late 19th-century France, intellectuals have felt a certain sentiment of obligation vis-à-vis the Republic (or its equivalents), which, by ensuring free and secular education for all, has enabled the more intellectually talented, whatever their social or economic backgrounds, to become, precisely, the new *intellectual* elite of the nation. Upon this, intellectuals feel almost duty-bound (and often, let us admit it, also ego-strokingly eager) to mobilize their painstakingly acquired critical, analytical or synthetic expertise beyond its traditional or disciplinary remits towards the public arena.

It has been observed in the EAA session that inspired this discussion, and in Sarah and Liv's introduction to this section, that among the polymorphous plethora of intellectuals still proliferating in our post-May 1968 era, archaeologists have rarely, if ever, been recognized as such and given credence, or indeed appealed to, by the all-powerful media. Some will consider it important, with much justification, that we archaeologists learn to raise the 'intellectual' profile of our profession, as distinct from its erudite contents or its entertainment value. In this respect, the next exciting discovery granted a minute's exposure time on the regional news, or the latest million-pounds'-worth-metal-detected-hoard-of-incredibly-precious stuff, alas soon to be lost to the nation, should be taken as opportunities to make the case that archaeology is not limited to this basic form of romantic empiricism popularized by Howard Carter or Indiana Jones. Archaeology, we should be able to claim, is actually a mature, thought-provoking, debate-enhancing discipline relevant to our contemporary conditions and challenges

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– including, if I may follow up on the above example, the proposition that all fortuitously discovered archaeological remains, be they dazzling or dull, need be considered outright as scientific and cultural resources, at once the property and the responsibility of the nation state (see Schlanger 2012b).

Be that as it may, my argument here for the intellectual reach of archaeology stems from another perspective: leaving aside the medium and the message bearer, it is the message itself that needs to be worked on. Indeed, it will prove useful to identify, proactively, the kinds of public debate to which we might seek to contribute, as intellectuals and as archaeologists. History, its nature and unfolding, constitutes such a subject matter, seemingly arcane and remote from public consciousness, and yet thoroughly implicated in structuring world views and in instrumentalizing dispositions. Here, then, are three recent examples of such historical-cum-archaeological intellectual topicality, which, though originating in specific contexts in France and in Britain, may actually prove to have some more universal relevance.

The first case comes from France, or rather from some Frenchman's view of Africa. I am referring to the notorious speech pronounced by former president Nicolas Sarkozy in Dakar, Senegal, on 26 July 2007. True to his *franc-parler* image, 'you'll get it from me as it is', President Sarkozy set to address head-on the legacies and prospects of the African continent. Besides allowing for some responsibility of the French colonial policies of yesteryear, and after exhorting his audience, especially the 'African youth', to grab themselves by the bootstraps and sieze the day, President Sarkozy went on to muse,

> The tragedy of Africa is that the African has not fully entered into history. The African peasant, who for thousands of years has lived according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, only knew the eternal renewal of time, rhythmed by the endless repetition of the same gestures and the same words. In this imaginary world where everything starts over and over again there is no place for human adventure or for the idea of progress.
>
> In this universe where nature commands all, man escapes from the anguish of history that torments modern man, but he rests immobile in the centre of a static order where everything seems to have been written beforehand. This man (the traditional African) never launched himself towards the future. The idea never came to him to get out of this repetition and to invent his own destiny. The problem of Africa, and allow a friend of Africa to say it, is to be found here. Africa's challenge is to enter to a greater extent into history. To take from it the energy, the force, the desire, the willingness to listen and to espouse its own history (translation by US Embassy cables, reproduced in *The Guardian*, 30 November 2010).

Without necessarily going back to G.W.F. Hegel's portrayal of immutable Africa in his *Philosophy of History*, readers of Johannes Fabian's *Time and the other* (1983) or Eric Wolf's *Europe and the people without history* (1982) will have a sinking feeling of *déjà vu*. The anguish of history that torments modern man, indeed! As can be imagined, the Dakar speech generated a veritable outpouring of outrage within and beyond the francophone world,

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and also a range of what are effectively intellectual responses from historians, anthropologists and thinkers across Africa and in France, both in the media and in dedicated publications. Among the latter can be mentioned such titles as *L'Afrique de Sarkozy. Un déni d'histoire* (Chrétien 2008), *L'Afrique humiliée* (Traoré 2008) or again *Petit précis de remise à niveau sur l'histoire africaine à l'usage du Président Sarkozy* (Konaré 2008). Spanning from the earnest to the ironic, these reactions usefully marshal expert knowledge and critical understanding to expose for its worth the idea that African man has yet to 'enter history', an idea as deeply flawed conceptually as it is factually untenable. Historians and philosophers have dwelt much on the former aspect, with its neo-colonial 'essentialization' and 'naturalization' of African man. Archaeologists for their part clearly find axes to grind on the latter aspect, boosting the topicality of their otherwise fairly esoteric chrono-cultural and stratigraphic investigations, and showing that also the prehistory of the Others is a topic well worthy of critical investigations (Schlanger and Taylor 2012). Indeed, a particularly thorough demonstration of the historical depth, richness and diversity of the African continent was provided by the international scholarly community at the 13th Congress of the Pan-African Association for Prehistory and related studies held in July 2010 at Cheikh Anta Diop University in Dakar … that is, with some retributive irony, in the very venue where the speech in question had been delivered!

It may well be (to reproduce the cruelly apposite pun by Senegalese leader Abdoulaye Wade) that President Sarkozy was betrayed here by his 'negro' – this being the French slang for 'ghostwriter' or 'speech-writer', a certain Henri Guaino. However, as our second case will show, there is no doubting the presidential conviction that history is emphatically something to be 'entered into' – why else would there be such pressure, back in Paris, for its reification into a 'Maison de l'histoire de France'? The contrast is great, but nevertheless ideologically coherent: while Others have no history to speak of, or are locked out it, we contemporary Frenchmen and -women deserve to have it pre-chewed and force-fed on us. Indeed, leaving aside the universalist trappings of '1789-and-all-that', French history is, according to this view, necessarily a national one, one that can be gathered into a single edifice, structured around a cumulative 'gallery of time' that displays the great sequence of our civil and military history, a chronological narrative to be episodically revisited (conjecture here busloads of suburban schoolkids *issue de l'immigration*, as they are called) as a reinvigorating touchstone or antidote, a mausoleum in which any threats of decline or disintegration are transcended by the celebration of our identity and our destiny. It is the case that France has no central historical museum as such (unlike, say, Berlin or Barcelona), but rather a series of disconnected establishments, each with their traditions and modes of display, specializing in different time periods: the national museum of the Middle Ages at Cluny Abbey, the national museum of the Renaissance at Ecouen, or indeed the Musée des antiquités nationales (recently renamed the Musée d'archéologie nationale) at Saint-Germain-en-Laye. Some sort of relations between these separate entities could well be of educational and cultural benefit, but not necessarily when the project, heralded by President Sarkozy shortly after his election, has been

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**Figure 1** Despite the recent human-induced damages to its Palaeolithic paintings, the cave of Lascaux remains a veritable *lieu de mémoire* (see Demoule 1992). Former French president Nicolas Sarkozy fittingly took the opportunity of his visit (on 12 September 2010) to announce that the Maison de l'histoire de France will be based in central Paris, on the site of the National Archives (© Philippe Wojazer).

carried forwards by the thankfully short-lived quasi-Orwellian 'Ministry of Immigration, Integration and National Identity'.

On both professional and intellectual grounds, protests emerged from the community of museologists and historians. Besides arguing that the proposed project represented an outdated and obsolete conception, these intellectuals also decried the interference of the political apparatus in the establishment and dissemination of historical truth (Babelon *et al.* 2011; Backouche and Duclert 2012) – much as they had protested a few years earlier at the creation of a museum of 'first arts' at the Quai Branly, following the hobby of collecting African masks of former president Jacques Chirac. Even with the best of intentions, such an official history risks being misleading. A case in point concerns this cherished image of France as a land of refuge and asylum, readily assimilating needy and deserving foreigners (intellectuals included). Yet sorting out those who were 'always here' from the migrants generously accepted into the fold posits an 'eternal France' of the kind long challenged by sociologists and historians (see Mauss 2012; Lebovics 1992), as well as archaeologists (Demoule 2012). Indeed, archaeologists have the scientific expertise to demonstrate through material culture, settlement patterns and burial practices just how inherently composite is this thing called France, a recent national reality that will be all the stronger for acknowledging that it is build of consent and participation, rather than birthright or origins.

In the wake of the recent presidential election, the Maison de l'histoire de France is now all but ancient history – and although the powers that be could have resorted to the convenient excuse of the economic crisis to unceremoniously ditch this €80 million project, they did actually condemn it also for its ideological dubiousness. Let us at this point cross the Channel to reach the last case study where, in my view, a measure of 'preventive' archaeological-cum-intellectual intervention is urgently called for. At stake here is not some regrettable speech or controversial institution, but rather a piece of legislation that many seem to approve of: the Localism Bill, as enacted

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in late 2011 by the Conservative–Liberal Democrat 'coalition' government. Cutting through the technicalities, this seems to be but the latest move in a wider-ranging tendency towards decentralization and devolution of powers in the United Kingdom. To judge by its official webpage, the Ministry of Local Communities in charge of its implementation is something of an antithesis to the Ministry of National Identity in France, albeit equally alarming:

> This Bill will shift power from central government back into the hands of individuals, communities and councils.
>
> We are committed to this because over time central government has become too big, too interfering, too controlling and too bureaucratic. This has undermined local democracy and individual responsibility, and stifled innovation and enterprise within public services.
>
> We want to see a radical shift in the balance of power and to decentralise power as far as possible. Localism isn't simply about giving power back to local government. This Government trusts people to take charge of their lives and we will push power downwards and outwards to the lowest possible level, including individuals, neighbourhoods, professionals and communities as well as local councils and other local institutions (see this and other gems in www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/localismbill).

When politicians formally endorse such a world view, it can only be because they expect financial savings or electoral gains to be made, and preferably both. One does not need a PPE degree from Oxford to understand that 'pushing power outwards and downwards' is a good means of strangulation, the obverse of the Peter Principle whereby decision making is 'shifted down' to the level where it can no longer be effective, informed or long-sighted. For one, the expertise available locally may simply not be competent enough for taking and implementing decisions regarding the historic environment, even if it is well attuned to local lore and pressure groups. As well, most local councils and authorities (now generously left to fend for themselves as best they can, without guidance or financial support) will in any case systematically prioritize hospital beds at the expense of county archaeologists and heritage managers – who, in proportion, cost probably as much as a pillowcase laundry bill. Nor will these local authorities be able to attach much value to expenditures in the 'culture' sector in general, a form of enforced philistinism recently demonstrated by Newcastle City Council (see the cuts website monitoring by Rescue Archaeology at http://rescue-archaeology.org.uk and https://rescue.crowdmap.com, and by *The Guardian* at www.guardian.co.uk/culture/interactive/2012/aug/03/europe-arts-cuts-culture-austerity).

Localism may well prove to be a sinkhole in which vast tracts of archaeology (both the material record and the discipline dealing with it) risk disappearing. Upon the sigh-of-relief financial disengagement of the central powers, and their ready divestment of legal responsibilities (see below), no local authority will be able to afford the next Staffordshire hoard, let alone employing a much more mundane but nonetheless indispensable small-finds specialist. As the cunning plan of the (now former) culture

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secretary would have it, making the professionals redundant will only encourage 'inclusiveness' towards the voluntary sector, by definition local and so conveniently cheap. So much so that the Institute for Archaeologists itself, normally in favour of the invisible hand, has now risen to implore the relevant authorities to maintain their curators, lest developers, without any compulsion to undertake archaeological mitigations, will simply cut commercial outfits out of the equation.

Furthermore, even without such erosion in controlling and enforcing mechanisms, the formal legal propositions of the Localism Bill represent by themselves a worrying dilution of historic-environment protection. As if to compound the far too 'light-touch' treatment of heritage in the National Planning Policy Framework ('everything must fit on a single page'), the Neighbourhood Development Plans promoted by the Localism Bill would apparently make it possible to override provisions for the protection of heritage that is of more than local interest (assuming that these local interests amount to more than the current aspirations of unrepresentative mavericks or profit-motivated entrepreneurs). This would seriously affect the conservation of historic town centres, for example, and could also lead to 'unintentional, but potentially very serious damage to, and total loss of, nationally and internationally important undesignated archaeology'. As this memorandum by English Heritage further reminds us, there are elements of the historic environment

> which have a national significance beyond that of the immediate place in which they are located. They are not protected purely in the interests of the current inhabitants of the neighbourhood in which they sit but because they hold a heritage that is potentially important to all of us and to future generations (memorandum submitted by English Heritage (L 42), www.publications.parliament.uk/pa/cm201011/cmpublic/localism/memo/loc42.htm).[1]

Upon this, we archaeologists clearly need to act. And we should do so not simply as vested-interest professionals, anxious about the exercise of our trade, but also as public-spirited intellectuals, concerned, at a broader scale, with making the world a better place. Besides pointing out some unwelcome effects of localism, we are also uniquely placed to explore its roots. Alongside historians and sociologists of urban and rural Britain, we can expose for its worth this idealized notion of 'local community', basking in the glory of its cricket grounds to the peals of the bells ('as stands the church clock at ten to three, and is there honey still for tea?'), a nostalgic and largely illusory Cranford-like hamlet whose inhabitants 'have lived for thousands of years according to the seasons, whose life ideal was to be in harmony with nature, who only knew the eternal renewal of time'? Indeed, what was a dubious stereotype already on the banks of the Senegal is probably as much of a cliché on the banks of the Cam. Shall we not rather argue, as archaeologists, documentation and interpretations firmly in hand, that humans have always existed at different scales; that settlements have consistently been linked to others, close and afar; that raw materials, ideas and technologies have always roamed around; that long-distance encounters of social, cultural, economic

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**Figure 2** Between the burial grounds of French kings and the national football stadium, the town of Saint-Denis, north of Paris, embodies some of the complexities of 'localism'. As an attempt to enhance sentiments of citizenship through territorial practice, this Côte d'Ivoire-born potter (one of the 25 per cent of the town's population born outside France) exercises her traditional skills to reproduce local medieval ceramics for sale to international tourists (© Unité d'archéologie de la ville de Saint-Denis/Ministère de la culture et de la communication).

and political kinds have been facts of daily life long before some bluestones were dragged down the Salisbury Plain?

Without developing these arguments further here, I hope that their thrust comes across: we archaeologists do need to be bolder; to be self-critical, but also plainly critical; to bring our hard-earned (and, *en passant*, predominantly public-funded) scientific expertise to bear, in ways that are relevant and constructive and imaginative, on the problems of the age. To round up with the above example, it seems to me that if archaeologists were now to come together and debate a Margaret Thatcher-like proposition – 'Has there ever been such a thing as a local community?' – we will be bound to be heard, and even heeded, as public intellectuals.

## Note

[1] See also the Heritage Alliance at www.theheritagealliance.org.uk/tag/localism-bill, as well as Schlanger 2010; 2012a.

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## How to go public as an intellectual *Fredrik Svanberg**

### Abstract

Becoming a public intellectual, a voice read in major newspapers, asked for comments on television and in cultural debates, in an age where the range of platforms for

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expression are diversifying in a new digital landscape, has less to do with who you are – there are any number of potential public intellectuals – than with the mastery of public forms of expression. Going public as an intellectual is about the ability to build such a position, and there are typical paths to do so. It's a process. Cultural experts such as archaeological researchers have excellent starting points for engaging publicly and should do so in order to contribute with their specific cultural knowledge. Why don't you?

**Keywords**
public intellectualism; archaeology and media

As I see it, archaeological researchers or archaeologists intellectual enough to read *Archaeological dialogues* should generally qualify as 'intellectuals' in a general sense of the term. I also presume that these are archaeologists of the kind we are talking about here, when discussing how archaeologists may become public intellectuals. The public presence of such archaeologists, then, assuming that this presence relates to their professional knowledge and not, say, to taking part in cookery programmes, should, in general, qualify as public intellectualism.

The finer points of further defining what kind of public presence should count as 'public intellectualism' and what kind does not seems less relevant to me. In fact, I could go as far as saying that it may be that it is that kind of qualification that stops some archaeologists from developing a public presence since they are afraid that that presence may not be intellectual enough for their colleagues.

To me, and following from the above, in this context it is most relevant and interesting to discuss how intellectual archaeologists may 'go public', increasing their presence in public debate and becoming more visible, as intellectuals, in the present media landscape. It cannot be helped that this is to some extent also about becoming 'popular' or 'famous', since those must be facets of a public presence, whether intellectual or not.

Rather than discussing whether archaeologists can 'be' public intellectuals, which I think must be taken for granted, I would like here to try to illuminate how they may 'become' public intellectuals, since I think this is actually all about becoming rather than being. It is a process, and one wide open to archaeologists.

Becoming a public intellectual in the media context of today has less to do with who you are from the start (since there are any number of potential public intellectuals around even if we narrow it down to archaeological researchers) than with taking a specific interest in the matter and with developing a competence for public forms of expression. Becoming a public intellectual is about developing the ability to build such a position, which does not come automatically with, for example, being a professor.

In fact, cultural experts such as archaeological researchers have a double advantage when entering public debates, both by being academics and by

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being so in a cultural field which is of interest to the vast majority of people. These advantages enable them to engage with and comment on a very wide range of topics. I think that the problem signalled by the headline of this panel/debate – that archaeologists might not be public intellectuals to the degree they perhaps should – has rather more to do with the mindset of archaeologists and perhaps with a lack of capacity building for media engagement in their education and professional culture than with the existence of actual barriers to their engaging in and building public positions.

It thus worries me a bit that Tarlow and Stutz say, in their introduction, that archaeologists should have the potential to take on public roles but that they are 'rarely either sought or heard' (p. 3). In my opinion, the problem – if there is one – resides with what, seen from my horizon (admittedly heavily Sweden-centred), is rather a lack of interest or priority on the part of archaeologists themselves, resulting in weak competence in public engagement. Many archaeologists lock themselves up in well-defended towers of academia without any effort to be 'public', and subsequently complain that their knowledge is not sought.

Going public involves first of all getting out of the tower and choosing public engagement. Very few people actually get sought and those who do probably did not start there. It is you who must seek out media, making yourself heard, not the other way around. And developing a competence in public engagement and debate does not come easily or for free. As in everything else, some have a special gift for it and some specializations may be easier as a base for public engagement than others, but for most it comes with priority, with effort and with time invested. That is the simple truth of it.

What is the ideal? What counts as a 'public intellectual'? The introduction says that this means something more than 'just the promotion of archaeology to the public' (p. 3). Public intellectuals are to challenge 'popular understandings of the world' (p. 3). I think these ideals are fine, but how do we get there? After all, nobody starts from being Judith Butler or Edward Said. To me, and rather than discussing what parts of the public engagement of archaeologists should count or not count as public intellectualism, the central questions are rather how to encourage archaeologists of different strands to engage more publicly, and how their capacities to do that successfully can be built.

It seems to me that what stops many intellectual archaeologists from going public, besides a general fear of being 'popular' rather than 'serious', is that they tend to overlook, or are even unwilling to accept, that the public debate does not look exactly like the academic debate, with the forms, rules and hierarchies they are used to – and especially so when it comes to digital media. I work in a museum, which is a media form of sorts, though comparatively slow, and I can confidently say that most archaeologists have no idea of how museum communication actually comes about, of exhibition processes or pedagogical programming. They may know their subjects very well but clearly lack in competence when it comes to how it may translate into public communication.

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### Why should you go public?

Why should archaeologists want to build public positions or even become public intellectuals? With the development of digital media follows an increased mediatization of society. Public media are present everywhere, with a wealth of channels and voices. Organizations and people who want to be seen or even 'exist' in society will have to be present and visible, archaeology just as anything else. This will not stop; it will increase, and archaeologists have to be part of it in many ways, 'popular' as well as 'intellectual', if archaeology is to exist in a meaningful way in society.

### The scene

From a situation with lots of radio, comparably few printed media and ridiculously few television channels there is now, with the firm establishment of the Internet and digital media, any number of channels available and in quite a range of new forms. More or less anyone can actually broadcast publicly and many people outside the media business do just that on such platforms as Facebook, YouTube, Flickr and Twitter, as well in blogs.

New digital media are not just additions to the by now traditional modern media forms, they change the scene altogether since old and new forms are blending into one another, creating a new and more complicated landscape.

With the multiplication of channels and forms, and with their ever-growing availability through new media devices such as smartphones, follow a higher media tempo and intensity, which leads to a new sensitivity to form and format. Content is certainly still king, but will just as certainly be an isolated, disconnected king, locked away in an ivory tower, if it is unable to or unwilling to play the game by its new rules more sensitive to form and context.

Public expression and debate are faster, with more voices and forms involved. This means that there are several more potential ways of establishing a public voice than before – more 'career paths', if you like – and there are many potential 'experts' on any given topic out there.

### Get over your academic snobbery

(If you are not culpable of academic snobbery just skip this part.) I think that a major threshold for academics in general as regards taking part in the public debate has to do with the fact that they may have a highly respected position in academia and have a hard time accepting that this position just does not translate right into a similar one in the public debate. But taking part publicly means entering another field of engagement with a different kind of positioning, one which requires competence and skills complimentary to those of academia. You cannot just go there and demand the same status and respect as within your specific field of expertise. It will have to be earned. This may be discouraging but is just a rule of the game.

So you need to start by accepting that going into public communication is about entering another kind of field, with slightly different rules and skills. You may not think of those qualifications as being as valuable as knowledge in a scientific field, but you need to see that they exist and to respect them.

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## Know the big issues; know yourself

Going public, especially if you aspire to be a public intellectual, you must have an idea of the big debates out there and their different positions, because that is the scene your contributions will play into. Knowing the debate means more than reading the daily paper and watching the news. It probably means following and analysing a wider range of channels.

The public debate revolves around 'big questions' while 'small' and seemingly irrelevant texts and statements are commonly interpreted into those big issues. The big questions are, first of all, politics. Are you conservative or liberal? Right-wing or left-wing? Is your subject actually used in party politics? Cultural heritage and archaeological practices relating to it are political hot stuff in many countries. In academia you will not have to declare a political stand and many academics frequently argue the non-political nature of their research. The political or non-political nature of research as such is not the issue here, but you must know and be sensitive to the degree of political interpretation of your contributions – much higher in public debate. And where do you stand on, for example, sexual freedom, immigration and cultural traditions versus cultural change? If these are not your primary interests, know that they are to others who will read you from those starting points. Editors will consider your profile and your texts starting not in specific knowledge about your expertise but based on current situations in the big debates and from the particular positions of their own publications or other media channels. What this adds up to is that you will have to know the scene and where you stand yourself on the big issues quite well and decide how you want to be read or not read in relation to them.

You will also need to find out what are the public interests and representations in the specific field to which you make public contribution. What is the public, or 'popular', understanding of, say, the Maya culture, the Neolithic revolution or what archaeology is all about? In the country or other context in which you stand? If public intellectuals are to challenge 'popular understandings of the world', they will have to know them quite well first.

You should know yourself since you will have to think about how you want to profile yourself. Developing a public presence means developing a public image of oneself and one's competence.

## Find out the rules of the game

Unless you are very well connected to lots of media people you will have to find out what kinds of contribution different media forms want, what people to send them to and what social and professional conventions apply in this. Understanding formats should be the easy part, but I know that many academics have a hard time already here, or just don't care. Texts in different media are supposed to consist of about so and so many words, are commonly built up in certain ways, and this and that topic constantly recurs in specific publications – and that can be fairly easily grasped by taking a close look at previous contributions to them.

What publications or other channels invite contributions that agree with the sort of perspectives you wish to apply and with the profile you seek to

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build for yourself? In what formats do they invite voices from the outside? Get to know that. Practise and master them. There is no other way.

Media debates are fast compared to academic debates. You want to comment on a sharp ongoing debate? Do it right away. If the debate is in a daily paper preferably post your contribution the same day or the day after. A week later nobody remembers.

**Start small**

Nobody just sits down to write the best high-profile, full-page text in a debate in a major paper without previous experience of public writing, and nobody gets sought to comment on television news on the most important archaeological events without having built a public profile over some time. You will need training and all training starts from the start.

Facebook and Twitter are good places for practising how to build a public profile because that is what they are about. You don't need to say exactly who you are in those places, rather you will aim to create a profile of who you want to be, constructing a public image. Being a public figure in wider society is quite the same thing, just on a bigger scale.

Why not start with writing a blog or by improving some of the worst archaeology texts on Wikipedia? Blogging is very similar to column journalism and is excellent practice.

What do public intellectuals mostly do? Sometimes they write major original texts or initiate debates, but what they do most constantly is to comment on current events. So is there a major new book out or a major conference going on, changing things profoundly? Are there government-funding cuts or a new exciting archaeological exhibition? All of these things can be commented on by you, in public media. And there are most probably quite important things happening in archaeology where you stand that will not get proper public attention since there are too few public intellectual archaeologists around. So start with commenting, reviewing and in that way demonstrating your competence, inside knowledge and ability to translate it into publicly important and interesting material. Start in less prestigious places, such as your blog.

In the digital age, having something to say has a lot to do with being connected and networked. Following information streams such as blogs and tweets from interesting people and institutions in your field will let you know things early and give you a rich basis of potential things to comment on in your activity as a public intellectual.

**Gradually build up your cred**

From a small start, be strategic. Build up your information network and raise your profile with a stream of increasingly higher-quality public work. Aim for the kind of public media you wish to be represented in, but figure out how to get there in stages rather than aiming for the big win right away and getting disappointed.

Develop a network with voices and editors engaged in public media. In 2013 you can probably follow most of them on Twitter, and as your contributions get increasingly published you will also develop personal

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contacts. Make the page about yourself on Wikipedia because that is where people will find you when they Google your name.

## Conclusion

I claim that many or even most archaeologists have the potential to become public intellectuals and that, given a reasonable basic talent, interest and the willingness to invest time and effort, most can do it by understanding and respecting the rules of the game and by starting on a small scale, gradually and strategically building abilities and profiles. This is not for everyone but I see no reason why those who want to should not go there and I think it should be more encouraged and given higher priority within professional archaeology.

To me this is a question of priority and of developing ability and skills rather than simply 'being' from the start. That is an illusion.

Quite a few years ago, at university, I attended a speech by David Attenborough in which he gave a 'behind-the-scenes' relation of his work making nature films. Afterwards an eager young zoologist interested in film making asked him how he could get to work for the *National geographic*. He seemed to be hoping for insider knowledge about some magic shortcut. Attenborough told him, instead, that he should simply go outside, with whatever filming equipment he possessed, and make a skilful and innovative film about the local sparrows and send that to the *National geographic*, saying, 'this is what I can do with local birds and poor equipment', and in that way demonstrating his ability and skills.

I am not an Attenborough fan, but I have always considered that quite an elegant way of saying that in this, as in other fields, there are no magic shortcuts, but questions of developing competence and skills. I don't agree that archaeologists should have a harder starting point than others when it comes to public intellectualism. It is about choosing to go there, accepting the rules that prevail and getting to work. Just do it.

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