Changing archaeology's 'brand' would be helpful

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González-Ruibal *et al.* raise challenging issues that seem frightening in their implications. In both their specificity and their wider theoretical contexts, I had previously given these issues little thought, and some I had not even recognised. I share fully the authors' concern that archaeologists must seek ways to engage people influenced by 'reactionary populism', people who "are diverse, fragmented and complex", and who may be "greedy, patriarchal, xenophobic or uninterested in the past" (González-Ruibal *et al.* above). The authors find fault with the multi-vocal, multi-cultural approaches of epistemic populist archaeologies that tend to exclude most of those who fit this description. I could object to some of the details of the authors' critiques of epistemic populism and heritage studies, but their core arguments are mostly correct and powerful. At the same time, at least within a North American context, I think that archaeologists have generally reacted to the various populist pressures of the past century and that we have already started to do what the authors suggest.

In the USA, engaging a wide range of people has been an explicitly stated goal of archaeology for at least 60 years, and as economic, political and educational situations have shifted, so too have archaeology's 'target' audiences. The nascent years of a professional American archaeology directly reflected colonialism. Settlers demanded answers about the Mound Builders and the origins of American Indians, so the US Congress provided funds for mound excavations and ethnography. During the Progressive Era (1890–1920), populist concerns over the loss of archaeological resources prompted the first antiquities protection laws. The Great Depression of the 1930s saw archaeology used to provide jobs, and, in association with heritage protection laws, it eventually morphed during the 1940s–1960s into salvage archaeology programmes ahead of massive federal construction projects. By the 1970s, this led to the rapid expansion of cultural resources management archaeology (CRM). As well as being a boon to archaeological employment, CRM promoted the growth of public education about archaeology. Largely excluded, however, American Indians saw efforts to excavate or preserve sites built by their ancestors as exploitative and archaeology as a continuation of colonisation. American Indian civil rights activism of the 1960s led eventually to the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act (NAGPRA) of 1990, which forced collaboration with Native Americans and was partly responsible for the growth of indigenous archaeology. In turn, NAGPRA pushed archaeology to engage more broadly with marginalised groups and even to become activist, turning archaeology's powerful tools towards the study of contemporary concerns, such as climate change and

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other social problems, as González-Ruibal *et al.* urge. One challenge is that developing such projects takes time and requires a level of political engagement that many archaeologists fear.

This history is vastly more complicated than can be presented here (see Little & Zimmerman 2010). The point to note is that although approaches have changed over time, all of these 'programmes' continue into the present. Archaeologists in the USA have often been responsive to different sorts of populist movements, and whether by plan or accident, archaeology has become more inclusive as a result. Throughout, however, segments of the population have felt indifferent or negative about the discipline, wondering why society should even bother with it. What has often driven public attitudes has been related to the demands of capitalism, so what seems to drive archaeologists is a desire to show the public that archaeology is worth the substantial tax money that pays for it. At the risk of essentialising their arguments, this is what González-Ruibal *et al.* seem to suggest archaeologists must do in order to address reactionary populism; to paraphrase Victor Buchli (2007: 14), archaeology must find ways to "earn its keep". Current reactionary populism in the USA seems anti-science, anti-education (except where it supports employment), anti-taxation and public spending, and xenophobic towards even long-term, resident ethnic groups. All of this makes working out how archaeology can or should respond especially difficult.

Archaeologists are often their own worst enemies. We have created an archaeology 'brand' (see Holtorf 2007) in a way that trivialises what we do in order to attract public attention. Archaeological discovery thrills the public, but it is an exceedingly small part of our work. Time is certainly an important element of our studies, but the real power of the discipline transcends time. For some reason, however, we insist on discussing the oldest, earliest or first, and usually attach descriptors such as mysterious, vanished or abandoned. Rather, archaeology is about things—how they are made or acquired, used, disposed of and what they mean to anyone involved in those processes—in their cultural and environmental contexts. This is what allows us to "produce knowledge that is not reducible to mere subjective practices" (González-Ruibal *et al.* above), and is what gives us agency to provoke our many publics. Changing archaeology's brand can only help!

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