EDITOR'S CORNER

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Nearly four years have passed since a Forum appeared in *American Antiquity*. In the April 2010 issue of the journal, ten archaeologists responded to the argument made two years prior by Robert McGhee (2008) that "indigenous archaeology" was intellectually handicapped by what he called "aboriginal essentialism." The chorus of rebuttal in the Forum brought into focus the limits of a scientific archaeology that distances itself from the present, and from the future, by disabusing "social projects," as McGhee (2010) described some forms of indigenous archaeology. Science—we were once persuaded to believe but learned to question—was expected to operate outside the subjectivities of culture and politics.

Archaeology in the service of society cannot avoid the entanglements of politics, morality, and accountability in the web of modern living. Increasingly since the middle part of the last century, we have contemplated our responsibilities to public constituencies, and, of course, so much of our existence depends on government statutes and the apparatus of heritage management. We are asked in federal grant proposals to specify the "broader impacts" of our research, and we often mention something about the long-term perspectives that archaeology allows. It stands to reason that a profession dealing with deep time would have useful insight on processes that cannot be observed in real time. But what sort of questions are relevant at scales greater than the present and how do we mobilize archaeological knowledge for addressing uncertain futures?

The Forum in this issue is a monumental effort to address the first of these two questions. It reports the results of crowd-sourcing among archaeologists to identify scientific challenges for the profession that can be enabled or enhanced by greater investments in the infrastructure of "big data." This NSF-sponsored initiative, the brainchild of Keith Kintigh and a sizable team of top scholars, specifies challenges of profound human importance: food security, climate change, conflict, inequality, sustainability, and crisis, among others. It is hard to disagree with the gravity of these problems, and so they deserve not only our attention but also investments in our capacity to intervene. I imagine that for many readers the results of this effort will rekindle the promise of an archaeology that does more than serve itself.

Can archaeologists truly mobilize knowledge of the past for better futures? I believe so, and our colleagues have provided guideposts and inspiration for answering the call. However, we still have the second question to address: After accumulating bigger and better knowledge about the past, how do we mobilize it in ways that make a positive difference?

How archaeological knowledge gets deployed and interpreted in the service of society may be the mother of all challenges. We can be certain that our findings will not speak for themselves. There is a wide gulf between the emergent properties of scientific study and the bodily experiences of people. We see this, for instance, in the gulf between the science and bodily experience of recent climate change. As reported in *The Guardian* earlier this year (Goldenberg 2013), it took the extreme temperatures of past summers in Texas and Oklahoma to flip some of the most ardent skeptics of climate science. That is the finding of a recent Stanford University study, which shows widespread acceptance of climate change among those who experience global warming as hotter weather, lowered water tables, and drier soils. Evidently, neither better science nor the virtual experience of calamities worldwide compares to the impact of living through change enough to suffer from it. This does nothing to diminish the value of the science of climate change and its capacity to model futures. The point, rather, is that "social projects" of the future will have to bridge the long view of the past to real-time experiences yet to come. Michelle

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Hegmon (2013) and others in the November 2013 issue of the *SAA Archaeological Record* show us how an archaeology of the human experience lends itself to real-time narratives, and hence public policy. Others working at the sensual scale of humanness and on the microhistories of particular places and peoples provide insight on writing about the past in ways that affect people personally, where policy inflects life.

Between the big and the small we find intermediate scales of human experience in which archaeologists are especially versed. Studies of communities hold perhaps the greatest promise for bridging scales. It is at the level of villages and small towns that personal experiences become social, memorable, and potentially mobilized as public interventions. This is as true in many places today as it has been for millennia. Remarkable research on ancient communities stretching from the coalescent societies of the Iroquois, to the neighborhoods of the Mississippian Midwest, to the pueblos of the Southwest shows how collectives form, interconnect, reconfigure, and dissolve, and not merely as the consequence of things beyond their awareness or control but as interventions. Agent-based modeling in the Puebloan Southwest—exemplified by the Village Ecodynamics Project of Tim Kohler and colleagues (e.g., Varien et al. 2007)—makes great strides bridging the empirical record of local decision-making with the long-term realities of changing climate and resource stress. Changes in the scale and organization of communities are recurring themes of this archaeological view and perhaps a glimpse of our own futures.

An entirely different genre of community-based archaeology bears equal, if not greater relevance going forward than does the reconstruction and simulation of ancient communities. A growing number of colleagues are involving themselves in projects that are structured by the interests and desires of contemporary communities (Atalay 2012), those occupying the juncture between pasts and futures. Much of this work takes place among indigenous communities, such as the Inuvialuit of the Canadian Western Arctic (Lyons 2012), whose local knowledge of whaling not only informs the past in familiar, academic terms, but also serves to define heritage goals that empower decisions going forward. An archaeology responsive to community needs may seem foreign to many of us, but it could not be more relevant if we are to gain a foothold in the design and implementation of public policy.

All this goes to the need to bridge the science of archaeology with the prosaic reality of lives lived now and in the future. For that we will need many different voices and many different perspectives, particularly from those whose decisions going forward will not be determined by big data, but by the way they experience life. We can certainly add greater time depth to the foreshortened temporality of modernity, but we should also bear in mind that there are valid alternatives to the linear narratives of western time. There may be greater danger in an "archaeological essentialism" than in an "aboriginal essentialism," however that is defined. And so I open up the Forum to alternative perspectives on archaeology's purpose in futures planning and have already commissioned a piece for a later issue of this journal. I congratulate Keith Kintigh and colleagues for pulling together this vision of grand challenges and look forward to hearing from others willing to erect guideposts to pathways yet to be followed.

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