Are We All Archaeologists Now? (Cont.)*

Are We Not all Archaeologists? A Plea for Archaeology Beyond Excavation In Tanzania

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Introduction

In the absence of standardized and mutually agreed approaches to research and interpretation, defining archaeology in the Tanzanian context is problematic. On the one hand, there has been a shift in emphasis from excavation to studies that emphasize people and heritage, but conservative archaeologists continue to make a distinction between “proper” archaeology and less valid work which either focuses on a recent past or which emphasizes communities’ viewpoint about the heritage of which they have been users and custodians. Part of the problem is that community archaeology is not a strong discipline in Tanzania and is not rigorously taught, and it is consequently considered unprofessional and unscientific. Regionally tailored approaches are fundamental in bridging the gaps and harmonizing disciplinary differences.

The “archaeology of Tanzania” has tended to mean excavation of the early hominid sites such as Olduvai Gorge and Laetoli, rock-art sites like Kondoa Irangi, and iron-working sites. The curriculum for archaeology in Tanzania from primary school to university glorifies early periods and the rich Paleolithic, and the archaeology of the Stone Age is also emphasized by the Tanzania Broadcasting Corporation’s one-hour documentary series Zamadamu. Being an archaeologist is therefore associated with being an excavator; the introduction of “Heritage Studies” as an aspect of archaeology has been thus

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regarded as a “soft option” which undermines the status of archaeology as “science”. Professional archaeologists working on oral history, documents, and communities are not recognized as such.

This essay is written as a response to the question “Are we all archaeologists now?” Using a few examples, I address the situation of archaeology and archaeologists in Tanzania in order to explain this division. The essay concludes that making “archaeology” equivalent to “excavation” hinders the development of archaeology in the country. No matter what professional direction we choose to take, we are all archaeologists!

Professional Archaeology in Tanzania

Professional training in archaeology is regarded as having been first introduced in Tanzania in 1985, at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM). The archaeology unit used educators from the USA, and students’ study was supplemented with courses in history and geology (LaViolette 2002, 356). In a country rich in archaeological sites, some of which date to the early Stone Age, archaeology’s unique service was to investigate prehistory. As such, historical events such as the Majimaji War against German colonialism in 1905–1907 did not receive archaeological attention until its recent centenary. Historical archaeology and community archaeology are thus poorly developed sub-disciplines: for instance, terminologies such as “Swahili” and “Holocene archaeology” have been used to connote different studies which would otherwise refer to historical archaeology. The archaeological utilization of documents, especially in the archaeology of the coast and of contact, has yet to receive attention. Further, Peter Schmidt has been highlighting the rich potential of oral history in areas of northwestern Tanzania since the 1980s (Schmidt 2014), although Tanzanian archaeologists remain reluctant to use the same approach elsewhere in the country. Community archaeology is another area of weakness. Given the fact that the discipline is not rigorously taught, what is defined as community archaeology varies from one archaeologist to the next; in fact, archaeologists outside the field do not recognize it as archaeology. The dominant understanding of community archaeology in Tanzania is the showcasing of artifacts and of the archaeology of the area to the people. This top-down method has come under criticism due to the assumption that the community is ignorant of its own culture (Chirikure and Pwiti 2008). The best approach to community archaeology would therefore be one that allows the community to speak about the use of the archaeological artifacts and landscape for the archaeologists too.

Professional archaeology that has been conducted in Tanzania without excavation is best explained by discussing specific instances, although there are only a few examples. One study was conducted by my colleague Noel B. Lwoga, whose resulting MA dissertation Built Heritage Management in Dar es Salaam City Central Area was completed in 2010. However, Lwoga has not been trained in archaeological excavations; instead, his undergraduate studies at the University of Makerere in Uganda were in tourism studies. Lwoga was the only candidate among the 11 students on the UDSM archaeology Master’s program in that year not to undertake a supervised excavation, meaning that he was considered an “outsider” in the archaeological field.

Recently, Festo Gabriel investigated professional archaeologists and their role in relation to the community. His PhD dissertation, Professionals to the General Public:
Community Archaeology and the Cultural Dialects of Cultural Heritage Resources in Mtwarra Region—Tanzania (Gabriel forthcoming), involved extensive scrutiny of the methodologies for community archaeology. Most of the inquiries were on which methodologies were to be employed in this type of archaeology. I was with Gabriel at the point of preparing his project proposal. As a UDSM-trained archaeologist, Gabriel included excavation as a data-collection method in his proposal, but when he embarked on the preliminary fieldwork he discovered that there are a lot of community voices that can stand on their own without excavation. The point here was that excavations of the region are plentiful and known, but the communities’ voices were unique and unknown. Through this project, Gabriel was able to investigate the interrelationship between professionals and the community and how they interact with cultural heritage resources available in Mtwarra region. The research of both Lwoga and Gabriel revealed aspects of importance to the archaeology of the country and thus the fact that they did not use excavation did not detract from the archaeological nature of their research.

Are we all archaeologists now?

Archaeologists in Tanzania have tended to be known by their specialization. For example, Bertram Mapunda is known for his work on metallurgy, Felix Chami is known for his work on theory and pottery technology, Emmanuel Kessy for lithic technology, Amandus Kweka for pottery technology, and Charles Saanane for fauna. The landscape has developed in this way in part because there were only a handful of archaeologists, most of them teaching at UDSM. To become an archaeologist therefore was to imitate one of these gurus. From 2005, archaeology began to be tied to heritage studies. At first, this meant that excavation was to be followed by the display of artifacts and talks with local villagers, especially primary- or secondary-school students. I participated in this type of “public archaeology” as a UDSM student and also after my own excavations in Umatumbi (2008) and Kanazi (2010). However, my exposure to another African institute diverted my approach to public archaeology. Researching the Majimaji War, which involved considering themes of symbolism, ritual, gender, labor, resistance, and colonialism, I found that a lot of information was concealed in the landscape rather than being carried by the artifacts alone. My recent project has therefore used artifacts and landscape knowledge obtained from the field to question primary- and secondary-school students in order to understand what they know about them and their uses. It is in this type of archaeology that archaeologists must be more than excavators to fulfill archaeological projects. This, however, is difficult when every archaeologist is using his or her own methodology. It is therefore important to set up and agree on rules not only for public and community archaeology in the country but also for archaeology without excavation. It is also important that studies of the material remains, whether using excavation, documents, or oral narratives should be recognized as archaeology. Standards should then be set regarding the practices of “archeologies” within the region where they occur. This should also be part of the curriculum for archaeology teaching in the country. As a consequence, archaeologists in Tanzania will be able to explore the vast and rich archaeological resources of the country. Whether we excavate or not, we are all archaeologists!
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**Traces of Past Subjects: Experiencing Indigenous Thought as an Archaeological Mode of Knowledge**

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Walking through a narrow path in the Amazon forest, surrounded by the ever-green vegetation, I was in a trail with a Wajãpi family, searching for an ancient village occupied in the nineteenth century. We passed by a very large angelim tree (*Andira nitida*) when Nazaré, a middle-aged woman who had invited me for the journey, told me that was the house of the forest master. I looked at that beautiful tree and wondered what else I could not see.

In the last six years, I have engaged in journeys, workshops, and other meetings with the Wajãpi, a Tupian people living in the extreme north of Brazil, in the State of Amapá, where they inhabit the Wajãpi Indigenous Land (homologated in 1997). I was introduced by an anthropologist, Dominique T. Gallois, who has worked with them for a long time (e.g. Gallois 1988, 2009). She had been asked by a couple of leaders about some ceramic sherds found in a distant village, and introduced me as the specialist—the archaeologist—who perhaps could help them out. At first, potsherds served as mediation among us, as a common interest drawing our attention. It didn’t take me long, though, to realize that there was much more to know about material remains of the past, as seen from a Wajãpi point of view.

As an archaeologist trained in relevant scientific protocols, I was prepared to identify a whole range of material remains, not only sherds or lithics, but also earthworks and...
vegetation changes, important cultural markers in the Amazon environment (e.g. Schaan 2012; Balée 2013; Rostain 2013). And although my anthropological training was shallow, I was aware the Wajápi people would explain archaeological remains differently. I presumed that as long as we had the same material remains to explain, I would feel comfortable as an archaeologist.

During my first journey with them, aiming to visit a distant site where pottery figurines had been found, I was exposed to our difference regarding archaeological remains. We had spent a couple of days in a village midway from our destination, where dozens of pottery sherds and a stone axe were shown to me. As some sherds had incised decor- ration, they told me those were remains from enemy groups—namely, the Karanã, who are today probably extinct (Grenand 1982; Gallois 1988). As far as I was concerned, we were explaining those remains as potsherds using a shared logic.

The day we left the village, we crossed Inipuku River, where I saw a series of polished grooves and basins on the rocks by the river. A few hours later, while having a break on the trail, I asked our guide—a young Wajápi named Rosenã—about those marks by the Inipuku. Those, he told me, were footprints of Janejarã, a creator-hero who inhabited this world when rocks were still soft, allowing his footprints to last. There I noticed the difference for the first time: although we agreed on the remains of the past (marks on rocks), we explained them from completely different perspectives. Just as expected, we are after all dealing with different knowledge systems or “conceptual fields” (Gallois 2012).

A wide anthropological literature has discussed Amerindian ontologies (e.g. Viveiros de Castro 1998, 2004; Santos-Granero 2009), in which native categories appear to unsettle our own sense of safety in relation to such basic concepts as nature and culture. The discipline of archaeology, as all scientific enterprises, is deeply enmeshed in that conceptual ground, in a way that being able to discern between natural and cultural features is the base of all our practices. But what happens if we allow ourselves to experiment—as proposed by Viveiros de Castro (2002) — with an Amerindian thought? What happens if we follow Roy Wagner’s proposition that natives are anthropologists (Wagner 1981), or in this case, that natives are archaeologists?

These are the questions I decided to pursue while taking part in a collaborative project seeking to register places and narratives related to Wajápi cosmogenesis (Gallois et al. 2014). As an archaeologist, I realized I was more concerned about the means by which the Wajápi construct narratives about material traces of the past than the explanations themselves, and I had to rethink my own conception of archaeology. Beyond the scientific discipline, archaeology is a mode of knowledge, a process of engagement with the past (Hamilakis 2008), a practice of meaning and sensing material traces of the past. Such a conceptual turn allowed me to investigate much more than material remains. Following the Wajápi mode of knowledge regarding the past and its traces, there was an opportunity to unveil processes of engagement and meaning with the material past. Experiencing their way of relating to traces of past subjects, it became clear to me that it was somehow archaeological. If they were archaeologists, they were positioned in a completely different place than I was; therefore, it was an archaeology based upon a different perspective.

Just as I would not have seen the house of the forest master, to which Nazaré kindly introduced me, I realized that scientific archaeology did not have room for much of the
past remains that the Wajãpi can identify. But once archaeology is also understood as a practice of meaning and sensing, there is room to transform archaeological practice and room to allow other knowledge systems to exist and to be fortified. Especially when dealing with indigenous people, who have historically and systematically been subordinate to Western standards, collaborative works aim to reinforce native conceptions and practices as full knowledge systems (Tuhiwai Smith 1999).

If at first I was the specialist who would provide them with a singular kind of knowledge, I soon realized the knowledge they were sharing with me was the key to following their engagement with the material past, and therefore for creating bridges between our different logics. However, to be able to recognize the range of traces of the past perceived by the Wajãpi, I had to become familiar with an intangible set of knowledge: narratives of cosmogenesis. Without learning such narratives, I would not be able to perceive traces and marks, which were—after all—material results from the events told in those accounts, material expressions of intangible knowledge.

Through this learning process, it became very clear to me that the Wajãpi could perceive a great deal of evidence of past events that cannot fit into a scientific mode of archaeology. However, this same evidence did in fact work in the same manner as archaeological remains, as a means to construct narratives about the past. That is the case, for example, of the Yypavu pond, located at a two-day walk from a main Wajãpi village. Its round shape, surrounded by a steep slope, are marks of its origin, when Anaconda became angry with a Wajãpi ancestor and created a depression by rotating himself, which turned everything into a vortex filled with water (Anaconda is the master of water). As elders would show us the material traces of events described in narratives, pointing to particular features as evidence of actions of past subjects, youngsters became amazed by the strength of traditional knowledge. Narratives were true—they were not just stories, their traces were right there to be seen and perceived.

Once I allowed myself to try this other mode of knowledge as if it were archaeological (since the Wajãpi themselves would not call it such), I caught myself wondering what archaeology is after all. And here is where I approach this forum’s main question. If the Wajãpi are archaeologists, does that mean we are all archaeologists now? And if so, what about scientific parameters or even—as is the case in Brazil, where a federal agency regulates archaeological research—public policies? Who is entitled to do archaeological work? Whose authority is at play?

When I argue that the Wajãpi are archaeologists, as I suggest here, I mean they deal with material traces of the past in a way that I perceive as analogous to archaeology. They regard particular material evidence as traces of past subjects, and they use this same evidence to construct narratives about the past. Further, they interpret new evidence in the light of previous knowledge, and re-evaluate their explanations in the light of new evidence. They do this, however, from a completely different perspective than ours as scientific archaeologists. What they regard as subjects, for instance, following other Amerindian ontologies, is far wider than our notions of personhood. It follows that what they regard as traces of past subjects might be seen from a scientific archaeological perspective as mere natural features.

From a disciplinary standpoint, we are not all archaeologists. As a scientific community, we might discuss protocols, methods, and theories. We might not agree upon definitions,
boundaries, and interpretations, but we do share some common ground: we share an ontology which allows us to distinguish—for instance—natural from cultural. Our expertise lies in dealing with this ontology as means of making sense of material traces of the past, to understand materiality and its multiple ways of engagement with our collectivities. But it is also about challenging our own conceptions. Once we experiment with other modes of knowledge, particularly those grounded on different ontologies, we are forced to deal with difference, and we become much more aware of our own standpoints.

Following Roy Wagner’s statement on anthropologists (Wagner 1981), I argue that we should experiment more with the idea that “we are all archaeologists”, both as a means of critiquing disciplinary knowledge production, and as means of perceiving other modes of knowledge, many of which are being silenced by the impact of scientific perspectives.

Perhaps we need not worry about reinforcing the scientific discipline of archaeology, since it is grounded on a very strong basis. It might be that we need to do the opposite: “un-disciplining archaeology”, as proposed by Alejandro Haber (2012), which is a path towards turning what we do—and how we do it—into something actually meaningful for those struggling to sustain different knowledge systems.

References


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Are We all Archaeologists? An Iranian Perspective

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Archeologists should first ask what it is that their enterprise has to offer to a diversity of interests. I would answer that it is archeology’s craft—the skill of using material remains to interpret past experiences and situations. This skill is the basis of the archeologist’s authority, for not everyone has mastered the craft of dealing with the past archeologically. This is scholarship. (McGuire 1992, 829)

The interpretation of archaeological material, as we all know, is hardly ever straightforward, and any archaeological reconstruction of the past is inevitably accompanied by conformity to a certain set of interests, perceptions, and norms. This will and should create dialogues within the community of archaeologists, and also—while recognizing the autonomy both of archaeology as an academic discipline and of the community that archaeologists form—with other interest groups. It is certainly in the interests of archaeologists to enable these dialogues as a context that produces and encourages creative work. But the community of archaeologists is a sovereign one and the democratization of the field does not mean that archaeological data are capable of an infinite number of possible interpretations by anybody who simply believes that she or he can interpret this information. Archaeology is a scientific approach and there are certain canons or criteria that would allow most professional archaeologists to arrive at the same most plausible readings of the archaeological record.

In every part of the world, archaeology has developed along a unique path, and the process of democratizing archaeology and opening it up to contemporary society at large would have very different connotations and consequences in each context. In the case of Iranian archaeology, nationalism has been the main socio-political context for archaeological practices, for interrelated historical reasons. Archaeology was first imported into Iran as a foreign commodity (Papoli Yazdi and Garazhian 2012) and practiced as a relic of Western colonialism; it was then abused in order to justify and empower a dictatorship during the Pahlavi regime (Niknami 2000). The anti-imperial and anti-colonial revolution of 1979 tried to counteract this history by putting a halt to all archaeological activities, while the subsequent eight-year war in which Iran faced aggression from Western-backed Iraq was a strong impetus for the revival of nationalism (Abdi 2001). Current nationalism in Iran should be considered against backdrops that include the CIA-sponsored coup against the very first democratically elected Iranian government in 1953, the current discourse of resistance in the context of nuclear negotiations, and the sanctions inflicted on Iran by the West. Ascribing a great antiquity equally to all ethnic groups inside Iran reifies
this constructed political unit, and is helpful in justifying common burdens inflicted on its citizens in the process of reaching a valuable common ideological goal. Nationalism gives the interests of a nation-state, which is a modern political construct, priority over all other interests of a group of people (Anderson 1991; Hobsbawn 1992). To reach this end, nationalism needs to rediscover and/or elaborate a remote past and create an image of a unified community with ancient roots. All this requires arguments, made especially strong by material and tangible evidence of ancestral presence discovered and unearthed through archaeological practices (Shnirel’man 2013). The democratizing of archaeology in Iran, meaning relinquishing the authority of interpreting the past to anybody who wants or needs to do so, will lead into more unscientific and ideological abuse of the archaeological record by the political establishment as well as other interest groups, including those who try to undermine the dominant Islamic discourse of the Republic. In this situation archaeology can even more easily be abused as a powerful tool to strengthen and promote either the official state nationalist agenda or those of the opposition groups. Archaeology would be deployed to find the necessary evidence and tangible materials to prove specific constructed narratives about the past and present. The archaeological record is imbued with essential qualities of values and authenticity by the choices that archaeologists make during their archaeological practices (Shanks 1992). These choices could be different according to the agendas of the research and this consequently affects and defines the process of recovery, documentation, and interpretation of the material.

A recent personal experience helped me to gain a first-hand understanding of this issue. Lately I was among a handful of Iranian archaeologists who were invited to a major research institute that specializes in Iranian studies. The head of the institute, a politically influential cleric, shared his concern about Iranian archaeology with us. He was worried that other Middle Eastern countries are confiscating most, if not all, of the achievements of Iranian civilization and representing them to the world as their own. We (i.e. the archaeologists) had to start to counteract these activities by “preventing the dissemination of false information about other civilizations” and “publicizing true knowledge about how Iranians were the first inventors and discoverers of most of the important ideas and technologies throughout human history!”

As an archaeologist I had to tell him that the roots of a nation can never be securely traced and there is no certain correlation between archaeological cultures discovered inside Iran and our modern nation-state. Peoples’ sense of themselves—who they are and what they have done—continuously changes and cannot be held constant over centuries, much less millennia. Nonetheless the constructed concept of a Persian ethnic identity has played a significant political role in the process of creating the modern nation-state of Iran, during the past century and up to now. However, we know that nationality is a socially constructed phenomenon, and therefore its roots and traditions are invented and consciously manipulated for political, economic, and social reasons. Archaeology has been used as a tool in the process of nation-building in Iran—and democratizing it, meaning making the craft of archaeology available to anybody—will consequently accelerate this abuse. This will relinquish more authority to the ultra-nationalist groups and open the grounds for them to rediscover the glories of the pre-Islamic periods in
Iran and use this knowledge to undermine the hegemony of the Republic, which heavily relies on the Islamic doctrine. On the other hand the state officials and politicians would gain an upper hand in politicizing the past and further encourage the volatile combination of archaeology and religion.

This is why it is almost never possible to reach a straightforward and clear reconstruction of the past. All archaeological finds are mute and lend themselves to multiple interpretations. Many different stories from different points of view can be told about a single object. This fact, however, does not mean that archaeological information can be interpreted in an infinite number of different ways. The discipline of archaeology equips archaeologists with specific theory and methods for interpreting the archaeological record in the most plausible ways.

Nonetheless, in regard to democratizing archaeology in Iran, a further important issue needs to be considered. Although Iran is a country that was never formally colonized by a foreign power, the archaeology that is practiced in Iran has inherited traits that are deeply colonial. Apart from the epistemology of the discipline, on a pragmatic level its most important colonial trait is its inaccessibility. Archaeological reports and information that have been produced inside or outside Iran are for most part unavailable to the general public, and they have not even entered the common discourse of the intellectuals. While archaeological research produces information of public value, archaeologists often have difficulty communicating their findings and the contemporary relevance of their field to the general public. As well the problem of accessing the material, the language of archaeological products is infused with academic jargon. Democratizing access to the products of archaeological research is a much-needed step to be taken immediately by Iranian archaeologists. The specific products of archaeological research take the form of site reports, sites, and artifacts, and feature descriptions and classifications, radiocarbon dating, and faunal remains, among other materials. These are analyzed to produce information on past technologies, dietary patterns, land-use patterns, environmental settings, demographic trends, social relationships, and other topics. Although these materials are the intellectual property of the archaeologists who produced them, it is essential that they are shared with the general public in a language that they can make sense of (Nicholas and Bannister 2004). A socially engaged and responsible archaeology works on the fragmented past using its own specific theories and technical reasoning, in order to produce knowledge about the past through reports, papers, books, museum displays, and media programs that are publicly accessible and tangible.

We may not all be archaeologists in the sense that we all can speak for the past in any way we like, but we can all become involved in archaeology by having reasonably easy access to the specific products of archaeological research and learning from the professionals.

References
Are We All Archaeologists Now? (Cont.)


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### Why Archaeologists Misrepresent Their Practice—A North American Perspective

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#### Introduction

The claim “we are all archaeologists now” is a declaration of archaeology’s democratization, thus goodness. It suggests that archaeology no longer works in service of the elite and the state, but of the masses. Given the claim is at best a misrepresentation and at worst a lie, we ask why archaeologists persist in propagating such ideas.

Our point of departure comes from Erich Fromm and the world of critical criminology. In his 1930 essay “The State as Educator”, Fromm posited that “if […] both the present criminal justice system and even the modern penal system […] are ineffective and unsuitable for the attainment of their own goals, then there must be other reasons as to why society holds on to these ineffective measures with so much determination” (Fromm 2000 [1930], 124). Reweaving this thread, we ask: If archaeology has so little effect on democratizing heritage, and if this is well known to those who have experience in the discipline (Smith 2004; King 2009), then why do archaeologists support their practice’s “ineffective measures with so much determination”?

The claim “we are all archaeologists now” is a simple but effective rationalization that maintains the current power structure and permits the project of modernity to continue...
unabated. On one level, the claim is a diversionary tactic. It is simple because it shifts attention away from that which archaeologists and mass society do not wish to see, what we have elsewhere termed archaeology’s “negative reality” (Hutchings and La Salle 2014). The tactic is effective because such “positive” narratives act as a defense mechanism whereby archaeology’s controversial behaviors (e.g. institutionalized racism, disaster capitalism) are justified and explained in a seemingly logical or rational manner, thus making archaeology “rational” and, indeed, even laudable.

From our standpoint, North American (US, Canadian) archaeologists persistently misrepresent their discipline/practice as “good” and “democratic” because, in an Orwellian twist, it is (1) fundamentally undemocratic and profit-driven; (2) intimately tied up in state-sanctioned genocide, ethnocide, and ecocide; and (3) likely to carry forth its primary social function—clearing (predominantly Indigenous) heritage from the landscape to make way for economic development—into the foreseeable future. Rather than being democratic, archaeology represents a highly professionalized, thus bureaucratized, institution that works in service of the neoliberal state, upholding at almost every turn the ideology of growth, development, and progress. Given how destructive that ideology is (e.g. Bodley 2008; Foster et al. 2010), archaeologists, like the rest of the modern world, must be considered part of the problem, not the solution. As Marie Battiste puts it: “You can’t be the global doctor if you’re the colonial disease” (Battiste 2005).

A major impediment in discourse around archaeology’s “goodness”—be it in relation to democracy or anything else—is a lack of definition about what exactly is meant by “archaeology”. As such, following our treatment of “archaeology as good and democratic”, we pay specific attention to the term, defining the discipline/practice as an institutionalized form of neoliberal statecraft designed to control heritage, specifically Indigenous heritage where we live in Canada. We then turn to the social and environmental consequences of mainstream archaeological practice, wherein archaeology’s “negative reality” comes into full frame. We next look to archaeology’s future, which we see as becoming increasingly elitist, bureaucratic, capitalistic, and antidemocratic. We return in our discussion to the claim that “we are all archaeologists now”, where we address truth and truth-telling. We end with a short reflection on silence and indifference.

**Archaeology as Good and Democratic**

In *Understanding the Politics of Heritage*, Rodney Harrison challenges readers to “question the unwritten suggestion […] that heritage is necessarily ‘good’”. Critical understanding means uncovering “ways in which heritage embodies relationships of power and subjugation, inclusion and exclusion, remembering and forgetting” (Harrison 2010, 1).

In our experience, most people do not want to hear the “negative reality” of archaeology: they want a sterilized, Disneyfied version. This phenomenon is best illustrated in introductory archaeology textbooks, wherein very few authors provide a realistic representation of the institution. On rare occasions, textbook writers do open up about what they really think archaeology is about, and some explanations are more revelatory than others. For example, in the fifth edition of Kevin Greene and Tom Moore’s *Archaeology: An Introduction* (2010, xv), they note that the previous four editions never actually contained a definition of archaeology.

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We do not find it at all unusual that people “forget” to define archaeology. Indeed, in the absence of any definition, the suggestion of archaeology as democratic is good propaganda: something that no one is against and everyone is for because no one knows what it means “because it doesn’t mean anything, but it’s crucial value is it diverts your attention from a question that does mean something” (Chomsky 1992).

Archaeologists consistently misrepresent their practice insofar as archaeology’s “goodness” constitutes a disciplinary taken-for-granted that is presumed in the claim to science and scientific neutrality, including a scientifically neutral “past”. The unwritten assumption that scientific research is “either harmless or good” (Meskell and Pels 2005, 5) prompts a chain reaction: archaeology = science = neutrality = inclusivity = democracy = good. Put simply, archaeology is seen as good because it is scientific. The “negative reality” associated with its legacy of scientific colonialism (Nicholas and Hollowell 2007, 60–62) is forgotten in this formula. In the absence of pursuing the critical understanding Harrison describes above, the assumption that archaeology is “necessarily ‘good’” remains unchallenged.

**Archaeology as Undemocratic and For-Profit**

A useful place to start questioning archaeology’s “goodness” appears in the publisher’s summary at the front of Laurajane Smith’s (2004) *Archaeological Theory and the Politics of Cultural Heritage*:

Archaeology is meant to be an impartial science, concerned with seeking the truth about the past for the benefit of all humankind. But as the practices and values of archaeology have been enshrined in cultural resource management, they have also gradually become entwined with the apparatus of state power and control, and bound up in bitter political conflicts with Indigenous communities.

In our 30 years of experience with North American archaeology, most academics, including textbook authors, overlook or marginalize the form of archaeology that is most often practiced: state-sanctioned heritage management (Smith 2001, 2004; King 2009; Mapes 2009; Stapp and Longenecker 2009). In reality, virtually all archaeologists either work directly for the state (e.g. academic archaeologists, government archaeologists) or are paid to enforce state law (e.g. commercial, contract, or compliance archaeologists). This makes the state the supreme nexus of power in archaeology.

In our study of archaeology in British Columbia, we found that 97 percent of archaeology conducted in 2011 was done by private cultural resource management (CRM) firms, as measured by the number of archaeological permits issued that year (La Salle and Hutchings 2012, 10). Only three percent of archaeology was performed by academics. As such, archaeology needs to be defined not by its theory (academic), but by its practice (CRM). Indeed, since the 1990s in British Columbia, private archaeology firms have increasingly been bought up by large national and transnational development corporations.

Because of this union between state power and the development agenda, we have come to see archaeology as neoliberal statecraft (Hutchings and La Salle 2015), aimed at controlling heritage and aspects thereof, including its clearance from the landscape.
(Fowler 1987; Smith 2004; Smith 2008; Arnold 2014). We ended our 2012 study with this more “honest” appraisal of archaeology (La Salle and Hutchings 2012, 15):

1. Archaeology is about facilitating the destruction of heritage landscapes;
2. Archaeology is undertaken to fulfill legal and regulatory obligations;
3. Archaeologists have a responsibility only to their clients and the state; and
4. Archaeology is a private, “for-profit” enterprise.

The reality is that archaeology is a multi-billion dollar industry in North America, and archaeologists hold considerable power when it comes to the valuation and management of cultural heritage. Professional (white, university-educated) archaeologists “firmly control the prehistory of British Columbia” (West 1995, ii), and there is little evidence to suggest they will be ceding much of this control any time soon. Rather, archaeologists are becoming increasingly professionalized, and there appears to be no interest in imagining a world without archaeology, even by archaeologists who seek to “transform” it (Atalay et al. 2014, 13; see also La Salle and Hutchings 2015).

Archaeology as State-Sanctioned Ecocide, Ethnocide, and Genocide

There exists a vibrant commercial market for ecocide, ethnocide, and genocide in the modern world, and it includes cultural resource management.

Indigenous heritage is the central focus of archaeology in North America, academically and legislatively. While historical archaeology is of interest in some regions, “prehistory” (i.e. Indigenous peoples’ heritage) is archaeology’s main business. This is certainly the case in British Columbia, where the provincial Heritage Conservation Act (1996) protects sites dating to before 1846—legislation designed to specifically target Indigenous heritage, and thus Indigenous peoples. Hutchings (2014) calls this practice apartheid. Indeed, the overwhelming majority of archaeologists are non-Indigenous, and receive up to six times the annual income as the Indigenous peoples they study (La Salle 2014).

In this context, we view archaeology/CRM as institutionalized disaster capitalism, whereby archaeologists “make money out of misery” (Hutchings and La Salle 2015). The misery is the destruction of Indigenous heritage and land—and thus Indigenous culture (Battiste and Henderson 2000; Bodley 2008)—silenced and forgotten through institutional “whitewashing” (King 2009; La Salle 2013). Indeed, although archaeologists often insist their interests lie in “saving” sites, CRM is ineffective in this endeavor: in one British Columbia case study, 75% of known archaeological sites had been destroyed in part or in whole by development (Hutchings 2014). The persistent belief in archaeology’s and CRM’s inherent “goodness” hinders recognition of these connections and their serious implications.

Archaeology is violent because it enables development, which destroys places of cultural significance and fragments communities. Insofar as these sites are integral to cultural survival (United Nations 2008), their destruction can be linked to ecocide, ethnocide, and genocide (Bodley 2008).
The Present is the Key to Controlling the Past (and Future)

To understand archaeology’s contemporary social function, one must move beyond Hutton’s Principle of Uniformitarianism and embrace George Orwell’s multidimensional Principle of Power, where “Who controls the past […] controls the future: who controls the present controls the past” (Orwell 1949, 248). Orwell offers great insight here insofar as late-modern heritage is not about interpreting the past but controlling the future.

However one spins it, the claim “we are all archaeologists now” implies democratization, not theoretically but practically—as in, how archaeology is practiced. Our central premise here is that rather than becoming more democratic, whereby mass society (i.e. “the public”) is increasingly involved in and leading archaeology, it is becoming more undemocratic and more antidemocratic (i.e. “we are NOT all archaeologists now”). We have reached this conclusion by looking at what most archaeologists are taught (growth, development, and progress), what most archaeologists do (state-sanctioned heritage or cultural resource management), and the consequences of the discipline/practice (disaster capitalism and misery).

As Ian Angus suggests, “the first step is to tell the truth—about the danger we face, about its causes, and about the measures that must be taken to turn back the threat.” He then quotes Orwell: “In a time of universal deceit, telling the truth is a revolutionary act” (Angus 2013). It is precisely because telling the truth about archaeology’s (negative) reality is a revolutionary act that the subject is avoided with “so much determination”. Avoidance is the mainstream response. This includes the use of diversionary tactics, such as claims that archaeology is democratic. It is not. By truth-telling, we work to disabuse archaeologists—especially those operating in colonial contexts like the United States, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand—of the notion that archaeology is “necessarily ‘good’”.

On Silence and Indifference

Through our work, we have identified three reasons why archaeologists misrepresent their profession:

— They don’t know they are misrepresenting their profession;
— They don’t believe they are misrepresenting their profession; or,
— They are misrepresenting their profession willfully to deceive others, and themselves.

Which explanation is in operation at any given moment may not be clear. However, in all cases, archaeologists misrepresent their profession because it is in their interest to do so, psychologically and economically (Kahan et al. 2011). They misrepresent their practice as good and democratic because it is precisely the opposite.

The McDonaldization (Ritzer 2008) of heritage in the form of archaeology/CRM—characterized by increasing bureaucracy and scientific management—leaves little room for difference or opposition. Archaeology is hierarchical and conservative, characterized by institutional silence and collective amnesia. Silence, indifference, and forgetting are part of archaeology’s culture. Public acts of truth-telling are discouraged through guilt and fear of alienation from the institution; indeed, truth-telling significantly decreases
the likelihood of promotion. As a form of forgetting, diversionary tactics such as the claim "we are all archaeologists now" hinder rather than help critical discourse around the privatization of heritage.

While silence and indifference encourage and maintain the status quo, the opposite of silence is “dissent” (Kintz 2012 [1998]). Towards that end, we have proposed an “anti-colonial” archaeology (Hutchings and La Salle 2014). We remain, however, less certain than ever as to the possibility of radically transforming the institution. Instead, we now follow Smith and Waterton (2009, 3), who suggest that if archaeology is part of the problem, and not the solution, then we must consider “taking archaeology out of heritage.” Only then can democracy in heritage be pursued.

References


Are We All Archaeologists Now? (Cont.)


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To Be an Archaeologist along the Rue Saint-Jacques: A Textual and Visual Proposition

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Are We All Archaeologists Now?

For me, being an archaeologist starts with an entangled professional/personal way of looking at things, from landscapes to the objects of everyday life: objects and material culture are made “archaeological” by the way that archaeologists look at them—that is, by taking note their archaeological potential or properties (materiality, chronology, antiquity, etc).
My answer to the question “are we all archaeologists now?” is “yes”. To explain what I mean, I propose, as an experiment, a photographic journey through a Parisian street. It is possible to read the urban landscape from an archaeological perspective, and I intend to question our way of “transforming” the traces of daily life into archaeological evidence.

The viewpoint of my proposal follows the line of one of the oldest streets in central Paris: the Rue Saint-Jacques. This street sits above the old Roman cardo, which extended southwest from a bridge leading to the Île de la Cité. Our trip starts at 222 Rue Saint-Jacques (A: 48.844-2.342), and we will walk northeasterly, sloping down towards 3 Place Paul Painlevé (B: 48.850-2.344). This Parisian trip is also a test: what is archaeological and what is not in our surrounding? This approach will interrogate the kinds of traces that are to be found along the street, and allow us to question the
Are We All Archaeologists Now? (Cont.)

materiality around us that derives from an intermixed past. Everything comes from the past, whether from minutes ago or millenia. This way of looking at our surroundings is perhaps a first step to looking through an archaeological lens, i.e. as an archaeologist.

The first task at an archaeological excavation is to learn how to examine the ground in detail. On the Parisian bitumen lay, as in every urban place, we see all kinds of waste, dirt, tracks, marks, and signs of daily life. Some are temporary, lasting just a few minutes, while others have been present for decades. These traces from a contemporary past possess an archaeological dimension, by their materiality and their visual/symbolic potential.

So my point is to question the archaeological dimension of these most mundane and evanescent forms of material. What kind of “archaeological” features can a walk along the Rue Saint-Jacques reveal? This photographic series advocates that “to be an archaeologist now” is to have the ability to discriminate between what is archaeological and what is not in our daily urban public space (Figure 1).
1. “16.08.08”—Macadam Inscription

The pariscian bitumen corresponds to our present-day occupational level, where process of deposition occurs daily. Looking at the ground, we not only notice digits, but interpret them as a date, inscribed for decades in the bitumen. This is one of the most valuable kinds of information for the archaeologist. For me, this inscribed bitumen recalls an inscribed Mesopotamian foundation nail. This practice of branding the hot melted bitumen marks the day—16 August, 2008—of the application of the street coating. It allows us to evaluate the rate of damage to the coating in the succeeding years or decades. Also, we can distinguish lines of separation between different coating operations, producing in the street a patchwork of geometric, rather rectangular, shapes.
2. "Ecrire"—Paper on Stone

Are we in front of an archaeological trace of some sort? This “object” is the very opposite of the date branded into the ground: a gust of wind would be enough to blow it away. Yet, visually, it possesses a strong presence. This sheet of newspaper is not just lying on a step; it has almost perfectly formed itself to the shape of that step. We can suppose that after being made wet by the rain, it dried out and took that shape. Written on it is “Ecrire” (“to write”). This text-trace, almost as light as air, is also a text-ure that records a step. It is a text under disappearance. So, it could be seen as a metaphor of archaeological data: a material cultural fragment which it is about to vanish.

3. Cigarette Butts and a Ticket

Archaeological pictures typically take an orthogonal view of the ground. Such a perspective aims to offer the most “objective” view of objects and their connections, as in a crime scene. Here, there are three cigarette butts and a Parisian subway ticket lying on the sidewalk close to a wall, as waste waiting to be removed. They have an archaeological dimension, as mundane testimony of our daily material culture.
4. “Enceinte de Paris”—Paris’s Medieval City Wall

Placed high above ground-floor height is an inscription that tells pedestrians about the previous presence here of Paris’s thirteenth-century city wall, built during the reign of King Philippe Auguste (Philip II). This inscription is a modern twentieth-century stone plate, and the information it displays includes details of the date, name, and plan of the medieval city door. However, although historically informative, this is not an archaeological clue; it can serve as an evocation of a past presence, but it cannot be taken as a proof. No present material remains attest to the presence of the city door; the evidence is perhaps derived from land registry records or other archives.
5. Footprints

Here is another perfect example of an “archaeological” trace: human footprints fixed in the bitumen surface. Any of these simple human tracks can recall through imagination the most ancient human footprints—particularly that of Laetoli in Tanzania (3.7 million years ago), preserved in volcanic ash.

6. Tyre Tracks

Another kind of trace: not a track left by a person or an animal, but by a vehicle in passing. A tyre track should also be seen as an archaeological feature: this fleeting event left an imprint on a white line, marking the ground with a distinctive signature of squares.
7. Archaeology’s Allegory

Moving on, on the left we come to a nineteenth-century façade belonging to the Sorbonne building. Its decoration include allegorical statues of the various sciences and other disciplines taught at the university: that of “Archaeology” is close to that of “Philosophy”. Is this allegory of archaeology an archaeological feature? Certainly not! With a book in her right hand, and a jar in her left, the statue explains how the discipline of archaeology was seen at the end of the nineteenth century, as a new growing science… and for long time after this, archaeology would be seen as a “younger sister” of history.
8. Padlock

Every piece of material culture possesses an internal voice saying to us “do not forget”, which also means “try to remember where I came from”.

Here, we are confronted with a love ritual: the padlock was inscribed and then closed around a metal gate, to seal a wish. This “do not forget” command is directed towards the memory of two persons engaged in some romantic relationship:

    Liz et joie de vivre

    Decembre 10, 2014

The name “Liz” is here associated with joie de vivre, while the date marks the locking of the padlock. From an archaeological point of view, this love lock is very similar to other rituals involving writing which are meant to ensure shared memories are never forgotten.
This photographic journey shows us that to look at our everyday surroundings in an “archaeological” way means to consider objects for their materiality and chronological information, and as coming from an intermixed past. It is also to visualize our built environment as a stratified multi-period urban landscape.

Anyone can develop an archaeological way of looking at their surroundings, but that certainly isn’t enough to become a professional archaeologist. However, a taste of and engagement with past material culture gives a sense of the past’s thickness that could help to develop our own fruitful dialogue with the present.

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Digging Up and Digging Down: Urban Undergrounds

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Archaeology is the academic discipline most preoccupied with what is underneath us. It is also a field of study that until relatively recently has been predominated by work in non-urban areas. We are three urban scholars who have our own fixations with the underground. In fact, we have just compiled an edited collection called Global Undergrounds (Dobraszczyk et al. 2016), which surveys 80 underground sites from every continent, including Antarctica. This process coincided serendipitously with this call to consider whether we are indeed all archaeologists now. From the ruins of disused sewage systems to the churning of subterranean space by tunnel-boring machines, we, like archaeologists, spend more time with our thoughts under street level than anywhere else. What we would like to suggest in this short paper is that the excavation of urban undergrounds, as a sort of reverse archaeology where the newest stratigraphy must always go further down, is feeding an intellectual interest in underground spaces which has been accelerating since the large-scale nineteenth-century excavations of cities like London and Paris. Our key argument is that excavation is not just an archaeological praxis: it is also the process that has led to layer-upon-layer of infrastructure crowding
the underground, separating functions, often in the interest of circulation. Circulation is of course another disciplinary bridge we could build between geography and archaeology, trade and mobility being central to both disciplines.

Consider the construction of Crossrail in London as a point of crossover (Figure 1). The BBC documentary series *The Fifteen Billion Pound Railway* (2014) not only gave insight into the sheer diversity of challenges that engineers have faced and responded to; another striking element was how the project has also opened up unique opportunities (and indeed challenges) for archaeologists, in particular in relation to shedding new light on the period of the Great Plague (1665). Similar connections might be drawn between the building of railways in Victorian London and the interest of figures such as Charles Roach Smith in recovering the domestic, mundane, and fragmentary as part of London’s Roman ancestry.

We seek here to forge links between urban, industrial, and contemporary archaeology and the broad range of themes that confronted us in the process of collating and making sense of the 80 entries on global undergrounds for our new book, a good number of which brought us into contact with recent scholarship by archaeologists and what has been called the “vertical turn” in geography.

The politics of subterranea is a topic that social and cultural scholars have turned to with increasing attention in the past decade. In the words of Stephen Graham and Lucy Hewitt, the “flattening of discourses and imaginaries [that] tends still to dominate critical urban research in the Anglophone world” needs to be challenged (Graham and

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**Figure 1:** The Crossrail excavation under London, where archaeology and infrastructure intersect (photograph by Theo Kindynis).
Hewitt 2013, 71–72). Graham and Hewitt suggest shifting geographical imaginations to underground infrastructure as a means of combating this “horizontalism”. Indeed, in recent years, a clutch of new geographic literature has sprung up that thinks through our relationship to vertical space (e.g. Adey 2010; Elden 2013; Graham 2014). Yet much of this work has continued to see the subterranean as space out, over, and under what we know—continuing to render it conceptual, forbidden, and even exotic. Archaeology, as a discipline that invites the public to participate in the excavation of knowledges in various ways, seems to us to offer a more participatory perspective for engaging with underground spaces. Gavin Bridge, a geographer, recently suggested that:

> Shafts, tunnels, mines and other holes into the ground serve as conduits connecting the plane of existence (the surface) to a radically different space below. As conduits, their function is to connect—to enable movement by bringing two spaces into relation.  

(Bridge 2013, 55)

We find three promising links in the passage above in the context of seeking intersection between urban geography and archaeology. First, we see the underground as an intertwined space: in opening our imagination to the vertical, we do not wish to pitch it against the horizontal, for the cultural entanglements that move along and within both axes are enmeshed and inseparable. Just as archaeology recognizes that space is fundamental to the understanding of time, we contend that time is crucial to the construction of space and place. Second, conduits connect places and meanings; undergrounds are vehicles for powerful narratives, from personal stories of labour and fear to more structural issues that perpetuate asymmetries across class, gender, or wealth. Third, undergrounds crystallize one of the functions that are most essential to cities enmeshed in global networks of mobilities today: circulation. A separate infrastructure suggesting a sectional understanding of the city where people, goods, capital, information, and waste circulate—cut off from the turbulent rhythm of streets and daily life—is something that deserves our attention and that of archaeologists, not least because of the connections between space and politics that converge underground (Galviz 2013).

One very important component of a richer awareness of the underground is a reflection on where we look for the discourses and practices of subterranean space and how they have been transformed in the past. This view tends to privilege those who have the power to plan, transform, and manipulate urban space: the architects, engineers, emperors, kings, religious leaders, aristocrats, wealthy merchants, artists, and politicians who often have the resources to excavate. While we should never lose sight of the important histories of those excavations, there are other stories that can be recovered: testimonies to labour, beliefs, mythologies, and subversive tunnelling and underground dwelling. The long histories of many cities are as much about processes of sinking as they are about reaching for the skies, not just through the successive stacking of material remains but through the laying of the foundations of rising cities, and of the stories that go hand in hand with them.

The underground is both a collection of spaces and events in need of recordation, and a place of connections between surface, subsurface, and even supersurface matter.
We would like to encourage moves away from a sense of sites, surfaces, and linearity when approaching undergrounds, and closer towards—following Peter Sloterdijk’s suggestion—spherical constellations of meaning that imagine urban space as an “intimate, enclosed and shared round shape, spread out through joint inhabiting” (Sloterdijk 1999, 1011). No other definition better captures the multiplicities of the vast connections and movements that the contributors to our Global Undergrounds book have made apparent through their essays. Central to those connections and movements are the human dimensions of the undergrounds that we explore: whether built to escape war and destruction, or planned as a conscious exercise in building national identities, these spaces speak to both our primordial fears and also to our desire for intimacy and enclosure; they articulate both lost histories and alternative futures. They are spaces of function and meaning and also spaces of becoming.

Our aim in this short article is simply to point to, and demonstrate, a fruitful path toward exploring these multiplicities; one that engages as many different perspectives as can be (reasonably) gathered, and that is predicated on exploration rather than explanation. For some, this may seem like an abdication of the responsibility to commit, a revelling in ambiguity for its own sake, yet we believe strongly in a stance that listens, gathers, and assembles rather than coheres and orders.

Our collective attachment to subterranea has accelerated in direct relation to the fact that most people on the planet now live in cities, where their relationship with the underground is both practical and expansive in its meanings and associations. Though we do not argue this awareness has imbued everyone with the sensibilities of archaeologists, as scholars fascinated in processes of place-making we argue that urban undergrounds are more important than they ever have been. Perhaps as archaeology, geography, and history become increasingly intertwined, so too can we expect that people will have a greater awareness of the intersections between time and space as the worlds that we inhabit continue to sink.

References


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