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Is Public Archaeology a menace?

Thomas F. KING

Public Archaeology is a Menace to the Public – and to Archaeology

Introduction

*"You can dig a big hole, and you dig it wide;
Try to show the people what it's like inside.
Something for you; something for me;
All you gotta do is come down and see!"
(Old Tom King, a song by Ron Melander ca. 1971)*

So sang my friend, colleague, and then-office manager Ron Melander in about 1971, in a song he wrote about me. I quote it here to help establish my bona fides in "public archaeology." I began my career as an amateur archaeologist (some would use less complimentary terms) and am now engaged in ending it similarly. In its course I've worked as an academic and applied professional archaeologist, often -if not always- with a strong tilt toward public involvement, participated in the development of "cultural resource management" (CRM)¹, worked and published in that milieu, and incidentally was involved in U.S. archaeological politics at the time when C.R. McGimsey more or less invented the term "public archaeology" (McGimsey 1972). I had qualms about the term then, and I have qualms about it now. I want to explain why.

In essence, it comes down to this: much of what is done in the name of "public archaeology" is done in the context of defining and addressing the environmental impacts of modern development and land use. Most legal systems under which environmental impact assessments (EIA) are done give far more attention to archaeological sites (and historic architecture, monuments, and the like) than they give to other cultural aspects of the environment. Yet those other aspects

¹ A term whose ill-defined character has been even more damaging to the public interest than that of "public archaeology;" see King (2011: 2) for discussion and what I think is a responsible definition.

of the environment may be far more important to “the public” – in the sense of real people who live in or otherwise value that environment – than are archaeological sites. “Public archaeology” (like “CRM” and several similar euphemisms used by archaeologists) can be and often is misunderstood by those performing EIA or acting upon EIA’s findings – and by its practitioners themselves. The misunderstanding lies in the belief that by addressing the concerns of archaeology with a given proposal (for a dam, a highway, a power scheme, whatever), we have addressed “the public’s” concerns about impacts on the cultural environment. As a result, projects go forward with some measure (often a large measure) of attention to the interests of archaeologists, while effectively ignoring those of the public. This is damaging to the public interest, and it is also damaging to archaeology, because in the end it erodes the public’s support for what we do.

Definitions, Definitions

The problem largely lies in how “public archaeology” is defined and how we act with respect to our definitions.

An Innocuous Definition

One definition of “public archaeology” might be: “the practice of archaeology with significant public participation”. We invite the public to visit our field sites; we explain what we’re doing; we make arrangements for them to work with us in the field, in the lab, in analysis and reportage. We put together exhibits; we give public lectures; we help compose public brochures and websites; we make movies.

I see no problem whatsoever with “public archaeology” as thus defined; I think it is what we all ought to do, on virtually any archaeological project in which we engage.

A Slightly More Questionable Definition

We might also define “public archaeology” as “the practice of archaeology addressing matters of interest to the public”. I am thinking here of community-based (and other) archaeology programs that structure their studies around things in which the public is ostensibly interested. The study of the African diaspora, for example, is clearly of interest to (among others) the descendants of enslaved Africans; its archaeological pursuit is arguably “public archaeology”. What makes the definition a bit tricky is that what is of interest to one “public” may be objectionable or offensive to another (consider the sometimes divergent interests of Israelis and Palestinians in the archaeology of

their shared homeland). This doesn't make such archaeology any less "public", but it does require that archaeologists think through the range of public interests to which their work may relate.

There are doubtless other ways to define "public archaeology", with different implications, but let me turn to the one that I think is particularly problematic.

A Damaging Definition

Explicitly or (more often) implicitly, "public archaeology" is defined as "archaeology performed with reference to public law, regulation, policy, or programs". Thus, we understand ourselves to be doing "public archaeology" when we do surveys and other studies in advance of proposed construction or land use projects, under whatever environmental and historic preservation laws require that the impacts of such projects be considered. We also may understand ourselves to be doing "public archaeology" when we work in government agencies or ministries that oversee or conduct such work.

This would not be a problem if we stuck to archaeology and if other cultural aspects of the environment were routinely dealt with by other experts in consultation with the concerned public, but unfortunately this is often not the case.

What Happens

What happens is this:

1. The laws, regulations, policies or guidelines under which a project's environmental impacts are assessed include some sort of vague reference to addressing impacts on "cultural resources" or "heritage". Or they may not; they may only require that impacts on historic places or monuments be addressed.
2. The people and organizations responsible for EIA on the project scratch their heads a bit and turn to those they perceive to be experts in such things – the "public archaeologists".
3. The public archaeologists say, "Right, then please give us some money and we'll go do a survey, find the sites your project may mess up and advise you about how to avoid destroying them or mitigate the impacts of doing so by digging them up". All in the public interest.
4. This (in some form, to some extent) is done.
5. Nobody asks what else of a cultural nature may be threatened

by the project. If the question were asked, the answer might be “quite a lot” – for example:

- a. The ongoing traditional ways of life of resident or nearby communities;
- b. Spiritual beliefs about the landscape and its elements, and practices associated with such beliefs;
- c. Traditional uses of and beliefs about plants, animals, water, minerals;
- d. Culturally valued visual, auditory, and olfactory aspects of the environment;
- e. Language, which may be intimately related to or affected by the land and its uses;
- f. And many other things.

6. Because they don’t ask and they assume that by turning things over to the public archaeologists they’ve taken care of “culture”, the project planners go ahead with their EIA without considering any of the above variables, or without considering them very thoroughly.

7. The project is then found to have tolerable impacts on the environment, and is officially approved.

8. If “the public” finds a way to complain about being ignored, the project planners are puzzled and say “but we’ve dealt with these issues; we worked with the public archaeologists”. The public archaeologists usually don’t say anything.

9. The project proceeds, with little or no consideration of non-archaeological cultural issues.

The Results

There are three results of the process outlined above.

First, some rather significant cultural interests in the environment may be ignored and destroyed or altered without due consideration, despite what may be substantial public interest in them. It is because “public archaeology” as widely practiced in essence connives in this ignorance and destruction that I call it a menace to the public.

Second, the public (or publics) whose concerns are ignored come to view archaeologists (if they view them at all) as part of the problem. The archaeologists have come in and dug up the village before the

dam-builders or highway-builders did; they were, in essence, the tip of the development spear. The project may even have been designed to serve public-archaeological interests – for example, to open up an avenue of sphinxes or the site of an ancient palace for development as an archaeological park. The archaeologists have often hired local people to assist in what those local people see as the destruction of their heritage. At best, this does not build public support for archaeology; at worst it erodes it. This is one reason I suggest that public archaeology can be a menace to archaeology. Another is that by in essence jumping into bed with development interests rather than finding common cause with concerned elements of the public, we often let archaeological sites be destroyed, that might be saved had we formed alliances and worked harder to protect the overall cultural environment.

What To Do About It

I do not mean to suggest that archaeologists – public or otherwise – should stop being archaeologists, call themselves something different, or go out and develop expertise that they don't have (though these things may sometimes be desirable and happen to be what I have done). I do suggest that:

1. Public archaeologists should be honest about what they – we – can and cannot do, and are not responsible for doing. When asked to deal with the impacts of a project, if all we are equipped to do is archaeology, we should make this very clear to those who seek our services, and try to avoid the assumption that we are going to do more.
2. We should encourage the development and employment of more comprehensive approaches to identifying and addressing the modern world's impacts on the whole cultural environment, in effective consultation with the publics that value aspects of that environment².
3. As public whatevers – archaeologists, anthropologists, cultural resource people, cultural heritage experts – we should do everything we can to make sure that the public in all its diversity is fully involved not only in our work but in the broader studies and planning to which our archaeology may contribute.

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² See <http://www.cbd.int/doc/publications/akwe-brochure-en.pdf> for one such approach.

Responses

Carol McDAVID

Response to Tom King's "Public Archaeology is a Menace to the Public"

I read Tom King's paper with great interest, having been a fan of his work for some time. I read it, assign it to students, and frequently give copies of his 2009 *Our Unprotected Heritage: Whitewashing the Destruction of Our Cultural and Natural Environment* to community collaborators and clients. Even though I spend most of my professional time in the non-profit and academic archaeology arenas, my most recent work has involved collaborating with both CRM and SHPO archaeologists on a variety of projects and policy initiatives. Therefore, I have some understanding of the issues he raises, even though I do not "do" what is known as Cultural Resource Management (CRM) archaeology.

Tom is correct when he states that "the problem largely lies in how 'public archaeology' is defined, and how we act with respect to our definitions". The problem I have, however, is with his chosen (for the purposes of his argument) definition of public archaeology as "archaeology performed with reference to public law, regulation, policy, or programs". He is apparently defining public archaeology as CRM, when in fact it is, in today's world, far more than that.

I would agree that this definition was accurate until the early 1990's (as he points out, the term was coined by McGimsey in 1972). It is important to note that during the beginning days of CRM, despite the widespread use of the term "public archaeology", there was little public input in the archaeological work itself. Nor was there much indigenous, descendant or local community input as archaeological sites were excavated or interpreted. During this period most work with "actual" publics, when it existed at all, was overtly *educational*, and its primary aim was to convince the non-archaeological public that saving archeological sites was important.

Changes to this view began to emerge in the late 1980s, with the most momentous early benchmark for discipline-wide change (in the United States) occurring with the 1990 passage of NAGPRA (the Native American Graves Protection and Repatriation Act). The law was limited in many ways, as we all know, but the key point here is that during this period the meaning of the word "public" in "public archaeology" began to shift. It began to include diverse *living publics*. Archaeologists working

with indigenous remains were (in some contexts, anyway) obligated to take the opinions of descendants into account – and their methods and interpretations began, slowly, to reflect this. Even though one major shortcoming of NAGRA was the limited definition of “descendants” as documented, lineal descendants, it did drive important discipline-wide cultural change in terms of “public archaeology”.

Similar shifts also began to emerge in U. S. academic historical archaeology with the “critical archaeology” work that Mark Leone and his students (especially Parker Potter) initiated in the late 1980s and early 1990s. This work spawned an entire generation of scholars who are still pushing the boundaries in public archaeology. However, in terms of CRM models, the most important transformations came about because of the African Burial Ground Project (ABG), which took place in New York City in the early and mid 1990s. The public uproar over human remains found at this site, and the public debate about how to excavate and interpret them, continued into the decade and established new understandings of the words “descendant”, “community” and “client” within archaeology. Despite the fact that NAGPRA did not apply, the *cultural* descendants of those buried at this site were successful in gaining control over how their ancestors’ remains were excavated and interpreted. Even though there is still no NAGPRA for non-Indian lands, the ethos that drove NAGPRA (and emerged from it) is now commonplace in many archaeology projects across the United States – other than, interestingly, most “everyday” CRM work, where for the most part King’s critique is still entirely correct. This is not to discount a few major projects (such as the recent President’s House project in Philadelphia) – but they are exceptions to the norm. Even so, the ABG project had tremendous influence in archaeology generally.

As these changes have occurred in the U.S., similar shifts were occurring elsewhere, and a variety of post-colonial and global justice movements have played important roles in how archaeology and public archaeology are framed today. A major milestone in the global arena was the 1986 founding of the World Archaeology Congress, in part as a response to apartheid. Over the last two decades there have been key developments within governmental, non-governmental and scholarly arenas, all of which have been part of an ongoing global process of re-imagining how archaeological work can, and should, intersect with public interests and needs. As this has occurred, the term “public archaeology” has expanded in meaning, and it is fair to say that now many archaeologists, worldwide, conceive of public archaeology as something along these lines:

any endeavor in which archaeologists interact with the public, and any research (practical or theoretical) that examines or analyses the public dimensions of doing archaeology.

It is important to note that those who do this sort of work may identify themselves in various ways – as archaeological ethnographers, or heritage professionals, or applied anthropologists, etc. – even though their work is just as often characterized as “public archaeology” in case study volumes. A key feature of this definition is that its emphasis is not only on practice, but also on research, and much of this research is aimed precisely at the questions King raises – that is, those who call themselves public archaeologists are thinking “through the range of interests to which their work may relate”. Another feature of the most recent work is that it tends to cross the usual disciplinary lines – arguably more so than earlier “public archaeologies”, which tended to be situated within the typical geographic and temporal discourses (such as prehistoric archaeology, classical archaeology, and historical archaeology). In the past, for example, a typical historical archaeologist/public archaeologist might not have been conversant with the public archaeology work done by an Egyptologist, or a prehistoric archaeologist, or an Africanist, because they read different journals, went to different conferences, and so on. This is not as true today, and as this has evolved, particular methods and approaches common to “public” work in general have begun to emerge.

This short response does not include citations (there are hundreds now available), but one easy pointer to the newer work is to examine the international journal, *Public Archaeology*, which began publication in 2000. The masthead states that the journal provides:

...an arena for the growing debate surrounding archaeological and heritage issues as they relate to the wider world of politics, ethics, government, social questions, education, management, economics, and philosophy. Key issues covered include: the sale of unprovenanced and frequently looted antiquities; the relationship between emerging modern nationalism and the profession of archaeology; privatization of the profession; human rights and, in particular, the rights of indigenous populations with respect to their sites and material relics; representation of archaeology in the media; the law on portable finds or treasure troves; [the] archaeologist as an instrument of state power, or catalyst to local resistance to the state.

By scanning the pages of this journal, one can find public archaeologists who work in a variety of fields, including but not limited to education and curriculum management, heritage management, new technologies, the academy, politics and legislation, ethics, journalism, performance, museums, tourism, as well as commercial contract archaeology. These people do both qualitative and quantitative research about the public perceptions of archaeology, how pasts are created and used, and the conflicts between academic and popular views of the past. They deal actively with the political, social and economic contexts in which archaeology is undertaken, the attitudes of disempowered and indigenous peoples towards archaeology, and the educational and public roles of the discipline. In short, public archaeology defined in this way is an arena in which past and present merge, as information about the past is used by contemporary people for contemporary agendas and needs.

Before closing, I would like to address a particular issue that was raised in a recent internet conversation about King's paper, and this had to do with whether "public archaeology" is "archaeology". My answer would be yes – *if* the public archaeologist is trained as an archaeologist and is doing the work within an archaeological context. This is like any other archaeological specialty – would someone say that a GIS specialist with an advanced archaeology degree was not doing archaeology when s/he was surveying a site? Or that an osteologist with a similar degree who was examining the bones from a site was not "doing archaeology"? Of course not, even though GIS and osteological skillsets are also used in other disciplines. Public archaeology should be seen as just like any other specialty – if it is done within an archaeological context by someone with an advanced degree in archaeology, it is archaeology.

For example, like most archaeologists, I have training in several archaeological specialties (in my case – public archaeology, archaeological theory, historical archaeology and African Diaspora archaeology). However, I also have training in writing, public relations, marketing, museum management and agency administration, all of which are useful in my particular public archaeology practice. This work includes putting together community meetings, writing materials for the public, doing basic research about different aspects of public interaction, setting up media interactions for field projects, participating in public policy planning, assisting with museum displays, conducting ethnographic and oral history interviews and giving public talks and tours. It also includes writing about those forms of practice –

analyzing them, drawing conclusions, etc. In short, it is both practice and research.

However, in order to do this work properly, within archaeology, I first had to obtain the basic training that any archaeologist should have (field training, archaeological history, theoretical training, etc.). Then I had to make sure I had the training to do the public archaeology work as well. Public archaeology is like any other archaeological specialty – it requires training to do it properly, but, like other specialties, it is archaeology.

To close, Tom King is both right and wrong. In his critique of a certain area of “public archaeology” – CRM – he is right and his critique should be required reading for anyone going into the field. He is wrong (and hugely unfair to scores of researchers today) to restrict his definition of public archaeology to “only” one realm of practice.

Cornelius HOLTORF

Comment on King

I have no experience with American CRM but I am employed by a University in Europe, consequently lacking much of the background and experience on which Thomas King’s argument is based. From my European research and teaching perspective, however, public archaeology is not a particular form of archaeological practice related to public participation, interests (plural) of the public or indeed the public interest (singular) represented in laws and regulations. Instead, I see it as a field which studies practices by which archaeologists engage with society at large. I like Nick Merriman’s (2004: 5) formulation that “public archaeology opens up a space in which to discuss ... the processes by which meaning is created from archaeological materials in the public realm”. To me, King’s argument therefore does not address public archaeology directly and the title of his polemical comment appears as somewhat ill-chosen for non-American audiences.

King discusses a number of issues that characterise the way archaeology appears to be practised in the planning process in the U.S. and how this affects in different ways both academic archaeology and the public in the same country. I am very surprised to read that apparently this process does not include any public consultations in relation to developments plans. Such consultations would precisely

bring to light any kind of local values or other concerns about a given project, so that they could be answered or addressed. For example, a couple of years ago the local Town Council's development plan for the area in which I live in Sweden was made public and presented in several local meetings. It received so much criticism from the local population that the Council was compelled to revise it thoroughly (though as it happened, archaeological concerns did not come into it at all.) Quite possibly, I misunderstood what King actually meant.

Finally, King does not appear to allow in principle for CRM to be justified when it does not involve the local population. Although I broadly agree with this democratic sentiment (Holtorf 2007), I am also aware that in modern democracies state authorities very commonly represent the public interest. This is achieved by way of expert authorities which usually act independently of both politicians and the public and on the basis of their own specific expertise alone. Although good public relations are of course important for all such authorities, the quality and legitimacy of their work cannot be determined by public surveys alone. In other words, it is nice but not necessarily essential for the local community to enjoy and support a CRM project carried out by experts and fulfilling demands made by legislation.

In sum, I fear that I may not have addressed the specific issues King wished to raise. My task may have been easier if his paper had been presented in a clearer and more elaborated way.

Antonio VIZCAÍNO ESTEVAN

What menace? Beyond the Archaeological Heritage Management

One of the challenges of Public Archaeology –and of Archaeology in a broad sense- is to effectively deal with modern development and land use projects. It constitutes a major challenge because there are very different stakes –economical, political- linked both to public institutions and private companies, which very often implies, on the one hand, little time to address environmental impact studies and, on the other hand, impersonal archaeological processes of study and evaluation. In the end, Archaeology gets bureaucratized, as Faulkner (2000) argues, becoming a simple and standardized procedure that is carried out not because of a real scientific or public interest, but because of a particular legal framework.

In countries like Spain, where Public Archaeology practices are not usual –if they exist at all- (Almansa 2011), the situation is even worse: besides time and official stakeholders' pressure, community involvement does not exist, not only in aspects concerning archaeological research and fieldwork, but also in decision-making.

The process becomes, in this way, a simple data-collecting labour with the sole purpose of fully justifying the accomplishment of the environmental impact study; a pile of archaeological data that, at best, are used in order to fill the pages of a scientific publication –completely out of non-professional possibilities- or, being extremely optimistic, as part of information panels if one of the archaeological sites is lucky enough to be preserved and presented to the public.

Nevertheless, we should include these practices in what one might call 'standardized' Archaeology. In other countries, like the USA, there is a long tradition of involving local communities, especially during the archaeological dig, in the framework of the well-known 'cultural resource management' (CRM). However, taking into account the reflections of Thomas F. King in 'Public Archaeology is a menace to the Public – and to Archaeology', Public Archaeology practices are considered to be damaging to the public as long as they only look for the interests of Archaeology, leaving other cultural heritage resources aside. Often these other cultural heritage aspects are more related to local communities than the archaeological record itself, so if they are not taken into account or, moreover, if they are neglected and destroyed due to the lack of consideration on the part of archaeologists, then negative consequences for Archaeology and its public image should be expected. Is, therefore, Public Archaeology a menace to the public, as King says?

Personally, I do not think so. As Schadla-Hall (1999) proposed in the late 90's, Public Archaeology is concerned with relations between Archaeology and the public, that is to say, it stresses every aspect of people's daily lives in which Archaeology has something to say. This means that the discipline tries to go beyond the traditional discourse of heritage management and opens the way to fields where there is an important economical, political and social component, which increases, consequently, the scope of action. This is because the main goal of Public Archaeology is to strengthen links between Archaeology and society, encouraging the utility and meaning of Archaeology to people's real lives; in other words, to claim the social use of Archaeology. From that point of view, the public –not the archaeological object- is the

main character, and that is why Public Archaeology cannot be seen as a menace to the public.

Actually, Public Archaeology has the chance to help, through archaeological heritage management and its several possibilities –law, fieldwork, interpretation, outreach, local development-, solve greater or minor controversial and in-depth problems that exist in our society. This can happen regardless of whether the problems are concerning heritage issues –either archaeological, ethnographical, environmental or whatever-, social and political aspects –historical conflicts that are not yet over, social justice, historical memory- or economical and local development; or all of the above at the same time, because it is not always easy to separate them.

And this does not mean that Archaeology is exceeding its possibilities and its fields of action. Why do we have to prevent Archaeology –if it is in its ‘hands’- from acting on fields that are apparently –but not really- out of its limits, if by doing so we can improve the situation of the affected community? This is, in my opinion, what Archaeology should do when an environmental impact study has to be conducted: knowing the needs and interests of communities in connection with the project and practise Archaeology according to these indicators. If management of local archaeological resources can be used in order to address such needs, even if they are not directly related to those resources, any initiative in this way should be welcomed. The important thing is to develop inclusive and participatory practices in order to know what the real impact for local groups is, promoting less damaging actions and, at the same time, a civic enrichment and a better understanding between people and their environment and heritage –and, of course, between people and Archaeology.

Naturally, environmental impact studies of modern developments should be carried out by specialists in every field, as King says, and in collaboration with local communities, because by doing so a better and more complete assessment of people’s needs could be achieved; we cannot forget, among others, the importance of ethnography for this kind of practices (see Pyburn 2009, Hamilakis and Anagnostopoulos 2009). However, this does not necessarily imply doing an inappropriate cultural and environmental management when the study is developed from Public Archaeology.

In the same way as, for example, a project carried out through an environmental perspective can facilitate the preservation of archaeological resources, or an ethnographical research can call for the

recovery of an archaeological site or a historical monument due to its importance in a cultural landscape –and, therefore, in the everyday life of the local community-, Archaeology can contribute to the preservation of other cultural values.

From this point of view, how can Public Archaeology be damaging for the cultural values of a group? Seeing Public Archaeology as a menace to the public means, in my opinion, not considering a broader and more complex definition and sense of what Public Archaeology is and can do –a broad definition that would include, at least, the three definitions for Public Archaeology given by King, even the ‘damaging’ one, relegating its intervention exclusively to the archaeological field –what King associates particularly with the ‘innocuous definition’ of the discipline- and acting on behalf of a kind of self-satisfied position that seeks above all for documentation and preservation of archaeological resources. That is when Archaeology leaves aside its real addressee, the public, and acts driven by other economical and political interests. Moreover, this fact constitutes the real menace to the public and, consequently, to Public Archaeology.

Instead of doing that, Archaeology has the possibility of becoming a means by which people can address their interests, aspirations and needs regarding their environment and their cultural heritage, what can be especially useful in situations like those related to modern development and land use projects, where local groups are not often taken into account by builders, developers and authorities.

If archaeologists are required to carry out an environmental impact study, and through public archaeological practices –with specialists and particular conditions- it is possible to channel people’s voice, let’s do it. Let’s defend Archaeology as a useful tool for social, political, cultural and economical development on a more human scale, as Pyburn (2009) says. Let’s claim for the social value of Archaeology and all its possibilities.

Gabriel MOSHENSKA

The Many Faces of Public Archaeology: a Response to Thomas King

I sat down to read Thomas King’s article with a sour expression on my face and a chocolate cake in my hand to cheer myself up. In practicing, studying and teaching public archaeology over several years I have encountered any number of attacks and criticisms of the field,

from hardened fieldworkers who considered it a sissy activity, to *haute*-theorists who considered it banal and under-intellectualised. At the same time I had long regarded King as one of the most thoughtful writers on archaeological issues, with a clear-sighted view of archaeology's place in the wider world, and a well-honed bullshit detector. Bluntly, I expected better from him than a cheap attack on public archaeology as a 'menace'. Fortunately, it turned out that the body of King's article belied the title, offering a carefully constructed and nuanced argument and raising a number of very important points. I ate the chocolate cake anyway.

King's paper engages with one of the most annoying problems in public archaeology, that is the definition or boundary of a discipline that has of late become a buzzword. Monstrous injustices have been committed against both the public interest and the archaeological record in the name of public archaeology, and King is right to take up arms in defence of the more worthwhile elements of the subject. At the same time he recognises the uncomfortable truth that what is good for the public may not be good for archaeology – and vice versa. King's paper has helped me think about public archaeology in a more critical and productive manner, but he has also inadvertently highlighted flaws in my own attempt to define the discipline (see Moshenska 2009), and for this I am extremely grateful.

The three definitions of public archaeology that King notes are a useful diagnostic tool. The *innocuous definition* focuses on public engagement with archaeology – a useful concept to work with and an area where much good work is carried out. However, I would argue that engagement or public outreach is just one component of public archaeology. The *questionable definition* of public archaeology is analogous to what we in the UK have come to call 'community archaeology'. The problem that this raises is the unhelpfully vague and inclusive term 'community', which is rarely defined with great care and frequently becomes divisive and problematic when funding or research priorities privilege one 'community' above another. The *damaging definition* of public archaeology is what I would call 'public sector archaeology' – where the only interaction with the public is through their elected representatives. This is archaeology at its most alienated from the public.

I have previously envisioned the relationship between archaeologists and the public as a commodity relationship – archaeologists are the producers of archaeological commodities (labour, knowledge, skills), and the public are in various ways the consumers.

Most of the problems in public archaeology, I had assumed, were due to a disjuncture between supply and demand based on a failure of communication between the two sides. King's paper has highlighted one of the (many) flaws in this model: there is a considerable amount of archaeological material for which there is currently no strong public interest, indeed little enough interest within archaeology. If we are to subordinate or align our research priorities to public demand alone we will be poor and irresponsible archaeologists. Of course, in a more sensible model for archaeological practice the public or publics form one amongst several stakeholder communities, which a mature, reflexive archaeological discipline can take into consideration. But this is an archaeo-centric perspective, as King has so rightly noted: we need to consider the public's interest not only in archaeology, but to the wider fields of planning, development and the study of the human past to which we contribute. In this sense, King's closing statement stands as a brilliant manifesto for public archaeologists: "we should do everything we can to make sure that the public in all its diversity is fully involved not only in our work but in the broader studies and planning to which our archaeology may contribute". I can't argue with that. Now, back to that chocolate cake.

Thomas F. KING

A final response

Rather than a point-by-point response to the thoughtful comments of Moshenska, McDavid, Vizcaíno Estevan, and Holtorf, let me try to offer a general clarification and then provide a real-world example of why inadequately reflected-upon "public archaeology" is menacing.

First the clarification. I am all for involving the public in archaeological work (the innocuous definition of public archaeology), and I support doing archaeology that is relevant to the public (the slightly more questionable definition); I have done them both, and continue on occasion to do them today. I do think that, in doing publicly "relevant" archaeology, we need to think about what "relevance" entails, and about how much bias is acceptable in favor of one public over another. But my main concern is with the more damaging definition of public archaeology as "archaeology performed with reference to public law, regulation, policy, or programs". McDavid appears to think this concern to be outmoded, and it simply does not resonate with Holtorf, but I

think it remains a serious issue, upon which those who call themselves "public archaeologists" need to reflect. A major reason I wrote my paper was that I recently attended a conference in Beijing, where "public archaeology" as originally formulated by C.R. McGimsey III was extolled as a model for practice in Asia. The dangerous definition of the term is alive and well in the world, and I think those who use it should think about the implications of doing so.

Now, to my example. I am currently working with an American Indian tribe in the western United States. The tribe finds plans advancing apace for the construction of a large wind energy project in the midst of a landscape – controlled by a U.S. government agency – which its people greatly value for cultural/spiritual reasons. The tribe is having a great deal of trouble getting the project proponent or the government land managing agency to understand its concerns. Why? In part because the agency and the proponent think they are dealing with archaeology. As an automatic part of their environmental impact assessment work, they have sponsored archaeological surveys and insist (probably untruthfully, but that is another issue) that they have designed the project to "avoid" all the "archaeological sites." They cannot seem to understand why this does not satisfy the tribe. But to the tribe, avoiding all the archaeological sites, even if it were really done, would be rather beside the point. The tribe is concerned with the overall landscape and the spiritual, cultural, historical, ancestral values that they, the tribe – not archaeologists – ascribe to it. As a result, the tribe on the one hand and the proponent and agency on the other are simply talking past one another, and every time either of the latter writes another letter or makes another verbal presentation about what good care is being (they say) taken of the archaeology, it only makes the tribe more angry and frustrated.

I cannot blame the government, industry, executives and attorneys alone for their "mis-equation" of archaeology with the entire cultural environment, because all are closely advised by archaeologists. It is to the archaeologists – who would very likely describe themselves as "public archaeologists" following the dangerous definition – that the industry and government look for advice about cultural matters. And if the archaeologists involved in this dismal case are even implying to their employers or clients that there is more to the cultural environment than archaeology, they are certainly doing so only in the most indistinct of voices. I doubt if they are doing so at all, because their concern, after all, is with archaeology.

As are the concerns, I surmise, of all my interlocutors, with the possible exception of McDavid. This illustrates, I think, why “public archaeology” (using the dangerous definition) is a menace.

Let me pose this question to all four, and any other reader willing to contemplate the matter: if an industry – let’s say it is a nice, clean, green industry, like wind power – came to you and asked you about what impacts a big array of wind turbines might have on an area’s cultural environment, or “cultural resources”, or “cultural heritage”, would any of you tell that industry that it needs to consider the spiritual and other cultural values that local communities may ascribe to the landscape? Would any of you suggest studies of aesthetic impact, or close and thoughtful consultation with communities that perceive themselves as having cultural links to the area? Or would you simply advise archaeological surveys, project design to avoid destroying archaeological sites, and programs of archaeological data recovery – all involving volunteers from the public, of course, and perhaps addressing research topics of interest to the public? If you would only advise the archaeological work, then you are part of a problem that is, I argue, menacing to the public, and in the long run to archaeology as well.

Actually, though, the industry representative would probably not ask you about the “cultural environment”, “cultural resources”, or “cultural heritage”. They would probably ask you about “archaeology”, so you could feel quite comfortable advising them only to take care of the sites. But the narrowness of their question would not mean that they were really asking only about archaeology. Us “public archaeologists” (third definition) have been so successful at promoting our point of view about what “cultural resources” are, what “cultural heritage” entails, that it is quite common for government and industry decision makers quite innocently to conflate the terms. “Culture” becomes “archaeology”, and vice-versa. But even if they ask only about archaeology, I suggest that if you do not answer by asking how they are going to deal with culture writ larger, culture writ different-than-it-is-by-archaeologists, you are part of what makes “public archaeology” menacing.

I agree with Carol McDavid that “public archaeology” is more than “cultural resource management” (CRM), but I also think it obviously is much less – because archaeology is not the only “cultural resource” that needs to be managed. If your particular practice of “public archaeology” never involves you in influencing how the modern world interacts with the cultural environment, as is apparently Cornelius Holtorf’s happy condition, then none of this matters. But if your species of public

archaeology does somehow involve interactions with planning and decision-making by government and industry, then I suggest that you need to be constantly alert to the danger of portraying archaeology – even at its most “public” – as the be-all and end-all of cultural significance.

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