

# The Politics and Practice of Archaeology in Conflict

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This introductory paper reviews recent writings on archaeology and conflict, setting the other contributions to this volume into context. We draw attention to the political nature of archaeological work, and to the problems of reconciling professional interest in the protection and management of cultural property with needs of communities affected by war. We focus on two areas of current concern — the ethical and moral dimension to professional conduct, and the need to reconcile post-processual critiques of practice with the need to draw on empirical science in the competent conduct of work — finding middle ground in both areas of debate. We also conclude that heritage management and archaeological practice have an important contribution to make in the rehabilitation of war-torn societies, but that the top-down approaches that are most widely favoured can fail to meet the needs of local communities. Best archaeological practice should build from an understanding of local socio-political and cultural power structures, draw on assessments of need, and build upon a notion of heritage that moves beyond the purely materialistic. The concept of heritage as ‘care’ is perhaps more important to our work than that of ‘curation’.

**KEYWORDS** Conflict, ethics, archaeology, heritage, management

## Introduction

This volume of *Conservation and Management of Archaeological Sites* presents a short selection of papers from a conference on ‘Archaeology in Conflict’ that was held at University College London in November 2006. We met to discuss attempts to protect endangered cultural property in conflict and post-conflict states, drawing

on experiences obtained in Iraq, the occupied Palestinian territories, Lebanon and Afghanistan. The conference participants were drawn from the same community that we imagine to form the readership of this journal: an international audience of professionals involved in making decisions about how to manage and protect archaeology and cultural heritage. Our discussions reflected on an underlying tension between the practical problems of conservation and management, and the broader question of the ends that such work serves. Most cultural resource management models assume the primacy of conservation, and are aimed at sustaining resources for future generations. But what about the needs of contemporary generations? How can we justify giving our attention to the care of property, however culturally significant, without first considering the circumstances and needs of people made victim by war: the displaced, disempowered and destitute? In our discussions, we identified a divide between the goals of international and governmental agencies involved in heritage protection and the longer term needs of local communities alienated from the historic environment that they inhabit. Top-down versions of heritage management, as promoted by UNESCO and other international agencies and inherent in most programmes of overseas aid, can fail to address the local needs of conflict and post-conflict societies. The political dimension to this work is inescapable, and the cause of much recent discussion about what might constitute proper behaviour for archaeologists involved in managing cultural resources during war and in its aftermath: a discussion provoked, in particular, by widespread opposition to the war in Iraq. The papers presented here illustrate some of the different ways in which the political present conditions our attempts to take care of the archaeological past. Taken together they show that we cannot pretend to neutrality and that our actions must be judged by their impact on the communities with which we work.

The purpose of this opening paper is to set some of these arguments into context, providing an introduction to the contributions which follow but also exploring some of the broader themes and issues raised. We start with a brief review of recent literature on the subject of archaeology and conflict, with particular attention to the political nature of work in this field. This leads us to two current areas of concern. The first of these is the ethical and moral dimension to our professional conduct: where our involvement might be seen to lend support to unjust wars, or to help in reconfiguring cultural landscapes in ways that dispossess and marginalise oppressed peoples. The importance accorded to the argument over archaeological ethics is reflected in the prominence given to this subject in recent sessions of the World Archaeology Conference (as at Dublin in 2008). The second area of concern relates to the post-processual critique of the positivist assumptions that underpin cultural resource management. Whilst we recognise the need for a self-critical, reflexive and contextualised approach to all archaeological work, we are also sensitive to the debilitating uncertainties of a post-modern relativism that risks undervaluing the contribution that can be made by expert research and advice, as well as undermining the reality of suffering. How we choose to deal with the attribution of expertise and power in the archaeological process, and against what vision we weigh the archaeological value against other values, are issues that we believe to be of more importance.

## Why archaeologists are drawn to conflict

Culture is a prime arena for conflict, and archaeology an important source of material in the construction of collective identity. In particular, archaeological research is extensively drawn upon in describing, defining and legitimising national identities, and thence drawn upon in the territorial and ethnic disputes that fuel contemporary conflict (Rowlands 1994; Kohl & Fawcett 1995; Meskell 2002a). We are unavoidably compromised by the partisan uses to which the past is put, in which the physicality of archaeological remains and historic buildings makes them convenient anchors for claims and counter-claims of cultural ascendancy. Heritage professionals are uncomfortably aware of the ways in which competing versions of the past are promoted to support or challenge arguments over the ancestral rights to supremacy of particular ethnic groups, political systems or world views. The cultural landscape — both tangible and intangible — invites manipulation, in defence or disruption of perceived ties between people and place. Tunbridge and Ashworth have described how an intrinsically partisan approach to the past gives rise to a dissonant heritage, where the selective commodification, preservation and presentation of cultural monuments privileges particular versions of the past, and can override and disinherit alternative narratives and identifications (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996, 20). This manipulation of the historic landscape, and of its archaeological remains, is taken to extreme in the deliberate destruction of cultural sites. Some of the better documented examples of this include the demolition of cultural sites that accompanied the disintegration of Yugoslavia (Chapman 1994; Šulc 2005; Smith 2008), the tearing down of the Babri Masjid (mosque) at Ayodha in sectarian dispute over the symbolic value of the site (Layton & Thomas 2005; Barber 2006, 147), and the controlled destruction of the Bamiyan Buddhas by the Afghan government in 2001 (Flood 2002). These acts of desecration and violation were intended to both deny unwanted and heterogeneous versions of past and present, and to cause hurt to those that held them to be valuable (Meskell 2002b).

Culture is not only a prime arena for conflict — conflict also sits at the core of any attempts to deal with cultural heritage in practice. This contested nature of cultural heritage comes to the fore in the value-based approaches to archaeological heritage management that have been promoted by international organisations such as ICOMOS and UNESCO, where cultural ‘significances’ are defined by assessing the values of a range of stakeholders. But values in this sense are not intrinsic, static or inherent: post-modern critiques have taught us that values are intrinsically linked to people’s motivations, that they are subjective, contextual and dynamic. Values therefore often confront each other, which is why the act of balancing conflicting values is actually at the core of all heritage management practice. The real questions here of course, are about relative power: who has the power to decide which values are to be upheld in the archaeological process, what is the role and responsibility of archaeologists in this, and finally, against what purpose, or vision, do we prioritise the multitude of values? We will return to these issues shortly.

Archaeologists are also drawn to conflict through more academic studies. We have long been involved in the study of ancient conflict through our interest in the material remains of war and warfare, as described further in the paper published here by Peter Stone. Lately the scope of such archaeological study has been extended

to include the evidence of recent conflict, where the human and ethical dimensions of our investigations are more immediately evident. This is a field of study now represented by its own journal: the *Journal of Conflict Archaeology*. Professional skills at forensic and battlefield archaeology are increasingly employed in the study of war crimes and mass graves (see Golden 2006; Gould 2007; Ballbè et al 2007; Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2007; Crossland 2009). These investigations serve different purposes: to collect evidence for retributive justice, to counter efforts at denial and historical revisionism, to help in the process of reconciliation, and in the commemoration of atrocity for war tourists (Tunbridge & Ashworth 1996, 94–111). Building on this work Bernbeck and Pollock (2007a) have proposed an ‘archaeology of perpetrators’ where the process of exposing and describing landscapes of atrocity is used to provoke public discourse and explore uncomfortable aspects of recent history. It has been ambitiously claimed that by working through issues within shared landscapes ‘archaeology has the potential to quell conflict, to create common ground’ (Colwell-Chanthaphonh 2007, 32), ‘where historic enemies or perpetrators and victims of colonialism [...] come together through archaeology over “memories that hurt”’ (Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 68). Moshenska also presents powerful arguments in favour of site-based research, seeing community participation in fieldwork as a commemorative practice on sites of contested memory and as ‘a proactive, agent-led approach to arenas of memory articulation’ (Moshenska 2010, 46). Moshenska is aware that such work may also inspire anger and distress and that this demands a conscious, considered and responsible approach the theoretical, methodological and ethical approaches adopted.

It is one thing to work on the archaeology of recent conflict, but quite another to be working in situations of war. It would be naive to pretend that archaeology has the potential to bring peace where the causes of hostility remain unresolved. When faced with ongoing conflict the best that many archaeologists can achieve is to mitigate the physically destructive impacts of war itself. In these situations, the main focus of work is to safeguard archaeological sites and cultural property. This is a matter of risk and disaster planning: of recommending and undertaking actions to be taken before, during and after conflict aimed at documenting, protecting and salvaging archives, finds and sites (Teijgeler 2006). In order to be effective, and for the safety of those involved, these contributions are structured through governmental agencies, engaging with those military and civilian authorities holding the relevant positions of authority. The threats to be addressed range from the direct impacts of military operations and installations as in the placement of military posts and gun emplacements on high ground (such as archaeological tells) and at sites which have long been strategic (historic forts and castles), and in the use of military ordnance against such targets and in urban warfare; to the wider range of indirect impacts — economic and social — that flow from conflict, including the widespread looting and pillaging of archaeological sites (e.g., Brooks 2005; Stone & Farchakh Bajjaly 2008; Emberling & Hanson 2008). These indirect impacts continue — and may even be exaggerated — in the process of post-war reconstruction and development, where archaeologists also play an important but contested role (Barakat et al 2005; Barakat 2007; Perring below).

## The politics of archaeological practice

A common theme to all of the papers published here is the way in which archaeologists are drawn into political arguments, although with differing degrees of awareness of the fact. This is, of course, nothing new, especially in the Near East where colonial ideologies drew heavily on the arguments of Western antiquarians and archaeologists (Meskell 1998; Mourad 2007), and where neo-colonial agendas persist. Post-processual critiques of the way in which archaeological work can reinforce hegemonic structures remind us that there is no such thing as a neutral vantage point (Gosden 2007; Bernbeck & Pollock 2007b; Olsen 2005). Archaeologists trained in the western and modernist tradition are, as Bernbeck and Pollock (2007b, 336) explain, 'generally working in an imperialist tradition which treats archaeology as a global endeavour'. The way in which our work is conducted has negative connotations if we fail to recognise the conflicting interests of local and non-local parties, or recognise the ways in which our projects contribute to conflicting agendas that create and transform power relations (Geurds 2007).

Archaeologists cannot place themselves above and beyond the process of conflict. We are not neutral observers but protagonists: complicit and partisan. In some cases this follows directly from our professional involvement in the stewardship and interpretation of the archaeological landscape where we make acts of political affiliation by defining what is important, which and whose values should be prioritised, and by any act of regulation or expropriation. In others it is a direct consequence of working with the military, or in providing evidence for politically motivated investigations into war crimes.

These are all issues that archaeologists had to come to terms with in the recent war in Iraq. Two of the papers that we publish here deal with the problems of working directly with the military, and were written by archaeologists who were invited to give advice to the UK and US administrations. Stone describes and defends the choice that he made in advising the British Ministry of Defence on their responsibilities towards protecting the cultural heritage of Iraq (see also Stone & Farchakh Bajjaly 2008). The key assumption he makes is that archaeologists cannot stop wars, but have a responsibility to take what action they can to mitigate their consequences, both through practical advice on resource management issues and by contributing to an atmosphere of care that makes destructive conflict increasingly unacceptable. Gibson deals with similar issues based on his experience of working with the US State Department and being ignored by the Pentagon: from which he laments a 'general disregard of and suspicion of culture', which would seem to have roots in an ideological distrust of government involvement in such matters. Neither paper is able to offer much, if anything, by way of comfort. Even from the narrow perspective of cultural resource management the foreign intervention in Iraq was comprehensively disastrous (Al-Hussainy & Matthews 2008; Emberling & Hanson 2008). Stone and Gibson ask important questions, however, about the nature of our professional responsibilities. Do we obtain more moral authority by refusing to lend any kind of support to military authorities or are we bound to do what we can to make things less bad, even if our efforts have little likelihood of success? The probability of failure, as suggested by a consistently dismal history of military disregard for the protection of historic sites at times of conflict (Moshenska forthcoming), may make it both easier

and more intellectually honest to retreat to the moral high ground. The problem is that by doing so, and thereby failing to give clear guidance to those in positions of responsibility, we diminish the force of our critique when advice is ignored and failures occur. On the other hand an active involvement in the forward planning of any military campaign risks placing us in the role of protagonists, and such complicity can fatally undermine our ability to participate effectively in post-war reconstruction. The papers by Stone and Gibson, whilst challenging, leave a host of such issues unresolved. Palumbo et al also write about the efforts made by foreign archaeologists and institutions to help protect Iraqi cultural heritage, but in this case in the aftermath of the war. Their principal concern was to reinforce the local Department of Antiquities by providing training, and offering scientific support in documenting vulnerable sites and landscapes as part of the Iraq Cultural Heritage Conservation Initiative. This is illustrative of the approach taken by many international bodies and agencies, UNESCO in particular, in attempting to help countries recover from war. The potential benefits of capacity building projects are not in dispute, but the project is described in strangely apolitical terms given the highly political nature of reconstruction in post-invasion Iraq. There is no overt consideration of the social context in which the work might take place, and no assessment of how to ensure that it will be sustainable or might address local needs and aspirations. These are perhaps matters for the Iraqi State Board to address, rather than for their foreign advisors to insist on, but the relevance of a top-down approach must be questioned. Whatever the structure of power, there is a clear case for advocating approaches that embrace and engage diverse communities of interest. The wider critique of UNESCO-type approaches has been summarised by Rowlands and Butler (2007, with reference also to Eriksen 2001) who describe 'the imposition of alien agendas on local scenes by globalising agencies usually dealing in totally inappropriate concepts of culture' (Rowlands & Butler 2007, 2). Archaeologists are not alone in developing their projects within a politically embedded, top-down, environment. There is a wider failure in the way in which aid policy tends to be directed into supporting aid organisations rather than grassroots development (Mosse 2005), compounded by the fixed-term, pre-planned project culture that characterises many donor-funded interventions in post-conflict reconstruction (Barakat 2007).

Some of the most politically inspired writings published here are those that are based on the situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. Rjoob offers a searing and thoroughly documented indictment of the way in which the legal framework of military occupation has been twisted to privilege a one-sided programme of archaeological research, undertaken as salvage work and resulting in the relentless and routine expropriation and destruction of Palestinian cultural heritage. Here the 'doing' of archaeology is not an act of remediation or mitigation but one of theft and dispossession, disguised under a rhetoric of 'rescue archaeology'. Greenberg draws our attention to the ways in which sectarian interests have fuelled much of the archaeological work undertaken in Jerusalem, and writes to convince compatriots of the need to be open, aware and honest about the impact of professional conduct. His attempt to demystify the ideological basis for undertaking archaeological investigations opens up this possibility. As he says 'the pretence of a disinterested, "apolitical" archaeology can, it seems, no longer be maintained'. It remains the case, however,

that the factional and legally myopic realities that Greenberg describes await effective challenge. Butler presents a more heavily theorised, but no less politicised, argument about the importance of caring about the past in the present as a means 'to combat the erosion and loss of culture, land, rights and dignity that is inextricably linked to conflict'. Where Rjoob describes the physical impacts of the occupation on archaeological sites, Butler addresses the social and human dimensions of loss, and asserts the consequent importance of archival memory, — involving the use of tangible and intangible heritage in establishing narratives of belonging that can be used to confront the trauma of dispossession and displacement. Ways of expressing and representing the past, and of establishing a 'right to a remembered presence', can bring comfort and healing (see also Moshenska 2010 on working with the concept of memory). This in turn allows Butler to stress the importance of the concept of heritage as 'care'. This is a dense paper, but it offers a different perspective on current initiatives in describing and presenting the Palestinian past. A notion of heritage as care challenges the primacy of 'curation' in present definitions of cultural heritage, and paves the way for interventions that prioritise the needs and livelihoods of present generations over the imagined needs of future generations, opening up ways to think beyond approaches that are primarily geared towards preserving archaeological records and material remains.

We conclude this volume with two papers written about post-war reconstruction in Lebanon. Seif, talking from the perspective of the Lebanese Department of Antiquities, describes a programme of reconstruction that resulted in the widespread destruction of archaeological sites and monuments, in part because different religious communities rejected external interference in their management of their own historic properties and in part because of a political preference to place redevelopment ahead of conservation. Whilst Lebanese politics draw on historical and archaeological arguments, and the past is intensely politicised, the past tends to be exploited for competing factional and sectarian ends, and there are few shared values beyond the commodification of artefacts for sale within the antiquities market or of heritage sites to promote tourism. This is a long-standing problem, and Seif's paper illustrates the colonial origins of modern dispute, but his conclusions are essentially optimistic. In his view there is space to accommodate both development and archaeology in the rebuilding of Lebanon and conflicts can be resolved, provided that shared value systems can be identified and negotiated. Perring's account of the earlier phases of archaeological work undertaken in Beirut, written instead from the point of view of one of the foreign archaeological contractors engaged to undertake rescue excavations, also describes the way in which conflicts over the past are brought to the fore in reconstruction efforts. Arguments over archaeological conservation allowed competing factions to dispute control of the reconstruction programme, exposing tensions between private sector reconstruction and public sector rehabilitation. This paper builds on the theme of using the practice of urban archaeology as a means of aiding both economic recovery and political reconciliation. The argument here is that the greatest contribution that archaeologists can make is to use the process of investigation to engage different communities in the collective endeavour of making sense of a common landscape, thereby undermining exclusionary claims to both past and place. The experience of discovery, and public debate over the value of the

archaeological remains, can be far more important to the process of reconciliation than static monuments conserved within the urban landscape. These two papers illustrate the way in which reconstruction efforts represent a continuation of conflict by other means, and show how archaeologists are inevitably drawn into opposing camps when the archaeological past is itself the coin of dispute. Our actions and our arguments are both contingent and partisan, and it is delusional to pretend political neutrality.

## Debating archaeological ethics

Our involvement in these political arguments has prompted calls for a more transparent adherence to shared values bound by agreed ethical standards, and for the development of codes of practice that will make it harder to perpetuate exploitative approaches to the study and management of cultural heritage that are indifferent to local needs. These are issues that currently exercise the attention of the World Archaeology Congress, which first adopted a Code of Ethics in 1990 (World Archaeology Congress 1990) and is now investigating new proposals to develop a general code of ethics.

Codes of professional conduct have been developed to address the conflicts of interest that arise in the conduct of commercially funded archaeological work by private and profit-making bodies by representative bodies such as the Society for American Archaeologists and the Institute of field Archaeologists (Lynott & Wylie 2000, 35).

Regulation can and does limit opportunities for malpractice and establishes benchmark standards for professional and scientific conduct, although there are enormous problems to be faced in promoting and enforcing codes beyond the national borders of the sponsoring agencies. There are also problems in translating concepts and approaches from one context to another: as Tarlow has pointed out, concepts of indigenism that may be progressive in some post-colonial contexts can become reactionary elsewhere, where they can appear xenophobic and nationalistic (Tarlow 2001). These issues make it difficult, and potentially dangerous, to universalise codes of ethics. Critics have also described the way in which codes of contact can lead to the bureaucratisation and instrumentalisation of ethics, where such matters are removed from the arena of conflict in the world and become a matter for professional organisations (Hamilakis 2007, 20; Meskell & Pels 2005, 17). One of the problems of placing our professional duties at the centre of any discussion of ethics is that it can add to the sense that archaeologists are somehow distanced from their wider responsibilities as human beings. We invite the accusation that we are placing the needs of cultural property ahead of the needs of people (Groarke & Warrick 2006). Moshenska has recently (2008) summarised some of the issues facing archaeologists in addressing the ethical issues of conflict archaeology. He is particularly scathing of the current emphasis on duty-based 'deontological' ethics, which has spawned the growing range of professional codes of practice. He argues that archaeology is now 'overburdened with statements, guidelines, codes and standards: the relationship of these dreary documents to archaeological praxis is very often a vague and formal one, and almost invariably unreflexive' and that these codes can stifle debate and fossilise approaches (Moshenska 2008, 163).



This is a harsh judgement, if not totally unfounded. Good ethical practice builds on our response to individual and specific situations, recognising that we are all moral agents and actors negotiating particular problems in unique circumstances. Ethics are embedded in practice and in how we negotiate our values with other audiences and stakeholders, and a rule-book can not be put in place of our personal responsibilities to act virtuously and morally (Meskell & Pels 2005, 17; Moshenska 2008, 162). On the other hand this does not invalidate attempts to act collectively, defining first principles and translating these into guidelines that make it difficult for professionals to pretend ignorance of the need to engage with other needs and concerns beyond their own. Our experience of contract archaeology in the UK leaves us in no doubt that codes of practice, however dreary and unreflexive, have helped extend professional practitioners beyond their comfort zone and denied space to the blatantly unethical. There is, therefore, scope for the World Archaeological Congress to build on the current work of its ethics sub-committee in encouraging a greater awareness of both individual and collective moral responsibilities. There is value to the exercise; even if we have doubts as to its ability to significantly improve practice and we must remain wary of some of the underlying assumptions that inform these efforts.

Our main problem is to find ways of better engaging with relevant audiences, including both professional and indigenous communities, without prostituting and debasing our skills in reading the evidence. We need to promote methods that reinforce dialogue and debate, and which work towards redressing the imbalances in power that fuel conflict. Effective dialogue involves building trust and understanding between different actors and interests, and this requires us to be transparent about our goals and open about the political nature of our professional relationship to governments, institutions, sponsors, agencies and other stakeholders (Geurds 2007, 207). We cannot assume shared objectives and values. This is a fundamental issue that lies at the core of all value-based heritage management models, but has particular resonance in the field of post-war reconstruction development.

The debate over archaeological ethics has become particular concerned with the issue of whether archaeologists should work with the military (Gibson this volume; Stone this volume; 2009; Hamilakis 2003; 2007; 2009; Mourad 2007; Starzman 2008; Curtis 2009). Our colleagues have been much divided over whether collaboration with the military can help safeguard heritage at times of war, or is an ethically compromised form of collusion that puts our civilian status at risk and elevates the defence of cultural property above humanitarian considerations. We are asked whether archaeologists mobilised against conflict might be a greater force for good than a few individuals working alongside the military in a damage limitation exercise. To this end a resolution passed at a session of the sixth World Archaeology Congress urged:

all archaeologists and heritage professionals to resist any attempts by the military and governments to be co-opted in any planned military operation, for example by providing advice and expertise to the military on archaeological and cultural heritage matters. Such advice would provide cultural credibility and respectability to the military action. (Hamilakis 2009, 58)

There are more shades of grey to this issue than emerge from this highly polarised debate. It is unrealistic to expect our common identity as archaeologists to suggest a common position on this issue, and the debate is an internal one unlikely to either convey legitimacy or deny it. We can agree with Hamilakis' conclusion that 'we should be true advocates for heritage by caring for and defending strongly and passionately human lives and cultural objects alike, past and present, being at the same time independent, and strong opponents of those who try to obliterate them' (Hamilakis 2009, 57), but decisions about where and when to talk to the military will remain contingent. Giving advice is not necessarily wrong, any more than it is necessarily effective. The point missed by this inconclusive debate is that by focusing on the extreme example of an illegitimate war it fails to help us in building workable responses to the more subtle problems of engaging in conflict situations where there is no easy way of knowing who the good guys are and who the bad ones. The situation faced by aid agencies in post-genocide Rwanda, where perpetrators become victims and the communities that fuelled conflict are no less in need of practical assistance or post-conflict care, provide but one example of many that could be cited. Our rules of behaviour if we must have them, our guidelines and ethical statements, must be about means and ends — how we behave and for what purpose — rather than simply picking sides.

## Taking issue with cultural resource management

The current debate over professional ethics takes place within the context of a broader argument about the politics and purpose of cultural resource management (CRM), and this has major implications for the issues that we address here. As Barber has observed 'archaeology's potential role in heritage conflict resolution might seem to be seriously compromised by its own theoretical conflicts' (Barber 2006, 147).

In this next section, therefore, we turn our attention to the post-processual critique of the positivist assumptions that underpin cultural resource management. At present, it is well understood that heritage management is not simply about finding appropriate methods of conserving the material remains of the past and about formulating laws and regulations. Recent debates have increasingly focused on the socio-political and cultural role that CRM plays in society and on the discursive implications of archaeological approaches to heritage. The underlying linear and positivist assumptions of archaeological processualism are seen as contributing factors to the political uses of archaeological 'facts' in the marginalisation of minorities, and to definitions of heritage that favour western and professional interpretations of the past over alternative, indigenous and subaltern interpretations. Smith has illustrated how archaeology in this sense has often been misused for political ends, warning of archaeology's 'mobilisation as a technology of government' (Smith 2004, 83; see also Hamilakis 2007). Intrinsically linked to this is an understanding of the archaeological professional as an 'expert' on deciding how heritage should be defined, whose values should be upheld in the archaeological process, and what constitutes ethical practice (Meskell & Pels 2005). Taken together, the use of positivist scientific arguments and the emphasis on archaeological expertise have indeed contributed to the reinforcement of the status of archaeologists in the control of cultural sites and resources, especially in the context of indigenous archaeologies and conflicts between agendas

of the state and the divergent interests of local communities (Smith 2004). This process is probably strengthened by discursive practices in the field that identify, and personify, archaeological data and sites with individuals, leading to a situation whereby archaeologists are attributed a degree of ownership over the study and management of cultural resources, especially in post-colonial and non-western contexts. We do not believe that all archaeologists necessarily seek this role, nor that they feel comfortable with the authority attributed to them, but it undeniably brings responsibilities.

The difficulty in dealing with this responsibility lies in the question of how to respond to post-processual critiques given the highly processual, methodological and linear daily practices of archaeology and cultural resource management. Indeed, archaeologists 'continue to objectify material remains and follow standard analytical methods in their research [...] while acknowledging increasingly that the generation of archaeological knowledge is not a neutral exercise' (Barber 2006, 146).

Related to this is the growing body of literature that challenges the way in which we construct the 'archaeological record', because of the questionable value systems embedded within our approach to archaeological science, where 'western official archaeology has fetishised an abstract metaphysical entity which it calls the "archaeological record"' (Hamilakis 2007, 20ff). Although such critiques make relevant points about the socio-political and cultural impact of archaeological method, it does not automatically follow that we should abandon our professional methodologies: establishing narratives from material traces of the past through sound archaeological practice is, and should be, at the core of our discipline. We are at risk of damning the process of archaeology because of the political ends it has served, whilst neglecting to assert the importance of method in any attempt to explore and understand past landscapes (Kolen 2009, 209). The 'anthropologisation' of archaeology (Kolen 2009), however important, cannot be at the expense of our ability to draw confidently on our professional competence, and to be critical of work that lacks sufficient methodological rigour. It is as well to remember that archaeologists, students and local communities looking to overcome the problems of war are often amongst the most anxious to develop the skills and expertise represented by processual archaeological methods. There is absolutely no justification for denying people those tools we value in our discipline. As Gould has observed 'the empirical, minimalist, perspective toward understanding physical relationships in the archaeological record [...] continues to provide the basis for establishing the facts of past human behaviour' (Gould 2007, 193). Sound archaeological methodology provides the necessary foundation for describing and representing archaeological evidence, and there is an important role for factual evidence in informing our decision-making. Forensic archaeology, in particular, needs to meet the evidential standards of a court of law. Despite the validity of critiques of the positivist assumptions of archaeological science, despite our recognition that archaeological data does not speak of and for itself, and despite the fact that all of our investigations are politically situated, one of the great strengths of archaeology lies in its empirical method. When we investigate, we uncover new data that challenge our assumptions and help us find new ways of conceiving of the past. The very process of discovery, supported by the comfort of technically proficient routine, gives archaeologists a key role in helping communities approach the past

from the perspective of the material evidence, offering new opportunities to make sense of that evidence: ‘the unique ability of archaeology to document unexpected historical and cultural inclusions suggests an important, if too infrequent, contribution of the material archaeological record in conflict situations. This contribution is not concerned with the political resolution of competing claims and authority, instead it is the challenge for contemporary communities in conflict to reflect on the archaeological evidences of acceptance and toleration as well as discord in their own cultural histories’ (Barber 2006, 152; see also Kolen 2009, 216–17). There is something pleasingly democratic about the process of routine archaeological documentation, where our favoured professional tools give equal weight to the different archaeological contexts and assemblages under study. In this way archaeological practice can be curative, helping people come to terms with contested pasts and landscapes. Our professional concerns with managing and protecting cultural resources can blind us to the fact that the practice of archaeology has enormous potential in processes of conflict resolution and post-conflict renewal (see also Perring below).

The practice of archaeology is, of course, socially embedded and politically contingent: archaeological knowledge does not exist in the abstract, but is produced within society. It is therefore equally important that we strive to achieve a shift in power that gives greater equity in all aspects of archaeological practice and management (Nicholas & Hollowell 2007, 73; see also Bernbeck & Pollock 2007a; Starzman 2008, 370; Pyburn 2003). This involves developing inclusive, rather than exclusive, approaches to both decision-making and participation. Widening the participatory basis of archaeology and heritage management does not absolve us of the responsibility to do our work competently and professionally; but it does require us to make sure that professional practice is combined with a critical analysis of power relationships in how archaeology and heritage resources are managed and deployed. This awareness of social context is not only crucial for understanding how archaeological knowledge contributes towards sustaining the political structures that are party to conflict, but also for successfully implementing the stakeholder and participatory approaches that are advocated in value-based management models.

## **The demands and opportunities of reconstruction and development**

There is, therefore, an important role to play for both professional archaeological practice as well as post-processual and self-critical research, provided that they are based upon the common vision of heritage management and archaeological study as inclusive rather than exclusive practices. This naturally leads us to also argue for the better integration of the archaeological involvement in conflict and post-conflict situations with broader development aid and reconstruction programmes. Some of the best work on the role and contribution of development and reconstruction aid has been undertaken by the Post-war Reconstruction and Development Unit (PRDU) at the University of York (Barakat 2007). This work informed discussions held at our conference on the issue of what constitutes best practice, and is worth summarising in detail.

Archaeology is often a key issue in post-war reconstruction programmes (Barakat et al 2005), where archaeological research and heritage reconstruction have an

important role to play in the reconciliation of communities. In order to be effective, however, our contribution should be based upon risk and need assessments, a clear understanding of local socio-political and cultural power structures, and upon a notion of heritage that moves beyond the purely materialistic. This involves identifying the values, beliefs and needs of those connected to the cultural heritage, drawing on the value-based management models coming into favour in the field of CRM. It is important to realise that a 'shared vision' of the importance and need for the recovery of cultural heritage needs to be built, and cannot be assumed; building trust is therefore an essential strategy, especially when dealing with members of different communities. Another important point stressed by Barakat is that the vision behind cultural heritage recovery should not be confined to physical restoration, mirroring the notion of 'heritage as care' as discussed above:

The first instinct of outsiders is to restore or replace the built environment including significant monuments as rapidly as possible, often using imported plans and materials. However, apart from undertaking measures to limit further damage and to restore necessary basic facilities, haste is not a good policy. It is necessary first of all to understand the cultural heritage that determined the damaged built environment, to question what led to its destruction and to appreciate the impact of conflict on the society. In any discourse on the restoration of cultural heritage damaged by war it is critical to acknowledge that, from the affected people's perspective, cultural heritage becomes much more than mere tangible manifestations, as architecture, historical artefacts and archival documents start to assume a complex role in forging their post-conflict identity. It is also important to remind ourselves that the process of defining post-conflict identity takes place in a wider context of social, economic and political upheaval with a high degree of uncertainty and apprehension. (Barakat 2007, 36)

The need for a sound understanding of the socio-political and cultural contexts of heritage formation is therefore essential, and this, again, is an area where both archaeology and post-processual critiques have a fundamental role to play. We have to give careful attention to the relationship between external and local actors, in order to make sure that local capacities are not destroyed by an unnecessary reliance on international experts. A bottom-up approach that builds on local capacities by means of knowledge transfer can be difficult to implement due to the international financial and institutional context of post-war development programmes:

trauma and loss do not rule out the participation of local communities in the recovery of cultural heritage. Local solutions [...] are frequently cheaper, more effective and more sustainable than externally imported solutions [...] they have the [...] benefit of harnessing local materials/skills/know-how and thereby help in the process of restoring dignity, confidence and faith in local capacities. [...] The fixed-term, pre-planned project culture that characterises many donor-funded interventions is particularly unsuited to most post-conflict scenarios, since it allows no space for solutions to evolve [...] The donor haste to see recognisable organisations in place often also ignores pre-existing institutional capacities instead of building on them. (Barakat 2007, 33–4)

Quick-fix solutions, especially when aimed at recovering and/or restoring material remains too rapidly, can also encourage damaging and inappropriate investigations

and conservation measures. These pose a risk not only to authenticity and quality, but also to peace-keeping if the dissonant nature of heritage in its socio-political context is not clearly understood. Since international support for the recovery of cultural heritage is at its highest in the immediate aftermath of war, when local demands for progress are also likely to be at their most pressing, there is a sensitive balance to be struck.

## Concluding thoughts

The purpose of this paper has been to set out some thoughts and concerns about the practice of archaeology in situations of conflict and post-conflict restoration. Archaeologists and heritage managers play an important role in the exploration and reconstruction of tangible and intangible heritage, which in turn contributes to processes of reconciliation and economic reconstruction. But if we are to be effective in the pursuit of these goals we need to be guided by a vision of cultural heritage that cares not only about the material remains of the past but also about those connected to it. This involves mitigating the worst of the impacts of over-hasty 'top-down' approaches to CRM by locating our work within longer-term strategies for social and economic rehabilitation. Whilst we may be employed to help investigate, manage, restore and protect cultural resources, or to train others in how to do so, what matters most is the uses to which these resources are put. This makes us political actors with social responsibilities. Our interventions and actions must therefore be shaped by as full an appreciation of the social impact of our work as possible. We need to be aware of how our work is located and perceived within local socio-political and cultural power structures, and in the context of wider aid and development programmes.

Ideally we need to develop long-term partnerships that are based upon bottom-up and value-based approaches. Unfortunately situations of conflict and post-conflict reconstruction are far from ideal. We work with sponsors and agencies who find it difficult to take a long-term view, and where dislocated and divided communities are excluded from (or exclude themselves from) the processes of engagement and dialogue that might help in conflict resolution. The political context of our involvement, the source and nature of the funding available, and the specific circumstances of the conflicts that we encounter, will all constrain and compromise our work. This is not, however, a reason to abdicate responsibility, and there are better and worse ways of doing things. In the first place we need to be honest about the political dimension to our work, and recognise the ethical issues that this raises. All situations are different, and there are no globally applicable guidelines that can save us from having to take difficult individual choices about who to work with, where, when and to what end. It is incumbent on us to acknowledge imbalances in power, listen to dissonant views, and facilitate the negotiation of values with those affected by our actions. If our behaviour is not guided by an awareness of this ethical dimension to our work, we run the risk of exacerbating the very divisions that contribute to conflict.

In the conduct of this work we depend equally on sound and scientific method, the practice and teaching of which is usually the main justification for a foreign involvement, and a self-critical approach to the uses of archaeological science that is

informed by the post-processual debate. Our empowerment of the people with whom we work depends on both sharing the tools with which we construct archaeological knowledge, and acknowledging the ways in which that knowledge can be used and abused by those in power. It is perhaps time for the ideas and practices of community archaeology to inform the archaeological work that attends conflict. The doing of archaeology, whether in the field or in the museum archive, provides an invaluable interface between people, past and place, and it has an under-utilised potential to contribute to both conflict resolution and social healing. The debate over the contemporary roles that we can find for the tangible and intangible heritage can also be used to redirect hostilities into areas where negotiated outcomes can be achieved. The past is not only a source of conflict, but also a place where we can find ways to build peace. The responsibilities that we carry are commensurately enormous.

## Acknowledgements

This paper draws extensively on the wide range of views and arguments expressed during the course of the conference in London, and we would like to thank all who helped to organise sessions, gave papers (most of which are not published here) or who made contributions from the floor, whilst apologising for the fact that we cannot individually acknowledge all of these contributions. We are also grateful to Mike Rowlands, Tim Williams and Gabriel Moshenska for their comments on the papers that form this volume, and for drawing our attention to issues and ideas that we have been able to explore here.

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