



GOING PUBLIC

CUSTOMIZATION AND AMERICAN ARCHAEOLOGY

Lawrence E. Moore

Larry Moore is an archaeologist at Fort Hunter Liggett in California.

Previously, forecasts for significant socioeconomic change for the U.S. and cultural resource management (CRM) were made (Moore 2005a, 2006). The claim is that a large demographic shift, the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, threatens the future of American archaeology. As U.S. society and economy will be significantly changing, then so too will the conditions for why, when, and where archaeology gets done (Van der Leeuw and Redman 2002:597). The goal here is to identify the new conditions that will foster archaeology for many years.

Over the next decade, American archaeologists should take advantage of the coming demographic shift by expanding their applied talents into a growing marketplace: the leisure industries. Through numerous excavations, archaeologists can provide recreation that is interesting to Americans. This will take the profession further into the public domain, perhaps ending up on Main Street America. This expansion in infrastructure can be achieved through customization, an additional trend that is transforming America.

Customization

One of the more memorable Baby Boomer sayings has been “Think globally, act locally.” This phrase expresses a customized value. Most everything in the U.S. is being localized or personalized, and yet it is all tied to macro-level current affairs. Localization and personalization are varieties of customization, a process that emphasizes flexibility at the point of action. Customization is a democratic and diversifying process, driven by technological proficiency and favorable values that encourage innovation and open economic markets.

Customization is replacing standardization, the process that saturated U.S. society with standardized products, services, and values about standards. Standardization emphasized uniformity, consistency, conformity, and congruency—of and between products, social institutions, and behaviors. Standardization is also expressed as normative concepts within the sciences. Stan-

dardization developed over most of the 19th century and climaxed in the early 20th century. Sprouting from standardization, customization began in earnest after World War II. Customization inserts multiple standardized products and services, along with values promoting flexibility, into every conceivable situation, such that their placement is targeted or appears distinctive.

Customization replaces one-size-fits-all and cookie-cutter standards with values that promote flexibility, diversity, convenience, and fine-tuning. 401k plans are replacing pensions because 401ks are customizable and pensions are not. In the workplace, workflow processes are customized to technological changes. Frequent adjustments and upgrades create adaptable, quick-learning workers. Knowledge is no longer viewed as static but transitory. Rules and regulations are impermanent. In terms of political and business leadership, people want rules from the top that are flexible at the point of use. Customization recognizes that what works well in one context may not work well in other similar contexts, and adjusting for that knowledge.

Local Heritage Management

As an industry, historic preservation is localizing. CRM, led by the National Historic Preservation Act (NHPA), is becoming local heritage management, to be led by state and local policies with commercial ties to economic development, tourism, recreation, and education. Some states, like California and New York, are several years into this transformation; many states have hardly begun.

The outcome of this process is diversity of local preservation implementation. In 2003, the City of Fort Collins acquired the Lindenmeier site as part of its Soapstone Prairie Natural Area, a local conservation area. In 2005, Hamilton County Parks and Recreation, in Indiana, unveiled six miles of recreation trails within its Strawtown Koteewi Park, visiting its numerous archaeological sites. In Cortez, Colorado, the Indian Camp Ranch subdivision has archaeological concerns written into its

homeowner association bylaws. Congress is also providing new customizing legislations; 36 bills are currently being considered that relate to National Heritage Areas that integrate economic development, tourism, historic preservation, and local planning.

All the recent NHPA enhancements have been customizing ones. The Preserve America Initiative, its associated Executive Order (EO 13287), and the current amendments before Congress expand preservation initiatives at the local level. In the future, the NHPA likely won't be the centerpiece legislation driving historic preservation because numerous federal legislations will target different issues. The standardized Section 106 process of the NHPA can be customized, as well, by replacing its focus on identifying national historic properties with a process that identifies multiple categories of useful resources across multiple jurisdictions and purposes.

Local communities can create numerous jobs for archaeologists. From the 2000 census, this country has 3,142 counties and 239 large cities. Within these, there are possibly 50 active municipal archaeology programs today. In 10 years, there could be 1,000 programs. Cressey et al. (2003) and Kenny and Murray (2003) offer useful insight on ways to integrate archaeology into community planning.

Recreation Archaeology

The retirement of the Baby Boomers ushers in another era of social change for the U.S. The leisure industries will benefit greatly from this, even if the economy turns negative. The best way to accommodate this change is by personalizing archaeology to the public. To accomplish this, an infrastructure is needed.

Recreation Archaeology, as a variety of Public Archaeology, includes volunteer programs, paid participant programs, and travel-expedition programs. Maybe there are 200 of these now nationwide; eventually, there should be 2,000. A few hundred enterprising archaeologists can make it happen. There is time to develop this infrastructure; the Baby Boomer wave of retirements begins about 2009, but the heyday of Recreation Archaeology will be 2016 to 2034, the years with maximum retiree participation.

Many of these programs should develop within the local preservation expansion described above. The volunteer programs in Fairfax and Alexandria Counties in Virginia are two examples that have been operating this way for many years. These "Community Archaeology" programs can make up half of the programs to be created. The other half can come from numerous sources. Every college, university, museum, for-profit, nonprofit, and local archaeological society can run these programs. For



Figure 1: The upcoming retirement of the Baby Boomer generation will lead to a rapid increase of visitation at archaeologically themed public parks, such as Bandelier National Monument in New Mexico. Archaeology stands to benefit from such demographic and economic changes.

example, in northern Virginia, there is the Mount Vernon volunteer program, run by a nonprofit organization. The University of West Florida is establishing seven Public Archaeology programs across that state. Likewise, 50 more centers like Crow Canyon need to be spread around the country. There is also room for a few more travel programs like what The Archaeological Conservancy offers. Lastly, almost every federal land managing agency will be running volunteer programs at full capacity in the near future.

Recreation programs are timely in two important ways. First, they are the essence of customizing archaeology to the public because participation is a personal action. Second, recreation and volunteerism will gain recognition as key ingredients within the U.S. economy. Politicians and high-level managers will be creating these programs instead of trying to cut them. Recreation Archaeology will become a leisure industry that replaces CRM as the dominant career track within the profession.

Marketing Popular Culture

To be successful at Recreation Archaeology, significant multimedia exposure and interesting excavation topics are needed. The first is already in hand, because archaeology has become a modest theme within popular culture (Holtorf 2005). Significant media currently include the Archaeology Channel, the History Channel, the Discovery Channel, and shows like *Stargate*

SG-1. There are also video games and mystery-adventure novels that have archaeology as a subject matter. Other important media include information websites, such as <http://archaeology.about.com/> and <http://archaeologyfieldwork.com/>. All these exposures indicate that archaeology will remain as popular culture.

The second item for success is interesting excavation topics. Going forward, archaeologists must focus on topics that are appealing to the general public, topics that draw much media attention and numerous volunteers. The reason for this is that during the coming leisure economy, Americans will be overwhelmed with the choices presented to them on how to use their leisure time. To compete in this market, archaeologists have to maintain high visibility with fascinating projects. Overly academic topics will do poorly in a leisure economy.

The way to compete strongly is to identify useful themes within American popular culture and then structure projects around them. This is targeted marketing. For example, in Oklahoma (Moore 2005b), themes that have local and regional appeal include the relocation of Native Americans to Indian Territory and cowboy culture. Another theme is "Firsts," because Americans like knowing the first occurrence of any type of event or process and the people connected with them. This could include excavating sites like the first school house or the first homestead in a county, and it includes Paleo-Indian studies. Genealogy is another theme, as the most common hobby in the U.S. For this theme, a "Firsts" homestead project might also be marketed as a genealogical one. A catch-all theme might be "Exotic-Spectacular-Rare," since anything that is considered exotic, spectacular, or rare is interesting to Americans. For Oklahoma archaeology, this includes sites that display well and have a rich collection of artifacts and features, such as Spiro.

It is easy to decide if a theme is popular or not. If it can be presented as an episode on the Archaeology Channel or as an essay in *Archaeology* magazine, then it is a popular theme. This use of popular culture themes is commercial, an essential trait of this new Public Archaeology. The profession need not, however, give up museum, academic, or preservation interests; Public Archaeology expands beyond them. "Going public" means taking applied archaeology into new territory, thereby creating new opportunities. CRM has been an applied venue, but it never took archaeology deep into the public domain because, in general, the value of archaeological resources continues to be based on internal concerns instead of public interests. Over the last 150 years, the profession has focused on internal, private interests—museums, research, and preservation—but these are old interests with diminishing opportunities.

The Civil War

A catalyst is needed to create growth for all areas of archaeology, a topic to focus on that can create action for the profession. In bowling, to get a strike, the lead pin must be hit hard, allowing the ricochet effect to achieve the desired result. Likewise, archaeologists need a popular topic that can spread its rewards throughout the profession. The Civil War is an excellent lead-pin, because it is the most important heritage-related theme in American popular culture. Conveniently, the 150th anniversary of the war will be the years 2011 through 2015. Given the number of retirees with idle time and America's infatuation with this war, this anniversary will likely initiate the greatest soul-searching era in U.S. history, surpassing the 1960s. Archaeologists have to embrace this anniversary and by doing so, enable hundreds-of-thousands, maybe millions, of non-archaeologists to enjoy the celebration. During those years, there must be large open-area excavations available for volunteerism and public visitation everywhere possible. This is a Public Archaeology opportunity that cannot be missed.

Incongruity is Valuable

American archaeology is obviously customizing. One legacy of the Processual-Post Processual debates is that they transitioned much of archaeology away from standardized conceptions of culture, science, and archaeology into customizing ones. Few people care about Culture Areas or the Midwestern Taxonomic System anymore because they were standardized, homogeneity-laden concepts from the early 20th century. Archaeologists today offer generalizations that express the heterogeneous, multidynamic, and multivocalic character of culture change, and the new common denominator of the archaeological record is local variation.

Customization has brought problems into the profession. On one hand, archaeologists now appreciate local variation. In CRM, some permitting procedures now require consultants to have local experience. On the other hand, customization generally does not create local experts. The American workforce is more flexible, mobile, and impermanent today than any time in the last 75 years, and this is increasing. Localization is not about maximizing local knowledge but instituting flexibility at the point of use and implementation. Customization creates adaptable quick learners capable of targeted action using portable communications tools. This is necessary in today's world that treats information as transitory, including archaeological information. Local knowledge certainly has merits but mandating it is counterproductive when the workforce is being pulled in another direction.

Customization is diversifying archaeology in other ways. It is now acceptable to speak of multiple archaeologies, even if pre-

sented by non-archaeologists. Looking ahead, boundaries between professional and nonprofessional will likely blur, forcing negotiations with other interested parties, such as modern material culture specialists, Native Americans, and relic collectors. The Secretary of Interior's definitions for two kinds of archaeologists—prehistoric and historic—are also approaching obsolescence. Several definitions may be needed, or one that is exceptionally generic.

Archaeologists today have more roles in society than previously. During the standardized years, archaeologists were primarily authorities or educators. The new customized archaeologist shifts roles based on context, sometimes being an authority, sometimes a mentor, translator, facilitator, bottleneck, negotiator, mediator, or bystander. In Public Archaeology, a competent archaeologist knows his or her contextualized roles; debunking myths and folklore may be appropriate in some situations, while in others, enabling and facilitating them are the appropriate actions.

“Going public” also means that archaeologists accept values from the public domain and nurture them. This new ethic is based in the wisdom that, more frequently than not, the external interests of the public are more important to the profession's future than are the internal concerns of its practitioners; rhetoric about archaeology held by members of the public are usually more important to them than professional accuracy and correctness. Incongruity is useful, allowing archaeologists to have their own professional opinions while supporting multiple opinions from the general public.

The key image of archaeology that the public seems to care about is the process of discovery (Holtorf 2005), best evoked by the term “digging.” What the public seems to want from archaeology is an outlet for digging. Therefore, the purpose of Public Archaeology is to create situations that allow people to follow the process of digging, to discover whatever it is they want to discover while experiencing archaeology.

Digging for Prosperity

Customization in America has many years to its climax. Meanwhile, recognize that Americans have the wondrous ability to take trends into the absurd. Standardization climaxed with people referring to their behavior as machine-like. Today, Americans believe that everyone is unique and special, yet they are not quite certain how to act on such claims. Excessive diversification can certainly happen to archaeology. How many versions of it

will there be? How multivocalic can it become? No one knows, but somewhere is a customized compromise that most of us can live with.

Throughout these forecasting essays, the years 2009–2016 have been viewed as important. In those years, the Baby Boomer retirements will reach critical mass, such that economic and political crises are likely. The rapid decline of CRM is also very likely, while the leisure industries will grow exponentially. And we will have the anniversary of the Civil War, with its attendant social unrest. Understanding these changes, we can position archaeology for prosperity by expanding local heritage management and recreation archaeology. Both are accommodations to a changing society. Both create new jobs in new places. If the economy goes badly, these changes also position us to absorb large numbers of laborers, giving us an essential role in society, a unique opportunity.

Everything recommended means substantial increases in excavations, because digging is the best way to keep the public interested in archaeology. Digging is our leverage. If the economy stays strong, digging will ensure growth while going public. If the economy becomes adverse, digging safeguards our profession.

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