

CURSOS DE ARQUEOLOGIA NAS REGIÕES NORDESTE E SUDESTE DO BRASIL E SEU VIÉS SOCIAL E MATERIAL

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Randall H. McGuire is Distinguished Professor at the Binghamton University, State University of New York, USA. McGuire is an archaeologist primarily interested in the development of power relations in the past and present. He has carried out most of his field work in the U.S. Southwest and is currently conducting a long-term field project in northwest Mexico. He has also done historical archaeology and oral history research in the northeastern U.S. In 2010, he completed a project investigating the 1913-1914 coal strike in southern Colorado. Since 2011 he has done research in contemporary archaeology on the U.S. – Mexico border around Nogales, Arizona. In addition to historical archaeology, history and ethnology, his interests include quantitative methods, social theory, cultural resource management and archaeomagnetic dating.

The first part of this interview was conducted in May 2014 at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) during the course “Archaeology as Political Action” based on his book with the same name. The course was organized by the Graduate Program in Anthropology and the Laboratory of Archeology at FAFICH/UFMG.



Cristina Fachini: What is the concept of public archaeology for you?

Randall McGuire: Our concept of public archaeology is a very broad one. Basically, it's any archaeology that reaches outside of the University. And in that sense, there are many aspects of my own work have been public archaeology. We're not really worried about a narrowly defined idea of what we do, and, it has been rare in the United States but is becoming much more common

A number of us, also have the idea of doing scholarship as public intellectuals. That is as intellectuals who engage in research and relate our research and thought to issues facing civil society. This is an idea that has not been well formed in archaeology.

But what I think it's that the scholarship we engage in, is not solely to produce knowledge or papers or to promote us, but that the knowledge that we develop is to engage the public and to involve the public and of course for this is my work with the miners and with the Yaqui Indians and with different communities comes in.

For example, Neoliberal attacks on unions spring from a monstrous lie, that politicians and corporations gave labor the benefits that they have and thus that workers no longer need unions. On the battlefield of public policy, these assaults on organized labor work in a fundamentally ideological way that calls the continued existence of unions into question.

Our archaeological studies of the Colorado Field War (1913-1914) reveal that contrary to the monstrous lie, workers and their families won their rights with blood and that solidarity and organization remain essential to maintaining these rights. (Larkin and McGuire 2009)

If you would ask me if I do public archaeology, I would probably say no, but I would say I am a public intellectual. I do apply my work and engage my work with public on real political issues. And I would see what I do is that rather than public archaeology.

Frederic Pouget: What do you think that should be included in the discussion of public archaeology?



Randall McGuire: I think for me there are two key things which are very often not included in these terms but can be. The first thing is the idea that we separate rational authority¹ and hierarchical authority. I am drawing on anarchism that distinguishes between rational authority that springs from skills and knowledge and hierarchical authority that springs from coercion and exploitation. Cobblers have rational authority in their ability to make shoes. This requires special skills and knowledge. In contrast, nobles have hierarchical authority that comes from their control of coercive institutions, instruments and social relations, and their ability to have others involuntarily submit to that authority. We must not confuse them and that we don't use rational authority to justify hierarchical authority so that we can work in collaboration with communities.

And the second thing is that there is no general public. What we represent as the interests of general public are more commonly the interests of our class position, which is middle class position, in most cases.

Frederic Pouget: When you said that it doesn't exist general public, that was very interesting. Why do you say that?

Randall McGuire: Well, an important question is what's the relationship of archaeology to "publics" in plural? The classic, traditional idea is that we as experts gain knowledge of the world and then we simplify that knowledge and communicate it to a public, the general public. I criticize this idea.

The first part of this critic is that I don't believe that there is such a thing as the general public. Well, there are many publics, you know. In places I work there are indigenous people, there are, \ middle-class people, there are workers, there are women, there are men. There are many ways to define publics. And they don't all have the same interest in the past.

¹ I am drawing on anarchism that distinguishes between rational authority that springs from skills and knowledge and hierarchical authority that springs from coercion and exploitation. Cobblers have rational authority in their ability to make shoes. This requires special skills and knowledge. In contrast, nobles have hierarchical authority that comes from their control of coercive institutions, instruments and social relations, and their ability to have others involuntarily submit to that authority.



I accept the idea that we have a rational authority. We have a craft (Shanks; McGuire 1996) that we are trained in, that we practiced, that we are immersed in, that allows us to understand the world in ways that people who do not have that craft cannot. I think that's very important but by the same token one of the points I've made repeatedly is a necessity of giving up hierarchical authority. In other words, I reject the argument that because we have those crafts and because we can interpret the world in ways that are the people cannot but that means we know what the important questions are, that we know what is important in the world, that the archaeological record that heritage should be under our protection. This is a logical extension that is almost universally made in archaeology, but I think it's wrong, and I question that extension.

So that means that we should not give up our rational authority, but we do need to give up our hierarchy authority. What that means in practice is that we need to engage with communities and find out why heritage is important to them. We need to engage with them and find out what about heritage, what about what the past, about what archaeology is important to them. Then we need to apply a rational authority to serve those interest. So, from that standpoint I reject the classic idea that we as specialists, we as experts can know the world and know what's important. We do have a special way to know the world but that doesn't mean that we also have control of what is to be known. So, in education we need to look for different publics, we need to identify different publics, we need to engage with them to see what their interests are and then we need to structure our education to meet those needs. And for me, the biggest contrast is always with indigenous people because their interest in the past are very different than that interest of archaeologist, very different than the interest of school teachers, very different then the interests of other people.

I wrote: *“archaeologists can use their craft to evaluate interpretations of the real world, to construct meaningful histories for communities, to strive for real collaboration with communities and to challenge both the legacies of colonialism and the omnipresent class struggles of the modern world... For effective collaboration, however, we do need to enter into a dialogue with the communities that we work with and to surrender significant control over our research agenda”* (McGuire 2008 p. 13).



Cristina Fachini: Do you think that perception of general public and different publics, like you said, is controversial with public archaeology?

Randall McGuire: It depends on what you mean by Public Archaeology. If you see public archaeology as dumbing down or simplifying the knowledge that we find so that a public can understand what we think is important. This is hierarchical authority. Yes, I reject that. But to my mind a public archaeology is possible, and it becomes even more important if we reject the idea of a general public and work with many publics' plural. I think what happens when we talk about a general public (archaeology this is something I hope to talk about class tomorrow) archaeology primarily serves the interests of the middle-classes. By that I mean those people who stand between the workers and the owners that is professionals, administrators, managers, teachers, etc. Most archaeologists come from this class, and most archaeologists occupy this class position - so we tend to take the interest of that class and to represent them as the interest of the general public. Now, I'm not opposed to serving the interests of that class. I'm not saying that the interest of that class is unfounded or unimportant. But what I am saying is it's those are not the interests of a general public. The interests of a certain educated segment of society whose attitudes towards education and towards learning and knowing are very different than other publics within the general society.

Frederic Pouget: Tell us more about the four aspects of your work with communities

Randall McGuire: opposition, education, consultation, and cooperation. To my mind these are very different things. I feel there are communities and there are publics that we should oppose and obviously this is a political position, and it comes from political position. It comes from a certain philosophy and political position. One of the reasons I explicitly call myself a Marxist is because I identify with all those things. But for me we need to work against interests that are opposed to or interfere with humane interests. We need to work against interest that alienate people. That alienate them from their land, their work, their heritage, their families, whatever. That is something we need to work against. So, there are some publics/communities that we should not support, I would include in that category extreme groups like neo-Nazis, I would include the falangists in in Spain. These are all easy



examples. I might include Republicans... I have been known to include republicans. So yeah, I think there are groups we need to oppose.

Education we've kind of already talked about. I think we do need to engage in education but, again, not from a position of hierarchical authority, where we say we know what's important, we're the experts... And this is also part of the discussion about archaeology and education. One question is why don't they listen to us? And the answer to this always is because we don't dumb down enough for the public. You guys understand what I mean, by dumb down? We don't make it simple enough. And when we do it simple enough, they would understand, and they would see that what we're saying is so important. Bullshit! This is not the case. The reason they're not listening. It's not because we can't say it simply enough, not because we can't make it exciting enough it's because we're not speaking to their interest. And to certain extent this argument does apply to say the interests of the middle classes. Because you know, these are educated positions and all. And Middle-Class people respect and ask for expert knowledge. But this is not the case with all class positions. For example, I was raised in the working-class, I'll tell you right now, there was not a respect for expert knowledge. In fact, expert knowledge was seen as something oppressive. I was reminded many, many times to be careful of book learning. I was a very studious child, I loved reading, this made me very different from the rest of my family. Generally, they respected it and they encouraged it because they could see how, you know, I can gain class mobility from it. But they also warned me not to put too much faith in book learning, in expert knowledge. My uncle Leo worked in a cement plant, and around the dinner table, a common story would be that there was some job to be done and my uncle Leo or some other worker because of their Hands-On practical knowledge knew how to do it but some engineer or boss, using their expert knowledge, would tell them to do it a different way They would tell the boss: - "Hey boss ain't going to work", and they would say: - "Well I'm the expert. You do what I say". And then, of course it didn't work. This was a trope that was repeated and again and again. So, when we are talking to a middle-class audience they respect and want expert knowledge, in part because they are experts themselves. That's how they make their living. That's how they obtained their position in society. So yes, of course they respect expertise and expert knowledge, but working with working class people, they don't necessarily respect that, and they sometimes are opposed to it and see it as something that oppresses them.



So again, we need an education, we need to get back to a model that does not assume we know what's important but rather ask and engages with the community and finds out what is important to the community and what the community needs and then we engage in that, again using our craft (our rational authority) to do it.

Consultation and collaboration are often confused. In terms of consultation, consultation is something we should do. I'm not trying to critique that this is something we shouldn't do. Consultation usually involves some goal-oriented project. We will engage in consultation when there's a problem to be solved or goal to be managed. We use it instrumentally! And in consultation we try to meet with and consider all the people that have interest in a project and then come to a resolution of those interests. The resolution changes the project to allow us to go forward and to not violate as many of those interests as possible. That's generally what the process of consultation does. This is fine, I am not saying we shouldn't do it, but we need to realize that it is something different than cooperation.

In collaboration we are engaged in a long-term commitment between groups with different interest, that respects those interests, that engages those interest, that has a commitment that goes beyond specific project and that modifies the interest of everyone involved. So, everyone is entering it. One thing at a consultation: consultations does not necessarily imply that all parties are necessarily equal. There are usually positions of power within a consultation. And so, when we talked about collaboration we are talking about a situation where any of the groups can say no. When my students are working on dissertations, we often talked about them engaging in collaboration with different groups. I always tell them that this is something you should do but, realize, if at some point these people say no, it's over! And that can be very disconcerting if you trying to do dissertation so in those cases, we always try to have the alternative dissertation! We always try to have a plan B o dissertation in case they say no. And in collaboration there's a commitment to the community that goes beyond, the commitment of the project, and also it implies a solidarity, engaging in solidarity can mean that you need to compromise some of your interest. You have to decide in advance which ones you can compromise, which one you can't. Because the political process is a process of compromise and being compromised so you have to engaged with that.



Luana Campos: How do you see Paulo Freire's influence in the field of public archeology?

Randall McGuire: In Anglophone archaeology Paulo Freire has had a significant but indirect influence on public archaeology. Very few Anglophone archaeologists read his work, but he has had a massive impact on pedagogy in Anglophone education philosophy. Archaeologists pick up on his ideas via discussions of education philosophy.

Cristina Fachini: How important is Paulo Freire's contribution to the work you do with the communities?

Randall McGuire: It is very important given that he has already addressed most of the challenges that I find working with communities.

Cristina Fachini: How do you teach education for emancipation with your students?

Randall McGuire: I focus on teaching different way we know the world as opposed to telling students what the world is. I challenge them to question what we know and how we know it.

Luana Campos: Do you think Archaeology Researchers are prepared for the challenges that the relationship between the community and the field demand?

Randall McGuire: Yes and no. In Anglophone archaeology, community archaeology has become widely accepted. Too often, however, in a very simplistic way. The archaeologist assumes that the interests of the community will automatically be emancipatory. As González-Ruibal, González, & Criado-Boado, 2018 point out this is not necessarily the case in a world dominated by reactionary populism.

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