host city, funded different stages of the project and managed the technical aspects of the reproduction – even reproductions have a maker (Thompson 2018) – are also crucial details in discussions of technological (de)colonization. Stobiecka's examination could benefit from a closer look at agency that comes from a deeper involvement with the artefact's itineraries. A focus on itineraries considers that objects have 'no real beginning other than where we enter them and no end since things and their extensions continue to move' (Joyce and Gillespie 2015, 3).

There is no doubt that the trajectory and influence of Palmyra extend historically far beyond the borders of Syria, but the carefully crafted circulation of a replica that claims to represent Syrian interests today must confront specific concerns with the ethics of representation in contemporary heritage studies. First, the destruction narrative that is represented in the reproduction of the arch is not representative of the widespread destruction of diverse cultural sites that took place across Syria during this rampage (Mulder 2016). Likewise, the representational form of the arch cites a very selective period for this monument, which includes being used as a mosque and a church at different moments in its life history (Mulder 2020). Second, the visible rejection of Syrian refugees across many European countries, contemporary with the free circulation and consumption of the replica, undermines efforts to construct a global discourse that addresses the human scale of the Syrian conflict (Cunliffe 2016; Thompson 2017). Third, the apparent applause that this replica has received across the world evokes the strong rejection of the reproduction of the Ishtar Gate in Babylon, Iraq, which was disassembled through excavation to be reassembled in Berlin in the 1930s. A scaled replica, built in Babylon by Saddam Hussein's regime in the 1980s, has been used as a textbook example of heritage inauthenticity and politically motivated deceit. Destruction, and its presumed resolution through digital reproduction, continue to be politically motivated.

Stobiecka's article offers important debates that invite us to revisit what it means to 'save heritage' in the 21st century. Her discussions also act as a reminder that heritage debates that fall under a 'heritage-at-risk' rhetoric enable less critical examinations of the means and purposes of representation (Rico 2015). Therefore calling for decolonizing practices in heritage preservation must revolve around an exploration of the channels of authority and expertise that give shape to specific safeguarding narratives, rather than focus on repackaging preservation strategies under new codifications and techniques that result in the same colonizing process of heritagization nonetheless.

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Hijacking ISIS. Digital imperialism and salvage politics

Lynn Meskell

Department of Anthropology, School of Arts & Sciences and Weitzman School of Design, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, USA
Email: lmeskell@upenn.edu

On 8 April 2017, I came across the replica arch in Piazza Signoria. If you were not paying attention, it was easy to miss. A small, rather unimpressive copy, out of scale with its surrounding Florentine architecture, but also with the Syrian site of Palmyra. The replica drew scant attention from the lunchtime crowds. It was largely an exercise in public relations for the G7 meetings being hosted in Florence: Italy was celebrating itself. The marble came from the legendary Tuscan quarry of Cararra, close to the spot where Michelangelo selected his marble for *David*. The Roman arch was built during the reign of Septimius Severus in the third century A.D. The copy was made

possible by the Commune di Firenze, UNESCO (Firenze), MUSE Firenze, Polo Museale della Toscano, Gallerie degli Uffizi, Terna, Arterià, Archae Associati and various other Italian entities. The accompanying signage described Palmyra as 'a place of myth' and 'acute reality', having once served as 'the main trade causeway between East and West'. At the time of the arch's destruction in 2015, the Institute for Digital Archaeology participating in the same discourses that are being critiqued were already collaborating with 'people of the region' to document and reconstruct it. Today it has since been transformed into a 'true global symbol of the triumph of co-operation over conflict'. Finally, the text included a dire warning that the arch was a 'dangerous and delicate work of art' and therefore 'it is severely prohibited to touch or interact with the work on display'.

Stobiecka's article underlines the specifically Western appropriation, indeed abduction, of the arch for other, non-Syrian audiences. The Syrian arch has effectively been 'hijacked by the imperial countries, "civilized" and possessed thanks to their powerful technological tools, to finally become an artefact of ideological discourse' (p. 121). She is right to ask who is mourning the imputed loss: the replica arch is not about Syrian war, nor about Syrian losses, or even Syrian heritage. Instead, compensatory technologies have reconstituted Palmyra for the West. The Euro-American ventures she describes seek to assemble complex technological tools and expanding computer-based skills within new institutional frameworks. Digital heritage initiatives like ICONEM, CyArk or IDA, typically underwritten by promissory rhetorics, 'encourage a diverse, crowd-sourced and stake-holder driven approach to the stewardship of heritage assets'.[1] The advisory board of the IDA is almost entirely classical in nature, comprising philologists and historians rather than archaeologists; founder Roger Michel Jr is neither.

Stobiecka's critique of archaeology's digital imperialism is reminiscent of Haraway's classic 'god-trick', that our technologies literally proffer the 'view from above, from nowhere' (Haraway 1988, 589), presuming to neutrality and objectivity. Digital and mapping technologies serve to distance the subject and elide the political in the interests of unfettered power. Our disciplinary faith in technology and heavy reliance upon it have remained constant, from the radiocarbon revolution to our use of geospatial satellite data and drones. Archaeologists continue to be linked to, and gain from, covert military technology, as Laura Nader (1997, 137) argued two decades ago, and not even in new ways, but ones that recentre the same configurations and reinforce a century's legacy of mutual involvement and benefit. Stobiecka rightly critiques digital archaeology for its lack of political, ethical and, I would add, historical self-reflection.

Throughout the histories of colonialism, occupation and foreign intervention in the Middle East, archaeology and archaeologists have played significant roles and derived not inconsequential benefits: whether control over the past and its material remains, or the predictive optics and analytical mastery gained through surveillance and digital technology. Those recursive linkages afforded by the opportunism of war and conflict have so often been followed by the concomitant rhetorics of rescue. It is uncomfortable for us to see ourselves reflected in these ongoing 'heritage wars', and recognize that 'salvage' is a burgeoning industry, where we too are beneficiaries. Archaeologists should be mindful about the provenance of these salvage campaigns, about what it implies about our attitudes and who is ultimately served. Seeking to 'save' others infers cultural superiority and justifies the violence it unleashes, instead of recognizing our own larger responsibilities and historical embeddings (Meskell 2020).

Syria's heritage has long been held hostage, reaching back to British and French colonial intrigues, archaeological adventurism and regional battles for the territory that now constitutes the modern nations of Lebanon, Syria and Iraq. The infamous 1916 Sykes–Picot line, drawn up by the British and French to divide the spoils of Greater Syria, was informed on the British side by Oxford archaeologists like Gertrude Bell, T.E. Lawrence, Leonard Woolley and their recruiter, D.G. Hogarth. In 2014, when ISIS literally bulldozed the Sykes–Picot line in the sand, their actions demonstrated how others remember (Meskell 2018). During the colonial mandate era, French colonial forces evicted the inhabitants of Palmyra, destroyed their homes and resettled them in the town of Tadmur. Beginning in the 1920s, the French excavated and

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reconstructed parts of the site, while Antoine Poidebard, an early exponent of aerial archaeology, mapped the desert landscape from above. Technocratic programmes like those outlined above reinforce a sense of superiority for Westerners in cultural and technical matters. Bell (2015, xiii) described such interventions as 'vast schemes for the government of the universe'. However, as history reminds us, those claiming to bring knowledge and civilization are often ultimately the destroyers, looters and beneficiaries of other people's pasts.

Hijacking ISIS, whether in copying the Palmyrene arch or having a Russian orchestra play in the Roman amphitheater (Plets 2017; Meskell 2018), reflects the enormous desire of foreign states, international bodies, academics and entrepreneurs to triumph. Some of these efforts have ultimately backfired. In Florence, the IDA had purportedly forged a 'true global symbol of the triumph of co-operation over conflict, optimism over despair, and human ingenuity over senseless destruction'. Stobiecka enumerates such quests, often shrouded in a military lexicon, where technology fights back: '3D printers can help undo the destruction of ISIS.' The same was true with Bamiyan. The motivations are reflective of deep desires by the international community to rewrite history and tell a story of success, rather than the failures of heritage agencies like UNESCO (Isakhan and Meskell 2019). Furthermore, a kind of fatigue has developed around the Syrian humanitarian crisis: thus it is easier to fixate on monumental loss than on the ongoing plight of people. Although well intentioned, such virtual efforts reside in Stobiecka's 'exclusive zone set by archaeologists, art historians, conservators' (p. 124). In the main, they reveal our ignorance of regional events and disciplinary histories. She recommends that archaeologists 'resign from the digital armoury' (p. 124).

While sympathetic to Stobiecka's arguments, I remain wary of the academic industry that continues to flourish around Palmyra. Yes, the archaeological adventurism and opportunism of the early 20th century have been refashioned into new forms of international technocratic expertise. But in fetishizing the arch, and indeed its copies, we also risk participating in the same discourses that are being critiqued. More sobering still is that the topics that scholars formulate (and seek to have funded) have simply been recalibrated to the insidious practice of 'crisis chasing' (Cabot 2019). The crisis is about salvage, albeit our own, since what is unfolding in Syria and Iraq has inevitably saved and spawned myriad institutions, foundations, digital start-ups, initiatives and research, with a new mission and moral charge. Perhaps now we should be considering whether we are creating ever more hostages to fortune.

Note

[1] See http://digitalarchaeology.org.uk/people.

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'Violent care'? A response to Lynn Meskell and Trinidad Rico

Monika Stobiecka

I would like to thank Lynn Meskell and Trinidad Rico for their thoughtful, reflection-provoking and articulate responses, in which they have expanded on a number of interesting points that I had