



DANIEL SOSNA, JAN KOLÁŘ, PETR KVĚTINA, FRANTIŠEK TRAMPOTA

PREHISTORIC ARCHAEOLOGY IN CENTRAL EUROPE: BEYOND DIVERSITY

ABSTRACT: This paper introduces a Special Issue of the journal Anthropologie based on the papers that were presented at the conference Theory and Method in the Prehistoric Archaeology of Central Europe, which was held in 2012 in Mikulov, Czech Republic. The papers cover a wide range of theoretical and methodological themes related to prehistory of Central Europe. Themes covered in this issue include human-environmental interactions, significance of artefacts, long-term processes, and reflexivity. Despite the diverse nature of the papers, there are two common threads emerging in this Special Issue. The first one is the relationship between archaeology and other disciplines and the second one is the tension between national archaeological traditions and internationalisation of archaeological practise. We argue that Central Europe is well suited for the exchange of ideas related to archaeological theory and methodology because of its geography and history. It is the space where various archaeologies and archaeologists can meet, present their arguments, negotiate their theoretical positions, and produce new knowledge.

KEY WORDS: Archaeological theory – Artefact – Communication – Environment – History of archaeology – Reflexivity

"I amar prestar aen. Han matho ne nen. Han mathon ned cae. A han noston ned gwilith."

Galadriel

INTRODUCTION

Archaeology has become diverse. An increasing number of scholars and institutions – both in academic and non-

academic settings – participate in the production of new knowledge about past societies. Their quest stems from values and goals specific for the environment into which they were socialised and whose natures they perpetuate

Received 24 January 2014; accepted 10 February 2014.

© 2014 Moravian Museum, Anthropos Institute, Brno. All rights reserved.

to various degrees both consciously and unconsciously. They tend to follow methods they are familiar with, frame their findings in terms of theories they find pertinent, and present their results in a manner they consider appropriate. In the world of nature diversity represents an advantage that provides a biotic community with the ability to cope with environmental fluctuations. Does it mean that diversity in archaeology represents the same advantage; value by itself? We will argue that diversity in archaeology itself is just a prerequisite for the enhancement of the knowledge about the past. Various archaeologies need to communicate with each other to turn meaning into desire; the process responsible for the creation of value (Graeber 2001: ix). International conferences and publications such as this Special Issue represent arenas where the mutual exchange of ideas and practices surrounding the production of ideas take place to transform differences into desirable ends.

In 2011, a group of Czech scholars met to discuss a plan for an international conference focused on theory and method in prehistoric archaeology. Our original intentions derived from dissatisfaction with the nature of discussions about local theoretical archaeologies. This group had experience with various barriers that limited the flow of ideas among archaeological communities despite existing international virtual channels and personal ties. An organisation of an international conference in the Czech Republic seemed to be a reasonable strategy to let fresh ideas flow into Central European academia and demonstrate that research conducted in Central Europe has the potential to inspire scholars in other regions. We wanted to show that there was a growing body of scholars and students who prefer the nature and atmosphere of conferences where open and intensive theoretical debates based on constructive criticism take place. We attempted to promote a friendly atmosphere that wears down academic hierarchies and provides space for discussion and mutual respect. The selection of English as *lingua franca* for the scholars from twelve different countries served as a vehicle for bridging national differences, which have remained surprisingly strong in contemporary archaeology (cf. Kristiansen 2008).

This Special Issue represents a fundamental sample of papers that were presented originally at the conference *Theory and Method in the Prehistoric Archaeology of Central Europe* held from 24th to 26th October 2012 in Mikulov, Czech Republic. These papers cover a wide range of approaches from quantitative analyses of pollen samples to qualitative analyses of texts written by archaeologists. Also, the authors represent multiple

archaeological traditions and schools of thought in Europe and beyond.

The work on this Special Issue was accompanied by tensions between the formal requirements of an international journal and tolerance to divergent academic traditions. We exposed the papers – including the papers of the editors – to critical feedback from leading specialists regardless of their nationality, language, and work location. We believe that the final product respects both international standards as well as community- and agent-specific understanding of proper scholarship.

ISSUE THEMES

Environment

One of the most pervasive themes in this Special Issue is the relationship between humans and environment. Karolína Pauknerová, Roderick Salisbury, and Monika Baumanová, in *Human landscape interaction in prehistoric Central Europe: analysis of natural and built environments* discuss different approaches to the research of human-environmental interactions. They point out that the novel methodological and technological applications are not interconnected with social theories and especially Central European archaeological understanding of landscape is often reduced to discussions about methodology. The authors present a wide range of theoretical approaches, which were only very rarely taken into consideration in Central Europe, even though the use of GIS and recently LiDAR have quite a long tradition in the research of human-landscape interaction. The interdisciplinary concept of built space analysis is demonstrated by the example of the deserted medieval village Mstěnice (Czech Republic), where major social changes occurred between two phases of occupation. The changes are indicated by the increase of the privacy of houses and stronger spatial integration of each compound. The concept of soilscape, which can be understood as "an area of similar soil-landscape relationships" demonstrates the use of a hybrid methodology. This approach combines the methods and research questions of a diverse range of disciplines such as pedology, geochemistry, and social archaeology. Indeed, the authors call for more than just this hybrid approach. They stress the need for interpretations that can cross disciplinary and paradigmatic boundaries. The potential of this approach is presented in the case study of Neolithic settlements near Pilsen (Czech Republic), where phenomenology and GIS analyses are applied together to produce deeper understanding of the

relationship between humans and environment in the past.

Roderick Salisbury and Gábor Bácsmegi's contribution enriches the debates about human-environmental interactions in archaeology from the perspective of environmental possibilism. In *Resilience in the Neolithic: how people may have mitigated environmental change in prehistory* the authors overcome the pitfalls of environmental determinism and build their theoretical framework on the assumption that human responses to environmental fluctuations are neither inevitable nor governed by universal rules. Humans tend to react to environmental changes in various ways shaped by specific cultural logic and agency of the actors. This, however, does not mean that humans are independent of the physical environment in which they live. In the case study of two Late Neolithic settlements in the Körös region (Hungary) the authors demonstrate how the strength of their approach goes beyond the simplistic assumptions about the primacy of nature or culture. In contrast, they apply a complex methodology based on collection and analysis of various environmental samples, magnetometry, and surface collections to shed light on cultural resiliency of Late Neolithic communities. Their interpretations stress long-term small environmental fluctuations and subtle human responses to these fluctuations.

The paper by Attila Gyucha, Paul Duffy, and William Parkinson entitled *Prehistoric human-environmental interactions on the Great Hungarian Plain* enriches the debate about human-environmental interactions by broadening the analytical perspective. The authors not only extend their focus to a long temporal scale ranging from the Neolithic through the Bronze Age on the Great Hungarian Plain but they propose a multi-scalar approach to archaeological evidence. The use of multiple scales such as the region, micro-region, and settlement allows the authors to examine scale-specific nature of the relationship between humans and environment. The case study from the Körös region is based on the long-term archaeological research that took advantage of diverse methods ranging from remote sensing to excavations and subsequent complex analyses of multiple lines of archaeological evidence. This approach based on rich and diverse evidence leads the authors to argue that any kind of single-causal explanation of long-term changes on the Great Hungarian Plain is untenable. Human-environmental relationships were complex and both environmental and social factors shaped human action. In addition to the substantive results of the research, this paper shows an example of successful collaboration

among scholars from different countries that resulted in multiple publications led by various members of the research team. This project proves that differences among national archaeological traditions can be overcome and solutions to cultural and academic incompatibilities exist.

Artefacts in context

Another theme focuses on the significance of artefacts, especially in technological, economic, and social context. Evžen Neustupný calls for a renewed interest in artefacts as a central domain of archaeological theorising. In his paper entitled *The archaeology of artefacts* he builds upon his long-lasting emphasis on artefacts in archaeology and formulates a specific school of thought that he calls "artefact archaeology". In doing so, the author confronts his theoretical perspective with previous paradigms such as culture history, processualism, and post-processualism to demonstrate that his artefact archaeology is the best framework for thinking about the human world in the past based on the material remains. The author's statements can be understood as a quest for an identity of archaeology. During the last few decades that have witnessed an unprecedented rise in the production and flow of information facilitated by digital media, internet, and the fall of political boundaries, archaeology has been exposed to ideas generated in other disciplines. The author searches for a quintessence of archaeology that would allow him to formulate a general theory of archaeology uncontaminated by theories of other disciplines. He finds this essence in artefacts and their inseparable relationship – or entanglement as Hodder (2012) might say – to humans.

The article by Selena Vitezović called *From artefacts to behaviour: technological analyses in prehistory* focuses on the study of technological parameters of bone industry from the Neolithic in the Balkans. The actual evaluation of the finds from the viewpoint of their raw materials and manufacture enables the author to achieve deeper insight into the past culture and society. Combining the technological and contextual approach, the author not only deepens our understanding of artefacts in their social context including their value, importance, function, and meaning, but also discusses important theoretical frameworks for social phenomena such as raw material procurement, organisation of craft production, and division of labour. Analyses of bone industries from Neolithic and Early Eneolithic sites from Serbia are presented. The author shows that these osseous assemblages are characterised by a high degree of knowledge regarding raw materials and their qualities,

skilled manufacture, organised raw material procurement, processing, and exchange of raw materials and finished products on both micro and macro scales.

The paper by Ina Miloglav, *A model of ceramic production, specialization and standardization of ceramic assemblages on the basis of two sites of the Vučedol Culture in Eastern Croatia* reveals a socio-economic model of pottery production at two Eneolithic sites in Eastern Croatia. This period, during which the settlements originated, is often considered as a time of formation of the earliest hierarchical social systems. Therefore, the social role of production, distribution, and consumption of various things became a relevant theme for archaeologists. Standardisation of ceramic assemblages, which is analysed in this paper through the coefficient of variation, traditional typology, and archaeometric analyses focused on production technology, shows that the local domestic pottery production was intensive but oriented towards demand that originated outside the households. The author presents the model of production performed by a specialised and skilled group of potters within a settlement.

Long-term process

Another topic aims at tracing long-term processes. The article by Robert Layton and Peter Rowley-Conwy discusses the transition from hunter-gatherers to farmers based on the case of the Northern Europe Ertebølle Culture. At first, the authors compare two theories of evolution, Darwin's theory of natural selection and Marx's theory of the internal dynamic in the Capitalist mode of production. As a compromise they find the principle of co-evolution which together with game theory offers an integration of the principle of the self-interested individual with the emergent properties of interaction. Secondly, the authors challenge the approach to the study of hunter-gatherer societies exemplified by J. Woodburn's model of "immediate" and "delayed" return. They look at the relationship between "simple" and "complex" hunter-gatherer societies. The authors argue against the principle of classic four-stage theory of social evolution without considering the particular ecological conditions. As the key factors indicating either simple or complex hunter-gatherers they see technology, mobility versus territoriality and egalitarianism versus hierarchy. Ethnographic Pacific Northwest Coast Culture and archaeological Ertebølle Culture are given as examples of delayed return economy which is characterised by semipermanent or all-year settlement occupation, food storage, ownership of territories by individuals or groups, and a certain degree of social hierarchy. Robert

Layton and Peter Rowley-Conwy reject the classical imagination of "client relationship" between the LBK/Rössen farmers and Ertebølle hunter-gatherers. Also they challenge the assumption that hunter-gatherers automatically desire farmers' technology. This view definitely makes the spread of farming more elusive.

Thomas Rocek in his paper *Why not pottery? A comparative approach to the variables underlying the adoption (or non-adoption) of ceramics* uses a comparative perspective to the investigation of long-term processes. The author observes the spread of ceramics in the prehistory of the southwestern United States but not for its own sake. In the broad comparative perspective, he presents a model of pottery adoption and establishment in the New World and European Neolithic. This process is described in three points. 1) It shows multi-step pattern of adoption of pottery not just as an issue in the initial invention of the technology but as relevant particularly to later cases of the adoption of ceramic production. 2) It summarises a set of examples, mainly from the southwestern United States, to demonstrate variation in the pattern of "software horizon". 3) It considers some models and underlying variables that have been suggested to account for these various examples, and points to a few explanations that should be examined critically, with possible implications for interpreting Neolithic origins in Central Europe and for considering the pattern of adaptation and interaction between pioneer farmers and persistent Mesolithic groups during the Early Neolithic. The use of pottery in the long run is perceived much more in relation to issues of ideology, social organisation, economy or environment rather than merely to knowledge; similarly those that do not use ceramics for centuries or more are not simply lacking the skill or knowledge.

Reflexivity

This theme approaches the discipline of archaeology and archaeologists as a subject of interest on its own. The authors evaluate archaeological concepts, traditions, and practices. The ever-present concept of archaeological culture is the subject of Klára Šabatová's paper entitled *It's not culture's fault. Problems of one premise*. The author points out some problematic methodological issues in culture-historical archaeology, which are associated with the concept of archaeological culture. Despite its critical rethinking in Western academia, this concept still remains embedded in the Central European archaeological reasoning and praxis. The author argues that it is not necessary to reject the concept of archaeological culture but it is essential to think about

where the data end and interpretations begin. The argument consists of three points. In the first one, ideology, construction, and deconstruction of the concept of archaeological culture are discussed. Klára Šabatová shows that well-constructed typo-chronological schemes, supported by several prominent researchers, become very stable entities, particularly in Central European archaeological tradition. The second point is devoted to the relationship between archaeological cultures and geographical space. Using several cases from the Bronze Age in the Danubian region, the author clearly shows that national borders represent strong constraints for the perception of culturally unified space in the past. In the third point, the division into cultures based on archaeological material is discussed. The author concludes that the concept of archaeological culture should not be considered as a starting point of a research but rather as its consequence.

Zorica Kuzmanović and Ivan Vranić, in *On the reflexive nature of archaeologies of the Western Balkan Iron Age: a case study of the "Illyrian argument"* focus on the way archaeologies with different socio-political background construct the image of the past. Taking an example from Western Balkan Iron Age, where the traditional culture-historical archaeology is still predominant, they point out that even similar research environment in Albania and former Yugoslavia produce different interpretations of archaeological evidence. These interpretations are biased by socio-political development and recent political context. Thus the modern constructs such as ethnogenesis, ethnicity, peoples, cultures, etc., which are often used uncritically within regional archaeological discourses, should be questioned in a specific self-reflexive way challenging the nationalistic tendencies in scientific praxis. Reflexive deconstruction of the concepts of modern nations and society within archaeological interpretations could thus lead scholars to less ethnocentric images of the past, and increase the objectivity of archaeological interpretations.

Many Central European countries experienced communist regimes, which referred ideologically to the ideas of Karl Marx. The question posed by Eduard Krekovič and Martin Bača in their paper *Marxism, communism, and Czechoslovak archaeology* is to what extent and how were archaeologists in former Czechoslovakia influenced by Marxist ideology. The authors focus on stances of distinguished archaeologists who represented archaeology before and after 1968; the year of great political turmoil. The authors demonstrate that the influence of Marx's ideas was limited to the use of specific concepts and pro-regime papers that served

ideological purposes. Serious theoretical applications of Marx's ideas were extremely rare. Neustupný's studies of prehistoric economies represent a notable exception to this trend. Culture history dominated theoretical perspectives despite the official rhetoric related to Marxism. Therefore, historical experience in Czechoslovakia exhibits a paradox. Although the authors trace glimpses of Marx's theoretical inspirations in Czechoslovak archaeology, broader use of Marx's theories never happened despite the omnipresence of Marxism in the political discourse and everyday life behind the Iron Curtain.

Sergeii Paliienko follows the interest in Eastern European archaeology during the socialist era. His paper *The culture-historical division of the Central European Upper Palaeolithic in Soviet archaeology* examines the classification of archaeological cultures as a vehicle to understand the history of Soviet archaeology. The author focuses on the works of Soviet archaeologists and their understanding of the Central European Upper Palaeolithic. He explores historical development of Soviet archaeology tracing the changes in classification. He shows that the subdivision of the Upper Palaeolithic was influenced by the search for general European schemes, the need to correct Russian periodisation, the emphasis on local nature of archaeological cultures, statistical and technological approaches. His historical analysis provides also information about the relationship between Soviet and Central European archaeology.

The exploration of the history of archaeological thought appears also in Daniel Sosna's paper *For whom the texts toll: styles, discourses, and genres in Czech archaeological community*. The author examines styles, discourses, and genres in Czech archaeology from 1854 to 1954 represented by one of the major Czech scholarly journals *Památky archeologické*. The author takes advantage of the Critical Discourse Analysis, which aims at language in its social context, and scrutinises Czech archaeological writing from different points of view such as the use of specific titles, abbreviations, specific characteristics such as scepticism or poetics. The author examines both qualitative and quantitative nature of the texts that were studied and interprets his findings in the historical context. The author points at several linguistic phenomena, which tend to be surprisingly stable and shape even contemporary practice of writing. He argues that these features may be responsible for formal incompatibilities with discourses of other academic communities and, therefore, hinder the flow of inspiration among different communities. Moreover, the author calls for attention to linguistic features such as the

capacity for detailed description and aesthetics, which were used masterfully in old texts but tend to be underestimated in contemporary Czech archaeology.

Pottery is one of the main materials for the understanding prehistory and it can be used to understand scientific praxis as well. Jan Petřík and Ivana Vostrovská in *Evolution of scientific approach to Neolithic ceramic studies in the area of former Czechoslovakia* examine the development of the scientific study of pottery in the former Czechoslovakia. The authors follow the development of research questions, methods, and number of references to foreign papers. Despite the positive changes such as the internationalisation of research and the use of relatively diverse methods, the authors identify weaknesses too. These are the low number of collaborators and frequent absence of a research question that would extend to the level of social and economic nature of past societies. The authors call for interdisciplinary approaches that would merge archaeology, cultural anthropology, and natural scientific analyses of pottery.

Petr Květina and Václav Hrnčíř in the paper entitled *Between archaeology and anthropology: imagining Neolithic settlement* use the case study of Neolithic longhouses to explore the relationship between archaeology and anthropology. The authors react to images of the past seen through the optics of today's world: house is house, just longer. Since scientific approaches to the study of longhouses are exhausted to certain level, the authors turned their attention to ethnoarchaeology. To provide a general idea about circumstances of life in longhouses the authors chose three well documented recent societies that used similar type of architecture (the Chinook from the Northwest Coast of America, the Iroquois from the Great Lakes region of America, and the Ibans from Borneo). Among these societies the authors seek for the unconditional aspects of life in longhouses and those aspects that are set by local cultural environment. In contrast to the traditional model of Neolithic houses, the authors arrive at the conclusion that these houses might have been built on posts with elevated floor above the ground.

DISCUSSION

The general question of this Special Issue aims at spatial nature of archaeological theorising: Why theory and method in Central Europe? Without falling into the pitfalls of geographic determinism, which even the authors in this Special Issue expose to criticism, we

suggest that the geographic position of Central Europe represents an advantage. Following the geographic argument of Morris (2010), we think about Central Europe as a natural hub where humans, ideas, and things meet despite the strong effect of digitisation and virtuality that transcend physical borders. Archaeology, as a discipline that centres on the material dimension of human social life, should pay attention to direct interaction among human beings. Theoretical debates can barely advance without face-to-face interaction and direct collaboration. Central Europe provides space where humans, things, and ideas met both in the past and in the present.

The tension between internationalisation and local specificity represents one of the effects produced through the interaction among scholars from different academic communities. From the perspective of the Guest Editors it was enriching to see not only the rise of the theoretical ideas presented in manuscripts but also to experience the practices and related values of different archaeological traditions. Nevertheless, the mere existence of diversity of ideas and practices can hardly embody a value by itself. We call for attention to various modes of interaction with otherness, during which different ideas and practices are negotiated. This Special Issue includes papers written by single authors, groups of authors who come from the same academic environment, groups of authors who come from different countries and academic environments, and authors who engage with otherness through the comparison among different spaces and times. These examples suggest different ways of advancement of archaeological theorising and all of them may serve as models for future development of archaeology.

The last direction for future thinking about archaeological theory is a dialogue among the disciplines. The main perspective supported by the authors in this issue is the openness to multidisciplinary in its various forms. This issue shows the potential of hybrid methodology (Pauknerová *et al.*), inspirations from ecology (Salisbury and Bácsmegi), ethnography (Layton and Rowley-Conwy, Květina and Hrnčíř), economy (Vitezović), and linguistics and anthropology of identity (Kuzmanović and Vranić, Šabatová, Sosna). The dominant view indicates that theoretical inspirations and collaboration among the scholars from various disciplines produces innovative results. The perception of this issue, however, is not uniform. Neustupný (this issue) builds upon his earlier ideas (e.g. Neustupný 1967) and warns against the uncritical dissolution of archaeology under the influence of other disciplines. This alternative position,

which celebrates the power of archaeology itself and points at the drawbacks of multidisciplinary, has its defenders (e.g. Fox 2003, Howey, O'Shea 2006, Wobst 1978) even in countries with strong historical ties between archaeology and related disciplines. Future development of archaeological theory will show which perspective will attract more followers.

We would like to finish this introduction as an ongoing project that resists simplified conclusions. This is especially the case of such a diverse collection of papers that touch multiple theoretical themes. It should open questions and suggest future directions rather than present conclusive statements about the state of theoretical archaeology practiced or related to Central Europe. Readers will be able to compare this collection to theoretical production in other parts of the world to evaluate archaeologies of Central Europe. It would be fair to note that this collection of papers is far from being representative for the entire region of interest despite the fact that scholars from twelve different countries decided to participate at the conference in Mikulov. The participation at the conference and this Special Issue was shaped – as always in case of small conferences – by personal ties, scholarly values, linguistic and topical preferences. Nevertheless, we believe that science is a step-by-step process that grows slowly. The sole fact that this theoretical international conference took place in a country such as the Czech Republic can be viewed as a step towards greater interest in archaeological theory and methodology in the region; especially in context of 2013 *Annual Meeting of the European Association of Archaeologists* and the forthcoming 2014 *Meeting of the Theoretical Archaeology Group* in the Czech Republic.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are grateful to Martina Galetová and Patrik Galeta for their collaboration on this Special Issue and Jarmila Bíšková, Martin Dolniak, Jiří Kadlec, and Peter Tkáč for their support during the conference in Mikulov. Ladislav Šmejda's support was critical for the smooth implementation of the conference. The conference, which served as a foundation for this publication project, was supported by Regional Museum in Mikulov, Institute of Archaeology and Museology, Masaryk University in Brno, Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic (The strategy of archaeological research in Europe, CZ.1.07/2.3.00/20.0036), and Czech Science Foundation (Variability of Neolithic pottery technology as a marker of social identity, No. 14-07062S).

REFERENCES

- FOX R. G., 2003: Let archaeology be. *Archaeological papers of the American Anthropological Association* 13, 1: 151–153.
- GRAEBER D., 2001: Toward an anthropological theory of value: the false coin of our own dreams. Palgrave, New York.
- HODDER I., 2012: Entangled: an archaeology of the relationships between humans and things. Wiley-Blackwell, Malden.
- HOWEY M. C. L., O'SHEA J. M., 2006: Bear's journey and the study of ritual in archaeology. *American Antiquity* 71, 2: 261–282.
- KRISTIANSEN K., 2008: Do we need the 'archaeology of Europe'? *Archaeological Dialogues* 15, 1: 5–25.
- MORRIS I., 2010: Why the West rules – for now: the patterns of history, and what they reveal about the future. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York.
- NEUSTUPNÝ E., 1967: Základní prehistorické modely. *Dějiny a současnost* 9: 32–34.
- WOBST M., 1978: The Archaeo-ethnology of hunter-gatherers or the tyranny of the ethnographic record in archaeology. *American Antiquity* 43: 303–309.

Daniel Sosna
Department of Anthropology
Department of Archaeology
Faculty of Philosophy and Arts
University of West Bohemia
Sedláčkova 15
306 14 Pilsen
Czech Republic
E-mail: dsosna@ksa.zcu.cz

Jan Kolář
Institute of Archaeology and Museology
Faculty of Arts
Masaryk University
Arna Nováka 1
602 00 Brno
Czech Republic

Department of Vegetation Ecology
Institute of Botany of the Academy
of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Lidická 25/27
602 00 Brno
Czech Republic
E-mail: janik.kolar@seznam.cz

Petr Květina
Institute of Archaeology of the Academy
of Sciences of the Czech Republic
Letenská 4
118 01 Prague
Czech Republic
E-mail: kvetina@arup.cas.cz

František Trampota
Regional Museum in Mikulov
Zámek 1
692 15 Mikulov
Czech Republic
E-mail: trampota@rmm.cz