

WHAT IS IN A PARADIGM?

Reply to comments

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My essay was a predictive one: by looking across the disciplines from science to humanities and social sciences, I see a related trend of a new approach to data and knowledge, based on the digital revolution and the DNA revolution among others, which I predicted are in the process of creating a new interpretative universe. This is still but a bold hypothesis, based upon incomplete evidence, like any other archaeological hypothesis. I took a mostly positive stance on these changes, although in other places I have stated my critical concerns with the darker sides of the use of the past in the present and with the rather conservative outlook of much European archaeology (Kristiansen 2008, 2012).

My positive stance, therefore, does not imply that important issues should disappear such as gender studies, the politics of the past, including the related forces of nationalism and globalization. Rather I believe that new knowledge will allow new insights, which in turn will challenge us into more critical reflection. Ideally it is a dialectic process, but looking at reality I find that archaeology has so far missed the opportunity to take the lead in critical reflections on the effects of the DNA and digital revolution, with few exceptions (an early example is Welinder 2003). I see critical reflection today as mostly the preoccupation of a rather small politically and theoretically informed group of archaeologists, and I wish we could expand such debates to larger segments of the

archaeological environment, hence my concern also with our responsibility towards the public.

Elizabeth Chilton embraces so much under the umbrella of critical post-processualism that it quite rightly no longer can be characterized as a paradigm. However, I disagree in her definitions, which are too inclusive: Marxism and the study of power relations is certainly not just a post-processual critique, nor is gender studies, as they both existed long before, and as much as she wishes that post-processualism used science in more clever ways, it never took the front seat and was more or less abandoned in phenomenological landscape studies. Post-processual archaeology, like other paradigms, started as a critique of what went before, but implementing this critique came to define a post-processual theory and practice, originally defined by Ian Hodder in his book *Reading the Past* (Hodder 1986). While Hodder later employed science cleverly at Catalhuyuk, and branded it a reflexive, multi-vocal archaeology, it represents a return to a more positivistic stance, whose practitioners also believed in opening up multiple interpretations through increased documentation. I would thus argue that we have been on the way towards a new paradigm for some time, but that it is only in recent years that many converging trends, some of which I describe, have finally gained the momentum and the potential to redefine archaeological theory and practice on a grand scale.

Quite rightly, however, there are concerns of the present that should always be part and parcel of a critically informed archaeology, and in this we do not disagree. I would rather see such a socially informed critical approach as a generalist stance in archaeology irrespective of paradigms, but although I share Elizabeth Chilton's wishful thinking about a progressing archaeology embracing it all, history unfortunately does not support such a view. I also wholeheartedly support the efforts to map future problems in need of research (also Kintigh *et al.* 2014), but I do not believe research councils should engage in defining what researchers should do, but rather provide food for thought. Otherwise we end up with research priorities defined by politics or a dominant research paradigm or both – which leads on to some of Alfredo Gonzales-Ruibal's critical concerns.

Alfredo Gonzales-Ruibal raises an important issue: that of academic or even political exclusion, or both, as a consequence of a dominant paradigm. However, I do not foresee an exclusion of critical approaches to either contemporary archaeology or critical heritage studies in a new paradigm with a stronger emphasis on science. On the contrary, they are two sides of the same coin. In Gothenburg I am presently leading a four-faculty research project: Critical Heritage Studies (www.criti-

calheritagestudies.se), a discipline Gonzales-Ruibal himself has contributed significantly to. This type of critical research is expanding in today's society, precisely because of globalization and the multiple uses of the past in the present, some of which represent a dark side of heritage through exclusion and racism, some of which represent a bright side through inclusion and critical discussion (Högberg 2013). I would rather see an expanded research potential in linking such discussions to the more solid empirical evidence that can be derived by combining in-depth case studies with Big Data on attitudes to past and present identities (Biehl *et al.* 2014).

However, all critical and innovating research must position itself in relation to a discourse to become meaningful, and right now we are experiencing a change of discourse. We can therefore expect this also to be reflected in research panels. Having had the experience of sitting on one of the ERC (European Research Council) panels, and on several national research panels as well, it is not my experience that an uncritical approach to the concept of Europe is mostly rewarded. It is correct that frontline research including the new archaeological sciences often receives money for the time being, quite naturally, but then coupled with strong theory and critical reflection. Non-theoretical or uncritical projects rarely receive grants in my experience. Committees nowadays are mostly so large and of such a mixed disciplinary composition that a single theoretical position cannot dominate. But no rule without exceptions, and we have all had our share of misfortune when it comes to funding. We are participating in an academic competition where you constantly have to prove yourself through international peer reviews, whether for publications or for grants. To me it represents a huge advantage compared to the small closed academic power circles of my student time, where a single professor could exclude unwanted research/researchers for life.

Isto Huvilla makes the observation that positivistic or processual paradigms have been driven to some extent by new sources of information, and that hermeneutic/culture-historical or post-processual critiques represent a wish to critically contextualize this information. Following this line of thinking, we can see the shifts between paradigms as a shift from pushing the frontier of knowledge forward which is then periodically stopped by a wish to understand that new knowledge better. There is some truth to this observation: the previous science revolutions allowed controversial or relatively uncertain knowledge to be replaced by safer knowledge; in this way it freed intellectual capacity to concentrate on better understanding the newly achieved knowledge. Today we need not spend as much time doing typology alone for dat-

ing purposes as 50 years ago due to C14 and the second science revolution, and likewise A-DNA and the third science revolution will allow us to spend more time on understanding migrations rather than debating their existence. However, it would be misleading to consider processual/science-based discourses as merely providing new safer knowledge. They also came/come with a theoretical agenda stressing, among other things, regularities in human history, which post-processual/hermeneutic discourses reacted against.

I share Stefan Larsson's concern about the "production line" in archaeology, and its future (Kristiansen 2009). However, in contract archaeology there is a real potential to engage the public in presenting the results of ongoing excavations, and in the EU-funded NEARCH project (meaning: New scenarios for community involved archaeology) new ways of engaging with the public are being tested (<http://www.nearch.eu>). The challenge is really to combine such on-the-ground experiences with the way meta-narratives are used for political and ideological purposes. We know far too little about the actual processes of employing the past in the politics of identity formation. At the University of Gothenburg we have created a Heritage Academy, which functions as a platform for meetings and workshops with the heritage sector, researchers and politicians (www.criticalheritagestudies.se). It has indeed provided much new food for thought in all camps, but such engagements are long-term investments if they are to have effect. We have only existed for two years as yet.

To Elisabeth Niklasson: in my darker moments, and they sometimes also appear in print (Kristiansen 2011), I see more similarities between the present and the 1930s than I should have wished, which is disconcerting for optimism. Although history does not repeat itself, some of its components are certainly reused, and I am still worried about the outcome of the ongoing fights between the dark and the bright forces we are witnessing in the rise of nationalism throughout the world and the conflicts arising from it in present-day Ukraine, and not so long ago in the former Yugoslavia, to name just two (Kristiansen 2004). Critical Heritage Studies are needed not only for academic careers, but for dissecting the manipulation of the past. One might say that heritage is gaining its economic success at least in part for the wrong political reasons. That is, if, like me, you are an engaged internationalist, and anti-nationalist (national identity *per se* is not bad, but some of its political uses become bad when they turn into excluding nationalism). However, we can never let new, basic research be directed by fear of misuse. Most historical research has been misused at one time or another, and for different purposes whether radical or conservative. Our only guard against

that is to maintain high scientific quality that is less easily manipulated. Otherwise we end up with political evaluations of what is useful or not useful (dangerous) basic research. Applied research is what we reserve for such more instrumental purposes.

Elisabeth Niklasson's prescription is to constantly engage in the structure of meta-histories and their potential impact, which is precisely what I have kept doing (as an example: see Kristiansen 1998, chapter 1.2). According to Niklasson: "critical thinking involves examining the premises and frames of our undertakings and should come before data collection and explanation, not after". Unfortunately the world does not often operate in this idealized way. What I describe in my paper is how it happened and still often happens when fundamentally new knowledge with direct bearing upon archaeology/the humanities is produced in other sciences. Critical theorizing nearly always takes the back seat, and I have been deeply concerned over the lack of engagement in meeting the challenge from the biological sciences, when they started to produce their own historical master narratives rather than collaborating with archaeologists and humanities researchers (see critique in Tallis 2011). That is also why I engage personally in collaborating with science researchers in my projects, and always have done.

However, it takes some effort to familiarize oneself with the new developments, and many critical archaeologists do not seem willing to make that investment, or believe they can do without it (Gonzales-Ruibal's response is an example). Rather they will invest in critically discuss the potential dangers of entering this new age of more science-based knowledge, because as Elisabeth Niklasson states: that is "what the humanities do best, critique of ideology and qualitative analysis". If that were their only role humanities would soon have ceased to exist. Here Niklasson exposes that her real interest is not in the past, but in its use in the present. Archaeologists, who, like myself, are deeply interested in knowing about the past (perhaps also to learn something meaningful about the present), are consequently being critically scrutinized from a moral position of social, political or global responsibilities, but without engaging in the hard work of understanding the context of the basic research in question (referring to a single sentence from the project "Forging Identities" being a prime example). There is no easy, predictable or clear-cut relation between basic research and its political use/misuse, and it is mostly with hindsight that such relations can be detected and understood.

To conclude: the general tenor of the comments relates to my omission of references to critical theory and the effects of the new science turn upon the present. I hope that my answers have provided some back-

ground to the stance I have taken, which is neither uncritical nor unaware of potential misuses of the past. But I remain opposed to the political and moral correctness implied in knowing beforehand what is worth knowing. It is true, however, that a paradigm tends to shape the worldview of its practitioners in a certain way, and the possible consequences of that should always be open to debate. The other critical question is whether we are in the process of forming a new paradigm or not. There is understandably some reluctance on the part of more dedicated post-processualists to accept that this is really happening, and I have myself considered for a while whether the present changes amounts to a change of paradigm. In the end it depends on what we believe is in a paradigm. My position is that we can indeed speak of a post-processual paradigm, and that it is more or less disappearing in the wake of the third science revolution, perhaps in tandem with a changed global climate with less regard for culture and humanities, as reflected in recent national budget cuts for culture and the humanities in the USA, Denmark and Sweden. The crisis in the humanities, however, has been a matter of debate for some time now, and whether the new budget cuts are related to shortcomings of the post-modern perception of knowledge or to the appearance of a new more science-based perception of knowledge would be an interesting theme for another keynote article.

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