

*Material Culture and Other Things*  
*Post-disciplinary Studies in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*



---

Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard

---

Material Culture and Other Things  
Post-disciplinary Studies in the 21st Century  
Gotarc, Series C, No 61

Edited By:  
Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard

© 2004  
Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard,  
and respective authors

*English revision*  
Niel Tomkinson

*Layout & Typography*  
Fredrik Fahlander

*Photo on cover by*  
Rune Østigård

*Printed by*  
Elanders Gotab  
Vällingby 2004, 400 ex.

*Distributed by*  
Department of Archaeology  
University of Gothenburg

ISBN 91-85245-12-7

# Contents

---

## Introduction.

- Material Culture and Post-disciplinary Sciences ..... 1  
*Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard*

## The World as Artefact

- Material Culture Studies and Archaeology ..... 21  
*Terje Oestigaard*

- Social Identity, the Body, and Power ..... 57  
*Per Cornell*

## Prehistoric Material Culture

- Presenting, Commemorating, Politicising ..... 93  
*Gro Kyvik*

## Discontinious Maya Identities.

- Culture and Ethnicity in Mayanist Discourse ..... 109  
*Johan Normark*

- Operational Ethnicity ..... 161

- Serial Practice and Materiality  
*Jörgen M. Johannessen*

## Archaeology and Anthropology: Brothers in Arms?

- On Analogies in 21st Century Archaeology ..... 185  
*Fredrik Fahlander*

- MRT Confidential ..... 213  
*Pontus Forslund*

## An Essay on Material Culture

- Some Concluding Reflections ..... 259  
*Kristian Kristiansen*

- About the Authors* ..... 279



# Introduction

## Material Culture and Post-disciplinary Sciences

*Fredrik Fahlander & Terje Oestigaard*

In 1978 a conference on *Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis* was held at St. John's College, Cambridge (Burnham & Kingsbury 1979). The report is provoking in many senses, despite the fact that most of the articles are seldom present in today's reference lists. The conference had an outspoken agenda of being *cross-disciplinary*, aiming to incorporate the methods and terminology of history and social anthropology into archaeology, but also being able to contribute the other way round. The focus lies on the relations between the individual, the group and the society in different periods of prehistory. In 21<sup>st</sup>-century eyes, the enthusiasm of the authors is rather touching in the way in which they outline a new "interdisciplinary archaeology". This passion was, however, not shared by the commentators from outside archaeology. Eric Hobsbawn represented the historian's point of view (1979). He is quite pessimistic about the attempts to write history without written sources and consequently he is not at all mesmerized by what the archaeologists can offer to history.

The main weakness of the archaeologists, which seems to me to limit their use for the historian is, if you will excuse the word, a certain amount of “status-seeking” by stressing the specific and scientific nature of the discipline. /.../ I am afraid I stick, as an historian along with Professor Clark (p. 242), to the old-fashioned view that if there is any sense at all in archaeology, it is as part of history. If it is not a part of history and if it does not elucidate what happened in history and why, when other sources are unavailable, I cannot see the object of the exercise (Hobsbawn 1979:249).

If Hobsbawn is generally patronizing, the representative of social anthropology, Edmund Leach, is more specific in his criticism. He points to a number of instances in which archaeological data would never be able to account for historically “known” processes. He also stresses that the Binfordian approach to burial analysis employed by the archaeologists is questionable. There cannot be any direct links of status between a buried individual and the interments and construction of the grave. The dead are always other than the living. Dress and ornament may as well be a reversal of the ways of the living, and if differences in wealth in burials reveal anything, it is the status of the funeral organizers (Leach 1979:122). He also points out that the concepts of individual and group are employed in a vague and somewhat careless manner (which is also the case of “culture” and “society”). In all, Leach finds the papers in the conference report to be rather presumptuous or at best speculative.

The situation of archaeology in the late seventies may not be the best representative of cross-disciplinary attempts; it may seem unfair to bring a dead cat into the living room. If it can show us anything, it would be the impossibility of evaluating the effect that a present situation will have in the future, as well as the impact on future discipline histories. Nonetheless, we are convinced that archaeology today has a great *possibility* of being progressive and truly multidisciplinary in the coming decades. It is a brave and perhaps utopian argument, especially bearing the history of archaeology in mind, but we will attempt to convince the reader

that we actually are at the beginning of a formative period in our (dissolving) discipline.

To continue, we need to take a brief look at the previously *formative phases* in archaeological thought and method. Archaeology seems to have always been a part of something else; in the first formative period of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it was basically anthropology and ethnology, but also politics and philosophy (e.g., Engels, Marx and Freud). The same picture is evident in the era of culture-historical archaeology, in which the world was mapped in time and space in the search for origins and diffusion. The archaeology of the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century had hardly any impact on other disciplines, perhaps with the exception of Gordon Childe. Freud continued to be inspired by prehistory in his development of psychology, but not in any new way that can be associated with the contemporary archaeological work. Surely the work of Gustaf Kossinna had political consequences, but the source of *Kulturkreislehre* is nonetheless found in the earlier work of the geographer Friedrich Ratzel. Economists, such as Maynard Keynes, or influential sociologists, such as Emile Durkheim and Ralph Linton, were never very interested in archaeology. The only examples during this period are found among the German idealists, such as Heidegger and his like, who found some inspiration in prehistory (but not to the same degree as did Marx and Freud).

The first major change is found after the Second World War, when some attempts were made to make archaeology something less speculative. In this regard, it is worth mentioning the Starr Carr excavations and the extensive use of subsidiary sciences. In the post-war period, we find a *second* formative phase in archaeology. Archaeologists such as Taylor (1948) formulated the new questions and methods that later would be key issues in the New Archaeology. The source of inspiration was sought in anthropology, and, to in lesser extent, human geography. This turn to anthropology was certainly progressive in some respects, but nevertheless enforced the subjective, “little-brother” relation to anthropology. It may suffice to mention the well-known statement of Philip Phillips (1955) that “American archaeology is

anthropology or it is nothing". The interesting aspect of this period is that we once again find references to archaeology in other disciplines. The two most influential would be Derrida's (1967) repeated references to archaeological practice and theory and the "archaeology of knowledge" of Foucault (1963).

This second formative period actually precedes the bold statements of so-called processual or New Archaeology of the 1960s and 1970s. The French post-structuralists probably never heard of Binford or other Anglo-American archaeologists. Their conception of archaeology is rather to be found in the work of Leroi-Gourhan (1964-5; see Cornell 2000). The main advance of processual archaeology was that they to some extent 'opened up' archaeology and found inspiration in, for instance, economy (Renfrew 1972) and philosophy (Hempel logic/American pragmatism). It was, however, still anthropology that provided archaeologists with terminology, social typology, structure-functionalism, Parsonian social theory, comparativism etc. Many models, fictions and methods were simply transferred to archaeology via anthropology.

During the 1980s and 1990s, the commonly attributed change from processual to contextual, or post-processual, archaeology has by some been seen as paradigmatic (e.g., Tilley 1989). In retrospect, it is confusing to note that neither of the two self-proclaimed 'paradigms' of processual and post-processual archaeology actually correspond very well to what seem to be the "real" formative periods. The differences are not as significant as they have been assumed to be and presented. It is only symptomatic that we find the first reference to Foucault in processual archaeology rather than in post-processual texts. The shift from one epistemology and ontology to another was *disciplinarily* unproblematic, since all the involved actors worked within clearly defined borders, which demarcated their discipline. The disputes were mainly of a theoretical and methodological nature; the agents argued not so much about what archaeology was but how to conduct good archaeology without either naïve beliefs in science or subjective speculations. Strict, American, structure functionalism was replaced by German idealists such as Gadamer

and Heidegger, historians like Collingwood and sociologists like Giddens. One may argue that the post-processual “paradigm” in archaeology was only an adaptation, an adjustment and an appreciation of general knowledge within other disciplines. There was no specific discipline that had led to the current state, perhaps except of the linguistic turn, but each discipline developed in close relation to its neighbouring disciplines.

It is interesting that the degree of mutual inter-relatedness and dependence between different disciplines has increased during the last few decades. The huge body of theoretical literature belongs not to a particular discipline any more but is shared knowledge among many actors on the scene of the social sciences. Thus, it seems likely that, if there is going to be a paradigmatic change within one of the social sciences in the future, it will happen in all disciplines approximately simultaneously. Good ideas, approaches and perspectives are not unique to a particular discipline but common knowledge, since everyone studies the same topics: human beings and societies. The similarities between the various disciplines go beyond the mere body of literature; it is a way of thinking which unites those who work on human understanding and aim to understand human beings.

Therefore, the archaeological discourse of today is facing an even more challenging quest, not only within archaeology as a discipline, but in all disciplines. There are few, if any, “true” disciplines any longer, and the more arbitrary the disciplinary boundaries appear to be the more difficult it is to stick to old definitions of what archaeology “is”. It may be naïve, but it seems as if like archaeology is about to enter a *third formative* phase. This change may take many forms and results, but the most promising seems to be archaeology as the study of the social dimensions of materialities (material culture and other things) in the present as well as in the past. Until recently, apart from particularly the material-culture studies at the Department of Anthropology, University College, London, materialities have never been recognized as important social parameters beyond simple fetishism, pedantry and schemes of culture-specific artefacts. We find that they have more or less been rejected by social scientists. They

were important to Marx in the first formative period, but not in the works of, e.g., Durkheim (1895:93, 12), Linton (1936) or Parsons (1951:89, 4). There are some forerunners that can be found in the works of Lacan (1966), Sartre (1960) and Foucault (1963; 1997). In the last few decades, this interest in the material dimension of social life has exploded. We find interesting studies in various disciplines outside archaeology (e.g., Latour 1991; Radley 1990; Riggins 1994; Gottdiener 1995; Soya 1996; Komter 1998; Flusser 1999; Schiffer 1999; Preda 1999; Dant 1999; Graves-Brown 2000). Also in archaeology we find a newborn interest in the potential in the social roles of materialities beyond simple symbolism (e.g., Rathje & Cullen 1992; Tilley 1996; Andr n 1997; Schiffer 1999; Grimm 2000; Dobres 2000; Cornell & Fahlander 2002; Bradley 2002; Olsen 2003; Fahlander 2003; Normark 2004).

In this “joint venture” of material studies, it is not difficult to imagine that one discipline may develop a theoretical stance which other researchers may adopt within their own disciplines, but it is difficult to imagine that there will be a delay of two or three decades between the discovery and the production of ideas for common consumption in other disciplines. Archaeology will not need to go through another “up-dating” process, as it previously did, by the introduction of established theories into an environment of researches comfortable with their typologies and schemes of classification. The previous, theoretical, archaeological delays were, unfortunately, not new phenomena in archaeology. Today’s old processualists were once radical researchers. When processual archaeology was introduced in the 1960s, Leach commented acidly that it sounded like the heyday of Malinowski’s na ve functionalism (Olsen 1997:63). There was a theoretical delay of almost three decades. When “postmodern” theories were introduced at the beginnings of the 1980s, and the later years of the decade, these ideas were already two decades old.

At the present time, archaeology as a discipline can hardly live its own life in isolation and in a theoretical backwater despite theoretical aversion among many curators. Many archaeologists read much, although this knowledge is normally not categorised

as archaeological, since it transcends the disciplinary boundaries. The important aspect, regardless of disciplinary labels, is that there will most likely be numerous archaeologists who are updated in various social theories. Bjørnar Olsen complained once that, compared with the 1980s, when very few read theory, everybody reads theory today, but nothing new happens (Olsen 1998). Following Clarke, “paradigmatic changes” are not possible if rigid, arbitrary and unproblematised borders define what the discipline is; hence the definition that “archaeology is what archaeologists do” (Clarke 1973). Nowadays, neither claims to be archaeologists nor vague or implicit understanding of what archaeology “is” are sufficient criteria for defining archaeology. Archaeology has become somewhat multi-disciplinary, not only because numerous disciplines are involved in archaeological practices, but, equally important, the theoretical foundation is based on other social sciences and vice versa.

The dissolution of borders between the disciplines has consequences for archaeology. There are therefore fundamental differences between approaches within disciplinary and post-disciplinary knowledge. “Disciplinary knowledge is focused upon a precise set of objects of analysis and prescribes definite ways of studying them. Interdisciplinary-knowledge constructions offer opportunities for looking at different sides of an event or problem, drawing together the assumptions and methods of different disciplines” (Smith 1998:311). The disciplinary identity crisis of multi-disciplinary research is highlighted and often seen as a problem, but the consequences and possibilities of post-disciplinary sciences are less elaborated. “Post-disciplinary social science, which looks for the parallels in knowledge constructions across the social sciences, throws such inhibitions out of the window and asks us to be more flexible and innovative in the ways we define objects and the methods we use” (Smith 1998:311). In other words, in post-disciplinary sciences it is not the disciplines that unite researchers but the questions they ask and the topics they study. Disciplinary boundaries are hindrances and obstacles rather than sources for gaining new knowledge. When boundaries between disciplines become more structures of dominance and

weapons of exclusion rather than preferable scientific approaches, there are good reasons to challenge the old hegemonies and work inter-disciplinarily and post-disciplinarily. Although archaeology is normally presented as a unified discipline, the reality is quite the contrary. There has always been a tendency among those who are employed to emphasise the excavation as the key which defines the discipline, but excavation is merely one method of collecting data, among other methods.

On the other hand, ethnographic fieldwork is one special branch that crosses disciplinary borders. The premises of such enterprises have a long history back to the Victorian prehistorians, and this approach became significantly developed during the processual era of “action archaeology” (Binford 1971:271). Under the somewhat unfortunate term *ethnoarchaeology*, the idea of action archaeology was more or less adopted unchanged by post-processual archaeologists. However, they never succeeded in justifying the use of ethnological data in relation to the theoretically advocated culture-relativism. Recently, however, ethnoarchaeology has matured by taking one step back and two steps forward. The step back is a return to the original attempt of Binford’s MRT to study *practices* and their material consequences. The steps forward consist of expanding the field to embrace *all* contemporary, social practices and their relation to ideologies and materialities.

The study of social practices is thus crucial in many disciplines but it does not define anthropology or ethnology. Methods of collecting data and the ways of processing these data are important, but these practices cannot define the discipline. In other words, there is a difference between the archaeologist’s and the philatelist’s categorisation, classification and typologies; the former practice is presented as science, whereas the latter is perceived as a hobby. The difference between archaeologists who collect old junk and others who collect nice things is not the meticulous interest in storing and presenting the things; archaeologists study human practices. An emphasis on only the artefacts is a fetishism, an artefact fetishism which archaeology has suffered severely under with its constant focus on finding things by excavations.

In anthropology, “ethnographic prejudice virtually takes for granted that one cannot understand another culture unless one has done fieldwork in it. I do not buy this argument at all” (Obeyesekere 2002:xx). Similarly, most archaeological finds that are used in interpretative archaeology are already collected; the museums are stored with artefacts from centuries of excavations. Artefacts once excavated are always a source of new insights, depending upon the approaches one uses and the questions one addresses. Participation in excavations is an insufficient criterion legitimizing the discipline. Therefore, ”...a work of history or sociology [and archaeology] partly owes its significance to the kinds of questions the historian or sociologist raises. If the historian is not interested in interesting things, he may write a book free of errors of fact, but /.../ his work will be of little interest to us. The social sciences are given force and direction by the questions the scientists address to reality, and the interest of their answers depends largely on whether they asked interesting questions” (Aron 1967:195).

Thus, on the one hand, neither the excavation nor the preservation of artefacts can define the discipline. On the other hand, theory in itself is also insufficient to define archaeology in so far as most of the theoretical body is shared with other social sciences. All archaeology is theoretical, but all theory is not archaeological (Solli 1996). What the archaeological component is which separates archaeology from other disciplines is often difficult to pinpoint. All archaeology is inter-disciplinary and there has never been a “pure” archaeology. From the simplest dating methods based on C<sup>14</sup> and dendrochronology to pollen samples and preservations of artefacts, the spinal core of archaeology has always been everything which is in between all other disciplines. Archaeology has in this sense always been inter-disciplinarily although this strength is often perceived as a problem.

It seems that only one aspect unites all kinds of archaeology and archaeologists (excavators, ethnoarchaeologists, surveyors and theorists), and that is the emphasis on materialities. This is not restricted to artefacts *per se* but applies to materiality in a wide sense (material culture and other things) and raises inevitably the

questions of the relation between archaeology, anthropology and ethno-archaeology and the use of analogies in knowledge production. These topics have always been crucial in the construction of models and fictions in archaeology and are especially evident in ethnoarchaeology.

### **The outline of the book**

The present book focuses on the importance of materialities in archaeological knowledge production and their role in past and contemporary society. In the current state of post-disciplinary sciences we argue that it is important to put even more stress on archaeology as *the* discipline which studies material culture or the structuring agency of materiality in general. Material-culture studies are the totality of approaches to all kinds of materiality and the interaction with, and influence on, humans, and vice versa. In other words, it is the study of the social world with an emphasis on the constraints and possibilities created by material factors; material culture is the medium through which human interaction and socialisation take place. The emphasis on material culture has not been thoroughly elaborated for two reasons. On the one hand, despite the Marxist basis of much anthropological work, it is a paradox that very little attention has been paid to the material constraints and possibilities. Material culture has been, with some notable exceptions, such as the Department of Anthropology at University College, London, a neglected area of research within mainstream anthropology. On the other hand, despite the fact that archaeologists acknowledge that they study material culture, there is a general aversion to defining archaeology as the “study of material culture”. The reason for this aversion is the consequence of transcending the traditional, disciplinary borders of archaeology. If archaeology is defined as the ‘study of material culture’, the discipline has to include contemporary material culture, which traditional archaeologists claim belongs to anthropology.

Regardless of the terminology, studies of materialities are interdisciplinary in their very basis. The articles in this book illuminate the problems and possibilities of material culture as the object for

the study of knowledge production of humans and societies. Approaching the world through material-culture studies is an incorporative approach aiming to both transcend and break down disciplinary hindrances. Thus, the aim of this book is to present various approaches to material culture, both empirically and theoretically, approaches which combines both present and past dimensions of materiality, agency and the structuration of materiality.

The totality of the different articles illuminates parts of the wide range which is covered by the title *Material Culture and Other Things*, and some of the possibilities within an open and incorporative archaeology. Terje Oestigaard's opening contribution discusses how and why archaeology has to be defined as material-culture studies, irrespective of various time depths. Through a journey exploring the role of ethnoarchaeology and the relationship between archaeology and anthropology, he argues that material-culture studies not only bridges the gap between processual and post-processual archaeology but also incorporate the scientific debate on methodological collectivism and methodological individualism, or the relation between determinism and free will. Hence, by stressing that archaeology is a material-culture study, it is possible to study the role that materiality plays in the constitution of society, both as a constraining mechanism but also as a constructive source and force for social relations, institutions and systems in the past as well as the present.

Cornell's contribution, *Social Identity, the Body and Power*, follows similar lines by addressing issues of social identity and ethnicity in archaeology. He makes some important remarks on these complex topics, pointing to the value of an embodied, but not racist, perspective in such a debate. There is almost a Fanon-like zeal here, asking us not to forget the blood, sweat and tears of human oppression. Cornell opens his inspiring and original argument by discussing the social function of dead bodies. Dead bodies are generally considered sacred, but this inalienability gives the dead a very special role in the social life of the living. Trespassing the rule of the sacred is a recurrent and strong means to impose power and control over subjected social series or

groups. Not merely the presence of the dead body is a strong social message. The absence of the body creates social trauma and is often accompanied by particular complex rituals or social conflicts, testified by the term “desaparecido”, introduced into international jurisprudence by Argentinean law in the aftermath of the horrors of the 1970s military government. Cornell thus emphasises the Body, both alive and dead, as a major field for social expression and social contest. In the end, he argues, we must always return to the flesh and bone when we discuss social subjection and exploitation.

The intricate and complex relations between material culture (materialities and bodies) and social identity/ethnicity is also the topic of a number of other texts in this volume. They differ in their choice of examples but they all seek to find more fruitful ways of dealing with these issues. Interestingly, all of them in one way or another emphasise the importance of materialities.

Gro Kyvik, for instance, argues that material culture shoulders a large responsibility for our personal and collective memory and that the past is an effective tool for political élites to foster new or legitimate, existing ideology. In her article *Prehistoric Material Culture – Presenting, Commemorating, Politicising*, the main theme is the politicising of prehistory and archaeological monuments to gain political control of the construction of present realities. Through preservation, reconstruction and presentation of archaeological remains, selected aspects of the past are commemorated, revitalised and repossessed, or hidden, forgotten and temporarily lost. When regimes undergo rapid and significant changes and traditional power practices are substituted by new practices, crises of legitimacy often occur. Kyvik’s paper discusses the developments in the People’s Republic of China during the last 50 years, a process that is characterised by rapid but uneven economic growth and a decay of traditional ideological norms and social controls. New political myths are needed to legitimate these developments; changes in archaeological research agenda and in the presentation and commemoration of prehistoric material culture are evident, whereas diverse prehistoric events are re-evaluated and re-interpreted.

Also Normark's paper, *Discontinuous Maya Identities*, criticises the ways in which the concepts of ethnicity and culture are used by both archaeologists and "indigenous people". His examples derive from contemporary Mayanist discourse, in which he finds an almost cultural-historical view of the past Maya area. In Guatemala, a growing, re-vitalizing movement among indigenous people also adopts this view. These people criticize the way in which they and their ancestors are described by archaeologists, anthropologists and the tourist industry. This critique basically reflects a negative version of the one that non-indigenous Mayanists use. The Maya-movement emphasizes an essential Maya culture and ethnicity, rarely affected by 'external' contacts. This standpoint is, however, quite easily refuted. Normark illustrates the differences between now and then by various ways of looking at ancient peoples' identities in iconography, which clearly are different from those embraced by contemporary peoples.

Normark argues that the modernist, constructed concepts of 'culture' and 'ethnicity' need to be abandoned. Instead, he turns to materialities, emphasizing a non-humanocentric view of the past. An artefact, in his view, is seen as isolated from the past human agents and, as such, it has no cultural or ethnical significance. It is rather a *polyagent*, which is a material or an immaterial "thing" that has the capability to affect a causal milieu. This milieu is the contemporary discourse concerning the antagonism between archaeologists and the indigenous movement. The artefacts are our only remains of the past identities that the ancient people may have had and, as such, they only reflect discontinuity rather than continuity.

Jørgen Johannessen also discusses ethnicity in his paper *Operational Ethnicity - Serial Practice and Materiality*. Johannessen criticises, e.g., Siân Jones and other archaeologists' definitions of ethnicity because of their lack of operational validity. Essentially, Johannessen argues that the traditional concept of ethnicity is a hollow term similar to the point made in Hans Christian Andersen's fairy tale *The Emperor's New Suit*. Everyone thinks that there must be something to it. However, in the end, it is basically

an illusion. Instead, he finds a promising way of discussing ethnicity-like issues in archaeology by utilizing elements from Jean Paul Sartre's concept of *seriality*. By focusing on executed action and materiality, it is, in Johannessen's opinion, possible to develop Cornell and Fahlander's notion of *structuring positivities* as a dynamic, flexible term that may serve as a substitute for ethnicity. The concept of structuring positivity is in one sense a prolongation of Sartre's concept of serial action, which seeks to illustrate regularities in social practice and materialities.

Both Normark's and Johannessen's interesting papers question the idea of social continuity and the idea of culture or ethnic group as a static "thingy" in a Durkheimian sense. This conception is the topic of Fahlander's and Forslund's contributions. Fahlander discusses how, or if, cross-cultural analogies may be justified in archaeological analysis. The issue was intensely debated during the 60s, 70s and early 80s, but went into oblivion in the late 80s; this despite the fact that the main questions were never satisfactorily answered. Fahlander argues that the familiarity with the past that some archaeologists experience is merely a mosaic of elements derived from a colonized periphery. The structural similarities between different "traditional peoples" of today originate from long-term, homogenisation processes, colonial administration and regional interaction, rather than being something pristine from the past. Fahlander's conclusion is harsh, but inescapable: to stick with a constructed ethnographical record, or the illusion of the homogeneous ethnic group, will only preserve a dull view of prehistory. Instead of advocating just another plea for "caution" in the use of analogies and cross-cultural references, Fahlander stresses that we ought rather to expand our horizons and also include inspiration from *any* contemporary, social practices, as well as purely fictional elements of popular culture. Furthermore, Fahlander argues that the archaeological record, i.e. the material traces of practice, often contains more information than we generally use. To find new and improved ways of extracting social information from the material record is thus regarded as a most prominent task for 21<sup>st</sup>-century archaeology.

Forslund also discusses issues of cultural comparability in his paper *MRT Confidential*. As the title suggests, Forslund's concerns are the phenomena of Middle Range Theory (MRT). Forslund argues that, although the fundamentals of MRT may very well be used by post-processualists, a continuance of the term by the followers of this approach is impossible, owing to the opinionated aspects. MRT suffers from a bad reputation simply because of its close connection with the founder of processual archaeology, Lewis Binford. Forslund chooses not to take sides in this debate, as he is himself ambiguous towards the term, but his paper offers a valuable contribution that clarifies the debate and unwraps the mystery of MRT.

The anthology is closed by a text by Kristian Kristiansen, *An Essay on Material Culture*, in which he argues that the proposed renewed interdisciplinary concern with material culture demands a re-opening of theoretical discussions of the relationship between e.g. archaeology, history/ethnohistory and social anthropology. Kristiansen stresses that we need to develop new interpretative strategies through the construction of conceptual relations that define new contextualised fields of meaning irrespective of disciplinary boundaries. In particular, he suggests that certain "abandoned" concepts, such as tradition and ethnicity, needs to be re-opened and discussed within such a post-disciplinary perspective.

Despite the great differences in generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale etc, it is interesting to note that all the articles of this volume resort to the study of material culture and other things, rather than the traditional way of employing ideas from anthropology and sociology. It seems that material-culture studies are a branch or mode of inquiry that naturally belongs to archaeology (if we use the traditional disciplinary label), but the advantage with the post-disciplinary stance is that it opens up the field to those who may have contributions to the study of humans and societies, both in the past and in the present.

## References

- Andrén, A. 1997. *Mellan ting och text. En introduktion till de historiska arkeologierna*. Brutus Östlings Bokförlag Symposion. Stockholm.
- Aron, R. 1967. *Main Currents in Sociological Thoughts*. Pelican Books. London.
- Binford, L. 1971. Mortuary practices. Their study and potential. In Brown, James A. (ed). *Approaches to the Social Dimensions of Mortuary Practices*. *American Antiquity* Vol. 36, No 3: 6-29.
- Bradley, R. 2002. *The Past in Prehistoric Societies*. Routledge. London.
- Burnham, B. C. & Kingsbury, J. (eds). 1979. *Space, Hierarchy and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis*. British archaeological reports, International series 59. Oxford.
- Clarke, D. L. 1973. Archaeology: the loss of innocence. *Antiquity* 47: 6-18.
- Cornell, P. & Fahlander, F. 2002. Microarchaeology, Materiality and Social Practice. *Current Swedish Archaeology*. Vol. 10: 21-38.
- Cornell, P. 2000. Post-structuralism and “Archaeology”: Michel Foucault and Jacques Derrida. In Holtorf, C. & Karlsson, H. (eds.). *Philosophy and Archaeological Practice. Perspectives for the 21st Century*: 173-184. Bricoleur Press. Lindome.
- Dant, T. 1999. *Material Culture in the Social World. Values, Activities, Lifestyles*. Open University Press. Buckingham/Philadelphia.
- Derrida, J. 1967. *De la Grammatologie*. Minuit. Paris.
- Dobres, M. A. 2000. *Technology and Social Agency. Outlining a Practice Framework for Archaeology*. Blackwell. Oxford.
- Durkheim, É. 1895. *The Rules of Sociological Method*, edited & transl by: Kenneth Thompson, Routledge. London & New York.
- Fahlander, F. 2003. *The Seriality of Practice. A Microarchaeology of Burial*, Gotarc series D, No. 46. Gothenburg.
- Flusser, V. 1999. *The Shape of Things: a Philosophy of Design*. Reaktion. London.
- Foucault, M. 1997. *The Archaeology of Knowledge*. Routledge. London.

- Foucault, M. 1963. *Naissance de la clinique: une archéologie du regard medical*. Gallimard. Paris.
- Gansum, T. 2002. Fra jord till handling. In Jennbert, K., Andrén, A. & Raudvere, C. (eds.). *Plats och Praxis: Studier av nordisk förkristen ritual*: 249-286. Nordic Academic Press. Lund.
- Gosden, C. 1999. *Anthropology and Archaeology. A Changing Relationship*. Routledge. London.
- Gottdiener, M. 1995. *Postmodern Semiotics: Material Culture and the Forms of Postmodern Life*. Blackwell. Cambridge.
- Gramsch, A. (ed.) 2000. Vergleichen als archäologische Methode – Analogien in den Archäologien. British archaeological reports. *International Series 825*. Oxford.
- Grimm, L. 2000. Apprentice flintknapping. In Sofaer Deverenski, J. (ed.). *Children and Material Culture*: 53-71. Routledge. London.
- Hobsbawn, E. 1979. A historian's comments. In Burnham, B. C. & Kingsbury, J. (eds.). *Space, Hierarchy and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis*, pp 247-252. British archaeological reports. International series 59. Oxford.
- Komter, A. 1998. Dingen als spiegel van relaties. *Sociologische Gids*, 1998, 45, 4, July-Aug: 234-246.
- Lacan, J. 1966. *Écrits*. Seuil. Paris.
- Leach, E. 1979. Discussion. In Burnham, B. C. & Kingsbury, J. (eds.). *Space, Hierarchy and Society: Interdisciplinary Studies in Social Area Analysis*, pp 119-124. British archaeological reports. International series 59. Oxford.
- Leroi-Gourhan, A. 1964. *Le geste et la parole, 1 & 2. Techniques et langage*. A. Michel. Paris.
- Linton, R. 1936. *The Study of Man. An Introduction*. Appleton-Century-Crofts Inc. New York.
- Nicholas, D. & Kramer, C. 2001. *Ethnoarchaeology in Action*. Cambridge World Archaeology. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.
- Normark, J. 2004. *Caught Somewhere in Time. Polyagentive archaeology in the Maya Lowlands*. Gotarc series C, No. 52. Gothenburg.

- Obeyseskere, G. 2002. *Imagining Karma. Ethical Transformation in Amerindian, Buddhist and Greek Rebirth*. University of California Press. Berkeley.
- Olsen, B. 1997. *Fra ting til tekst. Teoretiske perspektiv i arkeologisk forskning*. Universitetsforlaget. Oslo.
- Olsen, B. 1998. Back to the eighties? *Et hus med mange rom. Vennebok til Bjorn Myhre på 60-årsdagen. Bind A: 7-16*. AmS-Rapport 11A. Stavanger.
- Olsen, B. 2003. Material Culture after Text: Re-Membering Things. *Norwegian Archaeological Review*. Vol 36. No 2: 87-104.
- Parsons, T. 1951. *The Social System*. The Free Press. London.
- Phillips, P. 1955. American Archaeology and General Anthropological Theory, *Southwestern Journal of Anthropology* 11: 246-250.
- Preda, A. 1999. The Turn to Things: Arguments for a Sociological Theory of Things. *The Sociological Quarterly*, 1999. Vol. 40. No. 2: 347-366.
- Radley, A. 1990. Artefacts, Memory, and a Sense of the Past. In Middleton & Edwards (eds.). *Collective Remembering*: 45-69. Sage. London.
- Rathje, W. & Cullen, M. 1992. *Rubbish!: the Archaeology of Garbage*. Harper Collins. New York.
- Renfrew, C. 1972. *The Emergence of Civilisation*. Methuen. London.
- Riggins, H. 1994. *The Socialness of Things: Essays on the Socio-semiotics of Objects*. Mouton de Gruyter. Berlin.
- Sartre, J. P. 1960. *Critique de la raison dialectique (précédé de Question de méthode), Tome I: Théorie des ensembles pratiques*. Gallimard. Paris.
- Smith, M. 1998. *Social Science in Question*. Sage Publications. London.
- Soja, E. W. 1996. *Thirdspace. Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places*. Blackwell. Cambridge.
- Solli, B. 1996. *Narratives of Veoy: an Investigation into the poetics and scientific of archaeology*. Universitetets oldsaksamlings skrifter. Ny rekke: nr 19. Oslo.
- Taylor, W. 1948. *A Study of Archaeology*. S. Illinois University Press. Carbondale.

Tilley, C. 1989. Interpreting material culture. In Hodder, I. (ed.). *The Meaning of Things. Material Culture and Symbolic Expression: 185-194*. One World Archaeology 6. Harper Collins Academic. London.

Tilley, C. 1996. *An Ethnography of the Neolithic: Early prehistoric Societies in Southern Scandinavia*. Cambridge University Press. Cambridge.