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THE ROLE OF DISCIPLINARY BOUNDARIES IN PREHISTORIC RESEARCH: THE CASE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF PORTO'S TEAM*

by

Sérgio Gomes**

Abstract: During the 1970s, prehistoric studies at the University of Porto began a process of establishment that would lead it to consolidate with History, becoming an obligatory subject inside this Department and forming an independent field of research capable of managing the study of local and national prehistory. Since this time, researchers at this institution have developed several lines of research in which it is possible to recognize different bounded categories (e.g., geographical, chronological, architectural, etc.). An analysis of the way these archaeologists delimited their actions as researchers along with the possibilities they considered in their studies allows us to establish an enquiry concerning the boundaries they have used to fix and control their investigations. The analysis that I present here on the paths and work of this research group has two forms of inquiry. I first attempt to problematize in a historiographic sense the circumstances in which these archaeologists found their research options. Secondly, I intend to focus on the way they have represented archaeology as science and themselves as translators or performers of a specific kind or group of materials. This approach allows us to ask about the boundaries within which these archaeologists have operated and their consequences to an understanding of archaeology as practice. By doing this, I argue that archaeology, as any other discipline, should see its boundaries not as walls which surround an essence or identity, but as a source of questioning which offers ways of making something 'thinkable' that in previous moments was understood as a transgression of the archaeologist's practice.

Key-words: Disciplinary boundaries; temporal-scale analysis; spatial-scale analysis.

Resumo: Em meados da década de 70 a Pré-história na Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto iniciaria um processo de desenvolvimento e afirmação que a consolidaria enquanto disciplina no âmbito da formação dos seus alunos e campo de conhecimento capaz de ensaiar inquéritos, objectos de estudo, métodos de análise e programas de investigação. Ao longo destes quase 35 anos, os investigadores desta instituição desenvolveram várias linhas de pesquisa em cuja formulação é possível reconhecer a presença de distintas categorias de delimitação do objecto de estudo: geográfica, cronológica, tipos de arquitectura, tipos de artefactos.... A análise destas opções de delimitação da esfera de acção e das possibilidades da sua articulação com outras pesquisas, permite uma leitura acerca da representação que estes investigadores fazem dos

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limites que, por uma questão metodológica ou constrangimentos vários, impõem ou são impostos ao seu trabalho. A leitura que se pretende fazer dos trajectos e interrogações deste grupo de investigadores, além de tentar problematizar num sentido historiográfico as opções tomadas ou as circunstâncias em que se desenvolveu o trabalho, pretende também ensaiar uma leitura do modo como estes investigadores representaram a arqueologia enquanto área do saber e se interrogaram acerca do seu papel enquanto tradutores ou performers de um conjunto de materiais. Assim, a abordagem que se pretende fazer deste case study constitui uma possibilidade de questionar acerca delimitação que os arqueólogos fazem da sua prática e das suas consequências para os moldes em que se define a arqueologia que, como qualquer outra área do saber, deve olhar os seus limites não como fronteiras identitárias rígidas mas como fonte de uma interrogatividade a construir no *alargamento do pensável*.

Palavras-chave: Fronteiras disciplinares; escala de análise temporal; escala de análise espacial.

INTRODUCTION

In this paper I discuss the role of disciplinary boundaries in the research carried out by the prehistory team at the University of Porto. I argue that the focus of their research reflects distinct views of archaeology as a source of knowledge and, consequentially, involves unique disciplinary boundaries. I focus my case on the temporal scale of a single generation, analysing the path of Vítor Oliveira Jorge, Susana Oliveira Jorge and Maria de Jesus Sanches from the late 1970s to today, and stress the role of institutional context in the way these archaeologists chose their focus on past materials research. In their respective career paths, each of these archaeologists developed different research lines aimed at bettering our knowledge of prehistory in the north of Portugal as well as the academic and social establishment of archaeology as an independent and useful science. If we can consider disciplinary boundaries as lines which arise from scientific research (i.e., defining an object of study and regulating methodological procedures) we should also see such boundaries as constructions where different kinds of expectations are negotiated that give meaning to archaeological practice itself. In fact, the institutionalization of a discipline is a very complex process in which different interests and politics interact. Regarding this, I start with a discussion of some aspects of the tension between the internal and external context in which research takes place. I then focus on the way this generation interacted with that tension and, finally, comment on the disciplinary boundaries of archaeology.

1. Disciplinary boundaries

When we talk about archaeology as a discipline, we are considering Modernity's project of science (Thomas 2004). The modern Western scientific practice turns on the opposition between subject and object of study. In such a dichotomy, the subject, making logical-mathematical use of their rational skills, proceeds to an analysis of a certain aspect of the world (the object) in order to understand it within a unified research project. By producing such unities, researchers seek to create a grid of disciplines which produce a metaphor for the way scientific methods experience the world. They divide up knowledge and then subsequently expect to bring these strands back together as a whole. This disciplinary treatment of those experiences seeks to better our knowledge of the world and

seeks to become a utilitarian and functional knowledge capable of answering the challenges posed by economic and social dynamics (Heidegger 1976). It is in this “answering of economic and social demands” that a discipline receives its institutionalization by providing a singular specialist capable of handling its specific needs. In this way, disciplinary boundaries have tended to become a way of regulating ‘specialization’ based on accuracy: to each object a certain discipline, to each phenomenon a certain research, and to each problem a certain specialist.

The process of “answering economic and social demands” in research is not the only tendency toward disciplinary separation. In many situations, the answer to a problem is based on the juxtaposition of two or more disciplines. This is the case of several biotechnological sciences which merge biological and physical frameworks to create a new set of disciplines, or, in the present case, the articulation of History and Archaeology in the institutionalization of prehistory studies. At the same time, practice within a certain discipline may itself change the course of the project it was attempting to develop by proposing alternative questions or research lines. It may be that the initial focus on an object of study changes, thereby allowing for different forms of enquiry and evolving disciplinary frameworks. As I describe below, the development of prehistoric studies since the 1990s has ushered in new disciplinary connections, presented other research programs and changed its goals.

In the analysis of the relationship between researchers and their research (or disciplinary) boundaries, we must consider the implicit or explicit representation of knowledge in order to arrive at a better understanding of the aims and management of the circumstances in which research takes place. In this manner, the question of disciplinary boundaries can be discussed within the “Unit of Science” (US) framework. According to Olga Pombo (Pombo 2006), these units correspond to “historical accomplishments endowed with a significant duration and continuity [which] embodies the systematic coherence of knowledge” such as the Academy, the Museum, the Library or the Encyclopaedia (ibid. 135). Institutions (or “Pictures of US”, as Pombo calls them) manage the challenges made by State, Market and Community dynamics and proceed to a classification of the sciences in order to answer the challenges presented by the historical conditions in which knowledge is produced (ibid.: 207-209).

In order to deal with historical circumstances, each institution produces what Pombo calls “Metaphors of US”, a series of linguistic or pictorial devices, for example, in which the structure and dynamics of the US are systematized (ibid. 292-293). Within the group of Metaphors, Pombo highlights the following examples: the “Circle”, the “Tree”, the “*Mapa Mundi*”, the “House” and the “Network”. Once we examine each metaphor, we can distinguish between different relationships across several disciplines concerning the kind of boundaries that have been defined. In fact, boundaries define the possibility of dialogue between disciplines, however that dialogue is mediated by the rules that each metaphor endows. Those rules could foster specialization and hierarchy, such as in the case of the “Tree”, or could promote an absence of it, as with the case of the “Circle” where the dynamics erase any kind of hierarchy and, consequentially, the idea of boundaries themselves. On the contrary, in the metaphors of the “House” and the “*Mapa Mundi*” the role of boundaries is the main point since they are constructed upon a space where limits are needed in order to regulate passage. Although boundaries act as a way of hierarchy or

specialization (as in the case of the “Tree”), they can also allow for a multiplicity of dialogue strategies between disciplines. Even so, they are different from the “Network” where “movement” and “articulation” are the main goals of the research since, by contrast, cartographic and architectural metaphors aim to define spatial unities crystallizing in disciplinary territories (ibid. 294-309).

To summarize, we may consider two main boundary dynamics in the group “Metaphors of US”. On the one hand, there is a strategy aimed at the establishment of a disciplinary territory where boundaries provide identity to a discipline by detaching it from the US. On the other hand, there are dynamics where the identity of a discipline is built on the articulations, or network, that each researcher or research project can create. In the following sections, I argue that the prehistory team at the University of Porto used both disciplinary boundary dynamics at different moments in time. In the first moment, from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, they privileged boundaries as a way of defining the disciplinary territory and institutionalization of their studies. In the second moment, from the mid-1990s to the present day, boundaries were used as a way of promoting a dialogue with the frameworks of other disciplines, as a way of asking about the contingency of the research and the discipline’s identity.

2. Disciplinary and research boundaries in the study of the prehistory of northern Portugal

2.1. From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s: disciplinary boundaries as territory and the focus on temporal-scale analyses

Following the career paths of Vítor Oliveira Jorge, Susana Oliveira Jorge and Maria de Jesus de Sanches, we see that they had become part of the staff at the Faculty of Arts of University of Porto by the early 1980s, forming a Prehistory working group inside the Institute of Archaeology. This Institute was not, however, an independent entity inside the Faculty, and Archaeology was a discipline dependant on the larger Department of History, the goals of which were to promote research on local and national history. In order to understand this institutional organization, we should consider it a legacy of the dictatorship, ended in 1974, which had promoted History as the main discipline concerning the study of the past. Under the disciplinary hegemony of History, Archaeology and Art History were understood as complementary studies involving material and visual study objects. Accordingly, Vítor, Susana and Maria de Jesus took on the responsibility of producing a regional prehistory in order to complete the chronological sequence proposed by History. In this major project within prehistoric studies, then, the goal was to produce historic narratives and Archaeology was understood as a discipline focusing on temporal-scale analyses.

By the end of the 1970s, V. Jorge had started to study the megalithic phenomenon in the north of Portugal. This phenomenon was understood in chronological and cultural terms associated with a stage previous to local protohistory and it was interpreted as architecture related to the building of *tumuli*. In this way, Vítor’s research was already bounded – his study should be about a certain type of architecture, and what was asked of

him was to create a narrative within which this architecture could be explained. However, it should be noted that there were many concerns relating to the heterogeneous nature of the architecture within this megalithic universe. It was by carrying out a systematic excavation of several sites, namely in Serra da Aboboreira, and attempting a typological and chronological synthesis that Vítor would ultimately contradict the initial unity which was seen in megalithism. He had broken the boundaries which had initially framed the research and by doing this, had not only contributed to a better knowledge of megalithic architecture during the IVth through IInd millennia b.C, but also had proposed a new framework privileging its connections with other kinds of architecture and landscape (Jorge 1982; Jorge 1989). By arguing that the evidence did not fit within the categories previously established by History, he had broken with the earlier, bounded view of megalithism and proposed new ways to understand it.

During the 1980s, S. Jorge developed a research project which also sought the explanation of a traditional subject in the prehistory of the north of Portugal. Its focus was on an artefactual group constituted by categories such as beaker or *penha* pottery. Knowledge of these materials was, at the time, based on old excavations and there had not been any kind of systematic classification or research related to the context in which it appeared. To remedy this situation, Susana decided to excavate several sites in the region of Chaves and Vila Pouca de Aguiar in order to produce a database, establish a chronological and cultural context for *penha* materials and to try to explain the social processes within which these materials were manipulated (Jorge 1986). It should be noted that, by deciding to focus her research on a region, Susana was subverting the initial way in which her study object was bounded. In fact, what was given to her to study were artefactual categories – her study object was artefactually bounded, but in order to understand these, she opted for a geographical boundary in which she could produce contexts. By fixing the artefacts in space, she was able to create a net of indices (e.g., typological, stratigraphical, chronological, etc.) which allowed her to construct several hypotheses regarding artefact use and a better knowledge about the communities of this region in the IIIrd and IInd millennia b.C.

Beginning in the second half of the 1980s, M.J. Sanches started studying a region in northern Portugal known as the Planalto Mirandês (Sanches 1992). Maria de Jesus began with a geographic boundary which she then split into syntheses of archaeological and geographical aspects. She studied different kinds of architecture and artefacts and related these to geographic features such as valleys and mountains. By doing this, Sanches created an internal boundary for this region, considering these relationships through the IVth and IIIrd millennia b.C. It was by connecting different kinds of boundaries that Maria de Jesus created a narrative for local prehistory.

In addition to these works, which were submitted to the Academy in order to receive degrees, the scientific projects developed during this period assured the active participation of these archaeologists in traditional associations, such as the Portuguese Society for Anthropology and Ethnology (Sociedade Portuguesa de Antropologia e Etnologia), of which V. Jorge has been Director since 1990. During the 1980s, these and other archaeologists also created the Group for the Study of Archaeology from Porto (Grupo de Estudos Arqueológicos do Porto) publishing the review “Arqueologia” which was also directed by V. Jorge. Finally, in the 1990s, they promoted the creation of the “Association for the Improvement of Cooperation in Iberian Archaeology” (Associação para o Desenvolvimen-

to da Cooperação em Arqueologia Peninsular). Within this spirit of Iberian cooperation, they also organized the First Peninsular Archaeological Congress in 1993, which became a regular event organized every three years by different universities. An increase in the number of research projects and the affirmation of the archaeology team inside the Faculty of Arts allowed for the pioneering establishment of a specialized formation in Portugal. In 1989 the first Portuguese MA in Archaeology was created, followed by a Masters degree with a specialization in Prehistory in 1996. In 1999, Archaeology became an independent course; it was no longer a specialization in (long-term) History, but rather a separate course which students could pursue in order to receive professional accreditation (Jorge 2003).

The development of research on prehistory resulted in an increase of detailed data which did not fit into earlier boxes. These new approaches allowed for the definition of more structured and complex narratives on local and national history. The institutional recognition of the validity of this work was reflected in the participation of this team in an encyclopaedic project concerning the History of Portugal. Edited by historians Joel Serrão and António Oliveira Marques, the goals of this project were to produce twelve books concerning specific historical periods. The first book, published in 1990, documented the prehistory, protohistory and Roman establishment in Iberia. The chapters involving prehistory were written by two archaeologists from the University of Porto's team: J.P. Cunha Ribeiro, who wrote the chapters on the Palaeolithic (Ribeiro 1990), and S. Jorge, who focused on the Late Prehistory (Jorge 1990; Jorge 1990; Jorge 1990; Jorge 1990). Even if these encyclopaedic works were to have been a History project, the participation of these researchers in a national project was symptomatic of the institutional establishment of prehistoric archaeology as an independent discipline.

The prehistory presented in that encyclopaedic project acted as a kind of 'anatomical' report in that it systematized well-bounded cultural entities and described their function within a sequence proposed by History. It was believed that, by digging several prehistoric sites, it would be possible to produce an organized image of prehistory. Archaeological sites were studied in order to explain them as local narratives that articulated with broader Iberian and European contexts. In this indexability, periods of time were the main way of organising materials because the project within which the research had taken place aimed to represent prehistory as a sequence of stages culminating in historical societies. In this analysis, materials were understood as remains of a vanishing body which could be constructed under a regime of logical associations. This research provides a clear example of what John Barrett calls a "representational model of archaeology" (Barrett 1999 [1994]). According to Barrett:

"This model treats historical research as a problem of cause and effect, linking the past (as cause) to its present-day record.... Archaeological evidence need not be seen as the "record" of various "meaningful statements" which originated in the past. Instead it may be viewed as the residual remains of a widely diverse range of materialities. These materialities were inhabited and interpreted in light of assumptions and prejudices about the nature of the world. The validity of those assumptions was experienced and monitored through practice, an empirical evaluation carried forward by bodily and sensory dispositions as well as discursively. As archaeologists, we might enquire into how these different materialities could be known, the practices through which those knowledges were realized and monitored, and the consequences of those practices." (ibid: 87-90).

As we will see in the next sub-section, by the mid-1990s the archaeologists I am discussing would begin to critically evaluate their earlier work. In this first moment these archaeologists valued a causal scheme in which artefacts were the material proof of certain processes, reproducing this scheme to link prehistoric materialities with historical institutions. For instance, the walled enclosures of the IIIrd millennium in Iberia were interpreted in a linear sequence leading to historical state societies. They represented a stage of complexity in the historical process, and I return to this subject later. For now, I want to emphasize that the way archaeological data were created and interpreted reproduced the logical scheme of the natural sciences where knowledge could be verified and proven. So, by deferring to this kind of causal scheme, archaeology was seeking to validate its own methodology and interpretive program.

The methodological credibility presented by Archaeology allowed for its emancipation from History in that archaeologists had created specific procedures to produce and criticize knowledge of past materials. Although History and Archaeology shared a temporal scale of analysis, privileging different kinds of materials, at the moment History could no longer assure their study, archaeology arose as an independent disciplinary territory. Seeing this relationship within an interdisciplinary game, we should emphasize that it does not merge the two disciplines. On the contrary, it seeks the direction of specialization mentioned earlier in order to create a disciplinary territory defined by a study object and its methods. This territorial or cartographic image of disciplinary organization usefully illustrates the role of disciplinary boundaries in the institutions where these studies of prehistory took place. Science is taken as an image of the world and disciplines act as pieces of that image. These pieces present a well-defined centre which gradually becomes diffuse in its boundaries, just like a library shelf whose ends are almost empty. These “no man’s lands” promote an interdisciplinary game in order to continue the progress of Reason. By recombining several methods, new research frameworks appear whose recognition as disciplines depend on their capacity to present their own methodology and a useful knowledge of the world. In this way, the main boundary or regulatory element of a discipline is, at the same time, the main force in its emancipation and the production of new knowledge or new disciplines. In the early studies undertaken by these archaeologists the goal was to demonstrate that prehistory could be an independent discipline, defined by several methods and unities of research.

2.2. From the mid-1990s to the present day: disciplinary boundaries as “paths” and the focus on spatial-scale analyses

The methodological character of the knowledge about prehistory became a point of discussion during the 1990s. In a 1993 paper, V. Jorge admitted that the experience of past materials is a complex game in which interactions between several social and personal motivations occur (Jorge 1993). The primacy given to methodological approaches in the moment archaeologists present their work, however, erases these motivations in order to seek objectivity and a logical approach based on the data. This scheme of action is underpinned by the idea that the subject should be a neutral agent and that archaeology’s scientificity depends on that skill. In reaction to the boundaries that methodology creates

in the study of the past, he proposed a “free access” to the past based on a methodological plurality in order to incorporate other dimensions of experience. By doing this, he was asking about the ontological character of the materials used in prehistory studies. This discussion developed alongside V. Jorge’s research on a group of walled enclosures of the IIIrd millennium b.C., traditionally interpreted as fortified settlements that I mentioned earlier. During the 1990s, V. Jorge, S. Jorge and M.J. Sanches were involved in the study and heritage management of three such sites: Castelo Velho, Castro de Palheiros and Castanheiro do Vento.

In addition to this discussion about knowledge in prehistory, I should also mention that during this period, in 1998, there was an institutional disciplinary reconfiguration which placed archaeology within a new disciplinary group: the Department of Heritage Sciences and Techniques. This disciplinary group, made up of Archaeology, Art History, Museum Studies and Information Sciences, carries a different framework. In fact, the focus on temporal scale analyses has been replaced by an inquiry more concerned with spatial dynamics. This inquiry holds that if things become artifacts within a cultural indexability where time or chronology are very important aspects, this experience happens through space within a dialogue between several agents and things. In this way, if archaeology continues to work on a temporal-scale analysis, its challenge is no longer just a narrative but also a way of promoting past experience through place. The dialogue between these different disciplines has encouraged new views on archaeological materials and has promoted some newly-established projects focused on spatial-scale analysis. It should be emphasized that, in earlier studies, these archaeologists used spatial (geographical) boundaries in order to understand the material they were studying, but as we will see in the case of the “fortified settlements”, those spatial boundaries are used not just as a way of recording or organising data, but as a source of questions.

In 1994 S. Jorge presented a study on the “fortified settlements” noted above, based on a comparison of 69 Iberian sites. Her goals were to test an extant model of social and economic complexification which supported the interpretation of these enclosures as settlements with military structures whose construction aimed to defend people and wealth in a period of a major competition for natural resources, such as copper mines and fertile lands. Susana concluded that the Iberian sites involved several contexts and displayed specific features which denied the unity that such a model demands. In other words, the operability of the fortification model was insufficient to support the diversity presented by the sites analysed. As an alternative to this explanation, she instead emphasized the role architecture would have played as a communicational device serving to mark the territory and identity of the community. This meta-regularity says nothing about the specificity of the architecture; by denying a univocal function to the settlements as a whole, local interpretations were stressed in order to emphasize and integrate the specific details of each site (Jorge 1994).

In this way, place becomes the main boundary; it is archaeology as an experience of place that is demanded. This “turning to the site” requires a kind of interdisciplinarity much closer to that proposed by the heritage department of which archaeology has been a part since 1998. The long experience that this new line of research demands allows for a diversification of interpretations and requires a heritage management program in order to make it possible. For example, the site of Castelo Velho acted as a point from which could

be developed different scales of analysis and divergent narratives. At the same time, the heritage management project demanded a multiplicity of voices from the various specialists working or visiting the site, which added to the views of this place. Susana emphasized that it was pertinent to give an intelligibility to the past based on multiscale analyses and a wealth of interdisciplinary discourse when she wrote “there is an unsaid difference carrying strangeness, which far from make us stop valuing the, desired as well criticized, continuity with the past, it encourages a kind of kaleidoscopic representation” (Jorge 1999).

In the same spirit, M.J. Sanches would study Castro de Palheiros as a place of community, negotiation and memory. However, unlike S. Jorge, who started her study of Castelo Velho with almost no information about local prehistory, Castro de Palheiros was located in the region that Maria de Jesus had examined as part of her earlier research (Sanches 1997). As such, the study of Castro de Palheiros allowed Maria to revisit her previous work in the region by looking at it through specific sites like Castro de Palheiros and others, which became points of view for each other (Sanches 1999; Sanches 2004; Sanches 2006). The region, in its geographic and constructed elements, was taken to be a placehood where materials became meaningful. This line of research has also been developed at Castanheiro do Vento, namely by João Muralha Cardoso (one of the co-directors of the project) who by researching local prehistory and geography tried to systematize the possibilities in which the place reveals itself and acts as a device in the ordering of the region's identification (Cardoso 2007). In same way, V. Jorge, transposing his experience on megalithic monuments, would interpret these “fortified” sites as monuments (Jorge 2002), arguing that they could be taken as “architectural devices that have changed radically significant sections of the entire landscape, transforming them... into real communication devices, which inscribed in a horizon, or mirror on the valleys surrounding, a sort of spatial archetype of the cosmos” (ibid.: 25). In addition to this, V. Jorge would use his experience at Castanheiro do Vento to develop several questions concerning the accessibility of the past. He started to ask about materiality and the visibility of archaeological data which led him to emphasize the fluidity of what archaeologist's typically crystallize as study objects.

Such fluidity not only demands the diversification of dialogue strategies, but also draws on the methodologies of other disciplines, as well as a search for dialogue bridges in which study object and subject could act in a similar plan in order to bring up the historicity of both. In this sense, the performative dimension of archaeological experience arouses a central aspect of that relationship. As V. Jorge explains: “if performance is the whole human activity, which is always happens in a context (not a simple stage), where we observe and are observed (as in the old game of the look and of the gaze) and if the heritage is everything that involves us and includes us, then the two concepts practically cover each other” (Jorge 2008). In the emphasis given to performativity, Vítor singles out the unpredictability of the “knowing process”, arguing that archaeologists should examine new methods in order to integrate all dimensions of the archaeological experience. By highlighting the performativity of the encounter between subject and object, rather than partitioning knowledge, he is trying to merge methodologies and disciplinary frameworks thereby integrating archaeology within a Faculty of Arts. V. Jorge also hopes archaeology, as it incorporates knowledge and improvisational skills, becomes a way of giving sense to a place, creating bridges between past and present, memory and experience, and the individual and community (Jorge forthcoming).

Such a position does not identify the archaeologist as a researcher looking for past materials and representing the past, but as a performer who, while denying a substantive conception of culture, values archaeology as a plurality of experience in which materials can be thought of in several ways. Accordingly, cognitive and instrumental rationality is one of many kinds of rationalities in which the past and heritage construction are involved. It should be pointed, however, that this approach to “breaking boundaries” carries with it a responsibility to make experience thinkable, to give intelligibility to the methods used, and to pose questions and answers in order to share it and promote dialogue with other people. What is called for is a dialogical hermeneutics which seeks to emphasize the historicity of materials and archaeologists, thereby creating animated accounts of the evidence rather than the picked clean, descriptive control of a scientific approach. In this way, disciplinary boundaries, rather than creating territories, tend to become connections between several disciplinary frameworks – a game of possibilities in which the subject is a subject in experience. In other words, the archaeologist is not a neutral agent that puts into practice a series of conventions and techniques, but instead looks for new ways of make things thinkable. Rather than a territory, archaeology can be seen as a multiplicity of paths in which materials come together with one another in several unique ways.

3. Conclusion

In this analysis I considered two periods in which archaeologists used the boundaries of their research unities and discipline in different ways. From the late 1970s through the mid-1990s, they focused their studies on temporal-scale analyses, using their results to define a disciplinary territory in order to institutionally detach Archaeology from History. In the second period, from the mid-1990s to the present day, they started to focus on spatial-scale analyses, emphasising the multiplicity of ways in which archaeologists dwell with materiality. In doing this, disciplinary boundaries rather than territory become an arena of interstitial possibilities that each research unity can allow. In this path we can see simultaneously a trend aimed at the specialization of knowledge in order to provide the Market, the State and the Community with a group of professionals – archaeologists – and a trend where archaeology is understood as a practice informed by frameworks from other disciplines. When privileging specialization, archaeologists have emphasized the scientific rationality of the discipline (the representational model of archaeology). Once it was argued that the Past could be understood in more than one way, they enlarged these disciplinary boundaries by using other kinds of rationalities within a dialogical hermeneutics that sought to discuss the contingency of archaeological practice itself. In addition to this, I would like to emphasize that even with different conceptions regarding the meaning of materials, it is necessary to stress multiple strategies of intelligibility in the interpretation of the past and different attitudes related to the participation of the subject in knowledge. Boundaries can act simultaneously as both regulatory and emancipatory elements that encourage people to turn these materials and the experiences beyond them into objects of thought and communication. By doing this, archaeology becomes a form of communication and itself a way of breaking boundaries.

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