

Introduction: So Close, No Matter How Far? Sketching the Relationship between Water- and Landscapes across Europe

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165 years after the discovery of pile dwellings in Switzerland, the 25th annual meeting of the EAA in Bern under the motto “Beyond Paradigms” was an excellent occasion to relate archaeological waterscapes to their surrounding landscapes.¹ Due to their inherent fluidity and their impact on cultural phenomena, waterscapes are destined to make us look beyond rigid paradigms, dichotomies, and categories, in order to dissolve them and merge the results into something new.

Relating and integrating the various aspects of life in waterscapes and landscapes, as well as their transitional areas, creates new and unexpected narratives. Archaeological remains in waterscapes (in/at lakes and the sea, in peatlands, bogs etc.) must be seen in their relationship to and their symbiosis with water (HUSSAIN & FLOSS, 2016; RÖNNBY, 2007; VIANELLO, 2015). The traditional, somewhat hydrophobic, territorial models (HASENFRATZ & GROSS-KLEE, 1995) still common amongst some today, which saw dwellings or infrastructure sites as simply located by the water, limited the field of vision. This terrestrial view may also partly be a result of the fact that in today’s landscape wetlands have been made to disappear almost completely (GROSS & HUBER, 2018; NAUMOV, 2019). From a post-processual perspective, these models are no suitable analytical instruments. We would like to leave them behind us and instead focus on the habitat as a whole. When doing so, it has to be remembered that whether or not archaeological sites are recognised as such is largely dependent on taphonomic conditions (SOMMER, 1991, 59-64). Habitat here includes not only dwellings but also infrastructure installations such as bridges (e.g. KOVACIC & COLLAS, 2019), fisheries (e.g. KOIVISTO, 2017) and mills (e.g. DUMONT ET AL., 2014; HARDING, 2013; SCHUCANY & WINET, 2014) as well as natural facilities like ports (DAIM ET AL., 2018), fords (e.g. EDGEWORTH, 2011, 121-124), deltas (HUBER ET AL., 2020), estuaries (SEVERN ESTUARY LEVELS RESEARCH COMMITTEE) and portages (e.g. WESTERDAHL, 2004). We are talking about an entire space that was and still is being used, paddled through (e.g. CIPOLLA & ALLARD, 2019), trekked through (COLES & COLES, 1986; HEUMÜLLER, 2016), engineered (e.g. GIANNINI,

2019) and inhabited. In particular research in estuaries (e.g. COHEN, 2012; HAUGHEY, 2009; KRANENDONK ET AL., 2015; MAIKLEM, 2019; MONUMENTS AND ARCHAEOLOGY, CITY OF AMSTERDAM) has shown how diverse finds can be and how hard it often is to determine whether a deposit is deliberate or accidental (e.g. waste vs. deposition). This ambiguous picture puts the spotlight on ritual depositions or “territorial” markers, which can only be recognised when looking at them from a wider context (GRØN, 2020; STEVENS, 2019). Due to its distinctly liminal nature, water has heavily charged cosmological-religious connotations (LARSSON, 2011).

In order to understand waterscapes, the microarchaeological frog’s eye perspective (FAHLANDER, 2008; GROSS, in prep.; MAINBERGER, 2020), which examines the local aquatic environment, must be supplemented with a broader perspective, for water does not separate – it connects (JOHNSON, 2019; MAIXNER, 2020). Thus, archaeological sites must be viewed in relation to the water- and landscapes around them, in relation to each other, and as part of a wide and far-reaching network of similar relationships (GROSS & HUBER, 2018).

These “amphibious” networks are the result of a lively, diverse and constantly changing interplay between different actors (humans, animals, plants and other matters), factors, and forces (DOLBUNOVA ET AL., 2019). As we move between land and water, new perspectives open up in front of us; the dichotomy between the two is dissolved. This paradigm shift has given rise to a now broad field of research with contributions from scholars such as MATT EDGEWORTH 2011 on rivers and CHRISTER WESTERDAHL 1992 on coasts.

Waterscapes and their archaeological remains today are at great risk (GIAGKOULIS, 2019; THEUNISSEN & VAN HEERINGEN, 2006). This is one of the reasons why the Prehistoric Pile Dwellings around the Alps have been designated a World Heritage site (CORBOUD ET AL., 2017, 35-37). People all around the globe who live in pile dwellings in amphibious areas today are at an even greater risk, e.g. Makoko in the town of Lagos, Nigeria (ADELEKAN, 2010). These resilient people, their settlements and culture are challenged to the ex-

treme by the prevailing political conditions, the global economy, and the environmental problems. As pile-dwelling researchers, it is our duty to show today's pile dwellers our respect and appreciation and to support them in the continuation of this amphibious way of life. Working together with them on an equal footing can lead to an exchange of information that can enrich the mutual perspectives (similarly to works proposed by JULIA WATSON, 2013) and, on our side, lead to a more comprehensive transdisciplinary understanding of pile dwellings. And even if our engagement with this topic only helps us appreciate the taphonomic impact of human-caused water pollution and recognise its importance in the archaeological context (BLEICHER ET AL., 2018; SOMMER, 2017; STEINER ET AL., 2018), this would already be a worth-while lesson.

Translation: Olivia Linda Klee

Notes

¹ The following papers are some of the contributions to a session with the same title, organised by the authors together with EKATERINA DOLBUNOVA, TRYFON GIAGKOULIS and GOCE NAUMOV, at the 25th Meeting of the *European Association of Archaeologists* (EAA), 4-7 September 2019, in Bern. Abstracts of all the presentations can be found on the following web page: <https://www.e-a-a.org/EAA2019/Programme.aspx?Program=3#Program> [4.5.2020].

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