

## **Practicing the Borders: Structure and creativity on the Roman frontiers**

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### **Abstract**

The archaeology of frontiers and borders represents a significant opportunity for explorations of the intersections between sociality, materiality and practice. The Roman frontiers, in particular, have long been studied from quite narrow perspectives, and yet they have much potential to shed light on significant contemporary problems to do with the articulation of social and political boundaries. Furthermore, in recent years theoretical trends in Roman archaeology have erred towards frameworks such as globalisation, and aspects of the wider post-humanist agenda in archaeology, both of which emphasise networks and the fluidity of agencies. While some of the insights from such approaches are useful, themes like boundedness and hierarchy cannot be ignored, just as in the wider world in which we live, and it is argued in this paper that these issues are best approached using a practice framework, which emphasises human agency in relation to different structures, rather than dissolving it. In this paper, various archaeologies of the Roman frontiers in Britain are reviewed, before focusing on one class of material culture which appears in the late and early post-Roman period, and this is examined through the lens of Alfred Schutz's phenomenological sociology. This, I contend, offers a useful perspective on the role of boundaries in generating the creative aspects of human agency.

### **Introduction: frontiers and materialities**

Few topics are as pressing in the world we live in as the nature of political and social boundaries. While globalisation has far from receded as an economic and cultural process, from at least the turn of the millennium the re-assertion of borders in both physical and administrative forms has gathered pace. From the building of new barriers on the US-Mexican border or between Hungary, and Serbia and Croatia, to the UK's vote to leave the European Union, 're-bordering' is a widespread phenomenon that aligns with newly assertive nationalism in many countries (Bude/Dürschmidt 2010). Even the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, which one might imagine is precisely the kind of global problem to inspire a unifying response, has in

practice led to the reinforcing of boundaries at every scale, from the personal to the national, and played into existing political divisions within numerous societies (see e.g. Castan Pinos/Radil 2020; Walker et al. 2020). The relevance of all of these events to archaeologists may seem at first glance to be confined to the very immediate impacts upon research activity, funding, and academic networks, but there are at least two elements of deeper connection. First, as is already being quite well-studied, new versions of nationalism bring with them many of the methods of the earlier phase of nation-building in the 18<sup>th</sup>, 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries, in which context archaeology itself originated. The past is used extensively in the narratives of, particularly, the political right, in many parts of the world, as a source of legitimisation, symbolism, and trite slogans, whether it be ‘taking back control’ in the UK or making ‘America great again’ in the US (e.g. Bonacchi et al. 2018; Gardner 2017a; Niklasson/Hølleland 2018). Given how much archaeology has progressed in the last century, we are obliged to expose these kinds of myths for what they are. The second, more constructive aspect of our engagement with our times is – like other social sciences – to attempt to understand these events, and their implications, by placing them into the context of social processes, which we can frame in a uniquely long-term and comparative perspective (cf. e.g. Nilsson Stutz 2018; Rosenzweig 2020). The particular kinds of approaches explored in this volume provide some of the most effective tools that we have at our disposal to rise to this challenge.

In this paper, I aim to look more closely at the nature of social boundaries, and their dynamism over time, in the particular context of the Roman and early Medieval west of Britain, and using one particular strand in the broad tradition of practice theory (see e.g. Nicolini 2012; Reckwitz 2002; Schatzki 2006). In the first main section, I will outline some of the background to the immediate archaeological context of study, in the historiography of Roman frontier studies, and the ways in which material from the frontiers in Britain can be interpreted from a practice perspective. Thereafter, I will delve a little deeper into the social psychology of action, practice, and liminality to examine how the so-called ‘worldly phenomenology’ of Alfred Schutz (1899-1959; see e.g. Barber 2018 for biography) can help us understand the particular creativity of the frontiers, that is much in evidence in the Roman world. In a more detailed example, I will then illustrate this creativity via the particular phenomenon of the emergence of new forms of inscribed memorial in the Irish Sea zone, in the aftermath of Roman control. Through this argument, I hope to demonstrate the continued vitality of practice theory in archaeology. This point is important, because since at least some of the more well-known bodies of practice theory came to be adopted in archaeology, particularly from the work of Giddens and Bourdieu, theoretical currents in our discipline have moved on. While, in the last

20 years, the dominant theme in archaeological theory is simply one of fragmentation (Mizoguchi 2015), certainly among the more interpretive wing of the discipline approaches derived from various forms of post-humanism have come to the fore. Although these have forced important critical thinking about materiality and useful engagement with the problem of alternative ontologies, ultimately I, like several critics, find them unsatisfactory as analytical tools to understand power dynamics in ancient – or modern – societies (e.g. Fernández-Götz et al. 2020; Ribeiro 2016, 2018; Van Dyke 2015). Keeping human action in a material world at the centre of the frame is the strength of practice theoretical approaches, connecting as these do with Marxism, pragmatism and phenomenology, and they have much more potential to be developed in our discipline. The times we live in only underline the urgency of that work.

### **Repositioning Roman frontiers**

Roman frontier studies is a venerable sub-field within the sub-discipline of Roman provincial archaeology. Just as the latter developed in a somewhat distinct way from Classical archaeology of the central Mediterranean, so scholarship on the frontier installations of northern Britain, the Rhine valley, and so on emerged in some tension with the archaeology of the towns, villas and other settlements of the provincial landscape (Collins 2012: 1-5; Dyson 2006: 124-31; Gardner 2017b; James 2002). In the antiquarian phase of our discipline, and before fields like Romano-British archaeology became academically established, at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, research into the frontier fortifications in the landscape around Hadrian's Wall was well underway. General Sir William Roy undertook surveys of forts in this region, for example, in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, in a period when the English-Scottish border had a pronounced military character in the wake of the Jacobite rebellions (Bidwell 1997: 11-27; Hingley 2008: 139-48). This kind of complex association between the archaeology of the frontiers as primarily military archaeology, and its pursuit by scholars with military connections, in the context of contemporary military problems, is a recurrent theme in frontier studies up until at least the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, when the school of research known as *limesforschung* connected scholars in, for example, Durham with colleagues in Germany (James 2002: 14-26). While this internationalism was a strength of the field, there are some fairly obvious problems with the limited interpretive agenda that was constrained by the strong military focus of subject and practitioners – even more so where this extended to colonial contexts in North Africa or the Middle East (e.g. Díaz-Andreu 2007: 99-118; Mattingly 1996; cf. Hingley 2000). Despite several important changes in the approaches deployed on the frontiers in the 1980s, and increasingly since then, the legacy of traditional frontier archaeology

has cast a long shadow, not least because so much of the available data on frontier regions was created in the 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Nonetheless, many different approaches have developed in the last 40 years, and they have gradually taken frontier studies in a more productive direction, to address the multi-faceted nature of frontier zones, and their interaction with the wider Roman world. Broadly speaking, there are two major phases of this process. The first saw an increasing emphasis on comparison and connectivity in studies of the anthropological character of frontiers, particularly in the 1980s. As in the wider field of Roman or Classical archaeology, this represented something of a delayed impact of the New Archaeology (cf. Dyson 1993), but the combination of new methods, and thus new data, as well as new theoretical perspectives led to a very worthwhile shift in emphasis. Approaches of this period started to integrate the frontiers more effectively with the development of Roman society as a whole (e.g. Dyson 1988), and to connect them to societies beyond the Roman world, via economic as well as social and political processes (e.g. Cunliffe 1988; Hedeager 1987; Mattingly 1992; Whittaker 1994). More systematic comparative approaches to colonial processes were also employed (e.g. Bartel 1980). Subsequently, the second main wave of development in frontier research, again belatedly mirroring aspects of the post-processual revolution in wider archaeology, has built upon these approaches to place Roman frontier communities, military and otherwise, in something of a sociological context, emphasising the dynamic construction of diverse identities, as evidenced in material culture (e.g. Gardner 2002; Goldsworthy/Haynes 1999; James 1999). In this respect, some of the barriers between military and non-military archaeology have been broken down, and – more importantly for the purposes of this paper – some of the approaches associated with practice theory have been applied.

In my own work on the frontiers of Roman Britain, this tradition has been influential in a couple of major ways. In earlier research, looking at the transformation of military archaeology in the later Roman period, I used structuration theory as the primary lens to interpret changing material patterns as patterns of practices, and thence as dynamic identities (Gardner 2002; 2007a). Britain is a province well-suited to the detailed, contextual analysis required to pursue this kind of study, with its long period of occupation and extensive military presence, particularly in the north and west, but even so there are challenges with using data gathered over a long period of scholarship, as indicated above. Nonetheless, at certain key sites like Birdoswald and York, in the northern frontier zone, I was able to apply a typology of practices to which material patterns can be related, and compare these with a range of other sites to chart the localisation of aspects of military identity in the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Gardner 2007a;

2007b; cf. Lightfoot et al 1998). More recently, I have been looking at material patterning on broader regional scales, and incorporating both emerging material from Ireland and Scotland, and insights from the inter-disciplinary field of border studies, to look at this process of identity transformation as profoundly shaped by bordering practices (Gardner 2017a; 2017b). Border studies, which has obvious relevance to the Roman frontiers and provides something of a counterweight to recent globalisation approaches in Roman archaeology (cf. Boozer 2013; Hingley 2018), is helpful in identifying both border-making and border-crossing practices in the archaeology of the whole of Britain and Ireland in the Roman period (see e.g. Hunter 2007 on Scotland; Cahill Wilson 2014 on Ireland; Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006; Parker et al. 2009; Rumford 2006 for border studies). These sets of practices are both crucial to the transformation of imperial Roman identity and the formation of distinct local identities, which involves not just the military but other communities on either side of the provincial boundaries. Of course, there are numerous other scholars working actively on applying new approaches, including those drawn from practice theory, to varied aspects of the archaeology of Roman Britain (e.g. Birley 2013; Collins 2012; Eckardt 2014; Revell 2009); I have merely discussed my own trajectory here to provide the immediate context for what follows. Having found practice approaches very useful in looking at the local and regional scales of interaction on the Roman frontiers in Britain, I now want to dig a little deeper into the social psychology of how boundaries generate the kinds of transformation I've described briefly here. One of the benefits of a practice approach is precisely its capacity to link different scales of phenomena, and in this paper I aim to explore some of the potential for connecting the kinds of boundaries of wide cultural significance, very much within the usual domain of archaeology, with those perceived in the flow of individual action. For this purpose, one useful branch of the philosophy of practice is the 'worldly phenomenology' of Alfred Schutz.

### **The phenomenology of bordering practices**

The phenomenological tradition is one of the broad currents of thought which, like Marxism, structuralism/post-structuralism, and pragmatism, have influenced the development of practice approaches – albeit sometimes via critique as much as construction. This is not the place to map out the interactions between relevant scholars, as interesting as this exercise might be (cf. Nicolini 2012: 23-43; Rosenthal/Bourgeois 1998; Throop/Murphy 2002), but some brief background to the application of some of these ideas in archaeology is worthwhile. Although archaeologists began delving into the work of Giddens and Bourdieu at the same sort of time as they became interested in Heidegger and Merleau-Ponty, in the post-processual heyday of

the 1980s and early 1990s (e.g. Barrett 1993; Thomas 1996), this was a period of creative experimentation rather than necessarily a strongly coherent programme (cf. Shanks 2008). For this reason, some thinkers who might have been very productively drawn upon, like George Herbert Mead or Erving Goffman, received little attention (Gardner 2012: 149-52; Johnson 2004: 244). This is particularly true for the subject of this section, Alfred Schutz, whose version of phenomenology could arguably have been much more constructively applied in archaeology than the approaches which did find favour. While introducing archaeologists to important concepts to do with experience and perception, there has been a consistent tension in archaeological phenomenology between the universal and the particular, and the individual and the social, which in some ways goes back to Husserl's attempt to bracket off the 'natural attitude' of everyday activities from pure experience (Moran 2016; cf. Brück 2005). One of the distinctive features of Alfred Schutz's approach, by contrast, was to reverse that bracketing (or *epoché*), and focus squarely on everyday social life (Barber 2018; Heiskala 2011: 232-5; Throop/Murphy 2002: 194-5) – much like later generations of practice theorists would also seek to do.

Schutz was born in Vienna and served in the Austrian army in World War I, before becoming a banker after university, which career would sustain him through much of his early philosophical inquiry. This involved engagement with the thought of Weber, Bergson, and Husserl, and culminated in one of his major works, *The Phenomenology of the Social World* (1932 [1967]), but circumstances led to a change in his life's direction in the late 1930s, with the *anschluss* of Austria by Germany compelling his migration to the United States. His banking career continued to be significant in this new context, but he became increasingly involved with teaching at the New School for Social Research in New York, and became chair of the School's philosophy department in the mid-1950s, before his death in 1959 (Barber 2018; Johnson 2008: 137-9; Rogers 2003: 356-7). This later period furthered his engagement with sociology, and American pragmatism, and led, posthumously, to his other major work, co-authored with Thomas Luckmann, *The Structures of the Life-world* (two volumes, 1973; 1983). This would cement his influence on constructivist social theory (especially via Berger/Luckmann 1967), and ethnomethodology, further connecting him to the practice tradition. Capturing the key elements of Schutz's thought is clearly difficult in a short paper such as this, but the most relevant points can be summarised, with the help of a diagram (Fig. 1). In essence, Schutz was concerned with anchoring his phenomenology of the acting self in everyday life within a social, intersubjective world. In addition, therefore, to proposing a model of different kinds of action, some habituated, some more spontaneous or deliberated, he sought

– like his pragmatist influences, William James and George Herbert Mead – to place this in a temporal flow, with reference to past and future (Schutz/Luckmann 1983: 1-98; Barber 2018; Flaherty 2009 225-6; Rogers 2003: 361-67; cf. Barbalet 1997). A key concept in this regard is typifications, whereby past experiences form structures of predictable meaning which allow short-cuts in action. These in turn are influenced not just by the acting subject's experiences, but also the social world, for Schutz regards intersubjectivity as the baseline of human being. With, again, a temporal structure at the foreground, Schutz distinguishes between predecessors, contemporaries and successors, among an actor's more intimate consociates, and the wider world of others, and also emphasises the social 'stock of knowledge' that actors draw upon (Schutz/Luckmann 1973: 59-92, 229-331; Johnson 2008: 145-6; Rogers 2003: 357-61; cf. Jenkins 2014: 142-150). These fundamentally social aspects to his phenomenology offer a rather different perspective to those versions of that approach which have hitherto found favour in archaeology.

One particular theme in this work which I wish to focus on here relates to a common sociological problem to do with the generation of creativity in action, which is particularly a concern within the practice tradition (e.g. Emirbayer/Mische 1998; Joas 1996). Given the emphasis on habit and routine by many theorists of practice, including Schutz, the question of how to avoid determinism of future actions arises. The way the future is imagined, for Schutz, relies on the typifications of the past, but also on some assessment of options as to which experiences are the best guide for the future, and of potential problems (Knoblauch 2014). Again, like pragmatist thinkers such as George Herbert Mead, problematic situations which prompt reappraisal of past experience are important in generating creativity (Mead 1938). In *The Structures of the Life-world, vol. 2*, Schutz and Luckmann discuss the significance of boundaries in enabling transcendences from the everyday, including in relations with others (1983: 99-147). Encountering alternative ways of doing things, across boundaries, breaks the continuum of habit and encourages new practices to be enacted, and can happen at different scales, including in the most mundane everyday activities. This emphasis on liminality as generative of novelty has been pursued in sociological case-studies (e.g. Surak 2017; Zadoroznyj 2009), but in this paper I wish to deploy it to develop a deeper understanding of the archaeology of the Roman frontiers. This is partly because it chimes with recent work on border studies on the central role of boundaries in social transformation, which can be well understood as deriving from their paradoxical nature as places of exclusion and of contact (e.g. Krasteva 2015). It is also, though, because it compels us to think of boundaries at multiple scales, right down to the social constitution of the human actors whose material culture we

study. Importantly, also, this approach addresses not just the more conspicuous moments of liminality that archaeologists have already considered (e.g. Bradley 1990), but those which are embedded in everyday life. The role of frontier zones in generating novel lived experiences will be demonstrated in the example examined in the next section, from late antique western Britain.

### **Structure and innovation in the Irish Sea**

In the archaeology of the Roman frontiers of Britain, attention is most commonly directed to the northern part of what is now England, where Hadrian's Wall marked that frontier quite conspicuously for most of the time between its construction in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD, and the end of the Roman occupation of Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century. This is not only a reflection of the remarkable, and long-studied remains in that region, but also the complex border politics of England and Scotland over many centuries (Hingley 2012). While there is much of relevance to my theme in this paper from that region, given the limitations of space I will instead focus on a different part of the frontiers of Roman Britain, to the west in the Irish Sea. This region is certainly well-known as a frontier, but has been less well-understood, partly because of the limited research into Roman-period material culture in Ireland, a situation which is now being remedied (Cahill Wilson 2014: 18-22). Better studied has been the early medieval development of the Irish Sea as a significant cultural zone, with links to the wider world of late antiquity (e.g. Alcock 1970; Cahill Wilson 2014: 45-50; Johnston 2013: 1-26; Stevenson 1989), and it is into the interface between these two contexts that the following case-study fits. Before discussing the primary material I wish to focus on, the inscribed stones of the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries AD found on both sides of the Irish Sea, a couple of background points can be made. From the Roman perspective, western Britain took some time to conquer militarily, in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century AD; Roman armies were active in what is now Wales from just a few years after the invasion of Britain in AD 43 up until the early 80s. A network of forts were established during this time, anchored on two legionary fortresses at Caerleon, in the south, near Cardiff, and Chester in the north. This garrison was reduced to just a few bases in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, but reinforced in the later 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> century, with a new fort at Cardiff, and several coastal fortlets. Away from the military sites, the settlement pattern did not change greatly through this period, with a small number of towns established, and villas confined mainly to the south-east (see e.g. Burnham/Davies 2010; White 2007). Across the Irish Sea, outside of the Roman province, settlement is unsurprisingly even more of a continuum with the earlier Iron Age, but there are changes during the early centuries AD, with particularly more enclosed sites appearing from



the 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Dowling 2014). Roman material culture is evident in Ireland both in the early and later Roman periods, indicating various contacts across the Irish Sea that might involve trade and military service, among other possibilities (Cahill Wilson 2014; Waddell 2010: 395-401). These contacts are crucial for creating the milieu out of which the inscribed stone tradition developed.

The stone monuments of western Britain and Ireland are not the only early Medieval evidence for the long-term development of a frontier culture in this region – metalwork styles, like penannular brooches, attest to this too (Waddell 2010: 400-1) – but they are among the most conspicuous (Fig. 2). In Wales, there are about 150 of these monuments dating to the 5<sup>th</sup>-7<sup>th</sup> centuries, and they are found largely in the north-east and in the south-west (others are known from south-western, and north-eastern England, and western Scotland). Many are inscribed in Latin, but some are in the Irish script, ogham, and a few are bilingual (Edwards 2001: 15-18; Handley 1998: 339-41; Mytum 1991: 30-35). In Ireland, there are something like 360 ogham-inscribed stones, concentrated particularly in the southern province of Munster, and dating to the same period as those in Wales (O’Sullivan/Downey 2014). The ogham script itself is an important innovation of the frontier zone, consisting of an alphabet of 20 characters, each made up of a combination of horizontal or diagonal lines connected to a vertical stem-line, and thus well-suited to carving on the edge of a stone, or perhaps a wooden object. There is much debate as to the date of the emergence of this script, which bears comparison in its context with later scripts developed in Scandinavia (cf. Cahill Wilson 2014: 29-32), but it is likely to have emerged at least in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, if not earlier, and came to be associated also with Christianity; certainly the Welsh inscribed stones fit into this religious context too (Edwards 2001; Johnston 2013: 9-16; O’Sullivan/Downey 2014; Stevenson 1989). The function of the stones is often most immediately seen to be as burial memorials, with many inscriptions being personal names, but a role in claiming land ownership, or boundary marking, has also been proposed, and there has been considerable recent research into their landscape context, and the importance of their stone materiality in the conveyance of memory (Handley 1998; O’Sullivan/Downey 2014: 28; Williams et al. 2015). This temporal dimension is indeed surely significant given the changes that this region experienced in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries.

In the traditional narrative for this region, in this period, the shadow of the ‘end’ of Roman Britain, and wider ‘decline and fall’ perspectives on the western empire, has been a powerful influence, and raiding across the Irish Sea, followed by migrations – perhaps officially encouraged – have been the main themes in the story. The evidence I have summarised here, alongside other elements such as place-names, and indeed the fortifications

added to the Roman coastal defences in the 4<sup>th</sup> century, supports this in many ways (cf. Mytum 1991: 30-33; Rance 2001). At the same time, though, as also briefly mentioned above, there is a longer-term pattern of contact between Roman Britain and Ireland being revealed in recent research, multiplying the range of types of connection across the Irish Sea (Cahill Wilson 2014). All of this bears comparison with similarly complex evidence for practices of both boundary-making and boundary-crossing on the other frontiers of Roman Britain, and indeed, this complexity is to be expected of frontier regions across the Roman world (Gardner 2017b; Johnston 2013: 11; Miller 1996). While it is not necessary, therefore, to see these developments in a negative light, there are signs that the dynamics of the frontier intensified in the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> centuries, with increased evidence for both conflict and contact, and for change in Irish societies that might also be paralleled in other trans-frontier regions (Newman 1998; cf. Ferguson/Whitehead 2000). In such a context, the everyday lives of people in western Wales and southern Ireland were more likely to experience ruptures to established routines, but the inscribed stones are an example of the creativity that emerges from such situations (cf. Surak 2017). Even at the height of the Roman occupation in Wales, inscriptions were not prolific, confined largely to the military sites of the region, and of course there are no Roman inscriptions in Ireland. In both regions, though, there is a long tradition of monumental stones. The new form of the inscribed memorial or boundary stones of the 5<sup>th</sup> century onwards was a combination, therefore, of tradition and innovation. Schutz's phenomenology of the everyday lifeworld shows us exactly how this comes about at the level of situated actions. Connecting individuals with changing others, and with imagined predecessors, or ancestors, and less certain future successors, these stones materialised the hybridity of the frontier precisely at the time that sources of power were in flux, when new claims had to be made to land, but rooted in tradition. The liminalities of the frontier itself, and the diverse influences it captured, provided the resources for this creativity, even if – indeed perhaps because – these had not been particularly exploited previously. In western Britain and Ireland, as in the wider Roman empire, the frontiers are generative of the transformations of the 4<sup>th</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> centuries (cf. Johnston 2013: 11; Miller 1996; Waddell 2010: 400-1). Schutz's work gives us an insight into the social phenomenology of this process, and to the constant balance between routine and renewal in the practices to which our evidence speaks.

### **Conclusion: a prescription for practice**

The kinds of process I have been describing in western Britain and Ireland exemplify why the frontiers of the Roman empire are of paramount significance to understanding the changes in

the Roman world over time. Elsewhere, I have discussed the implications of this for Roman identity, while in this paper I have emphasised a more regional phenomenon which provided some of the basis for local identities in the early medieval period (cf. Gardner 2017a, 2017b; Miller 1996; Petts 2013). In either way, though, this argument provides both a pathway to uniting the hitherto divided ‘military’ and ‘civilian’ archaeologies of the Roman provinces, mentioned above, and also a potentially significant contribution to the current concerns of border studies. Investigating the complexities of bordering practices over a prolonged time-span is something which archaeology is particularly well-suited to, and we are certainly well-placed to correct some of the naïve understandings of ancient frontier regions that are still found in some of the border studies literature (e.g. Nail 2016: 79-80). At broad scales of interpretation, cases like the Roman empire not only demonstrate the centrality of bordering processes for the constitution of societies (cf. Mezzadra/Neilson 2013; Mignolo/Tlostanova 2006), but offer salutary insights into how this happened even with a superficially highly militarised frontier infrastructure, which in turn highlights the facetiousness of some recent political projects to reinforce physical boundaries.

Perhaps a more important point for the purposes of this volume, though, is that the creation and transformation of these frontier identities was articulated through material practices, and that understanding how these operate should be a vital focus of archaeological endeavour. If, as Giddens posits in *The Constitution of Society* (1984: 356-8), the methods of social science, and of history and archaeology, are indistinguishable, then ‘practices’ provide a concrete methodological tool for archaeologists to work with, focussing upon contextual material patterning (cf. Lightfoot et al. 1998). Such an approach re-vivifies the past not by attributing agency to everything, but by specifying how human agency is co-constituted by structure in the ongoing flow of everyday life. Retaining this analytical distinction is increasingly recognised as important in bearing upon the multiplicity of questions of interest both to archaeologists and to their audiences, while retaining a critical capacity (e.g. Fernández-Götz et al. 2020), but as I hope to have shown in this paper, it does not mean adopting a simplistic or monolithic model of human agency to be operative. Rather, through approaches like that of Alfred Schutz, emphasising the intersubjective constitution of the acting subject, we can explore the diversity of ways of being human across time and space, and some of the crucial processes – like boundary-making and boundary-crossing – which have generated the distinctive, creative qualities of different societies. Far from being an approach stuck in the 1990s, therefore, a practice framework is vital for the needs of archaeology in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

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## Illustrations

Figure 1: Schematic overview of Schutz's key ideas (author's image)

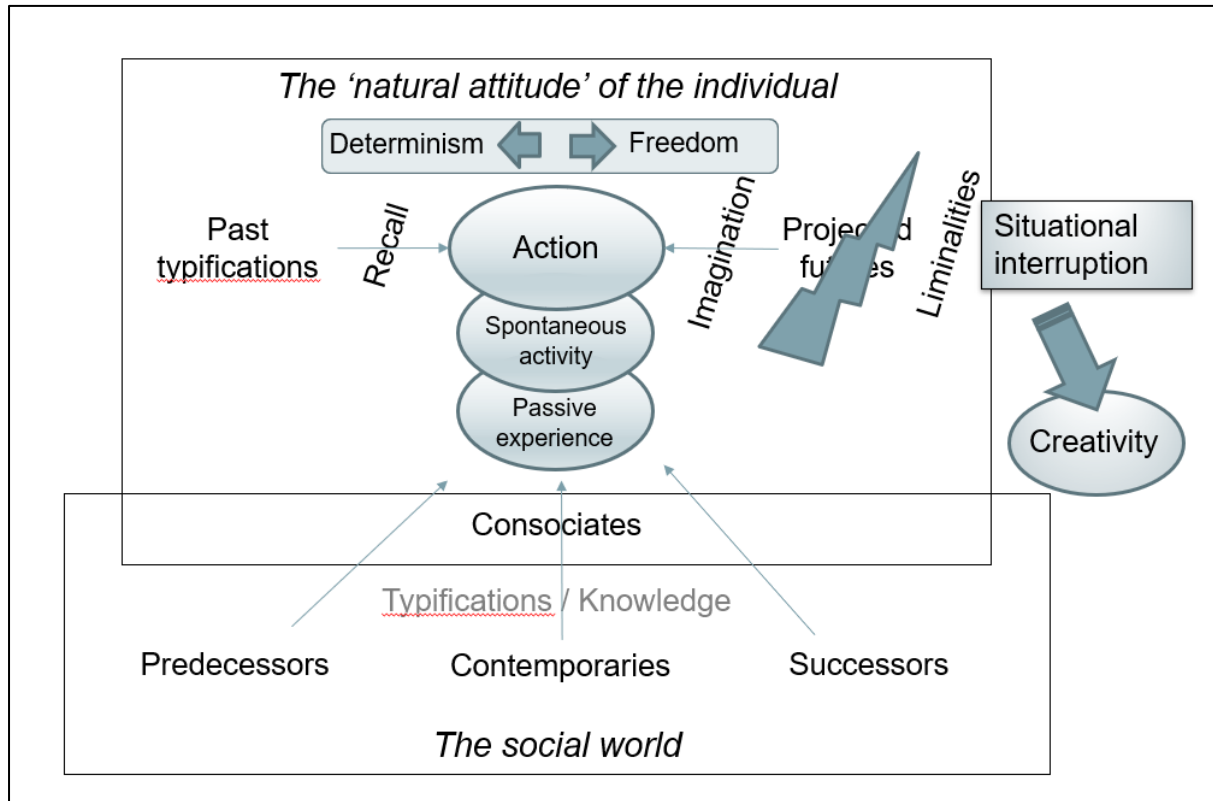


Figure 2: The Bridell stone, Wales, with a 5<sup>th</sup> century ogham inscription on the left side, and a later medieval cross (Photograph: Howard Williams, 2015)

