



Session #177

Digging deeper: archaeology as a tool for social change

Call for papers!

Deadline : 6th february 2025



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Digging deeper: archaeology as a tool for social change

The 2024 European elections reveal a rising influence of far-right parties across Europe. Often characterized as part of a 'new nationalism' wave, these parties claim to represent the 'pure people', call for the restoration of national sovereignty (from supranational institutions) and promote 'national preference' by advocating stricter immigration and citizenship policies (Halikiopoulou & Vlandas, 2019).

In such a political context, and regarding the deep connection between the politics of the past, present uncertainties and expectations for the future, how can archaeologists nurture a critical public sphere or create safe spaces to discuss? Archaeology has traditionally mediated narratives that normalise inequalities and legitimise dominant power structures.

Archaeological knowledge has been mobilized to support populist narratives that promote the idea of a 'golden age' when a culture or nation was purportedly 'pure' and superior. It is also worth noting that such narratives entail the dehumanization of certain social groups, reinforcing prejudices and undermining social cohesion. Archaeologists have also critically evaluated historical contexts and documents, offering non-hegemonic perspectives about the past. For example, what more powerful tool could combat racial or ethnic discrimination than the understanding that, despite our diversity, all humans share the same origin and that, for the past 300,000 years, we have all belonged to the same species? Yet, we struggle to go beyond critiques when it comes to confront reactionary narratives.

In this session, we aim to discuss how archaeological knowledge can be mobilized to challenge populist narratives and support a more informed and inclusive society. We seek contributions focusing on educational projects or community participation and encourage participants to showcase how their research is committed to a society grounded on values of social justice, equality and peace.