



BERN
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#337: The haptic dimension of archaeological objects

Theme: Archaeological theory and methods beyond paradigms

Organisers:

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Content:

The interplay between archaeology, (neuro-)anthropology, ethnology and sociology brought new approaches into focus as for instance what we call the field of implicit knowledge, embodiment of knowledge or what has been more recently discussed as extended mind. As a consequence archaeological objects were given two new levels of consideration: One the one hand things could show us an ongoing or completed process of appropriation of materials and tools by a craftsman, who acts within a knowledge system. On the other hand things reflect the practices of the consumers and thus also the habitualized activities guided by their body knowledge. Therefore our sensual experience with things as a source for relevant information revealed itself.

This session seeks not only to discuss the theoretical background but most of all tries to take the next necessary step – the application in the archaeological routine. Our interpretations of objects are usually (and understandably) generated from drawings, photographs and description but the information pool of the sensory dimension is still neglected. A focused discussion on the process of acquisition in crafts or on the daily usage of things could open another level of consideration, which will enrich our previous interpretations. An intensive exchange with craftspeople helps to understand how things are made within a system of values and well directed experiments may replace the selective use of existing ethnological studies.

Will we recognise which marks of an object are culturally bound and which are an effect of a law of nature expressed during the process of making?

Contributions presenting the cooperation with craftspeople/schools of craft are welcome. Process-based or experimentally/ethnoarchaeologically supported methods and their application to archaeological material will be discussed with their advantages or disadvantages. Also welcome are contributions regarding chances and challenges within the interdisciplinary exchange between the different mentioned sciences and crafts.

Keywords:

embodiment/implicit knowledge, process of appropriation, ethnoarchaeology, extended mind, crafts, knowledge systems