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Join us for the EAA 2021 PaM Discussion session

IMAGINATIONS AND IMAGINARIES OF THE PALAEOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC – DISTORTED VIEWS, EMBELLISHMENT, AND WHAT WE MAKE OF IT (#684)

Present your research/theory in 6 minutes with max. 6 slides and then begin the discussion!

Archaeology, we often claim, studies past humans, their actions, and interrelations. Yet, actually we excavate and describe static material remains of these past humans and their actions – artefacts and features – that we interpret in comparison with other findings and ethnographic analogies as reflections of social norms, behaviours, and choices. Our underlying views and concepts of the past very much shape what we make of the available archaeological information. Because our imaginations of past life weight in so heavily on our interpretations and because the actual evidence is often sparse, poorly dated and highly fragmented, a reflexive approach is important in these periods, yet the sensitivity of these underlying paradigms is better developed and more openly discussed in later prehistoric or historical periods.

In order to make our science more reflective, we aim to discuss in this session the following set of questions (open to expansion):

- How do we get from archaeological remains to people? Do we even get to people or rather to anonymous social formations?
- What concepts and theories are we using? How might received Palaeolithic/Mesolithic cultural taxonomies reflect recent political or other processes that have little to do with prehistoric reality? And do such received vocabularies structure our interpretations?
- Are we in need of more thorough and more critical history of science for the European Palaeolithic and Mesolithic archaeology?
- How to develop and install new concepts across different research practices?
- Is the borrowing of ideas and concepts from other disciplines and discursive contexts still useful and appropriate to answer big and long-standing question? What are the dangers of this practice and how self-determined needs Palaeolithic and Mesolithic research to be?
- Do we need to rethink our relationships to philosophy of science, STS and the emerging field of interdisciplinary science studies?