

Session: #1044

Theme & Session Format

Theme:

1. The Material Record: Current Trends and Future Directions

Session format:

Regular session

Title & Content

Title:

What a Waste! – The Epistemological Value of Refuse and Discarded Materials in the Current Archaeological Research

Content:

Understanding the past through the material remains of human activity has always been a prime pursuit of archaeology. More than architecture, artistic productions, grave goods, caches, or offerings, societies have left behind throughout history a trail of waste: unwanted artefacts and materials that were intentionally (or unintentionally) disposed of. Despite their ontological status of neglected things—or perhaps also because of it—they bear even higher potential as rich repositories of the past.

This session seeks to explore the epistemological value and research insights that waste, in all its forms, can offer to our understanding of human history. Reconstructing the hidden narratives behind refuse, middens, and dumps can redefine our approach to archaeological inquiry and specific aspects, such as: resource consumption, economic practices, social structures, value and identity construction, ecological interactions and more. We encourage papers that promote discussions on theoretical frameworks, case studies and cutting-edge methodologies, which can highlight the significance of the practice of discarding materials and their role in comprehending the complex and meaningful dynamics of human actions. History teaches us that waste generation and accumulation know no bounds, and that its impact on our planet has steadily increased over time. Consequently, we welcome contributions from all geographical regions and periods ranging from early prehistoric societies to ancient and modern urbanizations and the industrial world. The aim is to promote an interdisciplinary discussion among archaeological sciences (e.g., geoarchaeology, zooarchaeology, archaeobotany), ethno- and experimental archaeology, and material culture approaches.

Purpose of this session is to explore the untapped potential concealed within to refuse as we delve into its historical significance and reassess the criteria that determine what qualifies as “valuable” archaeological data.

Do not waste this opportunity!

Keywords:

Waste, Unwanted, Refuse, Leavings, Middens, Value

Session associated with MERC:

no

Session associated with CIfA:

no

Session associated with SAfA:

no

Session associated with CAA:

no

Session associated with DGUF:

no

Session associated with other:

Organisers

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