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- Session proposal for the themes Culture, economy and environments

MESO-NEOLITHIC HUNTER-GATHERER MOBILITY PATTERNS

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Abstract

The mobility patterns of hunter-fisher-gatherers and first farmers/pastoralists are a major focus of interest of this session. Overall, this theme articulates with the study of diet, demography, social organization, interaction networks, technological knowledge transfers, which can provide insights on resource and territory ownership, cultural change process by autonomous development and/or by external acquisitions either through indirect fluxes or contacts.

The great variability of hunter-gatherer life styles, environmental adaptations and integration or rejection of Neolithic innovations can be discussed through mobility patterns perspective. From the “nomadic style” adapted to areas with scattered and lack of reliable resources (Binford, 1980), till semi-sedentary and affluent groups living in high productive environments and practicing food storage, as observed in Center and South Portugal, in the Tagus and Sado estuaries (Soares, 2016), there are in the middle a large scope of organizational possibilities in collector-delayed return societies (Woodburn, 1980).

We assume a special interest on waterway systems of interaction, where mobility by boats and canoes (Isern et al, 2017; Rowley-Conwy and Piper, 2016) would ensure a faster and enlarged access to a huge variety of food, raw materials, contacts. In those ecosystems, fishing, shellfish gathering, seafaring could play important roles. The raw materials exploration strategy is also indicative of the mobility of the first producing communities, evident in several case studies (Gonçalves & Sousa, 2018).

Stable isotope analysis and archaeogenetic studies are powerful tools to answer questions about the mobility strategies and they allow the dismissing of rigid and unidirectional diffusionist models of neolitization. In what concerns Iberian Peninsula there is an uneven distribution of Neolithic immigrants, with a maximum influx in the Northeastern and a strong persistence of hunter-gatherer mtDNA haplogroups in the middle Ebro valley and in the Southwest (Szécsényi-Nagy, 2017; Olalde et al, 2019), supporting the idea of a diverse neolithization process. In those regions genetic data is in accordance with the archaeological

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record that revealed the important protagonism played by Mesolithic hunter-gatherers (Montes and Alday, 2012; Soares and Tavares da Silva, 2018; Soares, Mazzucco, Clemente-Conte, 2016). Although the new advances on neolitization process, further studies, becoming more widely discussed both on scientific archaeology and archaeological sciences (archaeometry) are required to a better knowledge of the Past and a better commitment with our Contemporaneity.

Keywords: Mobility; Waterway systems of interaction; Technological knowledge transfers; Neolitization.

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