



Session: #233 - Present identities from the past: providing a meaning to modern communities

Organisers

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The fundamental relevancy of archaeology has been increasingly questioned in recent years, because the discipline has traditionally been an intellectual investigation into the mysteries of the past, often without a purpose, even one just perceived or imagined. The present time enables us to record and investigate reality in scientific ways impossible just a decade ago, and yet the loss of natural environments and cultural heritage has never been larger. The very concept of culture is threatened by a globalized and homogenizing world that produces uncertainty, fear and dissatisfaction.

This session will bring together papers that focus on past cultures and characterising environments to (re-)discover our roots and cultural individuality, providing a meaning to what we are losing. If we are to halt and reverse this trend towards cultural and environmental destruction, we need to explain why such things matter to us today. Archaeology can provide a long-term perspective of a territory that is detached from specific cultural meanings, bonding people to the land they live in. It can also show cultures and societies in constant flux, adapting and interacting, helping modern societies to find novel identities. And the past offers plenty of lessons on key themes such as technology, environment, etc. Papers able to address the artificial constructs of modern nationalism suggesting novel identities are particularly welcome. Examples of positive lessons or warnings from the past applicable today are sought for. Many local communities need to renegotiate their identities and meanings, archaeology must go beyond commercial exploitation of the heritage.

Keywords:

contemporary identities societies communities environment

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