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Beyond Paradigms

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BREAKING OLD PARADIGMS: THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND ETHNOARCHAEOLOGY OF PASTORALISM IN THE INNER AREAS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

Theme: Interpreting the archaeological record

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Pastoralism is one of the main economic activities for all those communities that, both in the past and today, settled in the Mediterranean basin. This particular mode of production implies the existence of specific ways of managing land resources, settlement patterns, production of material culture and social structures. Despite its economic and social value, however, pastoralism has often been considered as a somehow backward activity in the prehistoric Mediterranean, particularly when compared with the supposedly more advanced societies whose economies were based on the so-called Neolithic package (agriculture, sedentism, etc.). Furthermore, pastoralism is characterised by a high level of mobility and by a large array of immaterial cultural aspects, often making its practice invisible within the archaeological record.

Multi-proxy analyses are recently contributing to re-evaluate the key role of pastoralism in the constitution and development of ancient societies and landscapes. This traditional activity can be also usefully investigated through the use of models and analogies developed within ethnoarchaeology, since its practice is particularly conservative through time. In the session we intend to investigate the different aspects connected with prehistoric pastoralism, focusing on the inner areas of the Mediterranean macro-regions, such as the Iberian and the Italian peninsulas, and of its large islands (e.g. Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica). These areas, showing substantial social, economic and cultural differences from both the coastal and the mountainous environments, are often underrepresented in the current archaeological narrative. We thus welcome papers adopting archaeological and ethnoarchaeological perspectives and contributing, though not exclusively, to the following themes:

- bioarchaeological, geophysical and archaeometric analyses
- production/consumption of material culture
- domestic, productive and funerary architectures
- economic modes of production (weaving, dairy, transhumance, etc.)
- spatial and GIS analyses, communication routes, settlement and mobility patterns
- immaterial aspects of pastoralist societies
- social complexity of pastoralism