

En Mouvement / In Bewegung / On The Move.
Mobilités des hommes, des objets et des idées entre le dernier maximum glaciaire et le début de l'Holocène

Joint meeting of the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft and the Société Préhistorique Française
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The Société Préhistorique Française and the Hugo Obermaier-Gesellschaft, associated since 2012, gladly announce a joint conference in spring 2019 in Strasbourg, a prominent interface of the Franco-German friendship. The topic of the conference will be the evolution of networks in Europe evidenced by the movements of people, objects and ideas from the Last Glacial Maximum to the early Holocene. The analysis of networks is inevitably also an analysis of where these networks end. Networks of prehistoric people can be inferred from different sources, such as lithic raw materials, mollusk shells, or distinct concepts of depiction and decoration. The diverse archaeological record of the Late Upper Paleolithic and Mesolithic period allows to highlight relations at different spatial scales and to discuss their significance with regard to three topics, namely 1. territoriality, 2. social networks and 3. colonization dynamics. In doing so, this meeting aims at launching a comprehensive discussion on these topics between prehistorians otherwise conducting their research in different geographical, chrono-cultural and environmental contexts.

The meeting will be held over a day and a half and is divided into 3 sessions, dedicated to each of the three topics.

1. Boundaries and margins – territorial aspects of the archaeological record

Distribution patterns in the archaeological record regularly evoke the impression of boundaries. While boundaries certainly were a part of prehistoric reality, the observation of boundaries can also be the result of biases introduced by taphonomic processes or research intensity. Therefore, it is necessary to make explicit the way these boundaries are inferred and to support the results with complementing data. In order for a boundary to be indicative of a network border, it should be observable in more than one object category and/or match geographical or other environmental features. Network borders may also be indicative of territorial borders. Territorial areas in hunter-gatherer societies are usually related to a regional and thus medium spatial scale. Ethnographic observations suggest that the territorial boundary structure of hunter-gatherers should differ in relation to the availability of resources, predicting mutually exclusive territories for the Late Glacial period and overlapping territories for the Holocene. In a synchronous perspective, this session shall provoke discussions on the reliability of the observed boundaries and their implication for possible network and territory structures. In a diachronic perspective, the question of change in territorial behavior from the LGM to the Holocene shall be addressed.

2. Social networks – Intra- and inter-territorial relations

While boundaries in the archaeological record are directly observable by breaks in transport and distribution patterns, further inferences of social networks always involve abstraction from the observations. Here, the distribution of concepts as recorded in the shape of artefacts are thought to be indicative of an exchange of ideas and hence communication. Social networks can be observed on regional as well as on large spatial scales. With regard to the latter, they become apparent in objects which regularly show remarkably long transportation distances, such as mollusk shells, but also in artistic concepts. The thus-resulting patterns often cross other regional boundaries observable in raw material transport patterns or gaps in site distribution. They thus provide a source of information

complementary to the regional-scale signals. As such, they allow for reflection on the notion of cultural globalization and on the relevance of long-distance comparisons.

3. (Re-) Colonization processes – timing and conduct

The period between the LGM and the early Holocene is characterized by a number of colonization processes of Europe which is driven by the retreat of the northern glaciers and an unprecedented population growth. Understanding the timing and conduct of these processes is vital for an understanding of the cultural and social development as a whole. Besides archaeological studies, analysis of aDNA can make valuable contributions to the reconstruction of these processes. The genetic findings should always be compared with the archaeological observations of boundaries and long-distance communication. Potential contradictions between these two independent sources of knowledge need to be discussed and resolved.

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