

29 - 31 October 2026
University of Innsbruck, Austria

Venue: Aula of the University of Innsbruck | Innrain 52 | 6020 Innsbruck | 1st floor

Program & Abstracts



hosted by
CHAT – Contemporary and
Historical Archaeology in
Theory Group

and
Historical Archaeology
Research Group / Department for
Archaeologies, University of Inns-
bruck

Conference Website:
<https://hopechat.chat-arch.org/>

CHAT|HOPE

In times of permanent crisis – political, ecological, social, economic and existential – it is urgent to talk seriously about the idea of hope. Whether we believe the “doomsday clock” is at 89 seconds to midnight or already five minutes past, the monumental path of destruction ahead appears overwhelming. It is easy to feel lost – yet, hope persists, rooted in past and current successes that envision genuine alternatives, both in defiance and care.

- What forms can hope take when the future feels so profoundly threatened and at stake?
- How can hope be nurtured, sustained, materialised, or eroded?
- And how can archaeology, with its capacity to trace the past and recover what was thought lost, help us find and strengthen hope in order to contribute to the fight for an alternative future?

Recovering the future buried in the rubble requires more than countering despair with naive optimism or lamenting the excesses of capitalism. Hope can be used as a framework for imagining and presencing alternative futures—such visions have always existed, hidden in the dark and the cracks of dominant systems, around the globe and across the recent centuries. Pre-figurative politics have created their own alternatives: environmentalist, feminist, and peace movements; peasant, labour, or unemployed protests; anti-deportation, indigenous and abolition activisms; utopian and communal settlements; and many other examples. These struggles, echoing our call for dignity, have left material traces in an archaeological record that reflects wild possibilities. By foregrounding such sites and the past aspirations they represent, hope can be an anchor and inspiration when embarking on new paths. Let us explore the radical heritage of hope at this year’s CHAT.

The 2026 conference takes place in Innsbruck, a city nestled among alpine peaks and valleys—a landscape that has historically demanded human endurance, adaptation, and imaginative solutions. The contributions explore how hope operates as a material, political, and affective force in the past and present; how hope shapes/enriches struggles of people’s lives; and how it becomes tangible in residues, material structures and spaces, objects of resistance, and in acts of care for our planet and society.

Presentations concern archaeological case studies, theoretical reflections, and creative formats that trace the material and emotional geographies of hope in sites such as: peace, disarmament and anti-nuclear protests, anti-deportation and abolition activisms, environmental action, utopian and communal settlements, workers’ and unemployed movements, queer and crip activism, indigenous empowerment, resistance in contexts of mass violence, youth camps, or countless other contexts where people envisioned alternative worlds:

Key themes and questions are:

- Radical and collective hope: hope as faith in the possibility of change and an open future, grounded in the memory of past struggles and the persistence of solidarity.
- Messianic hope: salvation deferred or redemption expected, echoing through religious, utopian, and millenarian movements.
- Passive-escapist and crushing hope: quiet endurance, naive optimism, or reactionary forms of hoping, top-down strategies for making hope impossible, and their entanglements with despair, passivity and capital.

How can we recognise, document, and interpret hope archaeologically?

- Objects, sites, and landscapes as bearers and heritage of hope.
- Hope amidst destruction: finding and sustaining hope when homes, communities, and memories are shattered by war, displacement, or ecological collapse.
- Hope beyond crisis: investigating hope through the tangible traces of everyday acts of care, maintenance and communising.

What hope do we envision for the future of Contemporary Archaeology itself?

- How will archaeology endure and evolve amidst growing authoritarian regimes, funding cuts, and nationalist attempts to (re)appropriate heritage?
- Can archaeology, as practice, method, and ethics, help us cultivate radical hope amid despair?

DAY 1
29 October 2026

09.00–09.15	CHAT Opening and Welcome of Participants	Barbara Hausmair, Attila Dézsi Schlingmann and Stefanie Heim (Organizers)
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Session 1	Hope Within Total Institutions	
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09.15–09.35	Hope in Captivity	Claudia Theune University of Vienna, Austria
09.35–09.55	Gardens of Hope: Archaeological Excavation and Restoration at a World War II Japanese American Confinement Site	Jeff Burton National Park Service, Manzanar National Historic Site
09.55–10.15	Numbering in Nazi Concentration Camps as a Material Practice: Control and Hope in an Archaeological Perspective	Tommy Theine, Barbara Hausmair & TAGS-Team University of Innsbruck, Austria
10.15–10.30	Discussion	
10.30–11.00	~ Coffee Break ~	

Session 2	Hope During and After War	
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11.00–11.20	Götterdämmerung 1945: Survival Strategies of German Archaeologists and Historians in the Czech Lands at the End of the War and the Beginning of Peace	Jan Hasil Institute of Archaeology of the CAS, Prague
11.20–11.40	Hope in the Liberated Pilsen 1945: Archaeology of the 109th Evacuation Hospital	Pavel Vařeka ¹ , James Symonds ² , Tomáš Pancíř ¹ , Roman Křivánek ¹ , Petr Netolický ¹ & Zdeňka Vařeková ¹ ¹ University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic, ² University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
11.40–12.00	The Heritage of Hope in a North American Small Town During the Cold War	William Caraher & Susan Caraher University of North Dakota & Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission, USA
12.00–12.15	Discussion	
12.15–13.45	~ Lunch Break ~	

Session 3	Urban Communities and Hope	
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13.45–14.05	Futures in Ruins, or the Multigenerational Project(s) of Imagining Worlds in Rubble (Film)	Patricia G. Markert University of Western Ontario, USA
14.05–14.25	Hope as Method: Materialising Hope During the PhD	Brodhie M. I. Molloy University of Leicester, United Kingdom
14.25–14.45	Can Domestic Material Culture Be a Symbol of Hope Against Coloniality? Reflections from Lima, Peru	Aldo Accinelli Obando University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands
14.45–15.00	Discussion	
15.00–15.30	~ Coffee Break ~	

Session 4	Jouyful Hope	
15.30–15.50	Peace, Love, and What Was Left Over: Hints on Counterculture from a 1980s Waste Assemblage from Schloss Trautson (Tyrol, Austria)?	Elisabeth Waldhart University of Innsbruck, Austria
15.50–16.10	Rural Dance Venues in 20th-Century Finland – Archaeology of Encounters in a Dwindling Countryside	Aleksi Kelloniemi University of Oulu, Finland
16.10–16.30	The Ski Village: A Materiality of Hope at Sheffield’s Most Flammable Attraction	Rebecca Hearne Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom
16.30–16.45	Hope springs.... We swim	Sefryn Penrose & Angela Piccini Bureau for the Contemporary & Historic (ButCH), United Kingdom
16.45–17.00	Discussion	
17.00–18.00	~ Break ~	
Session 5	Posters & Installations	
18.00–19.00	Embodied (is)land Narratives for Making-Kin	Susan Pearson University of the Highlands and Islands, Orkney
	The Paper Project: Community Building Through Upcycling	Natalia Sawicka University of Wrocław, Poland
	Unboxing the Collection: Repurposing Dormant Archives as Creative Teaching and Learning Tools	Laura Thompson University of Manchester, United Kingdom
	Flags Is It? Signalling Hope	Lara Band Historic England, United Kingdom
	What Would the Holy Ten Say? Modern Transformations of a Small Cretan Village	Anna Bertelli Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
	Long-Term Genealogies of Solidarity: Women, Memory, and Materiality in the Upper Ribeira Valley (São Paulo, Brazil)	Marianne Sallum, Marina Gomes, Lúcia Aparecida, Francisco S. Noelli, Wendel Dalitesi Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil
	Resistance and Hope: Exploring the Influence of Greek Antifascist Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War	Jaime Almansa-Sánchez, Ali Zahid, Faidon Moudopoulos-Athanasίου, Pablo Gutiérrez de León Juberías, Alejandra Galmés, Nota Pantzou & Anna Rosenberg Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain
	Paenitentiam agere: A Prison for Serious Offenders in Stuttgart (1851-1901)	Lennart Schmarsli University of Tübingen, Germany
	Resisting Hostile Border Policies in the Southern North Sea: Towards a Creative Public Archaeology of Clandestine Channel Crossings	Adam Swennen Independent Researcher, Belgium
	Hope Against Erasure: Memory and Science in the ‘Lexicon of Katyn Archaeology’ Project	Olgierd Ławrynowicz, Aleksandra Krupa-Ławrynowicz & Sebastian Latocha University of Lodz, Poland

19.00–21.00 CHAT & UIBK Evening Reception with fingerfood, drinks and music by Ulrike Töchterle, Sigrid Bruckner-Juen, Rebecca Hearne and Attila Dézsi Schlingmann

Late night Pub Time at [Zappa Music Bar](#)

DAY 2 30 October 2026

Session 6 **Messianic Hope**

09.00–09.20	Maria Spes Mea – Hope and Divine Assistance on Medieval Swords from the Tyrolean Region (12th–15th Century)	Florian Messner University of Innsbruck, Austria
09.20–09.40	Charnel Houses Between Pragmatism and the Hope for Physical Resurrection on the Day of Judgement	Stefanie Heim University of Innsbruck, Austria
09.40–10.00	Aching Societies, Radical Hope, and the Roots of the Capitalocene in Oceania: The Late 17th-Century Colonisation of the Mariana Islands	Matilde Carbajo Pompeu Fabra University, Spain
10.00–10.15	Discussion	
10.15–10.45	~ Coffee Break ~	

Session 7 **Displacement and Hope**

10.45–11.05	Archaeology and the Restoration of Dignity: The Case of the Italians of Patras	Nota Pantzou ¹ & Francesca Plateroti ² ¹ University of Patras, Greece, ² Independent Researcher, Italy
11.05–11.25	Hope Documented: Traces of Refugees on Lampedusa	Geesche Wilts Carl-Albrechts-Universität Kiel, Germany
11.25–11.45	Unexpected Hope in Greece's Borderlands: Reinterpreting Material Traces of Undocumented Migration	Johannes Jungfleisch Ruhr University Bochum, Germany
11.45–12.05	N.N.	Anonymous
12.05–12.20	Discussion	
12.20–14.00	~ Lunch Break ~	

Session 8 **Environmental Hope 1/2**

14.00–14.20	Between Rubble and Rajya: Archaeology of Infrastructure and Resistance in Ayodhya, India	Laaraib Ghazi University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA
14.20–14.40	Enduring Ephemera: Material Repetition as Resistance to US Nuclear Policy	Ella Goulding University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA
14.40–15.00	A Hope and a Host Rock	Alexander Kolibaba Université de Fribourg, Switzerland
15.00–15.15	Discussion	
15.15–15.45	~ Coffee Break ~	

Session 9 Environmental Hope 2/2		
15.45–16.05	Radical Starch	Claartje Rasterhoff & Christian Ernten Maastricht University, The Netherlands
16.05–16.25	Hope in a Landscape of Extraction and Coercion: The Guaneras of Mejillones, Northern Chile	Catalina Soto Rodríguez ¹ , Alejandra Didier Pérez ¹ & Wilfredo Santoro Cerda ² ¹ Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, Chile, ² Consejo Patrimonial de Mejillones, Chile
16.25–16.45	The Transition to Renewable Energy: A New Hope or the Same Old Story?	Dan Lee ¹ , Mark Jenkins ² , Antonia Thomas ¹ , Anne Bevan ¹ , David Atkinson ³ & Jen Harland ¹ ¹ University of the Highlands and Islands, ² Independent Researcher, ³ University of Hull, United Kingdom
16.45–17.00	Discussion	
17.00–18.00	~ Break ~	
Session 10 Movies		
18.00–19.00	Movie: What's Left Lasting: People, Process and Time at the Ness of Brodgar Venue: Ágnes-Heller-Haus, 1st floor seminar room 12	Lucy Carr-McClave Independent Researcher, United Kingdom
18.00–19.00	Movie: Geography of an Archive Venue: Ágnes-Heller-Haus, 1st floor seminar room 13	Nicole Khayat ¹ & Vesna Lukic ² ¹ Middlesex University, ² Independent Scholar, United Kingdom
DAY 3 31 October 2026		
Session 11 Queering Hope		
09.00–09.20	Excavation Futures: Hope, Trans-Temporality, and Speculative Archaeologies of a 21st-Century Trans+ Community Centre	Owen Hurcum ¹ & Helmut De Nardi ² ¹ University of York, ² Trans+ Learning Lab CIC, United Kingdom
09.20–09.40	Hoping for the Future, Materializing Other Pasts	Sandra Montón-Subías, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Spain
09.40–10.00	Who Tells Your Story? Diversifying Narratives of the Past Through Storytelling as an Archaeological Method	Hanna Steyne University of Manchester, United Kingdom
10.00–10.15	Discussion	
10.15–10.45	~ Coffee Break ~	
Session 12 Hope and Town Transformations		
10.45–11.05	Hope! The Core of Contemporary Archaeology	Jobbe Wijnen Independent Researcher, The Netherlands
11.05–11.25	The Old Ghosts of NewTown: Can Neoliberal Development be Hope? For Whom? A Case Study in Kolkata, India	Anena Majumdar University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

11.25–11.45	“The Hope of the Indigenous Is Absolutely Revolutionary”: Approaching Pluriversal Politics and Development Failures in the Andes	Francesco Orlandi University of Macerata and University of Exeter, United Kingdom
11.45–12.00	Discussion	
12.00–13.30	~ Lunch Break ~	
13.30–14.30	Roundtable: Is There Hope for Contemporary Archaeology?	Laura McAtackney ¹ , Sarah May ² , Susan Pollock, Caroline Jauss ⁴ , Thomas Meier ⁵ & Andreas Pantazatos ⁶ , moderated by Attila Dézsi Schlingmann ⁷ ¹ University College Cork, Ireland, ² Bureau for the Contemporary Historic (ButCH), United Kingdom, ³ Freie Universität Berlin, Germany, ⁴ Independent Researcher, Germany, ⁵ University of Heidelberg, Germany, ⁶ University of Cambridge, United Kingdom, ⁷ University of Tübingen, Germany
14.30–15.00	General Discussion and Goodbyes	
15.00–15.30	~ END OF CONFERENCE except for workshop participants ~	
15.30–17.00	Seeing the Wild Possibilities of Domestic and Captive Animals: A Workshop Activity (workshop for registered participants only) Venue: Ágnes-Heller-Haus, 1st floor seminar room 12	April M. Beisaw & Konstantina Saliari, Vassar College, USA & Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria
17.00–18.00	Meeting of the CHAT Standing Committee (open to everyone interested) Venue: Ágnes-Heller-Haus, 1st floor seminar room 13	

Abstracts

Aldo Accinelli Obando

University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Can Domestic Material Culture Be a Symbol of Hope Against Coloniality? Reflections from Lima, Peru

Lima is a city that was founded in 1535 to be the continental centre of the Spanish colonial enterprise in South America. Although throughout time there have been a lot of different urban developments and architectural styles, almost all of them portrayed a Westernized identity. The only one that did not only last for a few years in the first decades of the twentieth century. Such a Westernized identity remains ever present in the city of ten million people, especially in the most iconic architecture, whether public or domestic. In this presentation, after explaining the general process of material culture in the city, focusing on the domestic, I introduce a few examples of architecture that cut with the dominant styles and make conscious connections with ancient ones. These examples are used to reflect on how contemporary material culture can be a symbol of hope to break away with the colonial matrix of power. I base my reflection on the concept *ch'ixi* by Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui, which is a different way of recognizing the mixed heritage in the Andes that does not privilege the Western heritage over the local one, the way *mestizaje* has done. Hopefully this reflection helps other archaeologists see that contemporary material culture can be the manifestation of centuries of struggle in processes that are still on-going.

Jaime Almansa-Sánchez, Ali Zahid, Faidon Moudopoulos-Athanasίου,
Pablo Gutiérrez de León Juberías, Alejandra Galmés, Nota Pantzou & Anna Rosenberg

CRETUS, Universidade de Santiago de Compostela, Spain

Resistance and Hope. Exploring the Influence of Greek Antifascist Volunteers in the Spanish Civil War

After the military coup against the Spanish Republic in July 1936, thousands of volunteers from all around the world joined the loyalist forces to fight against the fascist uprising. These were mostly socialists, communists and anarchists, some already exiled from other fascist regimes, others in solidarity, numbers raised as war advanced. By October that same year, the International Brigades were created, bringing together and organizing most foreign volunteers.

Numbers are vague, but around 400 Greek volunteers participated in the war on the side of the loyalists. While the Metaxas regime of the 4th of July officially forbid the participation of Greeks in the Spanish conflict and did not permit exiting from the country, many sidestepped this prohibition and went to Spain anyway. The Greek diaspora, especially that of the US, was amongst the first to respond to the international call of antifascist solidarity and enlist in large numbers to the International Brigades. Many were killed during the war. Those who survived participated in the Resistance movements in Greece and elsewhere, fighting the rise of Nazi Germany and taking part in the Second World War, as well as the subsequent Civil War in Greece, keeping up the antifascist struggle for decades.

Interestingly, this seemingly unknown participation had a strong influence in Greek literature and the arts, shedding light to personal and collective experiences of the Spanish Civil War and what it meant to share antifascist sentiment across the world.

Since 2025, a new project aims at recovering the memories and materialities of these Greek volunteers, bringing to light their impact in the diffusion of antifascist values and hope across borders. In uncertain times, when fascist ideas are returning to the political arena in many countries, researching an example of commitment to democratic values, solidarity and hope is important. This presentation will show the main lines of work of the project and the first steps taken in a venture that combines contemporary archaeology, history and archives, geography, literature studies and more, to address from a transversal perspective a crucial episode of contemporary European and World History.

Lara Band

Historic England, United Kingdom

Flags Is It? Signalling Hope

From summer 2025 England a wave of George Crosses and Union flags attached to lamp posts appeared across the country in a disturbing, confrontational and semi-organized display right-wing and anti-migrant sentiment, using national(istic) symbols to further define borders and transform public space into zones of intimidation and exclusion.

Inspired by an RNLI* tea towel and the 'Flags is it? counter protest where an unknown actor strung international flags across a road bridge in Pontllanfraith, Wales, I began using fabric scraps and vegetable dyes to make my own signaling flags, based on *The International Code of Signals For the Use of All Nations (1902)*, a maritime system designed to overcome linguistic difference and ensure safety at sea.

My series reclaims flag language as a call for solidarity rather than division with the current work spelling O M Z for *Harbour of Refuge* and I N for *Let us keep together (in company) for mutual support (and protection)*. Whether installed in a window or carried on marches these flags function as counter-infrastructure: hand-made, they challenge the (contradictory) hostile marking of territory with mass manufactured product.

Flags is it? explores how material practice and historical codes can be reactivated to signal solidarity beyond borders. By shifting emphasis from flags as signals of boundaries, to flags as signals of mutual aid, the work proposes an alternative symbolic commons, grounded in collective protection and care.

*Royal National Lifeboat Institution, the UK charity for saving lives at sea.

April M. Beisaw¹ & Konstantina Saliari²

¹Vassar College, USA, ²Naturhistorisches Museum Wien, Austria

Seeing the Wild Possibilities of Domestic and Captive Animals: A Workshop Activity (workshop for max. 20 people)

The archaeology of Austria provides many opportunities to recollect the ways in which people and animals have coadapted to climatic and political changes over thousands of years. Receding glaciers allowed for agricultural development including the influx and crossbreeding of animals that became domestic cattle and pigs. Industrial mining created a need for standardization in the lives and deaths of pigs that followed new ideas of value and efficiency. Although the native aurochs were replaced with domestic cattle, wild boars continued to live on the edges of Austrian communities and in captivity with other wild species, like the brown bear. Wild bears have also adapted to both climate change and habitat loss. The mandible of a Neolithic bear is much larger than one from the twentieth century, reflecting a reduction in overall body size. Wild animals that are kept close to humans in zoos and other captive situations often have skeletal evidence of that captivity. Zooarchaeology, the study of animal bones from the past, can remind us that biological change does not have to be seen as a looming disaster or extinction. Change can be adaptive and managed with care for the present and future. In this workshop, zooarchaeologists will use drawings, photographs, and 3D models to teach participants about the osteological changes that characterize past and present species adaptations. After the 45 minute hands-on activity, participants will discuss long term environmental and biological change as providing possibilities for a better future.

Anna Bertelli

Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

What Would the Holy Ten Say? Modern Transformations of a Small Cretan Village

At the centre of my research stands the ancient city of Gortyn on Crete — one of the most important cities of the island in classical antiquity. Gortyn was the cult place of the heroine Europa, who was brought to Crete by Zeus in the form of a bull; it was the findspot of the longest surviving European legal code and later the capital of the Roman province of Crete and Cyrenaica.

Yet this illustrious past contrasts sharply with the present situation of Agioi Deka (“Holy Ten”), the modern village situated on the site of ancient Gortyn. Far from Crete’s major tourist attractions — the rocky coves, sandy beaches, dramatic gorges, and especially the renowned Minoan palace sites of Knossos and Phaistos — Agioi Deka appears on tourist maps merely as a transit point between Heraklion in the north and the southern coast. The absence of a monumental “Minoan” narrative, so central to Crete’s global image, affects the village not only economically but also psychologically. Young people leave, an ageing population remains, and a subtle sense of marginalization shapes local perceptions of the future.

Engagement with the present-day community further reveals ongoing processes of transformation: a new main road bypasses the centre; the recently opened archaeological museum remains detached from daily life; excavations proceed at a slow pace; traditional houses are being converted into luxury accommodations; migrant agricultural labourers reshape demographic realities. These developments raise questions regarding social cohesion, cultural identity and the sustainability of local heritage in face of change.

This paper asks whether archaeology might act as a bridge between past and present. Could a participatory approach — actively involving residents in research design, excavation, and interpretation — strengthen local connections to heritage and foster new forms of collective hope? In this context, archaeology becomes not only a practice of uncovering what once was, but a medium for reflection, dialogue, and potential future-making in Agioi Deka today.

Jeff Burton

National Park Service, Manzanar National Historic Site, USA

Gardens of Hope: Archaeological Excavation and Restoration at a World War II Japanese American Confinement Site

During World War II, the United States forcibly incarcerated over 120,000 individuals of Japanese ancestry, both American citizens and long-term immigrants, solely on the basis of ethnicity. This mass confinement occurred without due process, evidence, or legal justification, and the majority were detained in ten remote camps under austere conditions. Families were housed in poorly constructed barracks enclosed by barbed wire and guard towers, while communal mess halls and latrines disrupted domestic life and eroded cultural traditions.

Despite these hardships, internees engaged in acts of cultural resilience, creating Japanese gardens and sustaining traditional practices as expressions of identity and hope. These efforts constituted a profound form of resistance to systemic oppression. Decades later, the U.S. government formally acknowledged that this policy was driven by wartime hysteria, racial prejudice, and failures of leadership. Several former incarceration sites, including Manzanar, have since been designated as National Historic Sites under the stewardship of the National Park Service (NPS).

Contemporary collaborations between NPS and descendant communities have focused on excavating and interpreting Manzanar's Japanese gardens as material evidence of cultural persistence and resistance. Historically, these gardens symbolized endurance, pride, and hope for a better future. Today, these gardens serve as focal points for public archaeology and collective memory, underscoring the critical role that hope and resilience can play in the face of injustice.

William Caraher & Susan Caraher

University of North Dakota & Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission, USA

The Heritage of Hope in a North American Small Town during the Cold War

The Cold War represented a time of great contradictions in American life. On the one hand, the period saw a sense of existential dread remembered through „duck and cover“ drills in schools, the annual setting of the „doomsday clock,“ and the global reverberations of Korea, Vietnam, and numerous proxy „hot“ wars supported. On the other hand, the post-World War II period offered prospects for hope in the proliferation of consumer culture, advances in technology, expanded educational opportunities, and the expansion of civil rights to women, minorities, and other marginalized groups.

While today it is clear some of this hope was illusory, this hopefulness nevertheless transformed communities across the United States. Over the past decade, the Grand Forks Historic Preservation Commission has focused on documenting the Cold War landscape of Grand Forks, North Dakota. Grand Forks stands some 75 miles south of the Canadian border and is the county seat of rural Grand Forks County, North Dakota. Despite its relatively remote location and small size (<60,000 residents), it hosts a state university, a large hospital, a US Air Force base, a major rail yard, and one of the largest grain mills in the U.S. Our work sets these features against the post-war introduction of suburban-style housing to the small town street grid, the construction of new schools consistent with post-war educational priorities, and the development of shopping centers (including the earliest indoor mall in North Dakota), as well as new religious and civic infrastructure.

These studies excavate the tension between the hopeful landscape of a mid-century American small town and the ephemerality of this heritage when confronted with the realities of everyday life, conflicting attitudes toward post-war optimism, and the tainted anxieties of Cold War nostalgia.

Matilde Carbajo

Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

Aching Societies, Radical Hope, and the Roots of the Capitalocene in Oceania: The Late 17th-Century Colonization of the Mariana Islands

Historical archaeology, which studies the processes that cemented the structures of the present-day world, is uniquely positioned to trace the historical trajectories of the Capitalocene (sensu Moore 2015). This paper explores its onset in Oceania, focusing on the late 17th-century colonization of the Mariana Islands (Micronesia) which came in the form of a Spanish-Catholic mission led by the Jesuits, and was driven by what may be called a ‘colonial narrative of hope and healing’ centred around spiritual salvation. This discourse masked the violent imposition of a new labor regime, and patriarchal and capitalist structures designed to prevent solidarity and suppress opposition to colonial rule upon Indigenous peoples. This paper, building on scholarship like Lear’s (2006), departs from the premise that hope is directly linked to the capacity to embrace hopefulness, and that individual and collective health and

wellbeing are necessary conditions for sustaining hope. I explore how colonizers sought to dismantle the social cohesion necessary for hope. What immediate physical and mental health outcomes did this produce? And how can historical archaeologists locate the radical hope of pre-/a-/non-capitalist societies within colonial contexts? Colonial archival records of the Marianas mission (mainly missionary handwritten accounts) and material evidence are used to analyze the transition from pre-colonial society to what may be described as an 'aching' one that, despite violent colonization, never lost hope. The paper foregrounds the potential of historical archaeology to expose the origins of the structures underpinning the Capitalocene and the strategies through which they were imposed, and to bypass the foreclosing colonial historical narratives put forward by the colonizers themselves. These findings demonstrate that alternative social schemes can endure even under conditions of extreme violence, serving as an anchor for radical hope and offering inspiration for contemporary struggles for transformation and communal wellbeing.

Lucy Carr-McClave

Independent Researcher, United Kingdom

What's Left Lasting: People, Process and Time at the Ness of Brodgar (film 52 min)

'What's Left Lasting' is a documentary based around the final season of digging at the Ness of Brodgar in Orkney. All about people working on site and their relationships with archaeological practice and place among the Neolithic remains. Reflecting as they approach the backfilling of the site after 20 years of seasonal digging. The film explores contemporary archaeological work as part of a sites story and the 'hope' of what comes next once the ritual of digging is complete. The personal stories with the practice.

Laaraib Ghazi

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

Between Rubble and Rajya: Archaeology of Infrastructure and Resistance in Ayodhya, India

Revival of the Hindu past to create a *Hindu Rashtra* (Hindu Nation) or *Ram Rajya* (Ram's Kingdom) has been a major goal for the current ruling party in India, the Bhartiya Janta Party (BJP). After the 2019 *Babri Masjid- Ram Janmbhoomi* judgement allowed for the construction of the Ram temple at the same site of demolished Babri mosque in favor of the Hindu majority, Ayodhya became the hotspot of materializing this imagination of the *Hindu Rashtra* through massive infrastructure redevelopment and tourism. As a result in 2023, over 40,000 people were displaced and over 4000 homes and shops were razed to rubble to make way for road-widening projects. In this paper, I ask: What are the acts of resistance in the face of grand infrastructural projects that disrupt the imagination of a homogenizing landscapes of the Hindu city? In the 2024 Lok Sabha election, the BJP lost its seat in Ayodhya not because people disowned the imagination of *Hindu Rashtra*, but because their material realities (homes, shops etc.) were razed to ground as a consequence of their own desire for the Ram Temple.

I aim to explore hope when conflating aspirations - desire for Ram Temple and dignified livelihood - are pitted against each other. I explore the material practices of resistance which are performed in everyday life by acts of vandalism and creation of third spaces such as tea and food stalls along the two widened roads- Ram Path and Ayodhya-Lucknow Road. Through a systemic mapping of widened roads using GIS and google street view imagery, I document how a homogenous landscape of control is constructed through architecture, building by-laws and Hindutva imagery in Ayodhya. I argue that controlled landscapes are disrupted and resisted through everyday practices of reclaiming administrative and public spaces.

Ella Goulding

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

Enduring Ephemera: Material Repetition as Resistance to U.S. Nuclear Policy

Oak Ridge, Tennessee represents a complex nuclear landscape created to support the ongoing national security and energy goals of the United States. Dominated by fenced off laboratory spaces and growing infrastructures related to atomic tourism, the built environment of Oak Ridge reflects its past and current role as a center for nuclear weapons and nuclear energy research. Due to this direct association with federal bodies, opportunities to reshape the landscape for alternative purposes are relatively few.

This presentation will thus address the following question: How can resistance to nuclear policy in Oak Ridge be archaeologically examined when said resistance leaves very little material trace? While many scholars have considered how hegemonic spaces are transformed through material ephemera during large-scale protests or long-term occupations, my discussion will instead examine the impacts of the small-scale, short-term transformations of space that have been repeated within the town. Specifically, this paper will focus on annual and reoccurring events held in remembrance of the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki as organized by both local activist groups and the National Park Service. In doing so, I will consider how Stobiecka's "weak artifacts" of resistance, in this case banners, protest signs, and other ephemeral objects such as paper lanterns and cranes, have themselves emerged as important symbols within the town through their repeated, rather than permanent, presence. Drawing from Stobiecka's work and concepts of permanence beyond the individual object itself, this presentation will ultimately consider how small, repeated moments of material presence can help sustain nuclear resistance movements into the future.

Jan Hasil

Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Czech Republic

Götterdämmerung 1945: Survival Strategies of German Archaeologists and Historians in the Czech Lands at the End of the War and the Beginning of Peace

For centuries, the Czech lands were one of the natural centres of German science. At the end of World War II, however, the position of its protagonists in this territory was hopeless.

In the final period of the Third Reich between July 1944 and May 1945, the last two rectors of the German University in Prague committed suicide. Medievalist and leading figure of the occupation regime Prof. Josef Pfitzner, who resignedly delayed evacuation, was caught and spectacularly hanged in September 1945.

However, most German scientists were still looking for a way out, not only in terms of the physical survival of themselves and their families, but also the preservation of their scientific work and careers. The specific efforts of archaeologists and historians were not only to save themselves, their loved ones, and, for example, their own manuscripts, but also the most valuable historical artifacts and documents. In the last weeks of fighting, highly valuable collections were taken out of Czech territory, resulting in considerable losses. Some of them were traced and, thanks to the cooperation of the Allies, returned to Czechoslovakia. Others, such as the golden historical insignia of Prague University, were never found or were destroyed in the final military operations, while another, although identified, remained under the control of the German scientific community, such as the insignia of the University of Olomouc, which is now held by the University of Innsbruck. And what about you? Which part of your research would give you hope for the future in a crisis of the highest complexity?

Rebecca Hearne

Sheffield Hallam University, United Kingdom

The Ski Village: A Materiality of Hope at Sheffield's most Flammable Attraction

The Sheffield Ski Village, which opened in 1988 on a repurposed industrial waste dump site in Parkwood Springs, Sheffield, UK, was once the largest artificial ski resort in Europe. Featuring multiple dry ski slopes, parks, and half-pipes, it was built with £2.5 million local investment and became a crucial training ground for British winter athletes, including half of the 2014 Winter Olympic British freestyle skiing team. Despite its initial success the site was a repeated target for arson and its main building was gutted by fire in 2012. Subsequent fires and vandalism led to its eventual closure. By 2014 the site was fully abandoned, becoming derelict and a target for further arson, fly tipping, urban exploration, and as a local hotspot for free parties, drinking, and drug consumption. Despite attempts to reclaim and redevelop the site, progress has been slow and its future remains uncertain.

A contemporary archaeological investigation of the Ski Village illustrates that the site is still heavily used in multiple ways. The remaining material culture is consistent with the site as an Olympic training ground and, simultaneously, as a post-industrial urban ruin offering insight into the social, economic, and cultural dynamics of deindustrialized Sheffield. The Ski Village persists as a part of Sheffield's physical and mental landscape and its ruins are a material record of late 20th-century leisure culture, urban regeneration cycles, and an embodiment of continued and persistent land use resulting in an archaeology rich in nostalgia and hope.

Stefanie Heim

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Charnel Houses between Pragmatism and the Hope for Physical Resurrection on the Day of Judgment

In medieval burial practices, charnel houses arose from the necessity of counteracting the limited space in cemeteries adjacent to churches. However, their significance cannot be reduced to this functional dimension alone. This paper approaches charnel houses as materialization of messianic hope: the expectation of deferred salvation through physical resurrection at the end of time.

The preference for burial in consecrated ground around the church led to a shortage of space. Therefore, after a certain period, decayed bodies were exhumed and their bones were collected in charnel houses. This practice allowed for multiple use of graves without destroying the mortal remains.

Drawing on archaeological evidence from charnel houses and cemetery chapels, the spatial organization, depositional practices, and treatment of human remains are examined as strategies aimed at preserving bodily integrity. In medieval Christianity, the human body was considered an essential part of the person, which had to be preserved in view of the expected physical resurrection on Judgment Day. Death was understood as a temporary separation of soul and body, whose final reunification was expected in the eschatological future. The charnel house functions not as a final resting place, but as a deliberately created intermediate space of expectation, as a 'repository of hope' for the future completion of the human being as a unity of body and soul.

Charnel houses materialized the hope of participating in the process of salvation and overcoming death in the context of divine judgement. The illustrations of the Last Judgement often found in charnel houses and cemetery chapels underline this perspective by visualizing the preservation of the bones in the context of the future resurrection.

By focusing on the archaeological and architectural-historical feature, this study offers a *longue durée* perspective on how hope is embedded in material practices and spatial arrangements.

Owen Hurcum¹ & Helmut De Nardi²

¹Department of Archaeology, University of York, ²Founder, Trans+ Learning Lab CIC, United Kingdom

Excavation Futures: Hope, Trans Temporality, and Speculative Archaeologies of a 21st Century Trans+ Community Centre

Imagined as a presentation given at CHAT 3026, our paper proposes a speculative archaeological narrative grounded in trans+ hope, future making, and community heritage. Adopting the perspective of two future archaeologists, we present the findings from a 31st century excavation of a 21st century trans+ community centre. Through this framing, we invert the familiar trope of archaeologists misgendering ancient individuals and narratives of transness

as a contemporary trend. Instead, our future practitioners approach transness as an expected and respected aspect of human variation in a way not always afforded in today's discipline. This speculative lens enables us to articulate a politics of trans hope where "we must fight to have a future" becomes "we will have a future, and our material traces will testify to it".

For this, our speculative paper presents a series of archaeological finds uncovered from the imagined future excavation: gender-affirming hormone packaging, protest ephemera, community made art, archival flyers, and a fictionalized diary of a former transphobe who later embraced trans+ solidarity. These items allow us to imagine how future archaeologists might interpret shifting identities, solidarities, and social transformations when the validity and potential of trans+ identities aren't the focus of debate, but accepted by default.

Drawing on the Museum of Transology's community curation model and Trans+ History Week's guiding principles of "We've always been here", "We cannot be erased", and "We are stronger together", our paper blends creative storytelling with archaeological theory, trans studies, and heritage practice. It argues that speculative archaeology can serve as a method for imagining trans futures, countering erasure, and cultivating collective resilience. In doing so, it contributes to broader conversations about temporality, identity, and the role of hope in marginalized communities' engagements with the past and future.

Johannes Jungfleisch

Ruhr University Bochum, Germany

Unexpected Hope in Greece's Borderlands: Reinterpreting Material Traces of Undocumented Migration

When discussing undocumented and forced migration from Southwest Asia, Central Asia, and Africa to Europe, a series of iconic, often tragic images come to mind: armed conflict and political instability in countries of origin; overcrowded sea crossings across the Mediterranean; controversial border control practices, including pushbacks; and harsh conditions in reception camps on the Greek islands and mainland Greece. While these images correspond to real experiences of violence, danger, and precarity, they often overshadow migration as an ongoing social process, shaped by aspirations for security, stability, and improved life circumstances.

At distinct stages of their contingent migratory journeys, people-on-the-move leave behind material traces—structures, objects, and graffiti—that reflect aspects of their lived experiences. Found in resting sites, along routes, and in both informal and official makeshift camps, these remains do more than document precarity and experiences of violence: they show how people navigate dangers, respond to obstacles, and assert agency in otherwise hostile environments. In this sense, these transient traces constitute a form of "dark heritage," bearing witness to injustice while simultaneously revealing the aspirations, resilience, and hopes that sustain people-on-the-move during their often-overlooked journeys.

Drawing on multi-sited archaeological fieldwork conducted across the Eastern Mediterranean since 2017, this paper examines selected material traces of undocumented migration from Greek borderlands to provide glimpses into the strategies and aspirations that sustain hope along these journeys. By highlighting the interaction of precarity and agency, the paper seeks

to contribute to an understanding of Europe's borderlands not only as sites of injustice and violence, but also as spaces of resourcefulness, unexpected hope, and the ongoing struggle for dignity.

Aleksi Kelloniemi

University of Oulu, Finland

Rural Dance Venues in 20th-Century Finland – Archaeology of Encounters in a Dwindling Countryside

Dance and entertainment venues such as community halls and dance pavilions served as important culture hubs and meeting points in the villages and small towns of Finnish countryside in the 20th century, especially when the society was undergoing urbanization and the physical distances between people grew longer outside of the industrial centers. These venues were, for example, a stage of forming romantic couples, interacting with cultural influences, and meeting migratory workers temporarily living in the area and integrating them into the social structure of village communities. Alcohol as social lubricant and strict Finnish alcohol regulations, often targeted towards the stereotypical image of the “drunken commoner”, often competed in these locations, which resulted in impromptu and unregulated corners of secret drinking.

With small scale excavations, interviews and landscape archaeology these spaces can reveal a complex network of power structures, logistics, gender relations and an emotional landscape, which can illustrate the feelings of people in a rural setting that was getting more and more sparsely populated towards the end of the century. Two examples of fieldwork sites will be used to portray the material remains and memory structures and the interaction between the two, as through abandonment these sites have often turned into sources of tales and subjected to the degradation of memory.

Bottle caps are a marker of drinking activities, portraying qualities and quantities of drinks that were consumed, but these sites were more than just an improvised refreshment spot. These places have simultaneously functioned as sites of resistance towards a changing society and tight surveillance, but also as an avenue of the influences from the outside world to be sampled in these remote villages.

Nicole Khayat¹ & Vesna Lukic²

¹Middlesex University, United Kingdom, ²Independent Researcher, Haifa, Israel

Geography of an Archive (film 60 min)

The film is about Khayat family archive and explores the archive as a layered, spatial, and affective object that adds to the complexity of Palestinian history in the Middle East, and brings hope by resisting to the continuous silencing of Palestinian voices.

Conceived through dimensions and strata, the project treats the archive not as a single story but as a dense assemblage of stories, places, and temporalities. While the film documents the physical relocation of the archive to a new site, the materials themselves unfold a geography that extends far beyond that location—across Haifa, within Haifa, and outward to several continents. The archive thus operates as both a fixed body of material and a mobile network of places, relations, and memories.

By recovering overlooked social histories—of Palestinians in Haifa and of others connected to the family—the film traces lives shaped by dispossession, destruction, and loss, alongside ongoing efforts to preserve, salvage, and reinterpret what remains. Haifa emerges as an epicentre from which these narratives radiate, forming a dispersed yet interconnected social geography across time and space.

The film functions as a mapping device, following archival strands and reassembling them cinematically into a network of locations. Through layering, restructuring, and recontextualization, the film adds a new stratigraphic layer to the archive itself, enabling new interpretations in the present.

Illustrative episodes include a family member returning after World War I to find his home bisected by a British railway; letters requesting assistance after the 1948 Nakba; and accounts of social struggle and hope among those who remained. Together, these fragments make Palestinian lived pasts present, offering forms of historical resolution unavailable in state archives.

Alexander Kolibaba

Université de Fribourg, Switzerland

A Hope and a Host Rock

In the middle of the 20th century, nuclear power generated hope for many industrial states. Those hopes began to crumble as the problem of high-level radioactive waste loomed on the horizon. Yet a new hope seemed quickly to be found below the horizon, or more precisely in deep geological strata: salt.

Salt rock has existed in the subsoil for millions of years. Geologists say salt creeps, encloses, is impermeable and heals itself. Salt can trap ancient liquids and gases underground for geological times. This fostered hopes that it could do the same for highly radioactive waste, which must be safely shielded for hundreds of thousands of years. Salt thus became a hope and a host to which humans invited themselves to dispose of their radioactive waste.

But over time, errors occurred and controversies arose. In Germany, the salt under Gorleben, Asse or Morsleben impacted the debates of nuclear waste disposal drastically. Salt could no longer give the state and industry the hope of being able to present a „clean nuclear cycle“. Instead, salt began to provide arguments for anti-nuclear activists and their hopes of ending what they saw as dangerous nuclear infrastructure. Yet salt is still present in Germany's new hopes of finding a suitable site for a final nuclear repository.

Combining contemporary history and geographical approaches, my research traces this historical and present significance of salt geology in nuclear disposal in Germany. My work examines historical sources, human experiences, material evidence, landscapes and aesthetics of this „host rock“ and its interrelations with society.

In times when states and billionaires are opening up new territories while nature is proving to be more indomitable than expected, my paper contribution intends to inspire a discussion about what hopes can lie in salt and in the underground.

Olgierd Ławrynowicz¹, Aleksandra Krupa-Ławrynowicz² & Sebastian Latocha²

¹Institute of Archaeology, ²Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, University of Lodz, Poland

Hope Against Erasure: Memory and Science in the ‘Lexicon of Katyn Archaeology’ Project

The poster presents the assumptions and selected outcomes of the project “Lexicon of Katyn Archaeology (1990–2015)”; understood as both a scientific and memorial undertaking focused on the archaeology of the Katyn Massacre (1940). The presentation explores hope as an affective, social, and material force that persisted despite violence, political repression, and decades of enforced silence.

The project is examined through the lens of different forms of hope embedded in the history and archaeology of Katyn. At the individual level, this includes the hopes of families who for years believed that their relatives deported or imprisoned by the Soviet authorities were still alive. Later, these hopes transformed into the desire to recover the truth, identify burial places, and restore the names and biographies of the victims erased from official narratives. Hope became a mechanism for preserving memory despite the trauma of uncertainty and the impossibility of mourning.

At the collective level, the poster discusses hope as a social carrier of memory and resistance to the so-called Katyn Lie – the long-lasting Soviet disinformation campaign denying responsibility for the massacre. The persistence of families, émigré communities, researchers, and social institutions created alternative archives of remembrance that survived censorship and political manipulation. Archaeology played a crucial role in materialising this hope by uncovering graves, documenting evidence of violence, and restoring the physical presence of the victims within public history.

The poster also addresses contemporary hopes connected with ongoing archaeological and archival research in execution and burial sites linked to Soviet terror. New investigations continue to raise the possibility of locating unknown graves and expanding knowledge about the victims and landscapes of violence. In this context, archaeology is presented not only as a scientific practice, but also as an ethical act of care, recovery, and resistance against erasure.

The Lexicon of Katyn Archaeology project demonstrates how archaeological research may operate simultaneously as scholarship, testimony, and a medium of enduring hope rooted in memory, truth, and the continuing search for the missing.

Research granted under a programme of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education – National Programme for the Development of Humanities– in 2022-2027. The project is carried out at the Faculty of Philosophy and History, University of Lodz.

Dan Lee¹, Mark Jenkins², Antonia Thomas¹, Anne Bevan¹, David Atkinson³ & Jen Harland¹

¹University of the Highlands and Islands, ²Independent Researcher, ³University of Hull, United Kingdom

The Transition to Renewable Energy: A New Hope or the Same Old Story? (short film)

Energy transitions should give us hope. The current drive for carbon neutrality and the increase in renewable energy aims to reduce the impacts of climate change. Hope for a sustainable future. Hope for resilient communities. Can we achieve these or have we failed already? TRANSECTS is taking a creative cultural heritage approach to exploring marine energy transitions past and present, in three coastal areas in the UK, to inform better decision making for the transitions we are experiencing now. Part of our approach involves working with embedded artists on a series of place-based activities, including story gathering events, workshops, and mini-residencies. Our presentation will focus on some aspects of this ongoing work, the exploration of past and present marine energy transitions in Orkney through a series of short films developed by filmmaker Mark Jenkins, working with the TRANSECTS team.

This film series is a creative interpretation of the marine energy transitions in coastal communities through time, from Whale Oil to Oil & Gas through to Renewables. Using first person accounts drawn from Orkney workshops, together with personal diaries and historical records, Mark blends these elements with poetry, music and mythology into a creative docufiction, connecting the transition of energy industries from the 19th century through to today.

Anena Majumdar

University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, USA

The Old Ghosts of New Town: Can Neoliberal Development be Hope? For Whom? A Case Study in Kolkata, India

In contemporary academic scholarship, planned urban developments in the Global South are often critiqued as expressions of neoliberal expansion and speculative capitalism. While these critiques are important, they can obscure how residents themselves understand and inhabit such landscapes as forms of hope. Following nearly two centuries of British colonial extraction and the uneven recovery after independence in 1947, the question of what constitutes progress remains deeply charged in India. The desire to participate in the global economy is not easily reduced to false consciousness or mimicry. Rather, it can be understood as movement: a refusal to be left behind and a claim to what residents perceive as modernity. In this context, urban space, public heritage, and domestic homes become vital frontiers for articulating aspirations for the future.

This paper focuses on New Town, an extension of Kolkata's (India) urban development that embodies the promises and the contradictions of the late-capitalist, post-colonial moment: development as identity and development as exclusion. Drawing on contemporary archaeology and heritage studies, the paper analyzes of domestic material culture and ethnographic accounts of New Town's residents to understand how these spaces function as archives of hope and mobility, defined through global participation and classed aspiration. However, this paper also explores the exclusionary politics embedded within these hopeful landscapes, asking who resides in these spaces, who builds and maintains them, and who remains barred from their promise of global belonging. Through archaeological attention to everyday spaces, the study considers how hope operates as a political and affective force in the post-colonial city, and what it reveals about futures imagined from within global capitalism rather than outside it.

Patricia G. Markert

University of Western Ontario, Canada

Futures in Ruins, or the Multigenerational Project(s) of Imagining Worlds in Rubble
(film 25 min)

D'Hanis, Texas is a town marked by ruins. Within a two-mile square area, you will find the rubble-rock walls of 19th century Alsatian-German homes in various stages of collapse and renovation, situated alongside new construction and faded trailers; the railroad-inspired town center, built at the turn of the century using local brick and then rebuilt after its partial destruction by a tornado in 2015; and most prominently, the striking ruin of St. Dominic's Catholic Church, which has recently become the focus of grassroots preservation efforts to save the heritage building from further ruination.

Since 2018, I have directed the Old D'Hanis Archaeological Mapping Project, a community-based archaeology project that examines extant ruins, spatial decisions, and narratives related to 19th century Alsatian and 20th century Mexican migration to this small town sixty miles west of San Antonio. From photogrammetry and architectural survey to oral history and participatory mapping, we have documented the ways the landscape has changed from the 1840s to the present, spanning eight generations and multiple waves of migration.

Ruination is not straightforward on this landscape but a process in flux; abandonment, rubble, and natural processes create spaces to negotiate shared pasts but also imagine possible futures. This short film explores, with community members and through fragments collected during the research process, ways that ruins become sites of imagining and worldbuilding – a process that prompts deep engagement with shared (and, at times, contested) pasts alongside hopeful acts of shaping the material landscape towards desired futures.

Sarah May

Bureau for the Contemporary Historic (ButCH), United Kingdom

#TinyJoys at the Community Garden

All gardens are hopeful places, both because you have an anticipation of good things in the future and because, like all things we hope for, it is uncertain. Community gardens also represent the hope of more engaged and equal relationships in communities that feel disconnected from each other and from the living world. I have been working in a community garden in Cardiff and have found it is a great place to reflect on larger archaeological themes such as temporality, distributed agency and more than human agency, networks and scales of interaction. How do gardens connect people, with each other, with the places they live, with the world around them, with the past and with the future?

These questions are often addressed metaphorically. How does bringing an archaeological approach to these questions help? This presentation will address these questions through, material culture, compost, seed saving, and what it means to dig.

Laura McAtackney

University College Cork, Ireland

Archaeology as a Source of Hope in Countering Social Injustice

Although a lot of contemporary and recent historical archaeology is focused on dark, difficult and contested pasts this does not mean that it is not essentially based in communicating hope. The background to conducting contemporary archaeology in such contexts is nearly always because of a power differential and a pre-existing lack of honesty about what those pasts entailed. This is especially the case where the sources of authority, such as archival documents, are the focus of truth-telling and that are not conducive to revealing social injustices in the lived past. In such cases, conducting material culture-based studies by archaeologists are a necessity as they allow for an otherwise unconsidered source to reveal experiences that official documents were not designed or utilized to show.

This paper will focus on the potential of contemporary archaeology to uncover difficult, recent pasts as a means of giving hope to those people with lived experiences of those pasts, who often have long experiences of having their experiences ignored, sidelined or denied. One can also shape the archaeological process to facilitate victims, survivors and those with lived experience to be involved in the research in a variety of ways. To illustrate this argument I will be using examples from fieldwork I have conducted with former political prisoners in the North of Ireland, survivors and victims of institutional abuse across the island of Ireland, and communities living in the shadow of post/colonial islands in the Caribbean. The key argument of this paper is that contemporary archaeologies that are focused on dark and difficult pasts are not necessarily about despair but can be anchored in hope due to the imperative for conducting the research – in pursuit of social justice – and the comfort they can bring to victims and survivors for their experiences to be centred in the research methodologies and outcomes.

Thomas Meier

University of Heidelberg, Germany

A Better Future Needs a Better Past

Archaeology is story telling. About the past, we usually say. But is there a past beyond the present? And a future? There are good epistemological reasons to assume that there is nothing real beyond the now. There is only the now and the ‚other time‘, constructed in the now, mirroring the dreams, desires and fears of the present. But this other time feeds back on what we do and how we feel in the now. In the Western concept of linear time we call this loop a ‚trajectory‘, coming from the past, limiting the present and pre-paving the path into the future. In this case, we need to create a better past to make a better future possible.

As archaeologists we are experts of telling stories about the past. It is in our hands, whether we create visions of violence or mutual aid, of collapse or well-being, of doom or hope. The seeds for a better future grow or wither in our stories about the past. It is our responsibility as archaeologists to reflect our stories and it is future, to tell different stories about the past, about the world and, thus, about the future...

Florian Messner

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Maria Spes Mea – Hope and Divine Assistance on Medieval Swords from the Tyrolean Region (12th–15th century)

European chivalry in the Middle Ages was deeply embedded in the Christian religion. The knights sought the support of Heaven not only through prayers and rituals, but by applying Christian symbols and especially inscriptions to the sword. These inscriptions can be understood not merely as markers of faith, but as materialized expressions of hope: Hope for protection, victory, and salvation in moments of existential threat.

Inscriptions and symbols on swords represent a special subtype of written sources: First of all, it is the only type of scripture that, due to its carrier material, came into direct contact with the enemy when his blood was spilled. Since the sword was often identified in Christian theology as the Verbum Dei, a knight could actually fight the enemy with the word of God.

Describing a sword blade naturally involves some difficulties: An inscription has to be carefully carved by an experienced craftsman. The space on a sword is also very limited and it was necessary to focus on the essential: Hope had to be condensed into few formulaic and powerful words.

This paper is based on the author’s PhD research on medieval swords from the former County of Tyrol, analyzing all extant examples in the region. Among other swords with religious inscriptions there exists a particular blade carrying the invocation “Maria Spes Mea” (“Mary, my hope”), an explicit articulation of hope that directly links Marian devotion with the material culture of warfare. This and other inscriptions offer an opportunity to analyze how hope was brought into the violent confrontation of a battlefield, not as abstract theology, but as a “weaponized” expectation of divine care.

Brodhie M. I. Molloy

University of Leicester, United Kingdom

Hope as Method: Materializing Hope during the PhD

„I’ve always wanted to change the world, I hope this did” are the final words of my doctoral thesis. Hope has imbued every element of my archaeology PhD journey. From I hope I get accepted, to I hope I get funding and now, with the deadline imminent, I hope I get this finished! But the real hope comes from the content of the research itself.

This paper will explore the topic of my research, to investigate how archaeology can engage with contemporary social issues – with particular focus on the attitudes and stigmas around homelessness in the United Kingdom. Through embodied material encounters, participants of the project explored the meaning of “home”, both past and present. Using a posthuman feminist lens of care, the project workshops illuminate the affirmative differences of human existence, to counter the government’s predominance of reductive Cartesian narratives surrounding our most vulnerable members of society. All of this sought to (read: hoped to) not only have an immediate impact on those engaged with the project, but also to develop a praxis for archaeology’s engagement with communities (including us!) in the face of the many crises, or Wicked Problems (Schofield 2024), we currently endure. I will also comment on instances where our understanding of hope may not necessarily go far enough, suggesting there should be a transformative engagement with what we believe ‘hope’ to mean in our research and lives.

Whilst I will critically assess the efficacy and learnings of the research itself, I maintain that the place of affirmative hope throughout the project was vital to both its completion and its very ethos (and HOPEfully by the moment of CHAT’26, my viva will have revealed a lot more!).

Sandra Montón-Subias

ICREA/Pompeu Fabra University, Spain

Hoping for the Future, Materializing Other Pasts

This paper reflects on maintenance activities as a feminist archaeological proposal collectively developed in the late twentieth century and subsequently guiding my research trajectory. As both an analytical framework and a political commitment, the proposal of maintenance activities foregrounds the everyday practices of care, repair, and social continuity through which people sustain worlds, relations, and possibilities. My current project, MaGMA, mobilizes this perspective to investigate how quotidian practices articulated gendered forms of Indigenous CHamoru resistance in the western Pacific within the making of early modern colonial globalization. Rather than understanding globalization solely as an imposed, top-down process, this work traces how maintenance practices—often rendered invisible—materialized alternative ways of inhabiting and reproducing life that exceeded, negotiated, and sometimes subverted colonial and patriarchal orders.

This approach is grounded in the conviction that archaeological representations of the past are performative: they actively shape present realities and condition imaginable futures.

By illuminating practices of care, endurance, and relationality, maintenance activities constitutes an archaeology of hope—as a situated and collective capacity to sustain life otherwise within oppressive conditions. Attending to these practices, archaeology can recover suppressed genealogies of cultural persistence and resistance embedded in everyday material culture.

Reconceptualizing the past through maintenance allows us to foreground values historically marginalized by patriarchal neoliberalism, including interdependence, reciprocity, and the primacy of sustaining life over hyperaccumulation (also in academia). In doing so, archaeology contributes to materializing radical hope: not by projecting utopian futures detached from reality, but by revealing that alternative ways of organizing social life have always existed, often hidden within the ordinary. These past practices of care and endurance expand our political imagination in the present and strengthen archaeology's capacity to participate in envisioning and sustaining more just and livable futures.

Nota Pantzou¹ & Francesca Plateroti²

¹University of Patras, Greece, ²Independent Researcher, Italy

Archaeology and the Restoration of Dignity: The Case of the Italians of Patras

In 1945, the Greek state embarked on the deportation of the Italian citizens of Patras to Italy as enemy subjects, with the exception of those who had secured Greek citizenship. Their belongings were seized and auctioned off, while their houses were sequestered and handed to Greek families. In a matter of months, this once-vibrant community, with almost a century of presence in the port city of Patras, was depopulated because its members were deemed undesirable.

This paper will present an archaeological project that has, in the past couple of years endeavored, to reveal the stories of this community, through the recording of its surviving and lost architectural materiality. What struck the team at first was that references to the Italian community, which at its heyday was the largest foreign group in the city, were scant to nonexistent, attesting to the marginality of the Italians in collective urban memory and official historiography. Ongoing research has uncovered a living heritage that continues to manifest itself in everyday life in numerous ways. In this paper, we will discuss what survives and what is lost, as well as how the acknowledgement and preservation of this unofficial heritage could restore this community's dignity and reduce the stigma it has faced.

Francesco Orlandi

University of Macerata, Italy & University of Exeter, United Kingdom

“The Hope of the Indigenous is Absolutely Revolutionary”: Approaching Pluriversal Politics and Development Failures in the Andes

The Peruvian philosopher José Carlos Mariátegui is known for his contributions to bridging Marxist and indigenous politics in the Andes. For Mariátegui (1928), indigenous peoples' long-standing socio- territorial institutions and collective governance of the land encoded the hope

for a just future challenging the structural violence of colonial and oligarchic regimes. His ideas were notably adopted and distorted in the wave of the national and international policies, in the second half of the 20th century, which sought to find a solution to the “indigenous problem” by turning local communities into the preferred target of global development agendas. The “war on poverty”, as Escobar (1994) named it, forcibly aligned the memories and aspirations of Indigenous self-determination to a one-way road to citizenship and access to the basic human rights. Likewise, the current emphasis on state-led decolonization and community-based heritage practices, which have been predicated on the assumption of multi-voice and diversity of cultural expressions, risks to undermine Indigenous peoples’ historical struggles for political recognition, economic redistribution, and collective land regularization if the ontological conflicts underlying the heritage and rights nexus are overlooked. In this contribution, I draw on the Aymara concept “*quipnayra*” to visualize the multiplicity of different “future-pasts” that is obscured by the universalizing discourses of a “one-world world” (Law 2015), such as civilization, heritage, and development. Through examples from my fieldwork in Bolivia and Northwestern Argentina, the paper focuses on the overlapping materialities of conflicting ecologies of practices that entangle people, places and things in “a comedy of equivocations” (De la Cadena 2015). In this vein, I show how the ruination of multiculturalism unfolds possibilities for multinatural articulation beyond anthropocentric resource management frameworks. Contemporary archaeology can reveal the entangled decolonial and ecological dimensions of Indigenous heritage rights, thus reaffirming the pluriversal hope of a world in which many worlds fit.

Andreas Pantazatos

University of Cambridge, United Kingdom

Is there Hope for Heritage of Past Experiences (HoPE)?

In this paper, I argue that it is necessary to re-evaluate the relationship between heritage and hope beyond the wishful thinking for the positive contribution of heritage to our future lives. And I propose that hope becomes a powerful tool for communities to adhere the uncertainty of future if heritage enables communities to develop confidence in their life engagement with their past. I develop my argument in two parts.

In the first part, I propose that there are at least two main ways we can identify a relationship between heritage and hope. One is the view according to which, heritage provides people with hope for a better future in the sense that the saved traces of the past can help us to create together a better future world. Here, heritage fuels hope for a successful pathway to our future (R1). Two, is the view that there is hope that what we select from our standpoint in the present to transfer as heritage to future generations is what these generations might want (R2).

In the second part, I argue that (R1) and (R2) overlook two significant aspects about heritage. The first is that dissonance is inherent in heritage that is, what one understands as their heritage it is not what someone else understands as their heritage. Therefore, any relationship between heritage and hope is rooted in people’s understanding of heritage which is neither universal nor unanimous.

The second is that given that people develop different associations with their heritage, they might not perceive anything hopeful from their past to give them hope for the future. Instead they are related to their past seeking to develop confidence to adhere to future challenges. To support my argument, I draw upon my ongoing oral history project about the heritage of the psychiatric hospital at the Greek island of Leros.

Susan Pearson

University of the Highlands and Islands, United Kingdom

Embodied (is)land Narratives for Making-Kin

The island is the setting for this paper's discussions on making-kin, a term coined by Donna Haraway. The (is)land as a concept considers the metaphorical connotations of an island (bounded yet boundless, isolated and connected) as well as the elemental, material properties; it is land (earth) wrapped by sea (water). An embodied research-led art practice can cultivate making-kin with these materials.

Utilising embodied methods of art research in relation to the Anthropocene and multispecies archaeology, this paper demonstrates the advantages of making-kin by creating deep connections to non-human materials through narrative, theory, gathering and making. It urges us to think about our responsibilities to our non-human kin.

Sefryn Penrose & Angela Piccini

Bureau for the Contemporary & Historic (ButCH), United Kingdom

Hope Springs.... We Swim (film 12 min)

"Compared to all other swimming fellow creatures man performs miserably."

(Van Leeuwen, The Springboard in the Pond)

The UK has lost 500 swimming pools since 2010: 34,859 m² of water space. But over 3000 public swimming pools still exist. They testify to a history of local and national intervention in the watery bodies of people: baths of the early 20th century combined washing facilities with leisure and fitness. Swimming pools materialized an extraordinary conceptualizing of the body in public space in the name of civic hygiene. In 1934, the city of Elblag, Poland, opened a single pool of 33,000 m² that still operates.

Also extant are 1923's Jesus Green Pool, Cambridge, England, a city-centre, riverside lane-swimming pool of 100 yards (91 m x 30 m = 2,730 m²); and 1931's Kitsilano Pool, Vancouver, Canada, a seawater pool of 660 ft (201 m x 61 m = 12,261 m²).

All that engineering. We swim. You swim. Landscapes are tamed. Power is performed. Pools continue to be places where politics and prejudice are navigated, and nationhood is marked on bodies. They are sites where rules are implemented, followed, and also tested. Naked truths are exposed. In municipally maintained facilities, we toe-touch as we churn the lanes; we

strut the barest concrete sundecks. We choose lane discipline in lunch hours; skin time with strangers. In Canada, swimming is the biggest participatory sport. In the UK, it's the second biggest. Various acts of parliament have created this situation, obliging local councils, national bodies, schools and communities to provide tanks – hot or cold, rock cut or concrete, stand-up or sunken, covered or open – for civilian use.

We swim. In this paper we dive into the archival and experiential, examining the nanny-state-utopian project of the civic body through the tanks that were built for them. The state-sanctioned national narrative of fitness is long gone, and this infrastructure rusts into ruin, causes bottomless budget-lines for municipalities. But the stripped-down citizenry fights for its right to spaces of proximity. Against all odds, and against new national narratives, it still wants to swim together as if it was the 20th century.

Susan Pollock¹ & Carolin Jauss²

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Working as an Archaeological Collective – 15 Years of Forum Kritische Archäologie

Collectives, cooperatives, and other non-hierarchical forms of organization have a long history. In the minds of many of us today, they are closely connected to the social movements of the 1960s and 1970s that sought new, hopeful, egalitarian forms of living and working in community. Although it is easy to overlook the existence of such kinds of organization in the contemporary competitive and often aggressive social and political climate, they have not disappeared.

In this round-table discussion, we present the history and working modus of Forum Kritische Archäologie (FKA), a German-based, online, open-access platform for critical engagement with archaeology. In addition to a geographic, chronological, and disciplinary openness in terms of published contributions, the founding FKA editorial collective members made a commitment to consensus-based decision-making, independence from formal academic organizations, and absence of remuneration or external financial resources. Although the road has occasionally been bumpy, FKA is now in its 15th year. In this round table, we consider the many positive aspects of working collectively as well as some of the challenges that have confronted us in doing so.

Claartje Rasterhoff & Christian Ernten

Maastricht University, The Netherlands

Radical Starch

Radical Starch is a heritage- and design-based research project that explores hope as a material and collective practice in the aftermath of petrochemical modernity. While the legacies of oil, gas, and coal continue to shape contemporary landscapes and bodies, this project investigates starch as a historically grounded yet forward-looking material resource for imagining non-toxic, regenerative futures.

Prior to the rise of petrochemistry, starch played a central role in Dutch material culture, sustaining regional economies, embodied knowledge, and communal practices of care. Drawing on case studies from Limburg and Groningen—regions profoundly transformed by coal mining, gas extraction, and intensive agriculture—*Radical Starch* examines how these extractive histories disrupted local ecologies, social solidarities, and material traditions. At the same time, the project asks how neglected or marginalized starch-based practices might offer sites of repair, resilience, and hope.

Through archival research, material experimentation, and sensory practices such as tasting, making, and slowing down, *Radical Starch* treats hope not as abstract optimism but as a situated, embodied, and relational force. By engaging with ancient craftsmanship and regional knowledge systems, the project foregrounds alternative temporalities and values that challenge petrochemical acceleration and toxicity.

Positioned at the intersection of archaeology, design, and material culture studies, *Radical Starch* proposes an archaeological inquiry into the future: how forgotten materials can activate hopeful imaginaries and contribute to regenerative ways of living. In doing so, it aligns with CHAT HOPE's call to critically examine how material traces of the past can inform transformative responses to contemporary ecological and social crises.

Marianne Sallum¹, Marina Gomes², Lúcia Aparecida³, Francisco S. Noelli⁴ & Wendel Dalitesi¹

¹Federal University of São Paulo, Brazil, ²Director of the Rural Women Workers' Union, Ribeira Valley, Brazil, ³Ribeira Valley Artisans' Association, Brazil, ⁴Lisbon University, Portugal

Long-Term Genealogies of Solidarity:

Women, Memory, and Materiality in the Upper Ribeira Valley (São Paulo, Brazil)

This paper explores how networks of solidarity can be traced archaeologically through the genealogies, landscapes, memories, and materialities of Afro-Indigenous women in the Upper Ribeira Valley (São Paulo, Brazil). Drawing on collaborative research that connects oral histories, archival documentation, and materialities, the study reconstructs long-term networks of kinship maintained by women since the sixteenth century. The research focuses on the lineages of four contemporary women potters from the community of Encapoeirado (Apiáí), whose genealogies reveal fourteen generations of connections among Tupiniquim women, Africans people, and later Afro-Indigenous descendants.

These women sustained practices such as forest cultivation and pottery-making, forming what can be understood by the archaeology of persistence and collective care. Their histories demonstrate how everyday acts of maintenance, kinship, and land stewardship created enduring strategies to colonial systems of exploitation and erasure. By mapping ancestral territories, the research highlights forms of knowledge transmission and solidarity that continue into the present through the agency of these women.

Vídeo: Nhimongueta Renda "A Casa das Meditações"

Director: Thiago Altafini

Research and production: Marianne Sallum

Argument: Gwyrappendju Ana Paula (Aldeia Tabapu Reko Ypy, São Paulo)

Trailer: <https://youtu.be/6m4q8EN3K7g?si=ohbC49BAWp0mbNBA>

Natalia Sawicka

University of Wrocław, Poland

The Paper Project: Community Building Through Upcycling

The Paper Project began with a simple desire: to spend time together outside mandatory classes and create an opportunity for students and staff to connect. The idea first took shape as a workshop for making holiday decorations inspired by archaeology.

During an initial meeting with students, we discussed what resources we actually had. Since the initiative was entirely grassroots and unfunded, everyone needed to contribute something. That's when I proposed using waste paper stored in lecturers' offices to create a long paper chain that would hang in the stairwell from the third floor to the ground floor. Decorated with archaeological motifs, its elements were made both during workshops and daily in the library. We upcycled the paper, and by mid-December the chain was installed. Mounting steel cables allowed us not only to hang it safely but also to create a new exhibition space. The installation remained on display for two months.

In March, we begin another series of workshops, again using waste paper. The dismantled chain and future installations will be turned into paper pulp, which will be used to create a life-size (1:1) replica of the Ślęza Bear, a local archaeological monument. The process will be preceded by a detailed scan of the original, completing a full cycle of double upcycling.

After the pandemic years and the difficult experiences connected to the war in Ukraine, we managed to build a space for shared activity—a place where people put their phones away and talk to one another. Alumni and students from nearby institutes often joined us. Our workshops foster a sense of community, unity, and hope for change. And, as always, everything begins with small steps.

Lennart Schmarsi

University of Tübingen, Germany

Paenitentiam agere: A Prison for Serious Offenders in Stuttgart (1851–1901)

The former penitentiary in Stuttgart (Senefelderstraße 45 A–C) is one of the oldest buildings in the city district Stuttgart West. The historical sources about the roughly fifty years of prison operations are surprisingly abundant and show a high degree of standardization. So far, no archaeological investigations have been carried out, which means that hardly any definitive statements could be made about the prison's actual layout beyond the remaining building part.

The site's enormous potential as a subject for Historical Archaeology in current and future projects lies in this intersection of excellent historical sources and the untouched archaeological record.

Catalina Soto Rodríguez¹, Alejandra Didier Pérez¹ & Wilfredo Santoro Cerda²

¹Universidad Academia de Humanismo Cristiano, Chile, ²Consejo Patrimonial de Mejillones, Chile

Hope in a Landscape of Extraction and Coercion: The Guaneras of Mejillones, Northern Chile

The guano extraction sites of Mejillones, in the Atacama Desert of northern Chile, were part of a nineteenth-century transnational fertiliser economy that linked South American seabird deposits to European agriculture. Following the War of the Pacific (1879–1884), when Chile annexed formerly Bolivian coastal territories, these sites became frontier enclaves shaped by military consolidation, labour instability, near-slavery working conditions, and extractive capitalism.

Today, the local community seeks official heritage recognition for the guaneras, viewing them as foundational to the city's identity and its early incorporation into the Chilean nation-state. Through a community archaeology project conducted with residents and university students, we have documented both the material remains of guano extraction and evidence of the harsh social conditions under which this industry operated.

Among the findings are concentrated clusters of 7×57 mm Mauser cartridges (manufactured in 1896) scattered across the nearby desert pampa. Spatial analysis informed by battlefield archaeology indicates controlled, unilateral firing rather than open combat. The homogeneity of the ammunition—associated with the Chilean army—suggests institutional armed presence within the productive landscape. These remains point to surveillance, frontier control, or labor discipline in the extractive enclave. Historiographically, guano workers are recognized as early actors in collective labor struggles that later intensified in the nitrate industry.

Rather than presenting the site solely as industrial heritage, this research foregrounds its ambivalent past: war, coercion, and precarious labor embedded in global supply chains. Yet hope emerges through community-led heritage activism and memories of mid-twentieth-century welfare and unionization under Chile's developmental state.

Here, hope is not naïve optimism but radical reclamation: archaeology materializes violence in order to confront it, enabling local actors to transform an extractive landscape into a platform for dignity, recognition, and alternative futures.

Supported by the Fundación de Cultura y Turismo de la Municipalidad de Mejillones

Hanna Steyne

University of Manchester/Wessex Archaeology, United Kingdom

Who Tells Your Story? Diversifying Narratives of the Past through Storytelling as an Archaeological Method

We address the urgent need for diversity in archaeological narratives and propose the integration of story-telling with traditional archaeological methods. Archaeological work has been traditionally carried out by white European, heterosexual, able-bodied men, who in turn have produced archaeological interpretations that mirror and centre their own 'majoritarian' lived experience. Marginalized communities and those who were 'othered' have been actively ignored and excluded from archaeological narratives of the past. By centring the voices of excluded communities and employing storytelling as method, we demonstrate how archaeologists can explore marginalized lives and relationships that are often overlooked in traditional archaeological interpretations. We suggest that using story-telling as method not only enriches archaeological narratives but corrects our understanding of the past, demonstrating the longevity of diversity in past communities. In using story-telling as method this paper/workshop explores a method that ensures that archaeological work is meaningful, matters, and has social justice at its heart.

Adam Swennen

Independent Researcher, Belgium

Resisting Hostile Border Policies in the Southern North Sea: Towards a Creative Public Archaeology of Clandestine Channel Crossings

The borderscape at the northern French and Belgian coast is one marked by the persecution of people on the move and the erasure of their material traces. A public archaeological practice that is co-led by people on the move themselves can not only witness the intricate workings of hostile border policies in this region, but also forefront the lived experience of Channel crossers by employing the affective capacities of the objects they are forced to leave behind to reach a wider audience. The presenter's own research witnessed how material assemblages left behind on the shoreline reveal a kind of structural violence that compels people to erase their personal and political identities, resulting in sensitive story-bearing object ensembles that hold value beyond analysis. Engagement with a wider public therefore holds a potential for archaeology to do more than document, but to create, inspire, and hopefully transform. What is presented in this poster is aspired to be put into practice through a future PhD candidature.

Tommy Theine, Barbara Hausmair & TAGS-Team

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Numbering in Nazi Concentration Camps as a Material Practice: between Hope and Functionality in Material Evidence and Archaeological Perspectives

The numbering of prisoners in Nazi concentration camps was a horrific method used by the Nazis to dehumanize those imprisoned. The assigned numbers were recorded on (metal) tags, on clothing or, in extreme case as Auschwitz-Birkenau, directly on the skin. This markingsystem effectively stripped the prisoners of a significant portion of their identity, replacing their names with a numerical identifier.

Today however, objects bearing these numbers can make a significant contribution to identifying victims of the Nazi regime. It is evident that the numbered objects serve a crucial function in counteracting the impact of identity taken by facilitating the identification of the victims. Some of these objects even show a kind of individualization, particularly noticeable in prisoner tags from the Mauthausen concentration camp. For example, initials or ornamental decorations were carved into them. Initial investigations showed that these were added by the prisoners themselves. Perhaps hoping for an identification if they did not survive the camp, or to keep a tiny part of themselves, so as not to be lost completely. Other individualized objects bearing numbers have also been found at other memorial sites, including bowls and other tableware. These numbered objects were most likely marked in function of property protection, in the hope that items would be returned if they were lost or stolen.

The individualized objects in question demonstrate the limited scope for agency and resistance exhibited by prisoners within the context of a terror regime. However, this could be seen as a modest assertion of individuality, rather than a form of resistance by civil unrest. The presentation will examine the numbered objects in question, which represent a small spark of resistance perhaps fueled by hope, and attempt to contextualize them.

Claudia Theune

University of Vienna, Austria

Hope in Captivity

In light of individual, collective and global crises, theoretical considerations on hope are currently present in various disciplines. Hope is seen as a universal phenomenon, an emotional, action-driven human principle, a source of power and resilience. Hope is thus a form of life characterised by resistance and resilience, hope is followed by action (Byung-Chul Han). Hope leads also to a decision to accept the absurd or the terrible and still take action (Albert Camus). It is a defiant force that means not surrendering to circumstances. Hope is therefore action-oriented; hope promotes motivation-related decisions in relation to individual self-care, a life worth living (Lars Svendsen) or social engagement in a community. It is also significant that looking back at the past can give hope (Andreas Krafft).

Sociological studies have already shown that even in extreme life-threatening situations of mass captivity, social constants and social action still have an effect on one's own identity, dignity and sense of community (Maja Suderland).

Hope, or rather the power that detainees drew from hope, was essential in Nazi concentration camps, as Eugen Kogon and Viktor Frankl mentioned in early eyewitness accounts. In particular, they mention the own agency independently, meaningful actions, and actions that remind them of a good past.

Based on many years of research, I would first like to discuss hope in relation to detainees in Nazi concentration camps, before moving on to a more general discussion of hope in captivity. I will examine whether hope materialized in objects in the extreme situations of captivity, and in what context these objects can be identified archaeologically. Objects such as homemade spoons and shoes have previously been interpreted as material expressions of a physical will to survive. Other objects, such as a small heart, game pieces, or written, floral, and figural forms of expression, show connections to good things from the past and have been discussed in connection with coping strategies. The extent to which these approaches can be extended to hope will be discussed.

Laura Thompson

University of Manchester, United Kingdom

Unboxing the Collection:

Repurposing Dormant Archives as Creative Teaching and Learning Tools

*How can you tell a story about the past when you don't even know where it starts??
Sometimes we have to think outside the box...*

In 2023, The Museums Association declared the “clock is ticking” on archaeological archives with the demand for alternative uses for archival materials at the forefront of the UK heritage sector's agenda (Kendall 2023). Three years on, we are still facing the same issues with unprovenanced and dormant collections remaining under-utilized and perceived as a burden.

Concurrently, discussions around alternative teaching methods in archaeology have turned towards object-based learning and creative research skills proving the benefits of hands-on learning experiences (Wouter and Vansteenhuyse 2025). The struggle comes in finding the learning materials and creating a meaningful way of interacting with them, embracing the stories of the archives and giving more autonomy to the learner.

Through a collaborative making session, I propose to answer both queries: a way to reimagine unprovenanced collections and bring creativity and autonomy into the archaeological learning process. Unboxing the Collection invites participants to engage with my PhD case study, the William Brice Archive housed at the University of Manchester, an under-explored multi-media map of the life and work of an ordinary man with an extraordinary story to share. Using Slow Looking techniques (Mol 2021), participants will reimagine the story of mystery artefacts from the archive and produce an ‘Ode to Objects’ (a sketch, written piece, poem or any combination) contributing to the artefact's archaeological record.

With nearly two-thousand largely unprovenanced artefacts ranging from prehistoric handaxes to 1940s newspapers and pressed flowers, the William Brice Archive is an example of how even the abandoned mementos of a 20th century polymath can become an inspiration for creative storytelling and create new narratives to transform unprovenanced archives into valuable and unique teaching tools.

Pavel Vařeka¹, James Symonds², Tomáš Pancíř¹, Roman Křivánek¹, Petr Netolický¹ & Zdeňka Vařeková¹

¹University of West Bohemia, Czech Republic, ²University of Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Hope in the Liberated Pilsen 1945. Archaeology of the 109th Evacuation Hospital

The liberation of European countries occupied by Nazi Germany brought hope for a safe and free life. Recent archaeological research in Pilsen focuses on the hitherto neglected material traces of the U.S. Army's liberation and presence in Pilsen in 1945. The city was liberated on May 6, 1945, by the 16th Armoured Division of the U.S. Army, and memories of the field hospital established in Bory Park are still associated with the first post-war months. Staff of the 109th Evacuation Hospital saved lives by providing medical care to the local civilian population as well as survivors of Nazi prison camps. The research combines field examination of the hospital remains, oral history, and documentation of artefacts linked to the presence of the U.S. Army in Pilsen, which are still kept in the homes of Pilsen residents. Mapping of the hospital's location showed that it is currently overbuilt, but the remains of the camp where hospital staff were housed from May to September 1945 are very well preserved below the current ground level. Using geophysical, metal detector surveys, and test pitting, it was possible to identify the entire layout of the camp and reveal the locations of the tents. Everyday life in the camp is elucidated by lost and discarded items, some of which document the medical care provided. Some artefacts reflect the journey of the Evacuation Hospital through Europe, which it made together with General Patton's 3rd Army, such as a British coin or a commemorative medallion from Paris. Members of the Tommy & Yankee military history club, which reconstructed the hospital in Šafaříkovy sady in the city centre as part of the Pilsen Liberation Festival in 2025, were involved in identifying military items.

Elisabeth Waldhart

University of Innsbruck, Austria

Peace, Love, and What Was Left Over. Hints on Counter-Culture from a 1980s Waste Assemblage from Schloss Trautson (Tyrol, Austria)?

Between 2020 and 2022, archaeological excavations at the ruined castle of Schloss Trautson (Tyrol, Austria) uncovered several waste pits dating to the 1980s. The material, as well as the question of how and why it came to be deposited at this site, form the starting point of my ongoing PhD project. The assemblage consists predominantly of food packaging, household-related items, kitchen equipment, and materials associated with do-it-yourself activities.

Oral testimonies and self-published writings identify the castle's final occupants as a Viennese couple connected to Lebensreform movements and hippy worldviews, who appear to have spent the summer months at Trautson together with mutual friends. Both were well-known public figures within Vienna's cultural and intellectual life and came from aristocratic family backgrounds.

In my presentation, I explore whether it is possible to connect the couple's (in many respects extraordinary) lives with the everyday objects they left behind. By identifying notable items within the assemblage and drawing on comparative archaeological studies, I examine whether their subcultural background is reflected in their patterns of consumption, or whether the material record largely aligns with broader contemporary practices. Against the backdrop of their known socio-economic status and lifestyle, I further investigate how these factors may have shaped their worldview, ideas of community, and use of material resources.

Special attention is given to practices of consumption and disposal in order to assess what the assemblage may reveal about the couple's visions of a (better) future and their awareness of the environmental impact of waste. More broadly, the presentation seeks to trace connections between the subcultural and utopian ideas expressed in written sources and the recovered material culture. Given the central role of spiritual and individual growth in their writings, I ask how notions of hope and future-oriented thinking can be identified within this case study.

Jobbe Wijnen

Independent Researcher, The Netherlands

Hope! The Core of Contemporary Archaeology

In this paper I will argue that hope is at the core of our trade. Contemporary archaeology has come a long way since its inception in the early 2000s. Despite almost three decades of ample interest from more traditional peers, limited funding, and our own ever continuing struggle to define the nature of our contribution, we, as a community, are still here!

Using the Pull Tab Archaeology project and Project Wyldemerck as examples, I will argue that one explanation for this perseverance is that hope is at the core of contemporary archaeology. Drawing on Vaclav Havel's famous poem, I will argue that it is the hope within contemporary archaeology which gives us the strength to live and continually try new things and that this will continue to nurture, sustain and materialize wellbeing for humanity and all other species on earth.

Geesche Wilts

Carl-Albrechts-Universität Kiel, Germany

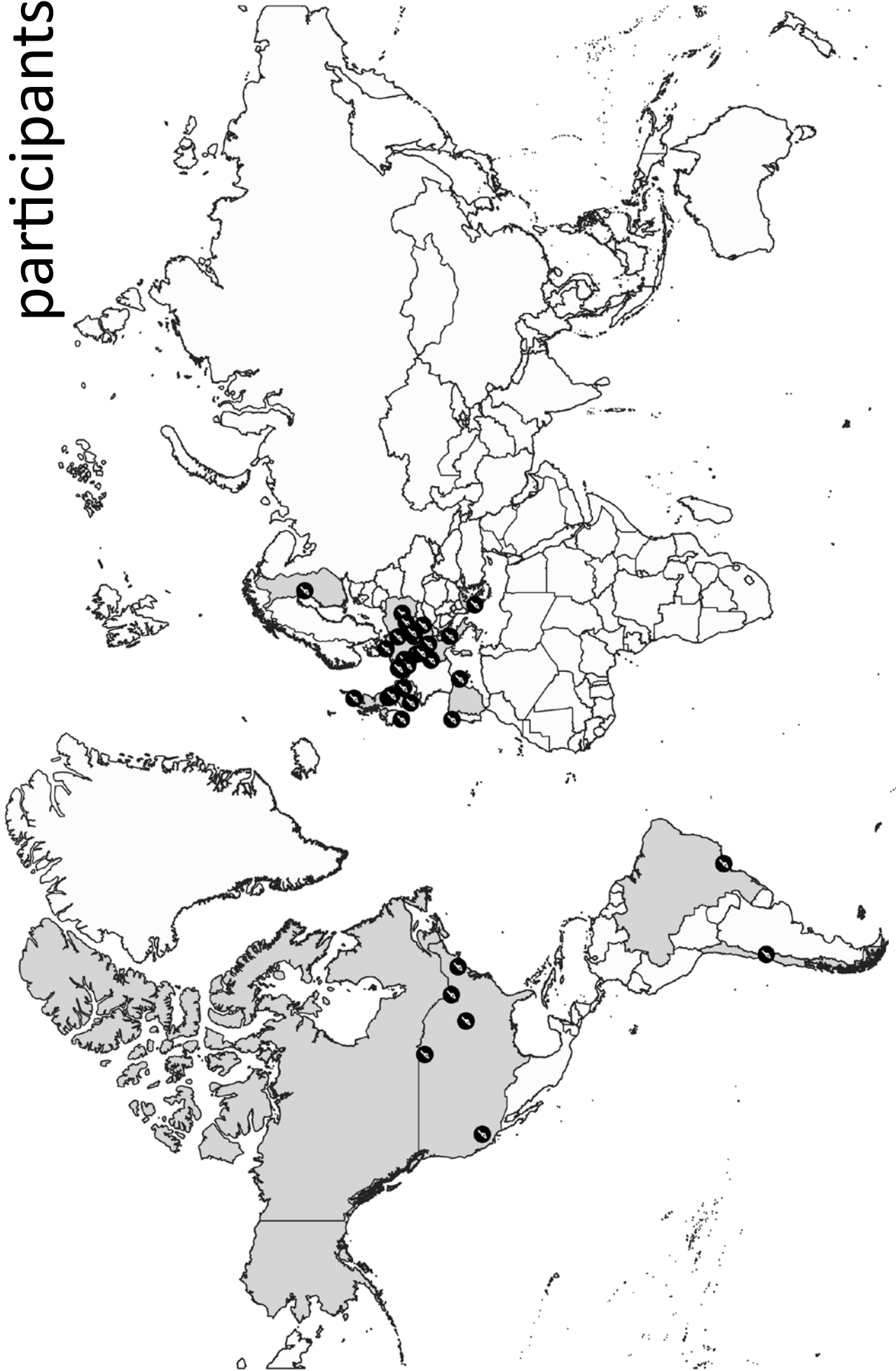
Hope Documented: Traces of Refugees on Lampedusa

The project “The Archaeological Documentation of Refugee Boats” focuses on the recent migration situation on the island of Lampedusa, repeatedly documenting moments of hope, the traces left by refugees upon their arrival in Europe.

In 2023, the documentation of refugee boats took place during a major migration crisis. Within less than a week, more than 10,000 refugees arrived on the small Mediterranean island. It was possible to document the boats used in this situation, mostly metal vessels. The construction techniques were improvised, with metal plates usually only about 1 mm thick. These boats are among the most deadly types used to cross the Mediterranean Sea, as even a single wave can cause them to sink. It appears that the only material truly holding these boats together is the hope carried in the hearts of the refugees.

Comparing this documentation with higher quality wooden boats from other periods shows a clear discrepancy between the types of vessels used to cross the Mediterranean. Particularly striking is the difference in safety factors among the various boats. The findings recorded on Lampedusa document two key aspects: the situations that force people to make the crossing, and the hopeful moment of arrival. At this point, objects are often left behind in situ. These clusters of finds make the moment of surviving archaeologically visible. This moment, and the hope for a future, which begins at the moment of arrival can be shown in the documented finding structures.

Hello CHAT participants!



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