

Title of the symposium:

Landscape trajectories during the long Anthropocene: dialogues between ecology and archaeology

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Symposium abstract

From the micro to the global scale, the human impact is the real protagonist of the Anthropocene across the long-term timescale.

It is impossible to look at the environment and the landscape without considering the long

processes of anthropic activities. The driving forces in landscape change are strongly related to historical dynamics. Changes in political regimes, social structures, economic modes of productions, cultural and religious influences – all the traditional domain of the Humanities – are phenomena entangled with many ecological and environmental factors. Understanding landscapes in the Anthropocene is impossible today without a cross-disciplinary approach. During the last few decades, the discipline of Archaeology has especially increased its focus on human-environment interactions and landscape formative-processes.

Landscape trajectories can be investigated through two different points of view. Vanished landscapes are the main object of study for many “archaeologies” (landscape archaeology; environmental archaeology; geoarchaeology) and “paleo” disciplines (paleoecology; paleoclimatology; paleogeography) that aim to reconstruct the non-visible past. The second approach focuses on the contemporary landscape as a palimpsest formed by various historical layers in which evidence of the relationship between the human footprint and ecological patterns can be detected.

Nevertheless, both of these approaches, one based on “hidden traces” and the other on current layered contexts, share a concept of Landscape as a complex and heterogeneous mosaic of spaces where it is possible to read both the temporal dynamics (historical stratification) and the specific characteristics of individual patches situated in various ecotopes, a series of hierarchical relationships between climatic conditions, substrates, landforms, soils, vegetation and human activities.

The main aim in this session is to combine and stimulate an interdisciplinary debate between the (many) Archaeologies, Landscape Ecology and Environmental Studies in order to address the following issues across different regions all over the world.

The following themes will be explored:

- Methods for multi-disciplinary analysis of formation, change, abandonment and resilience in rural landscapes (from Prehistory to the Present day);
- Archaeology as an “ecological” discipline;
- Historical perspectives of relationships between man and plants (domestication, introduction, extinction, cultivation, exploitation and disturbance of natural vegetation) in forming the plant landscape;
- Anthropocene landscapes: evaluating the human impact on the landscape from historical and ecological perspectives.

Contributions regarding different geographical areas and focusing on the session’s key themes from Archaeological and/or Ecological disciplines will be strongly encouraged (single excavations contextualised in a wider territorial context; regional and micro-regional data from survey and landscape archaeology projects) as well as broader overviews.

The papers in this session will offer a methodological dialogue between historical and archaeological issues and landscape ecology.

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Why your symposium will improve landscape ecology science?

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This session aims to create a space for dialogues between Archaeology and Landscape Ecology. Currently, there are several projects and research, both from the archaeological side and from ecological and environmental perspectives, that are focused on historical landscapes and the impacts of human activities in the environment, i.e. the Anthropocene. This interdisciplinary debate on landscape trajectories, across different times and geographical areas, will be a fruitful occasion where some historical and archaeological issues can be incorporated within Landscape Ecology research and some theoretical and methodological tools of Landscape Ecology can be tested in the reconstruction of past landscapes and societies.

Broad thematic areas

1st choice: History, dynamic and transformations of landscapes

2nd choice: Vegetation science and landscape ecology

Free Keywords

Landscape Archaeology; Bio and Environmental Archaeology; Historical Ecology; Historical Vegetation Science; Landscape change; Human-Environment interactions

Outcomes of symposium

Book (to be negotiated) with *UNIPA Springer Series*