

SESSION PROPOSAL

Adapting to Diversity: Holocene Hunter-Gatherers in Varied World Landscapes

Organisers: Federica Fontana¹, Jacek Kabaciński², Graeme Warren³

¹ Università di Ferrara, Dipartimento di Studi Umanistici Sezione di Scienze Preistoriche e Antropologiche, FERRARA, Italy; email: federica.fontana@unife.it

² Institute of Archaeology and Ethnology, Polish Academy of Sciences, POZNAN, Poland; email: jacek.kabacinski@interia.pl

³ University College of Dublin, School of Archaeology, DUBLIN, Ireland; email: graeme.warren@ucd.ie

Keywords: Holocene, Hunter-Gatherers, subsistence, settlement, technology, symbolic behaviour

The defining feature of the Holocene is the global rise in temperatures that marked the end of the last glacial cycle. This major climatic transition concluded a process that had begun during the terminal Pleistocene, fostering the development of diverse ecological niches across the continents.

In terms of social dynamics, these processes were accompanied by a general demographic increase and a geographical redistribution of human communities across the planet. New territories—particularly those in the lower latitudes of the Northern Hemisphere and in mountain regions—became available for occupation, while coastal areas were progressively reduced in extent, forcing human groups to reorganize their settlement.

During this period—particularly in its early phases in some parts of the planet Earth—certain human groups began transitioning toward agriculture and herding, while in most other regions hunting, gathering, and fishing remained the primary subsistence strategies. In the millennia that followed, the new economies spread at varying paces depending on the region, progressively reducing the areas occupied by hunter-gatherer communities.

This session welcomes contributions—at a global scale—focusing on how hunter-gatherer groups adapted to the diverse landscapes that emerged during the Holocene, maintaining a long-term perspective from the beginning of the period to the present day. Contributions may address any aspect of human adaptation, including settlement patterns, mobility, subsistence strategies, technological developments, and ritual or symbolic behaviors.