Before, during and after the Big Dry — Exploring the Gravettian and Epigravettian occupation of Europe

Keywords: Late Pleistocene; Gravettian; Epigravettian; LGM; climate change; human resilience

Main Organizer:
Philip R. Nigst
Department of Prehistoric and Historical Archaeology & Human Evolution and Archaeological Sciences (HEAS), University of Vienna, Austria

Co-Organizer:
Marjolein D. Bosch
Vienna Institute for Archaeological Science & Human Evolution and Archaeological Sciences (HEAS), University of Vienna, Vienna, Austria

Soňia Boriová
Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic

Martin Novák
Institute of Archaeology of the Czech Academy of Sciences, Brno, Czech Republic

Laëtitia Demay
UMR 7194 HNHP CNRS/MNHN/UPVD, Paris, France

Samuel Kasemann
Center for Museum Collections Management, University for Continuing Education Krems, Krems, Austria

Abstract:

Climate change — and the associated environmental transformations — has long posed fundamental challenges to all life forms, including human populations. During the Late Pleistocene, the amplitude, frequency, and severity of climatic fluctuations produced highly variable environmental conditions. Such variability had profound implications for faunal communities and, critically, for human adaptive strategies, influencing patterns of mobility, subsistence, and technological organisation. Within the European archaeological record, these challenges became particularly pronounced in the millennia preceding the Last Glacial Maximum (LGM), when human groups were compelled to negotiate increasingly harsh and unpredictable environments.

This session is focused on the time window between 31,000 and 14,000 years ago, the time leading up to, during and after the LGM—a time window characterised by substantial changes in moisture availability (aridity), temperature and primary biomass production. Within European archaeological record this time window is represented by assemblages assigned to the Gravettian and Epigravettian technocomplexes in Central, Southern and Eastern Europe.

This session invites interdisciplinary contributions that explore the Gravettian and Epigravettian occupation of Europe, specifically hunter-gatherer populations' responses to climate change and their landscape use strategies. We especially encourage submissions presenting preliminary reports of new fieldwork and research conducted by early career scientists. Themes include, but are not limited to, changes in food webs; shifts in raw material exploitation and supply networks; human—animal interactions; changes in prey exploitation patterns; variation in technological organisation against a climate background; variation in the degree of fire use; and site formation studies. By bringing together new field and laboratory studies from an array of disciplines, the session endeavours to shed light on environmentally-driven adaptations and human resilience in deep time.

We dedicate this session to the memory of Pierre Noiret.