

**ROUND TABLE TITLE:**           **Down from the ivory tower: archaeology beyond university**

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**ROUND TABLE PROPOSAL:**

Archaeology is often perceived as a discipline of experts utilising sophisticated methods to establish 'facts' about the past. Although most would accept that public engagement forms an important part of modern archaeology, this tends to take the form of briefing the public about discoveries made by specialist archaeologists. In contrast, enabling members of the community to create their own understandings of the past, and do archaeology for themselves, transforms our role from expert archaeologists providing all the answers, to facilitator, aiding others in finding their own questions for exploring the past more fully.

The opportunity to create their own understandings of the past can be extremely empowering for individuals and communities outside the academic field. Engaging positively with communities in facilitating their own production of archaeological narratives may not only restore a sense of ownership but also help address other important issues such as social exclusion, educational disadvantage and diversity. Inviting participation in archaeology can widen the research base and the range of interpretive possibilities to the benefit of the academic perspective and involving broader sections of the community in archaeological interpretation will undoubtedly greatly enhance the relevance of archaeology.

In this session we would like to hear people's accounts and/or case studies of projects that have involved communities and the wider public in archaeological research. We are not only looking for success stories but genuinely wish to learn from each other's experiences, both positive and negative, with a view of building a strong field of public and community archaeology.

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