


CfP EAA 2021: “Between variability and singularity: crossing theoretical, qualitative and computer-based approaches to types and typologies in archaeology”

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While the notion of the “type” and the integration of such types into typological systems played a vital role in the development of archaeology as a discipline, there has been a recent loss of innocence. Either deemed boring or practically fetishized, types and typologies continue to form important cornerstones of many culture-historical schemes and practices; they are used vicariously for inference-based dating, are often attributed cultural, historical or even quasi-ethnic meaning and typological change is read to imply societal transformation. Promoting the type concept and mobilising typologies is undoubtedly value-laden as well as theory-laden, even if only implicitly so. For many, the very term “typology” has thus become a battleground of seemingly incompatible archaeological research epistemologies, for instance reflected in a persistent rhetoric pitching so-called “typologists” against “technologists” in lithic studies and beyond. There is good reason to believe, however, that such inflammations have clouded our view of the utility and diversity of types in archaeology. A similar rhetoric also undermines any true community effort of developing and refining type concepts and type-based approaches to the past. Yet, recent developments both in computational archaeology and archaeological theory have begun to challenge some of these premises, opening up promising avenues of reflection, inquiry and interdisciplinary research.

This session seeks to identify, review and discuss these emerging perspectives. It is based on the ambition to revisit the “type” as an analytical and theoretical concept in order to re-activate type-sensitive archaeological research or to develop genuine alternatives. We invite scholars from varying backgrounds to interrogate our apprehension of types, and to re-consider the basic explanatory value of types and typologies, especially so *vis-à-vis* computer-based methods, emerging theoretical frameworks and, more generally, the consequences of such approaches and research frameworks for our understanding of types and typological thinking as core concepts of archaeological practice.