

CALL FOR PAPERS



27th Neolithic Seminar
Ljubljana, 7th-8th
November 2025

Neolithic ontologies

Rethinking radical alterity of the Eurasian Neolithics

There is a renewed hope that the past is ultimately knowable — an optimism that science can answer almost any question about it. We are witnessing a surge in scientific narratives about the Neolithic, written in terms of the natural sciences and presented as more rigorous than traditional archaeological methods. This is an exciting time, as our knowledge of the past has expanded exponentially.

However, this scientific turn has also led to increasingly simplified views of the past. The Neolithic is often interpreted through the lens of modern Western categories and framed by the positivist logic of scientific knowledge.

The Neolithic was profoundly distinct. People saw and interacted with the world in ways that were radically unlike our own. If we accept that Neolithic ways of life were not just different “cultures” or “beliefs” describing the same objective reality but entirely other ways of being, we must also acknowledge that their worlds were made up of entirely different things—unique entities, relationships, and processes.

This seminar emphasizes the importance of recognizing and engaging with the alterity of the Neolithic. What were unique Neolithic entities, things and relationships? Can we generate the conceptual shifts necessary to understand what these things were in their context? Can archaeology uncover the transformative powers embedded in different ways of life, offering new conceptual understandings of the past? Can we understand and appreciate this radical alterity without assimilating it into our worldview? Can we focus on the specificity of material culture and its ability to challenge established concepts and grand narratives, such as domestication, the Neolithic revolution, and food production?

Ultimately, this is a call to explore and embrace difference. It challenges traditional narratives and foundational assumptions about the Neolithic, presenting an open-ended invitation to think deeply about its alterity, an attempt to rethink and reimagine the Neolithic in all its diversity.

Please submit your abstract by 1st July 2025 via dimitrij.mlekuz@ff.uni-lj.si



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