**What do the monuments stand for? Materiality of Roman architecture**

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*Abstract*:

What and how do the monuments communicate? In this session we want to explore the mediating role of Roman architecture. Objects mediate between people in a range of ways, and in so doing are essential from their part to the way that selves are constructed in relation to others - i.e. to intersubjectivity (for the full discussion, see Gardner 2003, 2-5). In recent archaeological, and indeed interdisciplinary, discussions objects are given agency, better repositioning of human is searched for and the white western nature of the ‘human’ is questioned; these discussions have reached Roman archaeology, too (Mol 2023). Nevertheless, the extent to which such ‘material turn’ would help archaeology has been questioned (Gardner 2021), even if the essence of archaeology as the study of ‘things’ cannot be underestimated.

Roman towns were full of buildings that created different kinds of urban landscapes that affected people’s senses. The Roman architecture could be grandiose and massive, full of decorations and friezes. As monuments, the buildings stood for something and they conveyed different ideas and messages (e.g. Zanker 1990). But whose messages they communicated and what was their reception? Could the Roman monuments have unintended connotations? Do they still stand for something? And can we always understand their messages? Or is our perception of these monuments affected by older archaeological theories?

This session invites the interpretations and re-interpretations of pre-Roman and Roman monuments in the core and periphery of the Roman Empire. In addition, the assessment of their reception in the later periods can be explored as well. Especially welcome are contributions that discuss different ontological questions related to monuments.

**References**

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