

Call for Papers: Technologies of Daily Life (TODL) in Ancient Greece

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The Ancient Greeks are renowned as creators of political, social and artistic inventions, for example democracy, trial by jury, symposia, drama, realistic (mimetic) sculpture, and the classical architectural orders with columns, triangular pediments and tiled roofs. As the last examples make clear, the Greeks were creative with things as well as with concepts and ideas. The extraordinary achievements of the ancient Greeks were supported and enabled by technologies that they invented and then applied in daily life. For example, the Athenians used a machine called a kleroterion to select jurors randomly, and a sort of stopwatch to ensure plaintiffs and defendants had equal time to persuade the jury of their case. The Hippocratics reduced fractures and dislocations using a variety of ordinary and special devices, such as ladders and little leather balls respectively.

And the Spartans collectively recognized the impact that a particular technology (precious metal coins) had on society by deliberately rejecting them, in order to try to create and preserve equality between citizens.

Things, aka technologies, are society made durable, argued Bruno Latour.(1)

Why do technologies disappear in plain sight when they become commonplace, so that the word 'technology' is associated strongly, especially in our own perceptions, with new devices? Studying the place and role of technologies in daily life offers us a new route to engage with the ancient Greeks, especially relations of power and domination between people. The social fabric of ancient Greece was woven through everyday technologies and techniques. Girls learned how to manipulate special tools and machines to make thread and cloth. Boys learned how to manipulate other tools and machines to make food and drink. The Greeks built their houses by processing a variety of stones and woods into walls, doors and roofs, and furnished them by processing other materials into pots, baskets and beds. Metals were mined and transformed into coins, pans, tools, trinkets and weapons. Water was piped into town centres, and drains were dug to run out of them. Locks and keys kept temple treasures safe, and kept town gates shut to protect the inhabitants. Cranes lifted and lowered loads, carts transported people and goods, ships caught the wind, and nets, rods and traps caught fish.

Proposals for papers are invited on all such aspects of technologies and techniques in the ancient Greek world. Questions could include: What technologies were contained or embodied in a typical Archaic, Classical or Hellenistic Greek home? Who made and used them? Were Odysseus' DIY skills typical or unusual? What was distinctive about professionally-made items?

How, where and when did novices learn specialized techniques of production or service provision? Which ancient Greek technologies persisted, even to our own times?

Keynote speaker: Serafina Cuomo, Birkbeck College London, on the Foundry vase

Please send proposals, which should include an abstract of about 200 words and 5 keywords, and a brief CV, to t.e.rihl@swansea.ac.uk, e.bracke@swansea.ac.uk or TotelinLM@cardiff.ac.uk by 15 January 2015.

Speakers' costs will be met in whole or in part (depending on our success with further fundraising).

To widen access to the subject of the conference, we are also organising a local schools' day, with hands-on activities (which may be made available to conference delegates too if there is sufficient demand): see <http://swwclassicalassociation.weebly.com/todl-technology-workshop.html> for more details.

These events have been made possible thanks to the generosity of the Society for the Promotion of Hellenic Studies and the College of Arts and Humanities at Swansea University.

(1) In J. Law (ed) *A sociology of monsters: essays on power, technology and domination* [A special issue of *The Sociological Review*] 1991: 103-131, at 103.