
Lithospaces vs territories : a journey through space and time.

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Résumé

In Palaeolithic studies, territories are most often seen as congruent with lithospaces, even though a few studies avoid the trap. Mostly lithospaces are simplistically drawn following maps illustrating raw material procurement. Not only are such procurements tied to the availability and quality of georesources, but they also depend upon technical and cultural limitations, as the use of the *chaîne opératoire* concept and the ethnographic records tell us. Technical limitations require attention be paid to the aspect and quality of the raw materials available: stretch and thickness modulus, roundness *vs* angulation of natural faces, weight, cortex modifications, conchoidal fracturing... since tool-making began, all human groups have needed to consider these constraints.

Cultural limitations refer to the position in space of the resource (its association or otherwise with other specific items; concept of establishing an itinerary); resource morphology (global shape, fragmentation), its colour(s)... These considerations are often denied to ancient humanities - including Neandertals – and using ethnographic knowledge as a proper reference point is not widely undertaken by archaeologists who generally use it with reluctance.

On the basis of new Palaeolithic studies performed in East and North Africa and in Europe, we have made a diachronic examination of the relationships between different humanities and the lithic environment (the lithospace), to demonstrate how an optimised petroarchaeological approach to lithic resources allows a revision of procurement maps and how by taking some ethnographical visions of territories into account, it is possible to broaden attitudes and look at Palaeolithic territories from a new and different perspective.

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