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# Becoming Specialist – Losing Knowledge: lithic artefact manufacture during the 4th and 3rd mil. BC in the Rhineland (Western Germany)

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## Abstract

For many Central European Neolithic contexts we would assume, that lithic artefact manufacture was a routine task aiming at producing an almost standardized set of artefacts (sometimes described as "Neolithic tool kit"). However, a closer look reveals regional and diachronic differences that might be explained by differences in the knowledge of lithic artefact manufacture.

A striking example is the development of lithic artefact production during the 4th mil. BC in Western Germany (and beyond). While lithic assemblages of the earlier Neolithic periods (Linearbandkeramik, Grossgartach, Roessen, Michelsberg 5500-3500 BC) are characterized by the production of regular blades that were modified further, the later Neolithic tool production (from 3500 BC onwards) is marked by flakes with retouches that hardly conform to our notion of lithic artefacts in the narrower sense. Analysis of lithic assemblages creates an impression of "loss of knowledge" for these later Neolithic periods. At the same time, exceptional artefacts like Grand Pressigny blades or remarkably long blades made from Rijckholt flint appear in the archaeological record, reflecting a growing division of labor in the context of raw material acquisition and related to this in the manufacture of certain types of artefacts. However, the existence of full-time specialists is highly debated, even for the later Neolithic periods.

If we want to understand these developments we have to have a closer look on raw material acquisition, subsistence strategies, social organization and settlement structures of these societies i.e. a contextual approach is needed.

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