Forming Material Egypt: 
from conference to publication in changing times

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The Conference Award and Call for Papers

In 2012, on behalf of the UCL Institute of Archaeology (10A) Research Group Material Culture of Predynastic and Early Egypt, and after discussion with Paolo Del Vesco, postdoctoral Marie Curie Fellow at UCL, Stephen Quirke applied with the help of postdoctoral Marie Curie Fellow Gianluca Miniaci for the 10A conference award, offered each year in competition to staff in support of an international conference to be held the following year. The postdoctoral research project of Del Vesco is M A K A N - M o v i n g A r c h a e o l o g i c a l K n o w l e d g e A w a y from Neo-colonialism, and the project outline included the proposal for a major conference to address past-present-future issues that seem ever more acute as the decade progresses, though the problems have been alive from well before the January 2011 revolution. From the outset, the aim behind Forming Material Egypt was for a conference to unite Egyptian academics with their foreign colleagues in a direct assessment of the future for Egyptian archaeology, in a forum that would produce useful discussions for those in Egypt and abroad directly on the ground and at policy-making level. The application was successful, and supporting participants were found in the Friends of the Petrie Museum, the Centre for Cultural, Literary and Postcolonial Studies (CCLPS) at the School of Oriental and African Studies, University of London, and the Egypt Exploration Society (EES). An organising committee was set up, comprising representatives of these participants, and including, at a distance, colleagues in Fayoum and Cairo Universities. The key figure in preparation and delivery was Del Vesco, as principal co-organiser in the formation of the conference, in the organising committee, in online publication of, first the abstracts, then the papers, and finally, and crucially, in ensuring the successful running of the conference in May.