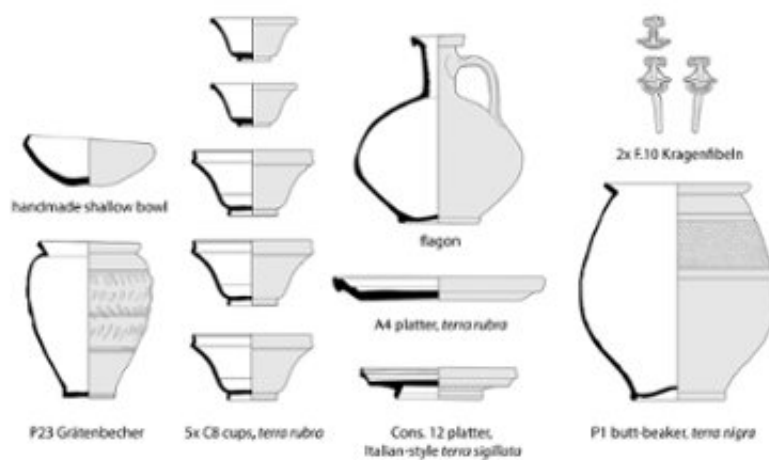


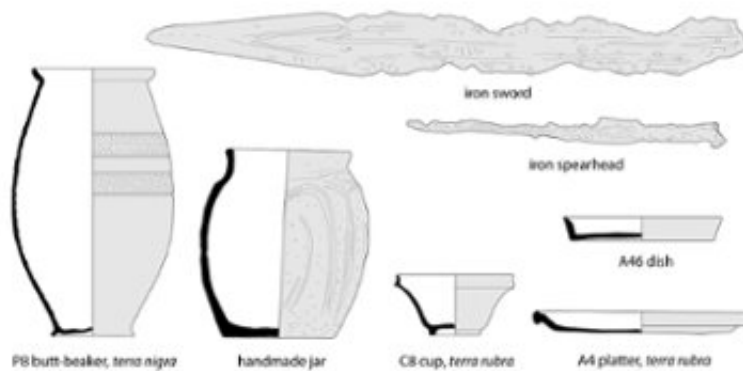
# A manifesto for investigating the impacts of object flows on past societies: Objectscapes

April 21 2021

Trier Valeriusstrasse (St. Matthias) grave, 1928



Lebach grave 106



Credit: Leiden University

World history is often framed in terms of flows of people and migration: humans coming 'out of Africa,' the spread of farmers in the Holocene, Phoenician and Greek diasporas over the ancient Mediterranean, the colonization of the world by Europeans from the 16th century onwards. Together with his Exeter colleague Dr. Martin Pitts, Professor Miguel John Versluys wrote a manifesto in which they argue that world history is also about the flows of objects and proposes the concept of 'objectscapes' to illuminate the impacts of objects on (past) societies.

## **Theoretical goals**

The VICI program Innovating objects. The impact of global connections and the formation of the Roman Empire (ca. 200-30 BC), coordinated by Professor M.J. Versluys, moves into its final, synthesizing phase. "One of the theoretical goals of the project is the development of the concept of the 'objectscape.'" Versluys explains. This idea is now presented and discussed in "A Manifesto for Investigating the Impact of Object Flows on Past Societies," published Open Access in the current issue of the journal *Antiquity*.

## **Relationality**

"The concept of 'objectscapes' should illuminate the impacts of objects on (past) societies, as a practical tool to develop new kinds of histories of human-thing entanglements, in which objects-in-motion have roles to play—beyond representation—over both the short- and long-term."

An objectscape refers to the material and stylistic properties of a repertoire of objects in a given period and geographical range. "This, therefore, maps a portion of space-time. Studying objectscales entails putting the relationality of material culture at the center of analysis and asks questions of cultural formation on that basis."

The [concept](#) may prove as especially relevant to the study of globalizing scenarios. Society is suddenly exposed to larger and denser networks of people and things moving in ever greater numbers and frequency.

**More information:** Martin Pitts et al. Objectscapes: a manifesto for investigating the impacts of object flows on past societies, *Antiquity* (2021). [DOI: 10.15184/aqy.2020.148](https://doi.org/10.15184/aqy.2020.148)

Provided by Leiden University

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