

Exploring Connections in the Past: Material Culture and Network Analysis

The 2016-2017 Ashby Dialogues on the use of network analysis in archaeological research were very successful. As planned, we met roughly once a month (for a total of five meetings plus the public lecture) in Graham 421, which has a large conference table. At these lunch meetings, we provided water bottles and had Jimmy Johns sandwiches delivered, and this was definitely a draw for students and faculty alike. A Canvas site was created in order to recruit students from the Archaeology Program and its contributing departments (Anthropology, Classical Studies, Geography, and History), advertise the events, and disseminate reading materials. We also posted flyers for each lunch meeting, and the public lecture. The flyers for the public lecture were mailed in addition to community members who belong to the local chapter of the Archaeological Institute of America.

One of the reasons for choosing the topic of network analysis was its complex nature and the feeling that we could all benefit from gathering to discuss the use of this approach to analyze archaeological data. The book chapter or journal article was distributed ahead of time via our Canvas site. These reading materials were selected by the faculty member in the Archaeology Program who volunteered to lead the discussion for that day (the schedule and topic of each meeting is included below). We also benefited from Amélia Polónia (University of Porto, Portugal)'s visit to campus as an Erasmus scholar in November. As someone who has actually published on network analysis, her insight into the process, presentation of the software possibilities, and discussion of her research were very helpful.

It was our hope that the inclusion of both faculty and students in the discussions of network analysis would ensure that we were making an extra effort to clarify our understanding of network analysis and that the level of discourse was accessible to all. In the end, I suspect that many of the students still felt intimidated by the concepts presented in the readings, and despite our efforts, student input to the discussions was not as frequent as hoped. That being said, the students did continue to attend the monthly meetings, and a fringe benefit of the Ashby Dialogues was the creation of a much stronger sense of community among the students and faculty in the Archaeology Program.

In April 2017, Thomas Tartaron (Penn) gave a public lecture on his recently published work on Maritime networks in the Mycenaean world. The public event was very well attended, with approximately 65 people (students, faculty, and community members) in attendance. The lecture itself was preceded by a wine and cheese reception, and then followed by a dinner for 13 at Lucky 32. The guests at dinner included 1 student, 4 community members, the speaker, and 7 academics.

Overall, the Ashby Dialogues were a boon to the students and faculty in the Archaeology Program and its contributing departments. We are very grateful to the College of Arts and Sciences for its support. Not only has our understanding of network analysis improved, but our archaeological community on campus has also become stronger. Finally, one of our faculty members, inspired by our Ashby Dialogues, has applied for funding to collaborate with colleagues on campus in order to pursue this type of analysis in his research.

Schedule for *Exploring Connections*:

Friday, November 4: 12:30-1:45, Graham 421

Connecting the Dots: What is network analysis and how do archaeologists use it?

Maura Heyn, Classical Studies, UNCG

Wednesday, November 16: 12:30-1:45, Graham 421

Network analysis - What is in it for Early Modern History? Some insights

Amélia Polónia, University of Porto, Portugal

Friday, January 20, 12:30-1:45, Graham 421

Networks and Paleolithic Archaeology

Charles Egeland, Anthropology, UNCG

Friday, February 17, 12:30-1:45, Graham 421

Social Networks in the Southwest

Linda Stine, Anthropology, UNCG

Friday, March 24, 12:30-1:45, Graham 421

Social Networks and Funerary Ritual in the Wari Empire

Donna Nash, Anthropology, UNCG

Thursday, April 20, 6:30-7:30pm, MHRA 1215

Maritime Networks in the Mycenaean World

Thomas Tartaron, University of Pennsylvania