



CHAT|HOPE

Innsbruck

29.–31.10.2026

Call for Papers CHAT HOPE

University of Innsbruck, Austria, 29-31 October 2026

In times of permanent crisis – political, ecological, social, economic and existential – it is urgent to talk seriously about the idea of hope. Whether we believe the "doomsday clock" is at 89 seconds to midnight or already five minutes past, the monumental path of destruction ahead appears overwhelming. It is easy to feel lost – yet, hope persists, rooted in past and current successes that envision genuine alternatives, both in defiance and care.

- What forms can hope take when the future feels so profoundly threatened and at stake?
- How can hope be nurtured, sustained, materialised, or eroded?
- And how can archaeology, with its capacity to trace the past and recover what was thought lost, help us find and strengthen hope in order to contribute to the fight for an alternative future?

Recovering the future buried in the rubble requires more than countering despair with naive optimism or lamenting the excesses of capitalism. Hope can be used as a framework for imagining and presencing alternative futures—such visions have always existed, hidden in the dark and the cracks of dominant systems, around the globe and across the recent centuries. Pre-figurative politics have created their own alternatives: environmentalist, feminist, and peace movements; peasant, labour, or unemployed protests; anti-deportation, indigenous and abolition activisms; utopian and communal settlements; and many other examples. These struggles, echoing our call for dignity, have left material traces in an archaeological record that reflects wild possibilities. By foregrounding such sites and the past aspirations they represent, hope can be an anchor and inspiration when embarking on new paths. Let us explore the radical heritage of hope at this year's CHAT.

The 2026 conference will take place in Innsbruck, a city nestled among alpine peaks and valleys—a landscape that has historically demanded human endurance, adaptation, and imaginative solutions. We seek contributions that explore how hope operates as a material, political, and affective force in the past and present; how hope shapes/enriches struggles of people's lives; and how it becomes tangible in residues, material structures and spaces, objects of resistance, and in acts of care for our planet and society.

We seek archaeological case studies, theoretical reflections, and creative formats that trace the material and emotional geographies of hope in sites such as: peace, disarmament and anti-nuclear protests, anti-deportation and abolition activisms, environmental action, utopian and communal

settlements, workers' and unemployed movements, queer and crip activism, indigenous empowerment, resistance in contexts of mass violence, youth camps, or countless other contexts where people envisioned alternative worlds. We invite submissions that explore these themes and current approaches to the contemporary past, from both known and new CHAT participants.

Additional thematic suggestions are provided below:

We welcome reflections on the multiple genealogies and contradictions of hope:

- Radical and collective hope: hope as faith in the possibility of change and an open future, grounded in the memory of past struggles and the persistence of solidarity.
- Messianic hope: salvation deferred or redemption expected, echoing through religious, utopian, and millenarian movements.
- Passive-escapist and crushing hope: quiet endurance, naive optimism, or reactionary forms of hoping, top-down strategies for making hope impossible, and their entanglements with despair, passivity and capital.

How can we recognise, document, and interpret hope archaeologically?

- Objects, sites, and landscapes as bearers and heritage of hope.
- Hope amidst destruction: finding and sustaining hope when homes, communities, and memories are shattered by war, displacement, or ecological collapse.
- Hope beyond crisis: investigating hope through the tangible traces of everyday acts of care, maintenance and communising.

What hope do we envision for the future of Contemporary Archaeology itself?

- How will archaeology endure and evolve amidst growing authoritarian regimes, funding cuts, and nationalist attempts to (re)appropriate heritage?
- Can archaeology, as practice, method, and ethics, help us cultivate radical hope amid despair?

Contributions can be made in any format: papers, panels, discussions, films, or collaborative sessions.

Come to Innsbruck, breathe the mountain air, and join us in exploring how hope endures.

Date: 29th to 31st October 2026

Venue: University of Innsbruck, Austria: <https://www.uibk.ac.at/en/>

Deadline for Submissions: 31.01.2026

Please send us an email with your name / affiliation / country / Email and a title and abstract with max 300 words (or images, video, urls) that explore HOPE through presentations, panels, discussions, films, performances, or collaborative sessions and more.

Please email chat2026.innsbruck@gmail.com

Website: <https://hopechat.chat-arch.org/>

Email: chat2026.innsbruck@gmail.com

The registration fees will be € 85 full rate and € 55 reduced rate for students (PhD candidates included), participants currently unemployed, or participants with net income of less than € 1200 per month.

Conference Committee:

Attila Dézsi Schlingmann

Barbara Hausmair

Stefanie Heim

The Conference is hosted by:

CHAT ([Contemporary and Historical Archaeology in Theory](#))

and the [Department of Archaeologies / University of Innsbruck](#)



References / suggested reading:

- Bulletin of the Atomic Scientists, Closer Than Ever: It Is Now 89 Seconds to Midnight. 2025 Doomsday Clock Statement, January 28, 2025. <https://thebulletin.org/doomsday-clock/>
- Attila Dézsi / LouAnn Wurst (Eds.), Special Issue: The Historical Archaeology of Capitalism's Cracks. International Journal of Historical Archaeology 28, 1, 2024. <https://link.springer.com/journal/10761/volumes-and-issues/28-1>
- Forum Kritische Archäologie Editorial Collective (Eds.), Theme Issue: Archaeology as Empowerment: For Whom and How? Comments on Scholarly Activism. Forum Kritische Archäologie 12, 2023. <http://dx.doi.org/10.17169/refubium-40253>
- John Holloway, Hope in Hopeless Times (Pluto Press: London/Las Vegas 2022).
- John Holloway, Crack Capitalism (Pluto Press: London 2010).
- Eva von Redecker, Revolution für das Leben. Philosophie der neuen Protestformen (Fischer: Frankfurt a.M. 2020).
- Matthew C. Reilly (Ed.), Special Issue: Futurity, Time, and Archaeology. Journal of Contemporary Archaeology 6, 1, 2019. <https://journal.equinoxpub.com/JCA/issue/view/1106>
- Rebecca Solnit, Hope in the Dark. Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities (Haymarket Books: Chicago 2016³).
- Kisha Supernant / Jane Eva Baxter / Natasha Lyons / Sonya Atalay (Eds.), Archaeologies of the Heart (Springer: Cham 2020).
- Slavoj Žižek, Too Late to Awaken: What Lies Ahead When There is No Future? (Penguin Books: Allen Lane 2023).