SOCIO-CREATIVITY AND THE NEOLITHIC

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Introduction

What role did creative practice play in social life at the Anatolian neolithic settlement Çatalhöyük, and what evidence is there to suggest that making informed the maintenance of the 'social bond'? Socio-creativity is an undeveloped but important area of research for archaeological approaches to the neolithic, and offers an opportunity to consider both individual and community dynamics, tensions and changing social values from the residues of material interactions. Çatalhöyük provides a particularly important example of social organization, as it is believed to have been an egalitarian settlement (Hodder 2014a, b). Furthermore, the material culture provides us with a rich dataset that contains the traces of highly creative and materially engaged individuals who routinely made and re-made things, such as sunbaked clay figurines, basketry and beads. Using data collected from the Çatalhöyük Research Project (1993–2018) excavation database and excavation reports, I focus in this publication on neolithic interactions with colourful substances to create handprints and hand icons, and unpack these creative gestures to explore the social connotations of the different making methodologies employed to create these images.

A creative centre in the neolithic

The excavations at Çatalhöyük have revealed a complex, industrious and creative neolithic settlement that was later confirmed to have inhabited the land for over a thousand years (Bayliss *et al.* 2015). The site's name 'Çatalhöyük' translates to 'forked mound' and refers to the distinctive shape of the tell; the west mound is chalcolithic, whilst the east mound is neolithic (Hodder 1996) with over 19 m of neolithic deposits (Bayliss *et al.* 2015). In 2001 the tell was dated to 7,300–6,200 calibrated bc (Cessford

2001); however, in 2015 the starting date of the settlement was shifted 200 years later to 7100 bc (Bayliss *et al.* 2015). The new starting date was found using the Bayesian chronological modelling technique, a method that synthesizes radiocarbon data and excavated sequences using a statistical system (ibid.). Çatalhöyük is one of many neolithic settlements that emerged across Anatolia during the period. Along with Çatalhöyük, it was the excavations of Hacılar, Can Hasan, Süberde and Erbaba that first indicated Anatolia had a rich and complex neolithic period, and questions arose as to what role Anatolian sites played in relation to the Near East and also to Europe (Özdoğan 2011:S417). Within Anatolia, the process of neolithization, as Özdoğan notes, was a 'multifarious process' (ibid.:S427; see Goring-Morris and Belfer-Cohen 2011). Nonetheless, several pan-neolithic social trends are evident at Çatalhöyük, such as farming and domesticated-crop agriculture (Twiss *et al.* 2008:43); a dramatic rise in domestic sheep (which at the settlement happened between 7500–7100 BC) (Bayliss *et al.* 2015:21; Pearson *et al.* 2007); and the use of pottery for cooking, which at Çatalhöyük occurred suddenly around 6500 BC (Bayliss *et al.* 2015:22; Hodder 2012:185, 2016:29).

The multifaceted and nuanced creative practices at Çatalhöyük offer an impressive neolithic dataset capturing co-residing dynamic communities of creative practitioners.[1] Clay, stone, limestone, bone and pigment were used to make figurines (Hamilton 1996, 2005; Meskell and Nakamura 2005), beads (Bains *et al.* 2013; Baysal 2013; Hamilton 2005), ornate weapons or tools such as mace-heads (Wright *et al.* 2013; Wright 2014), chert and obsidian blades (Carter

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1 The archaeological discourse has illustrated that co-residence does not necessarily equate to 'community', hence my use of 'communities' (see Canuto and Yaeger 2000; Harris 2014).

2011), and ornate daggers (Mellaart 1964:104). Additionally, wall paintings, sculptures, bone tools (Russell 2016), and plastered installations/ wall fixtures (Meskell 2008). Time was spent chipping stone and flint (Baysal and Wright 2005; Conolly 1999), polishing obsidian (Carter 2011), and making and applying, a variety of pigments (Çamurcuoğlu 2015) to walls (Mellaart 1962), figurines (Meskell and Nakamura 2005:168) and bodies in burial contexts (Patton and Hager 2014). A wide palette of colours has been recorded, from orange to pink and purple (Mellaart 1962:58); red, yellow, green, blue and black (Çamurcuoğlu 2015:137); and even glistening reds (Anderson *et al.* 2014). Pottery was baked in the sun; clay was shaped and formed and sometimes used to encase animal skulls, particularly bulls' skulls (bucrania). These animal parts were covered with plaster and pigment and were often added to the walls to create protruding sculptures. Textiles and basketry crafts were also produced at the town: mats, baskets and cordage have been found (Ryan 2011). Long trips were made to find raw materials such as cinnabar and obsidian. Cessford and Carter suggest that obsidian was carried back from the Göllü Dağ-east and Nenezi Dağ quarries, both in southern Cappadocia 190 km away from Çatalhöyük (2005:206, 310).

Çatalhöyük featured tightly packed mud-brick buildings often built next to each other with abutting walls (Twiss *et al.* 2008:43). The houses are estimated to have a life cycle of sixty years (Matthews, Wiles and Almond 2006), with time frames varying between 50–100 years (Cessford and Near 2005). After this period of inhabitation, the houses were closed or abandoned, and the next layer built above. Some of the buildings appear to have been intentionally burned as part of a dramatic house-closure event (Haddow *et al.* 2016:8); whereas others may have been accidentally set alight (Twiss

et al. 2008). However, not all house closures involved conflagration; usually, materials deemed culturally recyclable — such as the wooden posts used to support the roof — were removed, the floor was scrubbed, the roof was dismantled, and the top sections of the walls were knocked down to create the foundations for the next building (Farid 2007; Ganis 2012:133; Twiss *et al.* 2008:43). Thus, the occupants of the town built vertically, creating new structures on top of old architecture (Düring 2001). The cultural practices at Çatalhöyük, such as building vertically, plastering over wall paintings (Matthews *et al.* 1996) and burning buildings (Cessford 2007; Cessford and Near 2005; Twiss *et al.* 2008) have preserved a significant amount of data.

The micro-artefactual remains found in buildings[2] at Çatalhöyük indicate that all spaces were used for domestic activities and making, such as food making, obsidian knapping and so on; therefore, a variety of activities took place inside the buildings (Cessford and Carter 2005:310). B.75,[3] however, may have housed

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2   Building numbers are attributed when the excavators are certain that 'one or more spaces are part of a building' (Farid 2008:18).

3   During the excavation led by Ian Hodder, a 'unit' is a term used to refer to a single context, Hodder describes it as 'the basic element of a nested hierarchical system that includes features (groups of related units), spaces (spatially bounded entities generally defined by walls of buildings), buildings (groups of spaces forming a structural entity), areas (spatially discrete locations where excavation has occurred) and mounds.' (2020:9). I align the data I discuss with the contemporary system of recording data: buildings are referred to as 'B.' followed by their allocated number. Spaces are areas both inside and outside buildings that are delineated by the excavators. A space number will be given to a storage room, for example, or perhaps to an area that seems to be a 'room' in a building. Features are things that appear to belong together; several units might make the feature, for example, a burial cut (a hole made in the ground and various things placed inside along with a single body or several bodies) and the materials used to infill that hole

bead-making specialists due to a toolkit of drills (chert microblades) and 'bead blanks' (Carter 2011:14); nonetheless, it is still debated whether there was a skilled group of specialist workers who solely engaged with particular materials and fulfilled unique roles in the town (see Carter 2011; Cessford and Carter 2005). Wright's (2014) article evidenced that B.77, at the time of its closure, contained a seemingly disproportionate amount of valuable food-processing tools, many of which were unbroken and some of which were relatively new, and thus very useable. B.77 also housed an unusually high number of tools such as six axes and four diabase axes, which may have doubled as weapons. Wright debates whether these objects were private household property or under the control of the household (ibid.:13).

The case for socio-creativity

The archaeological remains at Çatalhöyük suggest that making took place uniformly throughout the layers of occupation at the town. Those who inhabited the settlement were clearly creative peoples, making things for different aspects of their lives on a day-to-day basis. Hodder discusses creativity, acknowledging that there are those who argue creativity is imposed on form and others who argue that creativity is co-produced (2016:80; on the hylomorphic model see Ingold 2013:21). Hodder argues 'that the main limitation of both these perspectives is that they remain overly focused on the maker and the material' (2016:80). His primary issue with these stances is that the analysis of making does not situate the products or artefacts in their 'wider entanglements' or

'their broader material dependencies, tensions and entrapments' (ibid.). By foregrounding the importance of the social context, Hodder argues that social conditions permit certain creative actions, and that entanglements with things can inform the impetus or drive to create (ibid.:91). I argue that the analyses of processes of making (creative practice) actively focus on the interface of specific human and material engagements in the past, and can reveal the socio-cultural restrictions and tensions of communities at large. From my perspective, a key factor is the human sensory system and the fact that the senses are mediators and not simply receptors of social value (Rice 2013:6); therefore, the way humans make can tell us detailed information about the 'wider entanglements' of social lifeways. Thus, a detailed focus on making as a material-discursive practice can yield information about the social context the maker finds themselves within (on material-discursive practices, see Barad 2007; for the rationale behind exploring making in anthropology and archaeology, see Ingold 2013). Whilst these two positions are very similar, the key difference is that Hodder argues that the wider social entanglements shape and drive creativity, whereas I argue the creative action itself can yield information about the wider social context and that the two are entwined in the material event as a phenomenon (see Hodder 2016:80; on 'phenomena', see Barad 2003; Marshall and Alberti 2014). Creativity is an area of tension in this discussion; I want to establish a new position on the potentiality of creativity, one that specifically widens the parameters of the discourse on creativity for archaeology.

It is important to note that creativity is not simply a psychological event, it is also a cultural and social experience (Csikszentmihalyi 2012:3). Cultural and social pressures are placed upon the maker, and these dynamics are revealed and

will be given a shared feature number. Both Space (Sp.) and Feature (F.), are also followed by the corresponding unique number. These numbers can be utilized by the reader to access the data on the excavation research portal: www.catalhoyuk.com/research (accessed 28 September 2022).

embedded in and during material engagement; thus, the material residues of creative events can yield vital information about the past.[4] One potential route is the consideration of participatory and socially engaged art; both are types of collective making, and can be used to demonstrate how the events coordinated in this category of art often envisage participants as co-constituting the event. In these contexts, audience members (even bystanders) become participants who are called upon to act in some way during the performance, and their 'participation' becomes integral to the formulation of the artwork. Intriguingly, the value of these artworks is often ascertained from the social impact achieved during the art event and this is evaluated through the analysis of social relationships (Bishop 2012). These artworks intentionally focus on creating community events formulated to have a social impact and bring people together. Art historian Claire Bishop describes the invisible relationships formed during participatory art, both between those doing and those witnessing, as a 'group dynamic' (ibid.:6). She reminds us of social aspects of making, and how the 'ambition' of participatory arts is to create a social bond (ibid.:13; on social-bonding theory, see Hodwitz 2014; Krohn and Massey 1980:529). Thus, participatory art evidences the wider social implications of creative practices.

On the theme of socially engaged art, Grant Kester draws attention to artist's who have 'defined their practice precisely around the facilitation of dialogue among diverse communities' (2013:153). These events create valuable experiences and exchanges between people, often forming 'powerful transformations

in the consciousness of their participants' (ibid.). Thus, the social and symbolic activity mobilized during the creative event becomes a 'model or a prototype for social relations' (Bishop 2012:22). On this matter, Bishop observes an 'ethical turn' in art, because the value of these types of artworks is often judged not on aesthetics but on the impact they have on making or enhancing social relationships (ibid.). Creative action is not simply a phenomenon of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. The power of shared creative practices can be located in their inextricable link to social bonding, community feeling and emergent political consciousness. Socio-creativity has been underestimated in archaeology, and in this pamphlet I want to emphasize it as a place where new impetus for social change can emerge.

Socio-creativity and the 'social bond'

Marcelo Giglio uses the term 'socio-creative' to frame an educational model that focuses on socio-cultural and creative learning (2015:137). His work considers musical composition and how teachers can place creative collaboration at the centre of their teaching (ibid.). Giglio addresses the relational, co-constitutive nature of creative action (ibid.:xvi), and describes this approach as socio-creative. I maintain that he uses 'socio-creative' instead of 'socio-cultural' because the latter does not quite capture the creative impetus that emerges during these learning events. I use the term 'socio-creative' in examining how social and creative factors interact and how the analysis of creativity can aid our understanding of social dynamics, tensions and values in prehistoric communities. Igor Kopytoff contends that 'culture' is a cognitive construct, arguing that '[culture] achieves order by carving out, through discrimination and classification, distinct areas of homogeneity within the overall heterogeneity' (1986:70). From a socio-cultural

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4   Cf. Mazzucato 2019, who offers a socio-material-network approach that utilizes material culture to map out social relations through material choices and spatial location.

perspective, materials are made cultural, but how can creative endeavours challenge the established cultural order if they are always recognized as representative of the cultural order of a particular society? Equally, conceptual space needs to be allocated to creative endeavours that are amidst 'materialization' and potentially not quite rendered 'cultural', therefore, to forefront the creative impetus behind certain material engagements, and to create a conceptual space for a 'new materialist' notion of creativity which understands it as a co-constitutional practice between maker and material, the term socio-creative is offered here.[5]

Historically, the relationship between the economic and the social has tended to garner a disproportionate amount of scholarly attention, this bias becomes particularly pronounced in research that focuses on communities that are blatantly modelled on other-than-capitalist modes of production, such as Çatalhöyük. The ownership of material resources and the landscape (and even my use of 'resource' here — that clay, for example, is always perceived as stock or supply) is the language and thought-cycle of a particular mode of being and production (on the potential of clay, see Fayers-Kerr 2015, 2019). When navigating prehistoric lifeways it is inaccurate to assume 'ownership', 'private property' or 'surplus' are anything more than potential facets (rather than cornerstones) of human lifeways; in some communities, life-enabling substances are gifted not taken,

cherished not mauled — surplus is a particular flavour of the capitalist strategy for survival (on the nuances between use-value and exchange-value orientations, see Taussig 1977). Thus, it is important to emphasize that the creative realms at the heart of my discussion are not envisaged as the solitary products of unique individuals whose agency is imagined to play out in sterile laboratory conditions with impotent matter; this is not about aesthetics for the sake of aesthetics, nor universalist aesthetics; it is about creative practice as a mode of social existence, as a means of creating, sustaining and negotiating lifeways in egalitarian communities. Before sharing my thoughts on the 'social bond', I wish to address using the term 'art' in prehistory and why I opt instead for 'creative practice'.

Morphy and Perkins argue that 'art' is a vital aspect of human action, and contend that contemporary notions of art as purely aesthetic and decorative have essentialized the act and removed it from everyday life (2006:22). They argue that this stance has encouraged a 'synoptic view' and led to social scientists not taking art seriously, and note that an unfortunate by-product of this attitude is that art artefacts tend to be excluded from anthropological discussions (ibid.:3–8). Thus, Morphy and Perkins raise several important reasons for utilizing the term 'art' in anthropology and archaeology; however, despite its usefulness as an ethnohistorical concept, the term remains problematic when applied to prehistoric contexts. Ingold argues that the concept of 'art' is an uniquely Western and historically specific term (Ingold 2000:22–3). Equally, sensory engagement is neither neutral, stable nor consistent, but a complex and culturally contingent matter, constantly negotiated and mediated by agents (Berger 1972; Howes 2006; Howes and Classen 1991;

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5   There are synergies with Hodder here, in the sense that he argues 'Creativity involves being in and out at the same time, entangled and disentangled together.' (2016:80). From my perspective, socio-cultural stances explain the culturally entangled elements of making whereas socio-creative approaches explain the culturally 'disentangled' elements — the latter capturing the more innovative aspects of creativity (cf. ibid.:79).

Layton 2003; Rice 2013). Anthropologist Robert Layton expands this point by noting that aesthetic values vary between cultures, and that a 'different theory of being' can impact upon the effects of art (2003:6). Thus, a key problem with using a term like 'art' is that it implies that we have a shared cognitive, emotional, sensorial and physical relationship with this particular type of material culture, and this creates an essentialized notion of being. Ethnographic analogy reveals complex forms of material engagement, and these often carry deeper connotations beyond aesthetic pleasure and cognitive stimulation, such as drawing to heal (Howes 2006:77), using pigment on the body therapeutically (Fayers-Kerr 2019:112), or painting to create portals to other worlds (Lewis-Williams 2013:132). Therefore, describing neolithic figurines, wall paintings and architectural installations as 'art' is complicated, particularly as the creators of the pieces would not necessarily identify their creative practices and products with that term and, more often than not, it does not do justice to the potential agencies that emerge from certain creative practices. By using terms such as 'creative practice' and 'socio-creativity' I recognize Morphy and Perkin's observation that art (thus creative practice) has been neglected, and indicate that my focus is specifically on the socialization of creative endeavours rather than the aesthetic or economic preoccupations.

Undeniably, exploring social identity via creative endeavours is complex. Alfred Gell discusses Marquesan tattooing practices and offers an in-depth analysis that explores how the Marquesan style creates 'variant forms, each subtly distinct' and yet bearing a 'striking formal homogeneity' (Gell 1998:220). He offers a case for 'the principle of *least difference*', arguing that the Marquesan motifs and figures are interconnected, iterating similarity and subtle difference (ibid.:218). Gell links this to the wider social context, which he describes as evidencing a 'political context of "devolved" or fractured hierarchy in which "difference" was exceptionally difficult to sustain' (ibid.:219). He notes how social identity could change through name-exchange or adoption, and this fluidity created a sense of anxiety around sustaining the integrity of the 'personal and spiritual' (particularly in ritual activities) and in the face of threats to 'wealth, power, and social support' (ibid.). Gell's argument is particularly interesting, because he explicitly connects rhythmic differences in the visual output of a creative practice to a hierarchical socio-political context; thus, making connections between creative outputs, social identity and the wider socio-political context. Whilst his analysis links subtle differences in creative iterations of the form of the motif to the social experience, my focus is on creative practices (doings) in a neolithic egalitarian setting – but the wider ambition of his project is mirrored here.

The painted hand icon
Having made the case for socio-creativity, and outlined how creativity can impact on communities and not just individuals, I will now focus attention on the creative practice of making hand icons (handprints, stencilled/painted hands) at Çatalhöyük. The handprint is an icon that occurs in multiple cultures over vast periods of time (Clottes and Lewis-Williams 1998; García-Diez *et al.* 2015; Manhire, Parkington and Van Rijssen 1983:32; Pearson 2002:116). Some of the earliest images known are of stencilled hand icons and handprints, such as those found at the caves of El Castillo, Spain (Pettitt et al. 2014, 2015) and Chauvet-Pont-d'Arc, France (Guthrie 2005). An impressive portfolio of wall paintings emerged during the 1960s excavations at Çatalhöyük, and examples of wall paintings continued to surface

Figure 1   Handprint, B.77, Unit 19078. Source: Dorthe Nistad, Çatalhöyük Research Project

in the 1993–2018 Çatalhöyük Research Project excavations; intriguingly, hand icons appeared in both excavations. I make references to the 1960s Mellaart excavation reports, but primarily focus my discussion on data that has emerged in recent years rather than the 'blanket phase' of the 1960s excavations (see Farid 2008). It is the variety in the production of the hand icon at Çatalhöyük that triggers intrigue, as the settlement is renowned for its consistency in building practices, including layering multiple washes of plaster over wall paintings and walls in general (Matthews, Wiles and Almond 2006), and evident egalitarian lifeways. My interest in these hand icons primarily lies in the different methodologies employed in their creation and whether a socio-creative approach might help us attend to the wider implications of the subtle idiosyncrasies evidenced within the creative practice itself.

To demonstrate the nuances between the different hand icons we could compare the handprints that feature as a wall painting in B.77 (unit 19078; Figure 1) and painted hand icons located in B.80 adjacent to the central platform (Figure 2). According to the research database, in B.77 a total of thirteen red handprints emerged, the majority on the north wall, whilst three were found on the east wall (unit 19078). Excavators observed that these handprints appeared 'realistic' and anticipated that they were actual hand impressions subsequently 'finished with a brush' (House 2010:36). The handprints run horizontal with the platforms below, with the fingers facing eastwards, and continue above a decorated niche and bucrania feature in the

Figure 2   Interpretation of painted hand icons located in B.80. Drawn by E. Govier, informed by Rose et al. 2015: fig 3.17.

north-east corner of the building (ibid.). The three handprints on the east wall were subsequently covered with an abstract geometric-style wall painting (Tung 2012:16). Excavators state that the handprints were made using red ochre (Doherty 2011:91), and anticipate (due to the same sizing of the handprints, which are all right hands) that the same individual created the entire painting (Eddisford 2011:34). In B.80, excavators found the traces of five hand icons on the platform (unit sheet 21789), next to burials and a significant geometric wall painting (Rose et al. 2015:63). The B.80 hand icon mimics the hand by capturing the hole in the middle where the mid part of the palm, indented as it is, does not touch the wall. There are five digits, but the thumb does not emerge at the usual place, and instead a fifth 'finger' emerges from alongside the other four on the top edge of the palm. This painted hand icon is reminiscent of the human handprints, but is not a handprint. Unlike a handprint – which only an individual can impress – the painted hand

motif, like the abstract brick patterns on the wall nearby, can be painted collectively. Devoid of the unique creases of the skin, the print, length, twist of the fingers and outstretched thumb, the motif becomes mechanized and reproducible. In the case of B.80, the hand sizes become variable – some become bigger and less human, perhaps claw- or paw-like (as on the hand/paw-shaped stamp seal found at the settlement, see Türkan 2007:261; for further examples of hand-shaped clay stamps, see Meskell, Nakumura and Arntz 2017:190). By making this distinctive change in their creative practice, the age and sex of the individuals making the prints are no longer discernible to the archaeologist.

The key distinction between the different hand icons is related to the processes involved in the making of the hands, and this seems to correlate with their geospatial location in the mound. The painted-hand image appears in the south area levels VIA and VIB,[6] whereas the distinctive handprints in B.77 emerge in the north area 4040 in level G. In the South Area during the Mellaart excavation, all hand imagery that I have examined from his publications were stylized hands, like the claw or paw-like hand. This type stylistically captures all the digits emerging from the top of the hand and a large negative space where the palm would normally be located. These hands sometimes have four digits, and sometimes the bottom of the palm is angled into a triangle, but it is likely that the methods of making these images all involved painting with a tool such as a brush rather than utilizing the hand itself. The B.80 hand icon is reminiscent of the handprints depicted by Mellaart, and has clearly been painted – it is a stylized impression of a human hand (see Mellaart 1963: plate VIIB). B.80

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6   Mellaart's numbering system of the different levels of occupation at the settlement.

Figure 3   'Stencilled-style' inverse hand icon, B.49, Unit 16666. Source: Jason Quinlan, Çatalhöyük Research Project.

is in the south area but B.77 is in the north area in the 4040 neighbourhood. The B.80 painted hand corroborates the style depicted in the Mellaart publications, specifically VI.B.8, VII.8 (B20), VIA.63, VIB15, EVIB8, AVI4, and VIB10, which all contained painted-hand examples (see Mellaart 1963, 1967), and this suggests that the painted paw-like hand icon is contextually usual in the South Area, where these buildings are located. Six of these buildings are in Level VIA and VIB, with one example occurring in level VII (B.20). Therefore, there is a cluster of activity relating to the painted-hand method in the south area levels VIB and VIA, 6500–6400 BC.

However, there was a further mark-making method found in B.49 in the North Area during the 2008 excavation (Figure 3). The hand imagery in this building emerged on the south-facing edge of a platform (measuring 1.34 m in length; feature 1651), the painting depicts a row of five white hands on a 'thin layer of white plaster' painted red (unit 16666) – see Eddisford 2008:33. The supervising excavator for the building noted the 'stencil style' of the hand icons – though the excavation-database entry clarifies that the images were painted rather than 'traced around someone's hand' (Eddisford 2008:33; unit sheet 16666). The platform itself housed nine burials (both adults and children) and the

bodies of the individuals had been disturbed, with six individuals decapitated (feature sheet 1651). Again, the decoration emerged in the northern area of the building. B.49 featured a number of painting events at different phases of inhabitation, the northern wall similarly featured a geometric design (feature 1661), and layers of plaster and painting activities appear in the area including multiple phases of decoration on an engaged pillar, which was finally 'sealed' with a layer of plaster (Eddisford 2008:34). After the appearance of the row of five stencil-style hand icons, the platform was covered in a make-up layer of 'decorated plaster fragments' and further layers of 'mid brown make up and white plaster', followed by two observable painting events, one depicting 'vertical lines' the second described as an 'abstract motif' (ibid.:33). The painted stencil-style hands, the vertical-line painting, and the abstract motif all appeared on the south-facing side of the platform and not on the east-facing side (unit sheets 16647, 16657). The appearance of the hand icon during the life cycle of the building is fascinating gesture, particularly due to the close proximity to the burials and its presence in the northern area of the building. These marks appear to be very similar to those photographed during the 1960s excavations, recorded on the east wall of a building (Mellaart 1963: plate Xb), which Mellaart described as 'negative' hands on a 'light red panel' (ibid.:69). The mark-making involved in the production of these hands is not as transparent, and a combination of stencilling and tool-painting activities should not be completely excluded. Çamurcuoğlu examined red ochre samples from B.49 and found that they may have been treated with heat, though stated the evidence is not conclusive (2015:230–1). The B.49 painted-hand imagery is also recorded in E.VI, 8 (Mellaart 1963) in the south area, and repetition of this gesture in these two unique

spaces offers a relationship in creative practices and a potential bridge between both the north- and south-excavation areas.

Having articulated three different types of hand icons observed at Çatalhöyük, I will now consider the sensory experiences of the hand-making events, particularly the handprints. The tactile engagement between substance and body is a creative action that occurs when paint is applied to the human palm and pressed against a surface to leave a clear mark of the self. The numerous sensory receptors at the end of our fingers, and in our hands in general, makes this a very sensitive part of the body. In connection to palaeolithic hand stencils, Pettitt et al. argue that touch was an important factor in their creation, they propose that the exploration of the cave walls was a 'tactile process' and due to the low level of light in the caves the stencillers would need to be close to the wall: 'Hands would be placed on surfaces, fingers and palms traced across them, and the undulations of the cave walls and ceiling could be "read" as much by touch as visual inspection.' (2014:60). Pettitt et al. frame this experience as 'palpation', the medical term for touch (ibid.:61). We might note that the caves offered a different experiential dynamic to the built environment of the neolithic, where the undulations of the plastered surface of the wall were created by humans and offered a somatic familiarity due to daily life in the houses. Nonetheless, it seems reasonable to suggest that the neolithic handprints were similarly a tactile experience; the addition of a slippery coating of the fluid paint momentarily transforms the surface of the hand: the finger tips and thumbs become more mobile and glide over the surface a little faster than they would normally. Handprints are an empowering gesture, as the visual replication of an individual's hand announces their presence and, in the case of Çatalhöyük,

marks their importance in the event through their evidential key role. The touching of walls with painted palms indicates a particular sensitivity to touching and feeling paint, and clearly offered a multisensorial making experience when the creative practice encouraged both ocular and haptic engagement.

Whilst making the handprint, the wall is touched through the sensory-loaded hands, and if this area of the walls were important vehicles to access other worlds or appease greater entities (as Lewis-Williams 2013:132 has discussed in relation to the San peoples), then in the case of B.77 this was achieved through a single individual who could place their hand on the wall. This contrasts with many hand-related gestures preserved in the south area that primarily appear to be painted-hand gestures. A painting tool (such as a brush) was used to make the claw/paw-like hand, therefore, a sensorial barrier formed between the individual and the wall. If wall paintings were thought of as places of transformation — perhaps access to other worlds, opportunities to appease greater entities, entwined with medicinal and/or shamanic practices, or aids to telling communal tales — access to the wall during the time of the painted-hand motif may have been restricted or mediated. The intersensory experience generated during the handprint changes dramatically between the different methods of making, and indicates an important shift in the knowledge expressed and shared at the making events. The handprints made using the hand are quicker to create than stencilled or painted designs, thus the immediacy of the image differs between the two types of material engagement. Equally, the risk of altered states of consciousness (such as hallucinations) or negative health impacts (Govier 2019:26—7) are reduced when creating a cinnabar painting with a brush or tool instead of with the hand

itself. By revealing different forms of sensory engagement with materials we can build a clearer understanding of the systems of value, and how access and exposure to certain materials can potentially alter human sensory systems.

In this section I have discussed the different types of material engagement involved in creating the claw or paw-like hand and the handprint, and emphasized that in the creation of the handprint there is an increase in sensory experience involved in covering a hand in substance and pressing the palm against the wall.[7] The north-east walls were important areas within the houses of the neolithic town, as it is in these areas that platforms, burials, wall paintings and bucrania are found: the north areas of the buildings tended be 'ritually marked and decorated' (Hodder 2016:38). For an individual to have creative access to this particular wall, and in many respects to claim it through the imprint of their unique handprint, is an important socio-creative gesture. I argue that this type of handprint announced an individual's presence and reveals their central role in a communal event. This point is accentuated when we think about how handprints can sometimes be interpreted to reveal the sex and age of the creator, whereas the painted hands (or even stencilled hands — Pettitt *et al.* 2014) cannot; each is a unique and personal gesture.[8] Due to the size of the houses it is likely that the number of people able to experience the event would be limited, on

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7   Pettitt *et al.* (2014:58) have explored the palaeolithic hand stencils at El Castillo and found that many of the hand icons are in places that are difficult to access. They have suggested that the images may not be the activity of a single individual, but a creative engagement between the stenciller and stencilled (ibid.:56).

8   A further dimension to this discussion is the prospect that these painting activities were potentially intergenerational events; excavators found a child's handprint in B.80 (Farid 2011:30—1) and a 'baby-sized' four-fingered print near the wall painting (unit sheet 21737).

this matter it seems pertinent to highlight the importance of 'co-presence' and the formation of community through these types of experiences and practices (Pauketat 2008:240; Yaeger and Canuto 2000:8); thus, it is likely that the signalling potential of these activities was held within the 'community of practice' (Wendrich 2013; Wenger 1998, 2012). Barbara Mills has highlighted the value of the communities of practice concept for analysis at Çatalhöyük, she argues that they are 'memory communities in that they each involve different sets of people in the performance and the transmission of knowledge' (2014:163; on communities of practice see Lave and Wenger 1991). Building on this observation, in the next section I will explore knowledge transmission and communities of practice.

Knowledge, communities of practice and the social bond

A key problem lies in whether the evidence of different methodologies (thus, different communities of practice) at the settlement indicates unbalanced social positions (on making mud-bricks and the performance of difference, see Love 2013a, b). Can creative practices tell us something about the 'forces' that dynamically informed the emergence of unique making events (Barad 2003:822)? If egalitarianism was to remain the modus operandi at Çatalhöyük, it is likely that equality would need to be vigilantly and repeatedly appraised by the inhabitants (Woodburn 1982:432). In some respects, the nuances in the making methodologies of the hand icon could reflect different households asserting their egalitarian status by presenting themselves as a distinct community of practice (Govier 2017). A second approach to the issue of differentiation in creative practices is the possibility that households were esoteric centres of learning, this possibility is discussed next.

Different making methods may indicate that the knowledge formed through the creative practice was contained within the community of practice and did not penetrate the walls between houses. In which case, the physical boundary between households was also a cognitive and sensorial boundary; equally, with growing evidence suggesting synergies in creative practices between different buildings, it is interesting to think of the shared communal activities and forms of creative engagement that were shared with different households across the settlement. This point can be connected to communities of practice and how knowledge transmission can be 'sticky' or 'leaky' (discussed in Hoadley 2012). Both types of knowledge transmission can be identified through synergies in creative practices, and certain aspects of knowledge can reside in a group but can fail to transmit beyond the network of those who engage with the activity directly: this is described as 'sticky' knowledge because it does not transmit beyond the practitioners (Brown and Duguid 2001). 'Leaky' knowledge spreads freely and widely (ibid.). At the neolithic town the concept of plastering could be described as 'leaky' knowledge, whilst aspects of the wall-painting practice could be described as 'sticky'. Hoadley notes: 'the practice is important because it identifies knowledge with something people "do" as part of their culture, profession, or avocations' (ibid.). Thus, at specific moments in the history of the settlement, certain individuals 'do' handprints, but the fact that they are creating these motifs using very different practices might indicate a rupture in the flow of knowledge between households (on the negative impact of such ruptures, see Fletcher 1995:xix). If we follow Wenger (2012:2) and describe a practice as a 'property' of a community, then the knowledge

of creating hand icons was a property that was either rejected or reinterpreted by certain groups or one that was not shared between groups. Wendrich contends that communities of practice use embodied communication and the development of micro-styles might reflect knowledge and cultural transmission (2013:258–9). Thus, differentiation in creative practices indicates different communities of practice, and might reflect a resistance in knowledge transfer or cultural transmission between households (on transmission signals and delays in sharing information, see Fletcher 1995:95; on the house unit as a zone of socialization, see Hodder 2012:306). Intriguingly, despite the differences in the creative practice of painting hand icons, both in terms of the style of icons and making methods, consistencies can be found in their (predominantly) northern locations inside buildings and close proximity to burial contexts and in the fact that — despite the wide palette of colours discovered at the settlement — the hand icons that have emerged in the 1993–2018 Çatalhöyük Research Project excavations exclusively involved red pigments. Thus, certain elements of the painting practice could be interpreted as socio-cultural, but where we see idiosyncrasies in the creative practice we can begin to detect socio-creative activities that may hint at new ways of being and doing at the settlement.

Conclusion

During the neolithic, creative practice was a social opportunity, a moment where synergies could occur between unique entities via shared actions. During creative events, more than products were made: social relationships were re-negotiated and expressed through material interactions. I argue that the sensuous engagement with materials, as evidenced in creative practices, can act as

access points to these data. When examining the neolithic, it is hard to detect how social order and community cohesion were created and sustained in early farming communities, particularly at Çatalhöyük, where ranking, public space and the centralization of power are not visible in the archaeological record (Hodder and Cessford 2004). Çatalhöyük stands out as a community with a vibrant creative practice, and people at the town routinely worked together to make things. Creative practice was clearly a key social tenet to creating community cohesion in the neolithic period, it afforded people the opportunity to create shared structures and perform seasonal activities that directly informed social cohesion. The archaeological remains at Çatalhöyük reveal a magnificent neolithic community and a complex, coordinated and creative social world. Çatalhöyük has reframed our understanding of complex societies during this period, and evidences a community with a very distinctive way of being. The presence of the town in the Konya Plain adds to the wealth of activity happening in this area. The sheer volume of day-to-day data produced across generations of inhabitants makes Çatalhöyük a remarkable and invaluable source. Multivocality is caught in the spatiotemporality of the mound, the presence of past agents is embedded in material-discursive making events. All this is held fast in a tell that has weathered thousands of years to show contemporary communities a different way of being.

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