

November 2017

Research Success Story



P l a y i n g b y t h e r u l e s i n c l a s s i c a l a n t i q u i t y

Child's play has never been less childish. A research team are taking a new look at toys and games as windows into culture, both that of today and of the distant past. The Horizon 2020 project "Locus Ludi" (The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity) aims to reveal what games in classical antiquity tell us about society at that time. The project is run by Véronique Dasen, associate professor of classical archaeology at the University of Fribourg.

The die is cast. Locus Ludi, an ambitious 5-year research project to identify, categorise, and reconstruct the games and play of ancient Greece and Rome, has begun. Locus Ludi is the first attempt to carry out a comprehensive analysis of the subject, and pools expertise in linguistics, history, archaeology, iconography, and anthropology. Funding comes from a Horizon 2020 European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant. ERC grants promote frontier research; new and promising areas identified by the applicants themselves. The sole criterion for selection is scientific excellence.

Who played games and why?

Locus Ludi seeks to answer a number of questions, explains the project coordinator Dr Véronique Dasen. How did play cross social categories? Were different games used to initiate girls and boys into

adult life? Were the same games played throughout the vast, multi-ethnic Roman Empire? How did shifts in religion affect the games?

"The most important thing is to profoundly believe in your own project"

"I wrote this project so that the reader feels there is a personality behind it, that it is not just a collective work," says Dasen. "The most important thing is to profoundly believe in your own project because it comes from your own scientific path. Of course, you also need to have experience running a project because every project is based on project management at different levels." For her interdisciplinary project, it was also necessary to have a network of scientists in different fields across Europe, not only in her own country.

Dasen feels that her approach is relevant to anyone applying for such a grant: "If these different conditions are met, I think you can attempt the adventure," she concludes.

Out of museum reserves

Dasen's team have plenty of material evidence to work with. Due to the modern Western disregard of games as mere pastimes, a wealth of literary, archaeological and iconographic sources lies forgotten in libraries and museum reserves. "Sometimes museums underestimate the treasures in their collections," Dasen says. Once reconstructed, these ancient games will go on the Locus Ludi website. How fitting that today's kids and adults will soon be able to learn about classical antiquity through online games.

About Locus Ludi



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Dr Véronique Dasen
University of Fribourg

CONTENT SUMMARY

Locus Ludi is a 5-year interdisciplinary project based at the University of Fribourg. Funded by an ERC Advanced Grant under Horizon 2020, it will be the first comprehensive analysis of play and games in classical society. The project will provide a basis for analysis of our own 21st century forms.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Project Name
Locus Ludi – The Cultural Fabric of Play and Games in Classical Antiquity

Research Area
Classical archaeology

Organisations
University of Fribourg, in collaboration with the Swiss Museum of Games (la Tour-de-Peilz)

Start Date – End Date
01.10.2017 – 30.09.2022

Duration
5 years

Project Cost
€2.5 million

Project Funding
€2.5 million

Programme
Horizon 2020 Excellent Science: European Research Council (ERC) Advanced Grant

More Information
<https://locusludi.unifr.ch/>

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