Human, animal and environmental interactions: Interpreting Neolithic farming
communities through scientific ethnoarchaeology
This lecture presents the application of new and innovative multiple methods and ethnoarchaeology to
answer questions about Neolithic farming villages in Jordan and the Zagros Mountains of Iran and Iraqi
Kurdistan from about 11,700 to 7,800 years ago. Common methods to investigate the development of
these early farming villages rely on the interpretation of archaeological contexts and their associated
material culture. However, we can go one step further and incorporate scientific
microscopic techniques in combination with modern ethnoarchaeology to gain further insights.
Dr Sarah Elliott is an environmental archaeologist and current CBRL Visiting Fellow at the British
Institute in Amman.She completedher PhD at the Universityof Reading investigating early animal
management in Iraq and Iran through the identification of animal penning and microscopic
signatures of dung in Neolithic villages. She holds an MSc in Geoarchaeology and a BA in Ancient
History and Archaeology, also from the University of Reading. In 2014-15 she worked as a Research
Assistant onthe INEA Project(
Identifying activity areas in
Neolithic sites through
Ethnographic
Analysis of phytoliths and geochemical residues) co-directed by Bournemouth University and CBRL
Amman.The aim of the projectwas to integrate ethnographic investigation of recently abandoned
settlements with phytolith and geochemical methods to identify activity areas and construction
materials within Neolithic settlements. During her CBRL fellowship she has been developing a
modern dung reference collection as well as continuing her research interest in historic Jordanian
villages.