

Book of Abstracts

BIOGRAPHIES

18-20 January 2016

OF PLACE

UrbNet

Centre for Urban Network Evolutions
Aarhus University



AARHUS
UNIVERSITY



Danmarks
Grundforskningsfond
Danish National
Research Foundation



UrbNet

CENTRE FOR URBAN NETWORK EVOLUTIONS
The Danish National Research Foundation



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Outline.....	4
Programme	
Monday 18 January	5
Tuesday 19 January	6
Wednesday 20 January	
Abstracts	
Dries Tys	10
Michael Smith	11
Paul Sinclair	12
Jörg Rüpke	13
Achim Lichtenberger and Rubina Raja	14
Michael Blömer	15
Sven Kalmring	16
Volker Hilberg	17
Karen Milek	18
Barbora Wouters	19
Johan Linderholm	20
Søren M. Kristiansen	21
Eivind H. Seland	22
Mateusz Bogucki	23
Sauro Gelichi	24
Søren M. Sindbæk	25
Conference dinners	26

OUTLINE

The innovations, cultural entanglements and environmental exchanges afforded by urbanism paved the way for social and material complexity, which forms the core of today's civilisation. The complex stratigraphies of urban archaeology form a uniquely rich archive of this process. Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet) develops research that offers comparison of convergent developments and determines how, and to what extent, past urban networks catalysed societal and environmental expansions and crises, potentially on a global scale.

Biographies of Place is the first of three conceptual conferences, and ensuing thematic publications, aimed to inspire and challenge the theoretical and methodological development of concepts and models which informs the work of the centre. The conference aims to explore how the combination of multiple methods and approaches contributes to characterise the biographies of urban sites and "circulation societies" (Aslanian 2012, 13f). Biographies comprise people but can be conceptualised more broadly as a gathering of people, things and spaces (Latour 2005).

Traditional archaeological approaches to urban archaeology have been limited by a "feature first" approach, in which evidence is separated and analysed according to material classes and only re-integrated at a highly generalised level of interpretation. By exploring a "context first" approach, in which a multidimensional interpretation of individual contexts forms the point of departure for integrated "biographies" of urban sites and groups, UrbNet will stimulate a new approach to urban archaeology.

Emerging applications of isotopic, biomolecular and geoarchaeological techniques afford unique potential for archaeology to refine the precision of dates, contexts and provenance ascribed to excavated materials. UrbNet aims to integrate scientific techniques with contextual archaeological and historical approaches to form a "High Definition" view of urban dynamics. The present conference shall explore how new forms of data can be harnessed to test, challenge and revise narratives of particular urban sites and fundamental assumptions about trajectories, dynamics and causal conditions of urbanisation in the era of globally interlocking, pre-industrial civilizations, here defined as the period app. between the 2nd century BCE and the 16th century CE. Furthermore the conference will also explore concepts of urbanism and themes relating to urbanism in a historiographical perspective which will inform us about which ways scholarship has been shaped by directions in research.

Hosted by Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet), Aarhus University - a Centre of Excellence funded by the Danish National Research Foundation.

PROGRAMME

PHOTO: JØRGEN WEBER

Monday 18 January <i>Urbanism and Biographies</i>		
13:30	Registration	
14:00-14:20	Introduction Rubina Raja and Søren M. Sindbæk	
14:20-14:45	Urban Life, Form and Identity in the Medieval Low Countries Between Social Practice and Iconographic Identity Dries Tys	Chair: Rubina Raja
14:45-15:10	Discussion	
15:10-15:35	Method and Theory for the Systematic Comparative Analysis of Early Cities Michael Smith	
15:35-16:00	Discussion	
16:00-16:30	Break	
16:30-16:55	Using Comparative Stratigraphy to Gauge the Spatio-Temporal Scales of Indian Ocean Urbanism Paul Sinclair	Chair: Rubina Raja
16:55-17:20	Discussion	
17:20-17:45	Crafting Complex Place: Religion, Antiquarianism, and Urban Development in Late Republican Rome Jörg Rüpke	
17:45-18:10	Discussion	
18:10-18:50	General discussion / End of Day 1	
19:00	Dinner: Museum of Ancient Art (Victor Albecks Vej 3, 8000 Aarhus C)	

Venue: AU Conference Centre, Frederik Nielsens Vej 4, 8000 Aarhus C, Meeting room 1

Tuesday 19 January <i>Site Biographies</i>		
9:00-9:25	Biographies of Cities and Rivers. The Case of the Golden River at Gerasa in the Decapolis (Jordan) Achim Lichtenberger and Rubina Raja	Chair: Søren M. Sindbæk
9:25-9:50	Discussion	
9:50-10:15	Urban Archaeology in Northern Syria and the New Doliche City Project Michael Blömer	
10:15-10:40	Discussion	
10:40-11:00	Break	
11:00-11:25	Viking Towns. Urban Biographies Between Cosmopolitanism and Delimitation Sven Kalmring	Chair: Søren M. Sindbæk
11:25-11:50	Discussion	
11:50-12:15	Revealing the Biographies of Europe's Early Medieval Trading Towns. The Case Study of Hedeby Volker Hillberg	
12:15-12:40	Discussion	
12:40-13:30	Lunch	

<i>Sediment Biographies</i>		
13:30-13:55	Potential of Geoarchaeology to Contribute to Biographical Approaches to Urban Sites Karen Milek	Chair: Michael Blömer
13:55-14:20	Discussion	
14:20-14:45	A Biographical Approach to Urban Communities from a Geoarchaeological Perspective. High-Definition Applications and Case Studies Barbora Wouters	
14:45-15:10	Discussion	
15:10-15:30	Break	
15:30-15:55	Biographies of Sediments and Soils in Urban Contexts Johan Linderholm	Chair: Michael Blömer
15:55-16:20	Discussion	
16:20-16:45	Anthropogenic Dark Earth and Urban Growth Søren Munch Kristiansen	
16:45-17:10	Discussion	
17:10-18:00	General discussion / End of Day 2	
19:00	Dinner: Madrepubikken (Jægergårdsgade 34, 8000 Aarhus C)	

Wednesday 20 January <i>Urban Dynamics</i>		
9:00-9:25	Climate in History, History in Climate. Some Preliminary Perspectives on Climate and the Fall of Rome Eivind Heldaas Seland	Chair: Dries Tys
9:25-9:50	Discussion	
9:50-10:15	Towns and Coinage. An Inseparable Duo? Mateusz Bogucki	
10:15-10:40	Discussion	
10:40-13:30	Visit to Moesgård Museum, incl. lunch	
13:30-13:55	Unconventional Places and Unconventional Biographies? Colonising the Lagoon in the Medieval Age. The Case of Venice Sauro Gelichi	Chair: Dries Tys
13:55-14:20	Discussion	
14:20-14:45	Urban Biographies as Network Dynamics. Re-defining the Archaeology of Urbanism Søren M. Sindbæk	
14:45-15:10	Discussion	
15:10-15:30	Break	

Wednesday 20 January <i>Urban Dynamics (continued)</i>	
15:30-16:15	General discussion Led by Rubina Raja / Søren M. Sindbæk
16:15	End of conference

ABSTRACTS

Urban Life, Form and Identity in the Medieval Low Countries Between Social Practice and Iconographic Identity

Dries Tys, Vrije Universiteit Brussels
dtys@vub.ac.be

The late medieval towns of the Low Countries have an emblematic character. Since the late 19th century the iconic character of these towns is recreated in an early form of City-branding through images and architecture (for instance on world exhibitions), often from a conservative perspective. However, the iconographic representation of these towns started already in the late-medieval period, through representations on religious paintings, while the towns even ordered Town portraits with an eternal value in the form of the First Town "Maps". These representations had a subtle changing character, depending on the perception of urban life and form by different social groups.

This shows how behind the iconic character of these towns we find an ever-changing urban fabric, life and organisation.

This is for instance very clear in the rise of the Market Places. These are considered as the theatres of the late medieval urban identity and are often related to the origin of the towns. However, the market place as urban phenomenon is relatively young compared to the origin of towns and trade. The spatial setting for trade and exchange shifts gradually towards constructed squares with halls and market infrastructure, the urban markets we still know, between the late 12th and the early 14th century. These squares are called 'forum', referring to the Roman 'villa fori'. It is an intriguing question why and how the mental concept of the "forum" was re-invented at the dawn of the late medieval period, but is clear that we are dealing with a deliberate transformation of the fabric and spatial structure of the late medieval towns in the same period. We lack however data on the chronology of this transformation, on the gradual shift of the mental sense of place of 'having a market' towards the spatial development of the well-known market places in the centres of the towns. It is also clear that before the late 12th/14th century, urban space had an entirely different character compared to later. This raises the question to which extent this went along with a different perception of urban life and the character of being 'urban' itself.

Method and Theory for the Systematic Comparative Analysis of Early Cities

Michael E. Smith, Arizona State University
mesmith9@asu.edu

I explore the tensions between two modes of archaeological analysis. First, detailed, place-specific archaeological analyses of early urban centers are needed to provide adequate data for social and historical reconstruction. Second, larger samples of systematic yet simplified data are needed to carry out the rigorous comparative analyses that illuminate past urban processes. Archaeologists and historians gathering rich local data may resist the simplification of comparisons, while those pursuing comparative analysis may fail to take adequate account of local contextual data. This tension can only be overcome if scholars pursuing each mode of analysis acknowledge the value of the other. I discuss varieties of comparative urban analysis, ranging from detailed contextual comparisons of a few cities to simplified comparisons of large samples. I argue that research in the middle of this continuum can be highly productive. I illustrate this kind of middle-range comparative analysis for three social domains: commercialization, governance, and social mobility.

Using Comparative Stratigraphy to Gauge the Spatio-Temporal Scales of Indian Ocean Urbanism

Paul Sinclair, Uppsala University
paul.sinclair@arkeologi.uu.se

Contextual comparisons of east African towns are presented from an archaeological point of departure, and these are interpreted in terms of longevity of settlement and spatial expression. Even a straightforward stratigraphic analysis using depth of excavated archaeological deposit as a measure of temporality makes a very interesting regional pattern. No doubt such Rudebeckian thoughts require careful justification, but it is interesting to compare Benadir Coast of Somalia 11 metres, Lamu 6 metres and Zanzibar 4 metres to Moz and Madagascar 1,5 m. A great deal depends upon the theoretical frameworks employed to interrogate the disparate empirical data sets with due note taken of spatial and temporal characteristics of settlements in the Indian Ocean which differ from European and Asian examples. A complex systems approach is favoured in which heterarchical and hierarchical settlement groupings are considered in terms of linear and non linear temporal dynamics.

Crafting Complex Place: Religion, Antiquarianism and Urban Development in Late Republican Rome

Jörg Rüpke, University of Erfurt
joerg.ruepke@uni-erfurt.de

On the basis of cognitive studies, recent evolutionary theorising has suggested that the formation of large societies and the social coherence necessary for their up-keeping depends on the development of omniscient and moral gods, able to observe and punish individuals even beyond ordinary social control. In contrast, I propose to test the hypothesis that large urban societies need practices that craft place by

- relating people and space,
- disrupting continuous space,
- selectively appropriating space.

Such a process is stabilised and furthered, if such processes become reflexive, that is, are accompanied by mental representations and discourses that are able to interpret urban experiences and to motivate urban development by providing further services.

My thesis is argued on the example of the late republican metropolis Rome, and in particular the rise of what is usually treated as “aetiological myth” and “antiquarian literature”. The textual basis is given by Marcus Terentius Varro’s book 5 of “On Latin language”, which is dedicated to the treatment of “Places”. For Rome, it was ritual and textual religious practices that were providing important tools for the creation of a highly complex, shared and divided, space called “city” brought to a new level of complexity and coherence in the subsequent period.

Biographies of Cities and Rivers. The Case of the Golden River at Gerasa in the Decapolis (Jordan)

Achim Lichtenberger, Ruhr-Universität Bochum
achim.lichtenberger@ruhr-uni-bochum.de

Rubina Raja, UrbNet, Aarhus University
rubina.raja@cas.au.dk

Many cities in the ancient world were situated on rivers, and their lives had to involve a close relationship with these. Cities benefitted and exploited the resources which the rivers offered. Societies managed and pruned rivers in order to optimise the resources which they could gain, including water driven crafts (i.e. mills and textile production), fishing as well as irrigation. Furthermore rivers worked as cultic sites as well. Ancient Gerasa, also called Antiochia-on-the-Chrysorhoas (Golden River), was located on the river, or rather on both sides of the river, which was surrounded by a steep wadi. The land around the city through which the river flowed was in Antiquity rich, as we know from archaeological and epigraphic evidence. However, research has only recently been undertaken in order to begin to understand the actual relationship between the site, the river and the land around the city. In this paper we present a conceptual “High Definition” research programme as well as preliminary results of examinations with such methods already undertaken in 2015. These examinations lay the ground for more comprehensive investigations into the dynamics between the city and the river from the Hellenistic period down into the Medieval period.

Urban Archaeology in Northern Syria and the New Doliche City Project

Michael Blömer, UrbNet, Aarhus University
michael.bloemer@cas.au.dk

In North Syria, the political and cultural upheaval following the conquest of Alexander the Great triggered the development of a dense network of cities after a long period of ruralisation. Among these cities are famous metropolies such as Antiocheia on the Orontes, Seleukeia in Pieria, Laodikeia by the Sea, and Apameia on the Orontes, but even less prominent places like Kyrrhos, Samosata, Zeugma, Doliche, Beroia, and Hierapolis eventually evolved into urban centers of considerable importance. Under Roman rule, the urbanisation process even intensified. This makes North Syria an ideal case study to explore trajectories and conditions of urbanisation in the Levant and beyond. However, the archaeological record at hand is surprisingly meager, and a closer look reveals that our knowledge of the biographies of North Syrian cities is, therefore, severely limited. The various reasons for the poor state of urban archaeology in this core area of ancient world will be surveyed in this paper. In a second step, I will explore how a new urban excavation in the North Syrian city of Doliche will enhance knowledge of urbanism and urban networks in the region by integrating contextual archaeology and scientific techniques.

Viking Towns. Urban Biographies between Cosmopolitanism and Delimitation

Sven Kalmring, Centre for Baltic and Scandinavian Archaeology (ZBSA)
sven.kalmring@arklab.su.se

The process of urbanisation far distant from the ancient towns of the former Roman Empire for a long time has been identified as a central topic in Viking age archaeology. Together with the mission of the Roman Catholic and Byzantine Orthodox church, it is the emergence of towns in the North that initiated a change of a foremost rather traditional society, the transformation towards feudal state structures and ultimately the integration into the Christian western world.

This change, however, did not come overnight, but gradually took place in the period that we call the Viking age. Therefore this period is characterised by sharp contrasts: On the one hand, there is the traditional rural and agricultural world controlled by petty kings fighting for supremacy. The royal manors of the leading dynasties are not seldom also connected to cultic places and thing sites. Religious performances or jurisdictional assemblies could even involve annual fairs. On the other hand, there are the upcoming towns as utterly alien elements in traditional landscape which in many cases even are separated due to their location in administrative border zones. To this novel living environment without any indigenous predecessors, market trade was not only an occasional event but constituted the very basis. These early towns integrated in long-distance trading networks were able to attract foreign merchants and craftsmen. Due to that, they not only became a target for missionary attempts, but also allowed the respective kings to raise taxes in exchange for trading peace. Obviously early towns safeguarded an influx of sought-after import merchandise that to a certain degree even penetrated into the surrounding landscape. But for all that as international trading hubs, they formed gateways for new technologies and innovation that also reached the hinterland and by that helped the development of the patrons' realm itself.

As sketched above it would be short-sighted to solely focus on the early urban centres themselves in order to understand the very core of that discontinuous phenomenon on the dawn of high medieval towns. It requires nothing less as a sincere holistic approach: A thorough examination of the societal framework of the circumjacent traditional rural world, mirrored in a super-regional comparison with Anglo-Saxon England, Continental Europe as well as Byzantium and lastly an inclusion of the sparse but not less important information from chronicles and legal texts. What sounds like a vast investment in research indeed is quite achievable since most of the jigsaw pieces are partly known for quite some time within the scientific debate.

Revealing the Biographies of Europe's Early Medieval Trading Towns. The Case Study of Hedeby

Volker Hilberg, Stiftung Schleswig-Holsteinische Landesmuseen
volker.hilberg@schloss-gottorf.de

Our knowledge of the development of urbanism in Northern Europe is largely depending on the archaeological research in the so-called emporia, early medieval urban production and distribution centres, which belonged to a new generation of ports.

The investigation of the early medieval portus at Hedeby is one of the most extensive archaeological projects in the Baltic region since several decades. Due to its central position at the narrowest part of the Jutland Peninsula, this place was an important hub in the communication and trading network linking Scandinavia with the Continent and the North Sea with the Baltic Sea from the early 9th century to the middle of the 11th century AD. This function was continued by Hedeby's medieval successor, the civitas of Schleswig, which is situated c. 2 km to the north on the other side of the Schlei fjord. Apparently funded in the late 1060s or early 1070s, Schleswig pursued this function apparently without any interruption until the middle of the 13th century.

Early medieval Hedeby is characterised by the fact that it has not been disturbed by modern building activities and by the excellent preservation of the archaeological features and their stratigraphy. Large-scale excavation of the settlement and harbour areas as well as the individual cemeteries has made available since 1900 large quantities of finds and structural material, which are being further increased by the systematic use of the latest surveying methods including geophysical surveys and systematic metal detecting. For an enhanced understanding of the results and interpretations of the new fieldwork it was also necessary to start a reassessment of the previous excavations. In combination with modern scientific analyses, this is opening up completely new possibilities for a more comprehensive understanding of the development and purpose of this early medieval trading and manufacturing centre.

Potential of Geoarchaeology to Contribute to Biographical Approaches to Urban Sites

Karen Milek, University of Aberdeen
k.milek@abdn.ac.uk

The understanding of early European urbanism and its effects on different social groups can only emerge from an acknowledgement that each town developed within its own physical and social environment, in a unique historical and economic context, and in a historically contingent network of cultural entanglements. The distinctiveness of each town's developmental context, subsequent trajectory, and social and material impacts, means that generalisations about early European urbanism will be difficult to formulate, and that research should in the first instance be focussed on the individual biographies of urban sites. Yet the excavation, analysis and interpretation of complex and often highly disturbed urban stratigraphy poses an immense challenge to archaeologists. To understand the full biography of urban sites, it is necessary to seek evidence for the pre-site environment, whether any alterations were made to the site to prepare it for settlement, and whether the development of the site included phases of periodic or seasonal occupation, or activities typically associated with rural contexts. We also need to excavate and analyse sites in a way that enables us to determine whether there were distinct functional areas within the town, the nature of the spatial relationships between craft production/industrial activities and domestic activities associated with daily living, and the degree to which there was a distinctively 'urban' daily life experienced by the inhabitants of the town, which might have engendered mentalities and world views distinct from their rural neighbours. Finally, we also need to use methods that enable us to understand the final phases of the town site, and how its material remains have been altered by post-depositional processes. Geoarchaeological methods, when integrated well into an archaeological research design, have the potential to contribute information to each of these aspects of a town's biography. Soil micromorphology in particular has been tried and tested on both rural and urban settlement sites as a means of providing high-resolution data about site stratigraphy, and the composition, origins, and post-depositional alteration of different on-site contexts, which would otherwise be difficult to infer. Using the micromorphological analysis of soil and sediment from the Viking Age town of Kaupang, Norway, as a case study, this talk will discuss how the high-definition data generated by this geoarchaeological approach can make important contributions to the understanding of the biographies of urban sites.

A Biographical Approach to Urban Communities from a Geoarchaeological Perspective. High-Definition Applications and Case Studies

Barbora Wouters, Vrije Universiteit Brussels
bwouters@vub.ac.be

This contribution builds on the methodological framework set out by Karen Milek's paper (Potential of Geoarchaeology to Contribute to Biographical Approaches to Urban Sites). It draws on a number of specific examples where different geoarchaeological methods have contributed to our understanding of towns' origins, use and evolution and aims to show their specific interpretative strengths. By focusing on a number of different methods, this paper also highlights the need for individual biographical case studies of towns and emphasises that the choice, timing and precise application of geoarchaeological methods need to be guided by the individual requirements and questions inherent to the urban site under study.

The micromorphological, textural and chemical analysis (μ XRF) of several sites is discussed, including Hedeby (Germany), Antwerp (Belgium) and Lier (Belgium). The types of questions tackled will range from how to improve the understanding of stratigraphy of both microstratified levels and thick homogeneous units such as "dark earths", formation processes and the identification of different activities. A new approach tested in one of the case studies is the integrated application of micromorphological analysis with micro X-ray fluorescence spectrometry (μ XRF). By scanning the block samples, or in some cases even the micromorphological thin sections themselves, μ XRF can pinpoint the elemental composition of specific objects targeted during the visual study under the microscope. This can, as in the case of Hedeby, aid the identification and characterisation of for instance on-site metalworking. Furthermore, by combining both the visual and elemental data we can take our interpretations further - not only is it possible to identify objects and activities more precisely, one can interpret them in relation to each other within their original stratigraphy.

By illustrating the potential of these geoarchaeological methods and showcasing their specific contributions, this paper aims to show not only that, but also how, different geoarchaeological methods can most fruitfully be built into research designs of North-European medieval towns. This high-definition approach allows us to come a step closer to a more detailed picture of early medieval and Viking Age urban communities.

Biographies of Sediments and Soils in Urban Contexts

Johan Linderholm, University of Umeå
johan.linderholm@umu.se

This talk will address some points of discussion on the process of urbanisation in relation to environmental sources of information and techniques to extract this. The point of departure is one of the fundamentals for human subsistence and the potential proxies carrying storing information; the soils and the sediments. Human manipulation and redirection of bio-essential (and other) elements has had a major impact on their circulation and turnover in many natural systems. However, this manipulation makes it possible for us to retrieve information human activities in most ecosystem, also an urban system. Sediment formation, stability and taphonomy are key issues. A preliminary case from Oslo harbour area will be presented with some problematics, methods and caveats.

Reading the Soil as a Record of the Past

Søren M. Kristiansen
smk@geo.au.dk

So-called anthropogenic dark earths (ADE) are soils enriched in charcoal (today denoted biocar) and plant nutrient that retain high productivity for a long time after the amendment. The ADE are best known from the Amazonian basin. Here it is hypothesised that the man-made fertile soil (called Terra Preta del Indio) was an important factor for maintaining the high pre-Colombian population density for millennia, despite the very low natural fertility of the region. No current analogue exists, so it is unclear whether the soils were purposely amended with the key component, i.e. biochar which is degraded very slowly, thus securing long-term productivity.

An extant ADE management system has been postulated to exist in West African, but no firm data have supported it hitherto. However, an upcoming publication will show that targeted waste deposition of some villages in the rainforest parts of Ghana and Liberia today transform nutrient- and carbon-poor soils into enduringly fertile, carbon-rich black soil. The ADE created by the indigenous population occupy only a small fraction of the village area, but they also utilise ADE at the abandoned village sites, together making the ADE the most important cropping soil for them. Today, the small patches of ADE in existing villages and abandoned village sites support a significant part of the locals income and protein intake and contribute significantly to the food security. This extant West African soil management system has in some places existed for up to 700 years, i.e. pre-Columbus and are thus unlikely to be a consequence of contact with South American farming practices.

In an urban archaeological context, such an intentional biochar management system on nutrient soil, where otherwise only slash-and-burn farming strategies work, will on a century time-scale slowly but steadily improve not only the food security of the individual village, but also the fiber and protein available for sale at markets beyond the village borders.

Climate in History, History in Climate. Some Preliminary Perspectives on Climate and the Fall of Rome

Elvind H. Seland, University of Bergen
eivind.seland@uib.no

The very notion of climate change builds on the premise of departure from a historical situation of normality. Climate is thus of vital importance to historians and archaeologist aiming to explain societal change. Historical experiences with climate change, however, are equally crucial to climate scientists arguing for relevance and impact. Planned as a pilot for a later research project and using the collapse of the Roman Empire in the west as a case study, this paper explores the potential of text data mining, citation network analysis, and narrative analysis, in order to gather preliminary perspectives on how archaeologists and historians have cast climate as an agent of change in their scholarship, and how climate scientists have utilised historical perspectives in research.

Towns and Coinage. An Inseparable Duo?

Mateusz Bogucki, Polish Academy of Sciences
matbogu@yahoo.com

Different types of means of exchange (usually coins, but also in other forms) are one of the most common finds in urban centers. To understand the relationship between this specific category of finds and a specific form of settlement, it is essential to define what are the means of exchange and what are the urban centers. In both cases we encounter difficulties, resulting mainly from the fact that, depending on the cultural context, both means of exchange as well as the urban centers played different functions and had different forms. While defining the means of exchange in preindustrial societies appears to be relatively easy - there are all kinds of measures of value, harmonising the exchange of goods - defining the urban centers is more complicated. Definitions derived from the Western European medieval historiography emphasised above all the legal status of such centers, the definitions derived from the Eastern Europe and Asia historiography emphasise above all the specific functions that urban centers should serve. In the context of preindustrial societies the latter group of definitions seems to be much more useful. With regard to the issue of relations between urban centers and currency/money, the most important is that one of the characteristics of urban centers is varied social topography and indwelling them by different groups of inhabitants who, through their specialisation, were not fully self-sufficient - they had to acquire some goods necessary for living and even to develop their specialisation. This is where money comes to help the multi-stage exchange of different goods. But was the money always necessary for the existence of urban centers? This issue will be shown on the basis of selected examples from Medieval and Early Modern world.

Unconventional Places and Unconventional Biographies? Colonising the Lagoon in the Medieval Age. The Case of Venice

Sauro Gelichi, Ca' Foscari University of Venice
gelichi@unive.it

The lagoons are not easy places to colonise; and living in the lagoons is not simple. There is a problem of control of the land. Despite the presence of so much water, there is a problem of supply of drinking water. There is, more generally, a problem of access to food. Yet, despite this, many saltwater lagoons along the Northern Adriatic coast were permanently inhabited during the Middle Ages. They have developed permanent settlements, with the presence of a stable society; they have elaborated a complex building also in masonry and, finally, they documented the presence of public authorities (laity and clergy). The most famous and striking case is that of Venice.

There are many traditional explanations that clarify how it was possible to colonise the Venetian lagoon and develop a traditional biography of this city. In this paper I will discuss these traditional explanations and compare them with archaeological data, also of two types: the archaeological data that come from a traditional archaeological research and those that are integrated with a paleo-environmental reconstruction. I would understand if the choices to colonise the lagoon depend not only on political, social and economic reasons, but also locational. Finally, I wish to put together all these approaches to reconstruct the biography (unconventional?) of a city valued unconventional.

Urban Biographies as Network Dynamics. Re-defining the Archaeology of Urbanism

Søren M. Sindbæk, Aarhus University
farksms@cas.au.dk

The questions about the development of urbanism has been named as one of the “big five” in the study of change in the human past: the origins of hominids, modern humans, agriculture, domestic animals – and urbanism (Gamble 2001, 157).

The biographies of urban sites have been approached in archaeological research either as a spatial dynamic of settlement patterns or as a political dynamic of social hierarchies. This presentation argues that urbanism needs to be explored more broadly as a network dynamic. Issuing from examples from Viking Age and Medieval urban sites in Northern Europe it reviews the criteria by which archaeologists have defined and researched urbanism, and suggests a new concept and working criteria issuing from a network perspective.

Widely cited early definitions of urbanism in medieval European archaeology (Hans Andersson 1972, Martin Biddle 1973, Herbert Jankuhn 1975, and others) were focussed on legal, demographic, economic and topographic criteria. These reflected nature of sources available prior to the growth of substantial archaeological data: documentary and cartographic sources together with preserved topography and standing buildings and monuments. In common with V. Gordon Childe’s (1950) well-known attribute list for the “Urban revolution” these “Kriterienbündel” definition (Haase 1965, cf. Ennen 1972) were formulated before an extensive record of comparative data gathered from archaeological fieldwork was available to urban archaeology. Today the situation has changed. In this presentation I discuss the nature of urbanism with a point of departure in the biographies of deposition patterns (Kenward & Hall 2008); types of features including road metalling, storage facilities and latrines, intentional and unintentional allocation including raw material procurement and surplus resources including packing materials; palaeoecological evidence, including entomology and bioarchaeological evidence for infections and disease (Kenward 1997; Hall & Kenward 2004), and topographical organization including street fronts and facilities for water management (Monica Smith 2014).

CONFERENCE DINNERS

UrbNet will host two dinners during the conference for invited participants:

Monday 18 January

The Museum of Ancient Art
Victor Albecks Vej 3
8000 Aarhus C.

Tuesday 19 January 2016

Madrepublikken
Jægergårdsgade 34
8000 Aarhus C



PHOTO: MUSEUM OF ANCIENT ART

Biographies of Place - Book of Abstracts
Published January 2016

UrbNet - Centre for Urban Network Evolutions, Aarhus University
<http://urbnet.au.dk>

Editors: Rubina Raja, Søren M. Sindbæk and Christina A. Levisen, UrbNet

Template: AU Communication

Cover photo: Jesper Rais, AU Foto

Printed in Aarhus, Denmark (SUN-Tryk, AU)