

Call for papers

Anomalocivitas

28-29 May 2020

Conference organised by Rubina Raja and Søren M. Sindbæk
Centre for Urban Network Evolutions, Aarhus University, Denmark

The archaeology of urbanism has developed with reference to particular emblematic examples: cities of the Bronze-age Near East, the Mediterranean of the classical period, Mesoamerican highland cities, or the Northern Europe high-medieval cities are key points of reference. Urbanism, in this light, has been regarded as nearly synonymous with social complexity and with civilisation.

In recent years, a more globally oriented historical and archaeological research has exposed urbanity as a phenomenon that varies widely across time and space, sometimes in surprising ways. Like the palaeontological record abounds in creatures, which defy evolutionary hindsight – such as the famous Cambrian arthropod *Anomalocaris*, the past is full of extraordinary and surprising urban societies – ‘*anomalocivitas*’.

Examples of atypical urban-like developments, which have been intensely discussed in recent research, include the “mega-sites” of Neolithic Eastern Europe, low density agrarian urbanism in the Tropics, Late Antique urban encroachment in the Mediterranean East, classical and medieval trading ports, seasonal assemblies and nomadic camps, as well as palace societies, such as the Bronze Age agglomerations.

With a point of departure in archaeological research history and examples, this conference asks how an increasing body of archaeological evidence can be used to inform more appropriate models. It outlines a vision of urbanism guided by the theory of complex systems: as a cultural attractor through which the practices and routines in different societal trajectories converge on homologous patterns.

Commemorating the 20 year anniversary of the Copenhagen Polis Centre’s seminal publication *A Comparative Study of Thirty City-State Cultures*, this conference gathers contributions, which explore the making of urban societies as a non-linear and underdetermined process, accepting that urbanity can be characterised as a recognisable pattern. We invite contributions that issue from specific examples, comparative studies or conceptual analysis.

It is planned to publish selected contributions as one of the first special issues in the newly founded Journal of Urban Archaeology.

Abstracts of 200-250 words should be sent to Rubina Raja (rubina.raja@cas.au.dk) and Søren M. Sindbæk (farksms@cas.au.dk) before 1st November 2019. Selected presenters will receive notification by mid-November.

The conference will be held at Centre for Urban Network Evolutions, a centre of excellence funded by the Danish National Research Foundation and hosted by Aarhus University.

The Danish National Research Foundation's Centre of Excellence for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet)

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