

## Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet) lecture series at the Danish Institute in Athens, 2017

Although the term *globalisation* is a fairly recent articulation in the public debate, characterising the ease with which information and ideas travel across borders, the practice of exchanging products and world views has been a trait of human interaction for thousands of years. Archaeological evidence suggests that even in ancient times, curiosity led people on long journeys into foreign territory in the search for prosperity. In the course of these explorations, new contact situations occurred, triggering a series of economic, social, cultural and religious practices being shared and adopted – often modified to fit the local contexts. The exchange of values and behaviour among individuals and groups thus allowed new and dynamic urban networks to be formed.

In 2017 the Danish Institute in Athens hosts a series of lectures on Urban Network Evolutions in collaboration with the Centre for Urban Network Evolutions (UrbNet), Aarhus University focusing on the development of urban networks and the way in which urban encounters catalysed societal and cultural changes. During a total of six lectures, the subject of urbanism will be elucidated with reference to different geographical contexts: the Middle East, Africa and Northern Europe – as well as different types of evidence/finds: ceramics, metal and water management. Finally, perspectives will be offered on a new approach to the topic: High-Definition Archaeology.

21<sup>st</sup> of March

*Anomalocivitas: On urban evolutions*

Professor Søren M. Sindbæk

**Abstract:** 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, and 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 – ‘*anomalocivitates*’. With a point of departure in archaeological research history, this lecture 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.

16<sup>th</sup> of May

*A new Macedonia? Redefining urban development in Hellenistic North Syria*

Assistant Professor Michael Blömer

**Abstract:** Hellenistic North Syria is conceived of as a region shaped by newly founded cities, but our knowledge about the development of urbanism and urban biographies in this region is surprisingly limited. Most studies that aim at giving integrated accounts of urban development rely very much on information gathered from literary sources and draw heavily on analogies and circumstantial evidence. The master narrative developed along these lines is that North Syria has been profoundly transformed by the Seleucid kings, most notably by king Seleucus I., who triggered a large scale urbanisation project that revitalized a largely depopulated region. However, the results of recent archaeological research suggest that the urban landscape of Pre-Hellenistic North Syria was more diverse than previously acknowledged. While some of the North Syrian cities can indeed be regarded as new and dis-embedded foundations, it now seems that most of them developed along individual trajectories rather than reflecting a royal strategy.

6<sup>th</sup> of June

*Bars, coins and scrap: Seaborne connections and urbanising metals*

Assistant Professor Thomas Birch

**Abstract TBA.** Keywords: structural metals: construction, transport, maintenance; daily life: utilitarian and specialised equipment, adornments; transition and exchange: recycling, currency; essential metals: perceived as necessary (tin, bronze, zinc, brass and precious metals); re-creation and imitation: re-use and mimicry?

12<sup>th</sup> of September

*On urban network evolutions: The case of the Decapolis city Gerasa in Jordan*

Professor Rubina Raja

**Abstract TBA**

3<sup>rd</sup> of October

*Water and urban resilience: Geoarchaeology of African early towns*

Assistant Professor Federica Sulas

**Abstract TBA**

7<sup>th</sup> of November

*Ceramics in Context: High-scale production vs. imports. Some remarks on pottery finds and trade networks in Gerasa (Jordan)*

Assistant Professor Heike Möller

**Abstract TBA.** Keywords: mass production; rethinking typologies due to interdisciplinary approaches; imports as marker of exchange