

**Session title: INTERACTION IN THE ROMAN CITY:  
UNDERSTANDING MOVEMENT AND SPACE**

**Organizer:** Ray Laurence, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham, UK

**Discussant:** Ray Laurence, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham, UK

**Time:** Thursday morning

**Room:**

**Session abstract:**

The city was the primary site of cultural interaction in the Roman Mediterranean and beyond into the North-Western Provinces. This session seeks to examine the city as a cultural artefact within which the public spaces were the locations for cultural dialogue. For more than two decades, the approaches developed by the Bartlett School of Architecture (B. Hillier and J. Hanson *The Social Logic of Space*) have been applied within archaeology and has also inspired alternative methodologies for investigating movement within the city. What we will be examining is the definition of those places within the city, at which the regular passage of people sustained a greater cultural dialogue than other places. In other words, we will be seeking to identify the 'hotspots' within the Roman city where an intercultural dialogue was played out. What we shall see is that intercultural dialogue can produce both a fusion of cultures and a denial of another culture's presence. The session will demonstrate that the physical form of the Roman city, and the flows of people through it, played a crucial role in creating and presenting civic identity.

**Paper abstracts:**

**PERCEPTIONS OF SACRED AND SECULAR SPACES IN ETRUSCO-ITALIC TOWNS AND ROMAN COLONIES IN CENTRAL ITALY**

Ingrid Edlund-Berry, University of Texas, USA

In evaluating the centre of a Roman town, we immediately look towards the forum and its surrounding buildings used for sacred and secular activities. Based on a closer examination of Roman towns and their predecessors within Etruria and central Italy both their physical location and the configuration of buildings suggest that instead religious, political, and social activities within the town were dispersed according to a variety of different patterns. The location of temples, for example, was governed by the type of cult, whether urban or extra-mural, and places for gatherings and trade were determined by criteria such as accessibility. The question is then whether the 'conventional' Roman city plan was superimposed on, and therefore replaced, the original plan in a town, or whether other features - such as the location of a newly

built main temple (Capitolium) were sufficient to serve as a focal point of a Roman/Latin colony.

## **RETHINKING THE CENTRALITY OF THE FORUM: URBAN CHANGE IN POMPEII**

David Newsome, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham, UK

Our definition of centrality in the Roman city is usually based on uncritical assumptions about the role of the forum – both in Rome itself and in provincial cities. However, in Roman thought and experience, centrality was not simply the monumental civic spaces. Instead, a great number of sources suggest that ‘centrality’ was defined by movement; social interaction structured the definition of place and, moreover, this centrality was *relative*. With this theoretical framework in mind, we might then ask, how did changes to patterns of movement in the city affect the relative centrality of a given place?

Using the example of the forum at Pompeii, this paper discusses how changes to the permeability of this space recalibrated its position in a network of relative centrality. The changes we observe around the forum, now better understood from established archaeological chronologies for the first centuries BC and AD, allow us to propose a ‘phase’ model of development. This is the basis for comparable spatial analyses, from one phase to the next. The result of this is a greater appreciation of an evolving space; one whose patterns of movement to and through it, and thus its ‘centrality’, were redefined over time.

## **THE DESIGN AND APPROPRIATION OF SPACE IN TRAJANIC FORA**

Francesco Trifiló, Birkbeck College, University of London, UK

The planning and construction of provincial *fora* of the imperial period has long been viewed as an operation in which the urban landscape received a static symbol of *Romanitas* and Imperial authority. However, the increasing amount of data emerging from the excavation of these spaces reveals the depth of change that occurred to them and how this profoundly influenced their appearance and use in time. By examining the Trajanic *forum* of Sarmizegetusa (Dacia) and comparing it with suitable parallels, I will outline these changes as the product of dynamics of inclusion of the planned civic space in the context of everyday life. My observations will outline these *fora* as spaces undergoing a continuous process of re-definition of form, purposes and roles in the context of their evolving urban landscapes.

## **WHERE TO PARK? CARTS, STABLES AND THE ECONOMICS OF TRANSPORT IN POMPEII**

Eric E. Poehler, Department of Anthropology, University of Massachusetts Amherst, USA

The streets of Pompeii have long been an object of interest ranging from general curiosity to academic discourse. While it is now possible to demonstrate the direction that a cart travelled on any particular street, a crucial issue for understanding the circulation of traffic is missing: the purpose for the journey. This paper approaches the question of the why vehicles were moving through the city by attempting to answer two, more modest questions: Where did carts come from? Where did they go? Using the evidence of ramps leading from the space of the street and stable areas within the space of an insula, this research first identifies forty-eight fixed locations that are simultaneously points of origin and destination. Due to the differences in the construction of ramps and the presence or absence of an associated stable area, the ramps were divided into a typology. Next, these locations and their typological information were plotted throughout the city and analyzed in Geographical Information System (GIS) software, revealing several important patterns of distribution. Finally, these distributions within specific locations in the city are explored for the economic implications of ancient cart driving.

## **HEY, I'M WALKING HERE! THE POWER OF NUISANCES ON THE ROMAN STREET**

Jeremy Hartnett, Department of Classics, Wabash College, USA

The primary role of the Roman urban thoroughfare was, of course, to facilitate the movement of people, goods, and livestock through the city. Yet, in its role as a conduit, the street also brought virtually the whole spectrum of Roman society into daily contact, rendering its space a critical theatre both for the performance of identity and status and for the creation and resolution of social and cultural tensions. This paper investigates the overlap of traffic and socio-cultural interaction by considering the means and motives of those who intentionally created nuisances or obstructions to the passage of pedestrians along urban streets.

The sidewalks of Herculaneum and Pompeii were liminal zones used by the urban populace yet cared for by the owners of the fronting properties. Constructions in this bustling space often interfered with the passage of pedestrians, and thus contravened a legal principle protecting unhindered passage along public thoroughfares. What set of motivations and counter-pressures led to the creation of these nuisances? Alongside aesthetic, spatial, and phenomenological explanations, a central concern was clearly gaining the attention of streetgoers. I reconstruct the power and meanings of intra-urban visibility by examining a phenomenon related to physical nuisances: occasions when builders created unavoidable, axial views of their edifices along street axes.

## **CLUB-HOUSES AND GUILD-HOUSES AT OSTIA: SPATIAL ORGANISATION AND THE CONSTITUTION OF OSTIAN SOCIETY**

Hanna Stoeger, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands

The guild buildings (*scholae*) of the Roman port city of Ostia have been attracting wide-ranging scholarly interest leading to various interpretations informed by the existing architectural structures, Roman buildings laws, inscriptions and literary analogies, and above all topological observation. While most of these studies share a notional understanding of the spatial patterns present in the location of the guild seats and the spatial organisation of the buildings, they do not advance much beyond a descriptive level. This paper presents the results of a formal spatial analysis applying *Space Syntax* analysis tools to explore the building's internal spatial organisation as well as their integration within the city's total fabric. Topics to be covered include the potential of these buildings for integrating varied interest groups and social sub-communities both through their internal structure and their strategic positioning in relation to the street system and other major public spaces.

## **LIVING THE URBAN IDEAL IN THE ROMAN PROVINCES**

Louise Revell, Department of Archaeology, University of Southampton, UK

Recent work on Roman urbanism has moved beyond seeing the Roman cities as purely economic centres and administrative tools to looking at urbanism as both a way of living and as a locale for the reproduction of power relations. This paper looks at the way in which the public spaces of the provincial town were an area where the imperial power of Rome was enacted on a daily basis. Rather than a top-down model of forced imposition, I argue that this was something reproduced at a micro-level through the everyday routines of the local population. Part of this was through the ideology of urbanism, that is a shared belief in a specifically Roman form of urbanism, and I will question how far the archaeological and epigraphic evidence provides an insight into how far this ideology was something which was shared by the provincial communities.

## **SPATIAL ANALYSIS OF DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE IN VILLAGES OF ROMAN SYRIA**

Dianne van de Zande, Faculty of Archaeology, Leiden University, The Netherlands

In this paper, ongoing research on the organization of Roman villages in northern Syria will be presented. Rural northern Syria contains many still-intact towns and villages. Scholars have argued whether the stone houses reflected wealth from agricultural exports, or housed farmers of average income. Discussion also addresses whether house and village plans continue local rural traditions or the lifestyles of Greek and Roman (urban) life.

Spatial analysis of the village plans and street network can form a complementary approach in order to understand how the built environment of the rural villages influenced human movement and reflected the social and economic practices of their inhabitants. The aim of this analysis is to shed new light on the function and position of these villages in relation to each other and to the larger Roman Empire. In this paper, a few examples will be given.

## **CHANGING PERCEPTIONS, CHANGING PLACES – IN SEARCH OF THE LATE ANTIQUE FORUM OF THEODOSIUS AT EPHESOS**

Izabella Donkow, Department of Archaeology and Classical Studies, Stockholm University, Sweden

The excavation of the *proscenion* of the theatre of Ephesos in the late 1860s revealed a monumental inscription (IvE V 1534) that referred to the *Foros Theodosianos*, the location of which has continued to be disputed. The State Agora, and the rebuilt *Tetragonos Agora*, and the upper part of the impressive Arcadiane have all at one time or another been proposed as locations of the *Forum of Theodosius*. Most recently, the large open square, beneath the modern car park, has been suggested as a location. This paper will discuss these changes in interpretation in relation to the archaeological exploration of Late Antique Ephesos, and will also reveal how the modern conception of what constitutes a *forum* in Late Antiquity has also changed over time. The paper draws recent epigraphic research on processional ways in Late Antique Ephesos and places a firmer emphasis on the evaluation of the role of the *forum* in its Late Antique context. In this interpretation, of what defines a *forum*, a far greater emphasis is placed on the role of the movement of people through the streets than on the topographical reading of urban space.

## **URBANITY AND THE CHURCH: CULTURAL AND RELIGIOUS DIALOGUE IN LATE ROMAN NORTH AFRICA**

Gareth Sears, Institute of Archaeology and Antiquity, University of Birmingham, UK

Roman North Africa was heavily urbanised compared to many other provinces in the Empire, a phenomenon that continued to the very end of Roman control over the region. By the late third century many of these cities had developed complex urban forms based around the monumental structures of forum, temples, theatre, amphitheatre, baths and walls; a vibrant Romano-African urban culture had been created. The urban space of late Roman Africa was one of the prime venues for a variety of religious disputes that were played out in the late third to the fifth centuries. Such disputes were not just articulated through pamphlets but also in the manipulation of urban space by city councils, Christian communities and bishops. The current paper will address the impact of Christianity on public spaces and the wider urban topography and will examine where space was transformed from being non-Christian to Christian from the late fourth century onwards. It will consider how far the choices that were being made by both Christians and non-Christians can be reconstructed from the archaeology and it will examine the transformation of temples for new uses, both religious and non-religious in the period.