



McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

Delicate urbanism in context: Settlement nucleation in pre-Roman Germany

The DAAD Cambridge Symposium

Edited by Simon Stoddart



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with contributions from

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Chapter 8

Not built in a day – the quality of Iron Age urbanism by comparison with Athens and Rome

Katja Winger (Berlin)

This paper is derived from my presentation at the symposium where my task was to discuss the quality of Iron Age urbanism. I decided to do this by comparing the sites of *Heuneburg* and *Manching*, the most prominent and best investigated Iron Age sites from Germany, with sites no less than *Athens* and *Rome*, two showcases for ancient urbanism. However, before we take a look at the sites themselves, I will make some remarks about the concept of town and city – two terms that I will use as synonyms in this article – (cf. Fernández-Götz et al. 2014).

Not only towns and cities

After the introduction of the concept of urbanism for prehistoric communities by Vere Gordon Childe (1950), Iron Age archaeologists were required to think about this subject. The result has been a plethora of alternative characterizations of urbanism, while skirting the usage of the very term itself. Frank Kolb's book about ancient Mediterranean towns established the common definition of urbanism from an ancient historical perspective (Kolb 1984). He pointed out the features 'topographical closeness', 'administrative and political separation', 'number of inhabitants' and 'urban lifestyle' for an ancient city and thus raised the bar virtually out of reach for prehistoric settlements. After a long and rather fruitless controversy, Bernhard Hänsel proposed analogous criteria for prehistoric settlements (Hänsel 2005). He highlighted 'settlement size', 'topographical concentration of occupation', 'variability of archaeological structures', 'economic diversity' and 'long-distance contacts'. 'Long-lasting continuity of urban space' was added as an additional criterion, but not as a *sine qua non*.

Beyond these checklists, Jurij Wiktorowitsch Andreev stressed the transformative character of settlements and introduced the terms quasi-city and proto-city (Andreev 1989). The geographer Walther

Christaller asserted settlement function as 'central places' providing certain services to their hinterland (Christaller 1966). Based on knowledge about medieval settlements, Eike Gringmuth-Dallmer developed a systemic model by combining geographical and archaeological data (Gringmuth-Dallmer 1996). His model ranks settlements with certain functional criteria and uses the term 'complex centres' to avoid the problems with the term town/city. Along with these prominent models, a large number of other terms and patterns exist. So we find ourselves faced with a number of different and also poorly defined terms like the afore-mentioned towns, cities, quasi-cities, proto-cities, pre-urban, proto-urban, urban-like or largely urban settlements. Furthermore, we can add complex centres and central places. Additionally, the terms used by Caesar to describe Gallic settlements as *oppidum*, *vicus*, *aedificium*, *castellum* or *urbs* are widely employed by scholars (Caesar, *De bello Gallico*). Just to name a few more terms common in the definition of Iron Age settlements, I also want to recall the thoughts of Vladimír Salač, who introduced the terms 'Lowland Oppida', 'Hilltop Oppida', 'Production and distribution centre' and 'Němčice-Roseldorf-type centre' (Salač 2005; 2009). For the Early Iron Age, we also have to deal with Wolfgang Kimmig's model of the *Fürstensitz* (Kimmig 1969) and should not forget that Herodotus designated Pyrene (be it the *Heuneburg* or not) as a '*polis*' (Herodotus, II 33). Apart from the aim of systematizing the archaeological record, most of these terms are first of all used to avoid designating a settlement as a town or city.

For the Mediterranean, we can detect, as far as I can see, a rather uncritical and widespread use of the words 'town' and 'city' for the whole variety of settlements in the Ancient world (cf. Preston & Owen 2009, 1). A city, in this context, is often mainly seen as a collection of architecture.

Ancient Historians as well as classical archaeologists divide the phenomenon of urbanization into endogenous and exogenous examples (Vittinghoff 1978). Endogenous hereby means an independent development of cities, while exogenous cities, for example the Greek, Hellenistic and Roman colonies, are seen as a transfer of the urban idea of their metropolis to a new geographical location. Of course there are transitions between these two models – for example when colonies are placed on former indigenous settlements.

Athens and the Heuneburg

My four case studies are typical examples of endogenous urbanization. The first similarity between all of them is their special topographic position, on points of intersection between sea and land routes. The cities developed in long settled areas, even though some interruptions can be detected particularly in the cases of the *Heuneburg* and *Manching*. The first two places – *Athens* and *Heuneburg* – both possess a prominent hill and are situated at places where arterial roads meet navigable rivers. The application of the term *Akropolis* from *Athens* to the hilltop plateau of the *Heuneburg* by Wolfgang Kimmig was the initial point of his *Fürstensitz* model (Kimmig 1969). This acropolis, by contrast with the *suburbia*, was directly connected to the image of the Greek *polis* in the time of tyranny.

To draw a short biography of both places we have to start long before the Iron Age. Of course, the chronologies are not in parallel, but what follows is an attempt to compare the development of the settlements

during the politically relevant periods. Archaeological finds date the beginning of settlement in the wider area of *Athens* to the late seventh millennium BC (Welwei 2011, 3–8). Written sources give the Athenians' belief that their ancestors always had been living at the same place (Herodotus VII, 161,3; Thucydides I 2,5) providing a link to mythical, heroic times. Of course we do not have similar sources for the *Heuneburg*, but from the archaeological point of view we can detect Neolithic traces (Fernández-Götz 2014e, 26), and even infer that a similarly mythical linkage might have existed. Unfortunately, these traces have been strongly affected by later periods and mainly consist of stray finds. In *Athens*, Neolithic wells and buildings are known from the Acropolis (Welwei 2011, 4) and at the *Heuneburg* a possible Neolithic ditch system has been traced (Krausse et al. 2016, 41–2).

More material is available for the Middle and Late Bronze Age, when the *Heuneburg* plateau was a fortified settlement. Recent excavations also brought to light several Bronze Age finds from the lower town and outer settlement (Krausse et al. 2016, 46–7). For *Athens*, the Bronze Age (Helladic period) material is very rich, although it mostly consists of sherds which mainly come from the fills of wells and graves (Wycheley 2015, 253–60; Mountjoy 1981). One special case is the remains of a Mycenaean palace, including access to the underground watercourses of the acropolis (Broneer 1939; Nylander 1962).

After a hiatus lasting some centuries, the classical years of the Iron Age *Heuneburg* began. While settlement traces from the plateau are absent between

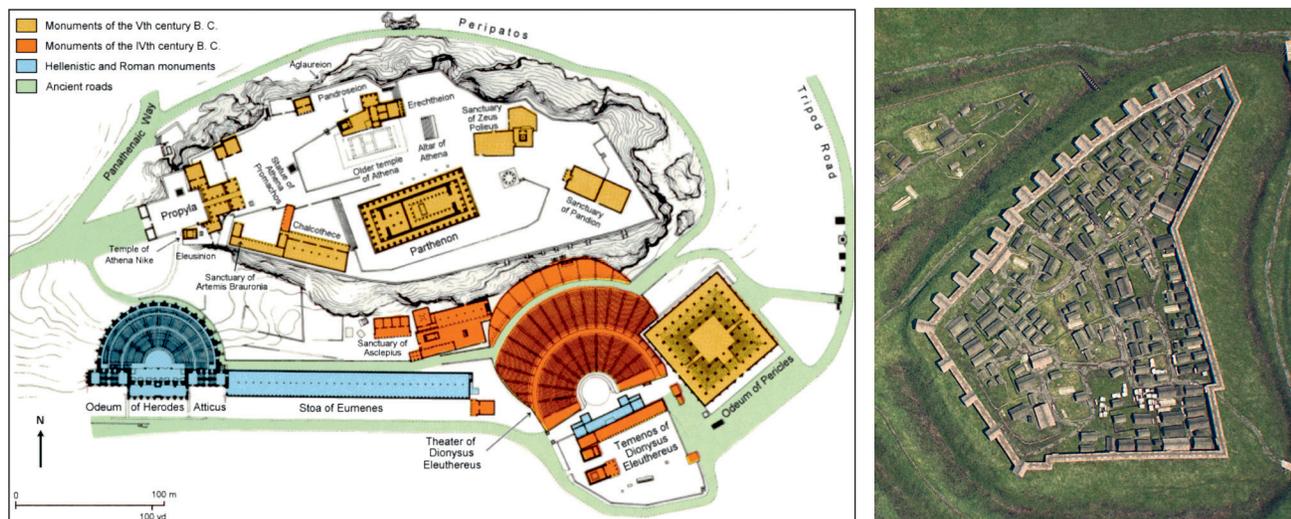


Figure 8.1. Ground plan of the acropolis of Athens (after Papathanassopoulos 1991, fig. 12) and idealized 'drone' image of the acropolis of the Heuneburg (after Krausse et al. 2016, fig. 43) to the same scale. The similarity in the size of the plateaus is striking. Most of the buildings shown on the left of the figure are more recent.

Hallstatt A1 and Hallstatt D1, the region around the *Heuneburg* was never completely deserted (Fernández-Götz 2014e, 26–7). The Iron Age also represents the classical times of the Athenian city that was continually settled. After a period of insignificance, the change is connected with the names of Draco and Solon.

After arrival in the Iron Age, the crucial periods of both places, it is the moment for a more detailed comparison of their features. In *Athens*, it is noteworthy that the most common pictures mostly show Classical structures. Most of her prominent buildings did not exist during the heyday of the *Heuneburg*. One exception is the parts of the so called ‘older temple of Athena’ which was built in the last quarter of the sixth century BC on the acropolis and survived in the so called Persian destruction levels (Childs 1994). In the sixth and fifth century, *Athens* looked more like a village than a town and was mostly defined by agricultural production (Vittinghoff 1978, 553).

The size of both settlements was quite similar (Fig. 8.1). An examination of the ground plans of both hills shows a size of about 3 hectares. Of course, both settlements had a huge amount of lower and exterior settlement and it is hard to determine the area belonging to the town itself. For *Athens*, the city walls from the fifth century BC document an enclosed area of about 215 hectares at this time. The size of the territory in the sixth century is not actually that clear, but by inference from the population increase in the fifth century BC, it can be assumed to have been much smaller. At the *Heuneburg*, recent research has traced an increased understanding of the outer settlements to reach a size of about 100 hectares (Krausse et al. 2016, 83–4). To determine the size of the actual hinterland of both settlements is inordinately more difficult (for *Heuneburg* cf. Nakoinz 2009, 364–8; Sievers 2008). The historical region of Attica has a size of almost 300,000 hectares, but included several areas of land without agricultural value and was of course never completely settled (Lohmann 1993, 285; for the rise of the Athenian *polis* and the role of its *chora* cf. Snodgrass 1991, 14–17). Isotope analyses on bovine and pork remains proves the mobility of Iron Age cattle (Stephan 2016), which can be seen as a first step to discover the real territory of these settlements in Germany. Similar results have been made for the pollen from honey found in princely graves near the *Glauberg* (Rösch 2002), but should be interpreted cautiously because of methodological difficulties.

Any calculation of population levels is highly dependent on the size of their territory. When we think of ancient *Athens*, we mostly have in mind the classical periods with their well-known buildings, personalities and tens of thousands of people. Nevertheless, the

sixth century, the time in which the Homeric epics were textually edited, had little in common with the idealized picture of Democracy. For the sixth century, *Athens* most scholars assume a number of about only 5000 people which is a number similar to that supposed for the *Heuneburg* in Ha D1 (Kurz 2010, 249).

We know very much less about who these people actually were. For *Athens*, we have written sources which mainly cover politics, and thus the tyrants like *Peisistratos* and other members of the aristocracy, who often distinguished themselves as military leaders. These elite families can also be found in grave architecture (Wycheley 2015, 253–60). Without written sources, we can only assume that the men, women and children from the elite burials of the *Heuneburg* area (e.g. Krausse et al. 2016, 113–38) may have formed something similar to this aristocracy. For both societies, the information about the socially ‘lower tens of thousands’ is especially rare. For *Athens*, the existence of dependents and slaves is *documented*, but for the German Early Iron Age we can only state the absence of many people from the burial record (cf. Trebsche et al. 2007). As town and country are an inseparable entity, the presence of farmers who sold their goods in the city can be assured, as well as the availability of merchants and craftspeople in both settlements.

In the times of tyranny, enormous building programmes were started in *Athens* – like the monumental temple of *Zeus Olympios* initiated by *Peisistratos*. The *Heuneburg* also exhibits an extremely differentiated picture of building structures including the monumental stone gate, the famous mudbrick wall and the younger major buildings (Gersbach 1996, 102).

Rome and Manching

The second pair of places is also characterized by their location near a navigable river and accordingly a harbour. The cities cover a much wider territory and are not dominated by a single acropolis. In terms of size, *Rome*’s first city walls already surrounded a slightly larger territory than the wall at *Manching* (Fig. 8.2). In terms of the fact that both settlements had sparsely populated and agrarian areas inside their walls, the actual size mostly depends on the particular topographic configuration. A determination of the size of the hinterland of each town is even more difficult than for *Athens* and *Heuneburg* (for *Manching* cf. Sievers 2008). While a Greek *polis* used to have a certain *chora*, *Rome* expanded its sphere of control to become the outstanding centre of the *Imperium Romanum*. For *Manching*, the hinterland surely can be found in the Ingolstädter Becken, but as the work of our colleague Michèle Eller (forthcoming) brought to

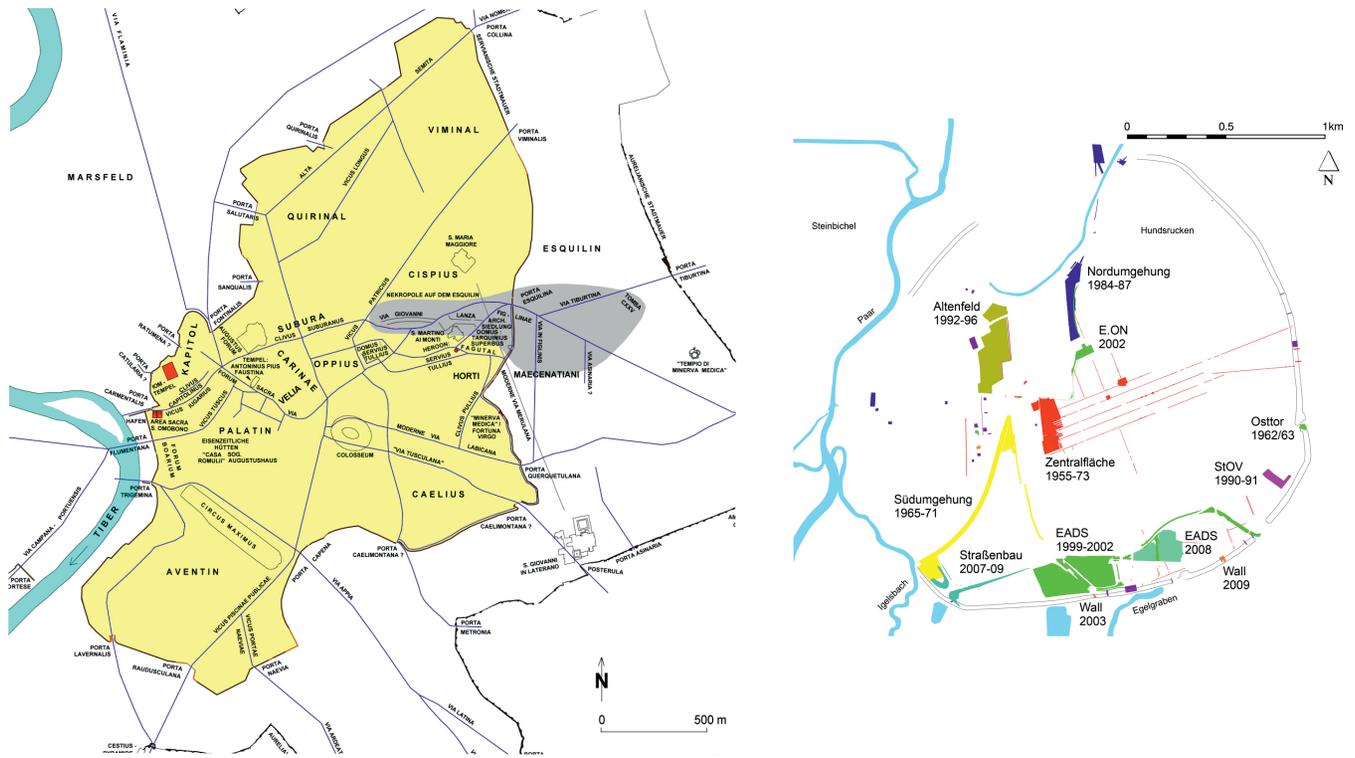


Figure 8.2. Ground plans of Rome with the area surrounded by the Servian Wall marked in yellow (after <http://www.rom.geographie.uni-muenchen.de/publications/ArchStadtRomHaeuberMapA.jpg> accessed on 4 Feb. 2017) and the oppidum of Manching with the main excavations (after Sievers 2007, fig. 14). Again, the size of both places is quite comparable.

light, the settlement structure is much more difficult than for example in Ancient Attica, and the functional differentiation between sites like *Manching*, *Kelheim* and *Berching-Pollanten* needs to be determined.

Both places have a long biography. Several Neolithic finds come from the later *oppidum* of *Manching* (David 2008, 89), which lies on an important arterial road used at least since the Bronze Age (Sievers 2007, 20–1; Sievers 2008, 13). The population of the Iron Age town was surely faced with some visible finds from these epochs and they must have wondered and created oral mythical traditions about the presence of possible ancestors in the Bronze Age graveyard (Nieszery 1992). For *Rome*, several places with Bronze Age settlement structures and sherds are known that predate the mythic Romulean foundation traditionally thought to take place in the eighth century BC. The fact that the Romans were also well-aware of the history of their city can be seen in the ‘House of Romulus’ that was presented on the Palatine Hill in Augustan times (Coarelli 2013, 155–62). The main period of Iron Age settlement in *Manching* lies in the early fourth to first half of the first century BC. In this turbulent time, *Rome* built the Servian wall after the sacking by the Gauls

in 390 BC, which was expanded in the course of the Punic Wars and suffered in the Civil Wars that led to the end of the Roman Republic.

The number of inhabitants is hard to specify in both cases. *Rome* derived its nucleation or *synoikismos* from several settlement cores and increased its population from hundreds in the eighth century to a tremendous million in the times of Augustus (Kolb 2007, 22; 71; Brunt 1971). Reliable numbers between the fourth and first century BC do not exist, but they should lie somewhere between thousands and hundreds of thousands of people according to the known census data. For *Manching*, the idea of a *synoikismos* is also a probable scenario from interpretation of the two early cemeteries (Sievers 2007, 24–7) and the abrupt rise of the settled territory parallel to the abandonment of settlements in the hinterland around 200 BC (Eller et al. 2012; Winger 2015, 109–111). The number of inhabitants can only be guessed as amounting to thousands of people (Sievers 2007, 55).

Visitors surely noticed the moment when they entered both cities. Although the *Murus Gallicus* in *Manching* was not built until the final decades of the second century BC, the boundary of the settlement had

been distinguishable in earlier times from the presence of ditches similar to the Roman *pomerium* (Brestel 2015). Inside the town walls, diversified building structures indicated various functions of buildings like sanctuaries, stables, craftspeople workshops and the like (Fig. 8.3; cf. Wendling 2013, 473–6). Unfortunately later

building has prevented the preservation of hardly any house of this time in *Rome*, not least because the large building programme of Augustus which claimed to have turned a city of bricks into one of marble (Suetonius, *Augustus* 28,3) reworked a tremendous number of buildings. One isolated surviving example



Figure 8.3. Diversity of building structures in the northern part of the 'Südumgehung' at Manching – longhouses (stables and barns), workshops, temples, residential buildings etc. (Winger 2015, fig. 83).

is the temple of *Hercules Victor* in the *Forum Boarium* which was erected in the second century BC and is the oldest preserved marble building in *Rome*.

The town/city centres in both cases were the areas with the highest accessibility and thus were characterized by public open spaces, important sanctuaries and – only proven in the case of *Rome* – political and administrative buildings. These open spaces and sanctuaries in both settlements offered space for representation and ritual acts that surely played an important role for the formation of towns (Fernández-Götz 2014d).

The societies of both settlements included an aristocracy which revealed itself by extraordinary wealth and building structures. Both cities surely had priests – in the case of *Manching* this group of persons might be identical to the term ‘druids’ mentioned by Caesar. Other groups like merchants, craftspeople, farmers and slaves are also proven for both cities.

If we take a look at the four settlements compared in this paper nowadays, significant differences of course occur. While the *Heuneburg* and *Manching* are far behind in their relative importance in Iron Age times, both *Athens* and *Rome* have also intermittently grown and are modern metropolises today. *Rome* retains the most amazing biography, as it stayed in the middle of different territorial, political and cultural systems. It was the centre of the Latin League, the Roman citizens and their colonies, the Mediterranean Imperium and the Latin Christianity. Thus, the only thing held in common for *Rome* and *Manching* today is the fact that both of them are a location for an airport because of the flatness of the local terrain. *Athens* similarly lays claim to its international importance as the foundation place of democracy and a broad linkage to events such as the Olympic Games.

Identity and the city: ‘I want to be a part of it’

After this very brief contrasting juxtaposition of *Athens* and *Heuneburg*, *Rome* and *Manching*, I want to raise the question level of the quality of life for the inhabitants of these settlements. It is not without reason that Roman aristocrats almost regularly had country residences to escape the Eternal City (Kolb 2007, 44–7). With a high level of inhabitants, social stress and risk of epidemic infections escalates. Waste, refuse and smells become a problem in bigger settlements. However, just as today there were more benefits to attract the vast number of people to live in the cities: It is in the nature of things that living in the town always means a benefit of education and innovation. In contrast to rural settlements, a city also provides its people with breaking news, access to foreign goods and a closeness to social and political organization. We know very little about

the social networks of the benefits for the deserving poor of *Athens* and *Rome* in the relevant periods and we know literally nothing about this for *Heuneburg* and *Manching*. However, it can be assumed that there were more opportunities not only for the rich, but also for the poor, sick and beggars, as well as for thieves in the urban settlements.

As the resident of a Greek *polis* saw himself as an Athenian or Spartan and modern teenagers from Berlin look down on their contemporaries from provincial Potsdam, we regularly identify with the city we are living in. Paul Sinclair and his colleagues defined this as the ‘Urban Mind’ – a global phenomenon throughout time (Sinclair et al. 2010). Of course, this understanding of urbanism can be assigned to the Iron Age people living on the territory of today’s Germany. In fact, the antagonism between townspeople and countrymen is no new phenomenon limited to a certain epoch or cultural environment and I profess here that the quality of life in the town or rural settlements is quite comparable during different times and between diverse cultural settings.

Conclusion

In conclusion, I suggest that we can detect a valid comparison between the Iron Age towns on German soil and the Mediterranean cities of *Athens* and *Rome*. To draw these analogies, it is essential to clear from our minds the images we have of ancient towns made from marble inhabited by philosophers and tragedians. Although *Athens* and *Rome* can look back on outstanding biographies, their seminal outline in times parallel to the heyday of the *Heuneburg* and *Manching* was relatively modest. In my opinion, this is mainly due to the fact that four examples of endogenous urbanization have been compared. When Holger Baitinger contrasted the layout of the *Fürstensitze* with the town of *Selinunte* that was a Greek colony and thus a planned city, with an already formed history, he hardly found any analogies (Baitinger 2013, 253–7).

It is obvious that this very short portrayal can only begin to trace the question of the quality of Iron Age urbanism. The author will try to develop this subject in future work and also involve remarks from the discussion after the presentation that *inter alia* stressed the idea of the *Axial Age* (Jaspers 1949).

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