

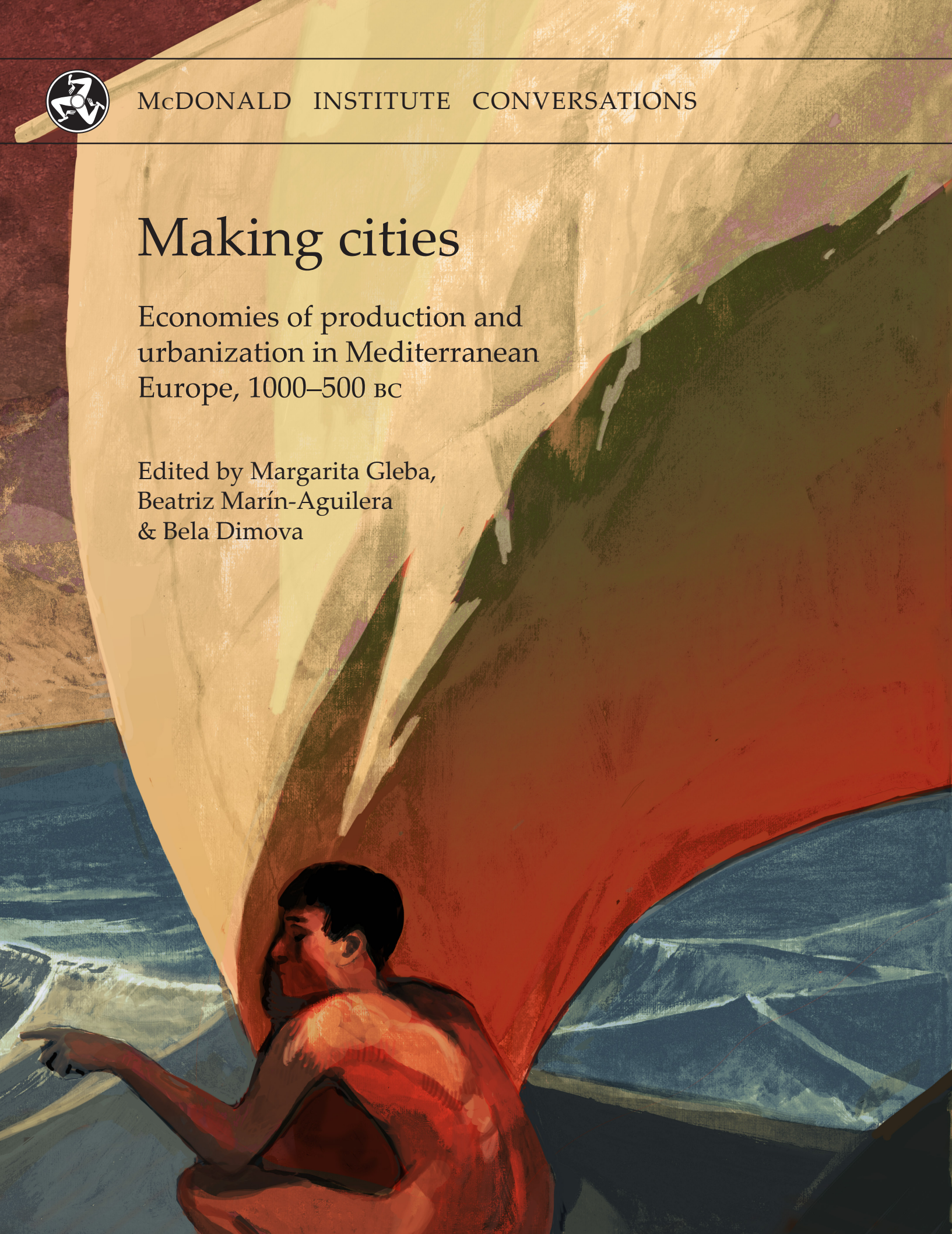


McDONALD INSTITUTE CONVERSATIONS

Making cities

Economies of production and
urbanization in Mediterranean
Europe, 1000–500 BC

Edited by Margarita Gleba,
Beatriz Marín-Aguilera
& Bela Dimova



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Chapter 29

Craft and the urban community: industriousness and socio-economic development

Christopher Smith

This volume brings together three themes. First there is the development of the package of settlement transformation, population densification and behavioural choices which we sometimes refer to as urbanization.¹ Second, it focuses on the evidence for textile manufacture, and other productive activities or crafts. Third, it situates this within the context of economic activity, broadly understood. There arises therefore a challenge of understanding this combination of themes, and the easiest way is to think that the economy is an amalgamation of craft production, which is then implicated in and parallel to the development of urban settlement.

However, as will be instantly obvious, but is borne out by this rich and challenging set of essays, this neat equation generates an almost fractal set of branching questions and doubts. When and how far does specialization set in? How far do crafts participate in knowledge networks?² What are the social and political conditions that work toward or against amalgamation? Are the surpluses ever amalgamated? How can one conceptualize a community economy if craft remains at a household level? Where do we locate the assignment of value? Is this rational or consistent behaviour and what are its parameters?³ And so on.

This volume seems to me to offer an opportunity to reposition the conversation about craft and the urban community. For the Classical world, craft is still relatively undertheorized.⁴ Archaeology recognizes it predominantly through either the object produced, or an art historical approach. The classic locus for this is the problem of vase painting, where the product may have been relatively cheap but the decoration permits the application of a connoisseur's eye (Vickers & Gill 1994). This shift from artefact to art also shifts the discussion from production to consumption, from cost to value. It has been very productive but it leaves much unsaid, though what is unsaid is often unknowable owing to the biases of evidence.

The contrast between art and craft is itself rather the product of modern historical circumstance and has been endlessly debated. Our concern is economic rather than aesthetic. Roughly speaking one might identify the following kinds of debates which relate specifically to the theme of the emergence of the city. When does specialization arise? Does specialization exclude household production? Does household craft production permit capital accumulation?

A simplistic and evolutionary picture might reckon on autarkic households eventually coalescing into hierarchical economies at a community level, but the reality was always much more complex. At the very least, we may be able to see specification of function, where there is specialization in terms of a product, though all the processes take place in the same place and are carried out by the same people. Specialization of function, or vertical specialization, where each element of activity is performed by different people, is a further stage of complexity, but across textiles for instance, the production of sheep, wool, dye, looms, loom weights, spindle whorls, and the process of weaving itself, may have at various times and in various places been more distinguished.⁵

What we are looking at is similar with what modern scholarship calls peasant economies, where the household is the basic unit of production, and most production is agricultural. Ever since Alexander Chayanov's groundbreaking work on the theory of peasant economy in the 1920s, it has been possible to understand the domestic mode of production as a highly efficient and complex economic model (Chayanov 1966). Chayanov argued that the domestic mode could even be more efficient than large-scale agriculture, and yet was not fully capitalist. Chayanov's work became hugely influential when translated in the 1960s, inspiring for instance Marshall Sahlins' classic *Stone Age Economics*, and the thesis of the 'first affluent society'

(Sahlins 2017). Peasants, in Sahlins' view, sought to acquire the minimum standard of living, although that did not exclude a minimum for social prestige nor did it exclude the potential for inequality arising from the variable biological fortunes of families (demographic differentiation). Moreover, these families were implicated in both local and larger-scale market exchange.

So, if we are looking predominantly at a domestic mode of production, then we need not exclude complexity. However, we are also looking at an urbanized or urbanizing mode, and therefore we need somehow to incorporate the capacity for effective household economies within the value system of amalgamation and densified settlement.

Fundamentally this is about the nature of economic hierarchy. The problem posed by this volume is whether textiles and other crafts actually form part of this economic production at all. Should we instead think of it as epiphenomenal to the broader processes of urban economic development, one which stays at a domestic level while the city develops different and more complex economic activity? Alain Bresson would argue instead that we should re-evaluate the importance of textiles; in his survey of the Greek economy he argues that 'textiles were a sector concerning which it is no exaggeration to say that despite its fragmented production structure, it provided genuine mass production' (Bresson 2016, 192). This is predominantly for the Classical and Hellenistic period, but there is little to suggest that the technology of textile production had changed since before the Archaic period (linen sees more development), and workshops are uncommon, though surely must have existed. Whilst *amphora* production or metallurgical activity are relatively easily brought into a discourse of intensification, it seems a little harder to make textiles enter the conversation.

I suggest that this takes us to the way we produce effective analyses and research agenda in the area of archaic Mediterranean economies. What is at stake is more than simply point of view, rather it is a shift in the way we contemplate agency and describe outcomes. Specifically, we need to develop a more dynamic model in which the artisan, the community and its values are in active and dynamic dialogue.

It is now more and more common to approach these questions through some form of network analysis which places emphasis on the agency of objects, on the entanglement of materiality and personhood, and on connectivity (Knappett 2011; 2013). This works well for much of the evidence collected in this volume, even if one of the trickiest questions when it comes to textiles is their mobility in and across societies, given their perishable nature. One of the steps that can follow is to think about reversible processes of

intensification. In the absence of the iron rules of economic rationality, and with limited temptation to pursue ideas of new institutional economics at this stage of urban development, increases in production seem contingent on other transformations, and not 'baked in' to the reproduction of social relations. That is to say, in the ancient economy, economic practices are embedded in society and it is the development of society and social values which changes the economy, not the other way around. Thus, intensification and abatement are processes which may have accompanied moral and social preferences.

It is perhaps worth saying that this approach should remind us of the need to view archaeological evidence alongside textual material. This is not to plead a return to archaeology's subservient position, but it is to note that where we do in fact have information about the values which surrounded, challenged and were challenged by material production we should bring that to bear.

My brief observations relate to thinking about how we can conceptualize an archaic form of industriousness. Almost everything that is described in this volume, buildings, population increase, agricultural intensification, metallurgical and ceramic developments, and textile production, reflect greater production of things and reproduction of people.

Industry is a fascinating word. Prior to the late eighteenth century, it meant intelligence, skill, cleverness, also diligence and effort, occasionally straying into an abstract word to define the sphere of action. Our associations with a large-scale organization of labour and profit are of course precisely the product of the Industrial Revolution. As such its semantic field covers both the Greek words *ponos* and *techne*, and maybe even the outcome of that labour, *erga* (Loraux 1982; Ette 2014). The relatively positive sense of industry has been almost drowned out by the other discourse that labour deprives one of freedom, but as Catherina Lis pointed out in a striking overview of the notion of labour in antiquity, there is plenty of evidence that in fact work was highly prized (Lis 2009; see also Cartledge *et al.* 2002; Verboven & Laes 2017).

This discourse starts of course with Hesiod, and one line is the exaltation of independent agricultural work (Edwards 2004; Barry 2016), but as Lis stresses there are representations of artisans on Greek vases, and self-identification of craftsmen (see also Neer 2002; Osborne 2018). Craft or *techne* is recognized and prized. The view of Plato and Aristotle that consumers and users were at a higher level than producers is a nice piece of academic prejudice but did not trump the recognition that skill was admirable and important (Parry 1983; Harris 2002; Balaban 2007). There is no

stronger illustration of this than the skills of the god Hephaistos. He is placed in an intermediary position (lame, cuckolded and unattractive), but he still has his place on Olympus (Barbanera 2015); and other gods too practice crafts, such as Athena, who was a patroness of weaving.

Once we allow that the prejudice against craft is not to be taken as a general orthodoxy, we can start to produce rather more exciting models of the way that production is inherently part of the 'making' of cities (cf. for the Viking period Ashby & Sindbaek 2019). Craft is one of the core knowledges which are required to build communities of interpretation. Techniques are passed on, inherited, lost and recovered. Textiles have a close connection to the body and to the home; they are personal and immediate (Cleland *et al.* 2005; Gleba 2008; Harlow & Nosch 2014; Harlow 2017). The lack of them is a sign of poverty; from Homer onwards, we hear of the beggar in rags (Milanezi 2005).

I would suggest that textile manufacture offers a particularly interesting intersection between industriousness, craft and social value. It is, at least in subsequent texts, gendered and socially laden (e.g. Larsson Lovén 2007). But it also produces objects which are highly visible components of behaviour, status and display. These discourses are now well known – from the extravagant textiles which Clytemnestra encourages Agamemnon to trample (McNeil 2005), to the Old Oligarch's complaint that slaves and free men are indistinguishable in Athens (Geddes 1987). The weaver weaves social personae and decorates political distinctions.

However, we need to bear in mind also the impact of craft on the maker. Dobres (2010, 109) argues for the essentially political nature of craftsmanship. Importantly, the mindful and technically astute body of the ancient technician was socially constituted and historically embedded within the body politic rather than some stand-alone and rational entity directly encountering the 'real' world. (As an aside, to which we will return towards the end, it is not irrelevant that politics itself could be viewed as a craft, and one in which knowledge was transferred across society and over time.) Thus, the technician's body was not only a medium through which they sensed and made sense of the world – it was simultaneously a 'stage' on which identity and other interests were played out. That is, the hands and bodies of ancient technicians were, at one and the same time, a sentient and sensual medium for actualizing self (and artefacts) as well as a 'surface' to be read by others with whom they were working.

I would argue that this is as true of textiles as it is of the more canonical crafts such as pottery, and not least because of the relationship between textiles and

the body. Textiles permit and enhance the performance of status and role. Both the well-furnished home and the well-furnished person function in terms of a sense of orderliness, as well as of status.

It is thus possible to see the continuous and vigorous production of textiles as self-actualization but also as an intimate interplay of surfaces – the weaver presents the image of industry, and creates a surface for bodily performance. As we have become more aware of and attuned to the significance of ancient clothing, we should also bear in mind the relevance of the production of clothing in the context of the social economy of the ancient city.

It is also interesting that this can be claimed for what is often, with all due caveats, also assumed to be a gendered activity (Barber 1983, 1995 and Costin 2015 generally; Gleba 2008; Dolfini 2013; von Eles *et al.* 2015 for Italy). Although the subsequent associations of textiles and women are often slanted towards personal morality, it is clear that this weaving activity can also be taken as a sign of industriousness. In terms of the social economy, the household is (ideally) productive at the level of every member, and there are other signs of this in stereotypes of thrift and cleanliness. This works even in the context of slave-ownership: in Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, Ischomachus instructs his wife on how to manage the slaves (Pomeroy 1995; Oakley 2000 for idealizing artistic representations).

So the domestic mode of production *par excellence*, textile manufacture, is essentially bound up in social discourses which I would argue are part of the production of densified and accelerating societies. It ought to be possible to infer that the creation of uniform markers of certain roles, the use of purple for instance, or priestly garb, are part of the outcome of societies which are constructing increasingly rule-bound cultures of display. In other words, the excessive display of would-be potentates is curbed by the introduction of functional signifiers which are associated with role more than individual. The anti-civic discourse of extravagance is clearly also relevant here, as we saw in the reference to the relative uniformity of Athenian dress.

This can be developed further, I think, through the notion of the potential role of textile surpluses in various forms of social performance. Textiles operate as dowry. They were, as Brøns has shown in an important recent book, significant as temple dedications (Brøns 2016; for the relationship of textiles to cult sites, the evidence from Eretria (Reber in this volume), and Este (Gambacurta, this volume and Gambacurta 2017), is helpful, and see Meyers 2013). These dedications marked both significant moments in female lives (puberty, marriage and childbirth) but also moments in the life of a sanctuary. Temple inventories show

substantial quantities of textiles of various kinds, some kept for so long as to fall into rags (Brøns 2016, 33–144).

Brøns focuses very much on dedication within a ritual framework, but the temple also acts as an economic entity. A recent special edition of *Religion in the Roman Empire* argued for religion as transforming value (Moser & Smith 2019), that is to say that one of the actions of religion is to take objects from the mortal realm and render them part of the transcendent world. This goes beyond the prevalent idea that funerary deposition places items of value beyond use, and insists on the repurposing of objects in the religious context.

Thinking of textiles, one can relatively easily make an argument for the integrative nature of textile dedications. The predominantly female nature of this behaviour binds female behaviour into normative routines, gives voice and agency to women in the sacred arena, and underscores their role in building community. The presence of weaving tools in female graves further implies the way that weaving and textile production was part of the female social persona.

It would be possible to make this into a repressive function in which female time was committed to a relatively repetitive and constraining routine. The limitation of female freedom consequent on the demand for surplus textiles suggests a very different regime from the ‘production of the bare minimum’ (Sahlins 2017). This may be valid in some if not all circumstances, but I want to suggest that we might arrive at a better understanding if we explore the notions that textile production was part of the construction of social persona and part of an economic value system. For instance, the ancient authors were well aware that weaving could stand for moral virtue, and be an act of drudgery.

On the first, there are obvious opportunities for competition and for display. The notion of the house society, which is becoming increasingly helpful in protohistoric debates, operates usefully here (see Ruiz-Gálvez, this volume). The house is a moral persona, and female production, assisted by demographic differentiation, and circumstances and choices which are relatively unrecoverable, may have assisted in augmenting relative profile, position and status. So the well-furnished household may also have been prominent in dedications. Evidence here is slim, but Osborne suggested that at least some of the female names in the Brauron catalogue may have been aristocratic (Osborne 1985, 158).

For the second, I want to suggest that we have radically underestimated the operation of tithe and tax in ancient economies (see van Wees 2013 and Fawcett 2016 for Athens). Tithe and tax obviously function towards the centralization of resource, as well as having the effect of redistributing wealth to some

degree (depending on how progressive they are). The prehistory of liturgies and euergetism is desperately unclear, but it seems to me that it perhaps ought to play a larger role in the accounts we are constructing of elite performance.

Textiles in this context are a product of committed labour, as well as a movable item of value, as argued by Susanna Harris (2018). The tendency to regard the expressions of wealth solely in terms of agricultural wealth, and the payment of taxes or tithes as either in terms of produce or metal or coin, may conceal a richer and more complex set of quasi-economic value transactions. In this context, the notion of the gift, the fixing of value, which Riva addresses here, is a critical element. The capacity for instance to clothe a guest which happens to Odysseus multiple times during his journey in the *Odyssey* is simply one aspect of how the abundance of textiles played into elite performance, gift-giving and hospitality. This is transformed in sanctuary dedications as part of the reciprocity of dedication. The relationship between farms producing sheep and houses producing textiles is an important element of the relationship between the productive meshwork of country and town (I borrow the term from Peregrine Hordern’s account of the Roman *suburbium*, but I think it has a wider relevance; Hordern 2014). This itself becomes implicated in potential relations of credit and debt, which then form a critical element of the development of the urban context, through the solidification of wealth classes, and in time, the regulation of debt.⁶

The continuity of the domestic mode of production seems clear, but the processes of acceleration and intensification mean that this production becomes implicated in a transforming world of exchange and value. One way of describing this is as the change from surplus gain to surplus profit, as has been done in a recent important volume on prehistoric societies (Meller *et al.* 2018). The idea of surplus gain is the production of abundance without necessarily having an underlying social inequality which was constraining that gain, and translating it into further inequality. However, there was no precise moment at which a society moved from one to the other. There may have been variations in the ratio between surplus gain and profit, but the case studies here show different kinds of ratio, and crafts may have been variously implicated in exploitative relationships.

This model insists on the overlapping of forms of economic behaviour. This is not to deny the reality of exploitation or its pervasiveness. Nor do I want to claim a close parallel between late Neolithic acephalic societies and the urban communities of the first millennium BC. I would however argue that processes

of draining surplus gain were for a very long time in tension with the production of surplus profit. As a consequential suggestion, euergetic social personae may have vied with exploitative ones, sometimes in the same house and at the same time. Part of our research agenda then becomes looking across both macro and micro scales to understand this layering of motivation and behaviour, and perhaps looking for the tipping points.

One suggestion might be that textiles track a particular set of transformations. Although textile production was surely always necessary, could we perhaps argue that as some production became increasingly directed to ritual depositions as part of socially constrained female roles, it played a less generally significant role in the overall economy, still representing surplus gain, but overtaken by the potential for other artisanal activity to produce surplus profit?⁷

Some of the sites explored in this volume seem to offer something like this model, whereas there are a few instances where textile production seems to have been more closely integrated into surplus profit models. Zagora, with perhaps 1200 to 1600 inhabitants, is interpreted by Beaumont as being largely egalitarian, but it was economically connected to other sites and capable of significant productive complexity.

Argilos on the other hand seems to be a town built for profit, which may stem from its core function as a distributor of mineral wealth. The sixth to fifth century BC complex of shops, workshops and housing units around Building L, identified by Perreault and Bonias, stand for a much more commercial approach to all artisanal activity.

Larger sites show evidence not just of specification of function but also specialization, as for instance is demonstrated by the possible sixth-century BC dye-works at Corinth (Tzounou). Regional level analyses such as Osborne's for Attica or Kotsonas' for Crete indicate varying degrees of complexity across both time and space. For Crete, for instance, we see the absorption of smaller sites by Azoria in the sixth to fifth century BC, whereas in Attica we see the re-emergence of smaller sites which had disappeared in the seventh century (Osborne).⁸

This variability can be seen at a lower level too – for instance, Tuck traces the relationships between Poggio Civitate and nearby hill sites. Recent work at this and other Etruscan sites indicates the quantity of movement of animals, including sheep, which are not really transhumant models so much as the mobility of resource (Trentacoste *et al.* 2019). This may turn out to be significant also for textile production.

Vidale and Michelini's account of Padova offers perhaps the most fully worked out model for economic

development and change affecting elite connections with craft. Taking a long run of over eight centuries, they track the arrival of specialized crafts, their close connection with elites and then their gradual embedding in the city until they became the province of independent artisans.

Another interesting question raised by the volume is the extent to which societies outside the city-state model may have managed these processes. Lin Foxhall had already argued in relation to olive oil and wine that Iron Age Iberian culture suggested a 'more complex and centralized network of dependency relationships' than Greece (Foxhall 2015). This can be compared with Sanmartí, Asensio and Jornet on the elite control of crafts, and the work of Álvarez and colleagues on Sant Jaume. Vives-Ferrándiz Sánchez also makes a similar case for strong elite control in Spain. Something similar seems to be hinted at here for Hallstatt culture (Fernández-Götz & Grömer), and Gailledrat usefully questions some of the received wisdom on Late Iron Age *oppida*.⁹

Perhaps the most striking examples of elite dominance are again from Spain. Jiménez Ávila's account of the post-Orientalizing complexes at Cancho Roano and La Mata indicate that the impact of broad Mediterranean connectivity could lead to extended elite control. But this is only one outcome of knowledge exchange discussed by Kolb and Balco and Nijboer. Textile manufacture may be interestingly connected to these wider influences through pattern repetition and changes in process. The wider social response is exactly the sort of question we have been asking about the shift between surplus gain to degrees of social profit.

To draw these threads together, I have argued that craft and industry were socially valuable. Archaic north Mediterranean societies demonstrate elements of both a peasant mode of production, of mechanisms to create and manage surplus gain, and that both may coincide with varying tendencies towards social profit. My conclusion places textile manufacture at the heart of this model of economic development, and this volume as a whole urges on to ask further questions about what sort of institutions structured the sort of community that was also economically competitive and outward-looking, or indeed inhibited aspects of that behaviour?

The increasing attention on textiles reflects the acknowledgement that this was a pervasive and significant activity in all communities, and that its product was a highly visible and meaningful part of the 'surface' of social performance. Weaving for the body, for the gods, or even for the sails of ships which underpinned the connectivity necessary for economies to thrive was work, but it was also part of creating a community of value.

The tendency to insist upon the institutionalization of economic process has been valuable for explaining intensification in areas such as olive oil and wine production, and the integration of activities such as *amphora* production, ship building and so on. Textile manufacture hints at another narrative. This narrative is one of a tension between social and economic value. My suggestion would be that textile manufacture starts very much as part of the world of peasant economies, the production of a bare minimum, but a bare minimum which covers the social obligations and aspirations which demographic differentiation permits. Moreover, surplus gain may have been a tactic in the face of uncertainty, providing a durable commodity for exchange. While dress can be part of social ostentation, dedications and acts of generosity are mechanisms for managing surplus gain. As a predominantly female task in the domestic world, textile manufacture was, I suspect, both repressive and empowering – perhaps one might say, it empowers women but only in socially normative directions determined by men. However, this does include the mutually beneficial construction of society. In some economies, textile manufacture will become increasingly part of social profit. We have seen this in two particular arenas, the highly commercial communities of the north Aegean coast, with their strong mining interests, perhaps developed in tandem with indigenous communities, and in the post-Orientalizing communities of Spain, with highly hierarchical societies. We have seen least evidence in small island *poleis*. But all of these communities are on a spectrum determined by their ecological niche, internal stages of intensification or abatement, and socio-political contingencies.

Textiles, with their language of ornament, their integration of domestic, ritual and economic spheres, their capacity to define and represent values, are important agents in archaic networks. Those who produce textiles are weaving a wider world. The intimate connections between cloth, body, status and political discourse ensure that textile manufacture has huge potential for understanding the complex interplay of factors which constitute the ancient economy at a time of intensified settlement density. One of the most elusive of archaeological objects, partly thanks to this outstanding PROCON project, has become one of the most intriguing and important proxy indicators for the emergence of the phenomena associated with the emergence of urban communities.

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Notes

- 1 On urbanization, see Osborne & Cunliffe 2005; Terrenato & Haggis 2011; Fernández-Götz *et al.* 2014; Gyucha 2019; for *longue durée* Mediterranean processes see Broodbank 2013.
- 2 See also Rebay-Salisbury *et al.* 2014.
- 3 Many of the problems around rational and institutional behaviour are touched on in Scheidel *et al.* 2007. For a broad overview of the Mediterranean economy see Manning 2018.
- 4 Older treatments include Burford 1974; on textiles and craft see Gillis & Nosch 2007; for a recent overview see Flad & Hubry 2008; cf. Esposito & Sanidas 2012; Sanidas 2013; Blondé 2016; Costin 2016.
- 5 For this distinction, which goes back to Weber, see Harris 2002.
- 6 See Osborne, this volume, for the economic development of Attica as a region and the connection to the Solonian reforms. The issue of debt, and the issue of euergetism with which it may be connected, is beginning to gain traction; see especially Zurbach 2017.
- 7 This is in part an attempt to provide a more sophisticated version of Sussman's (1987) reading of Hesiod's derogatory account of women as drones, interpreting this as another sign of Hesiodic sensitivity to change and redefinition.
- 8 This evidence will need to be read alongside Sally Humphreys' brilliant reconstruction (2018) of the varying level of real and fictive kinship groups in Attica.
- 9 For a broader synthesis, see Marion *et al.* 2017, an important summary of the state of play in Early Iron Age France, which does not hesitate to use the term 'industrialization'.

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Making cities

Large and complex settlements appeared across the north Mediterranean during the period 1000–500 BC, from the Aegean basin to Iberia, as well as north of the Alps. The region also became considerably more interconnected. Urban life and networks fostered new consumption practices, requiring different economic and social structures to sustain them. This book considers the emergence of cities in Mediterranean Europe, with a focus on the economy. What was distinctive about urban lifeways across the Mediterranean? How did different economic activities interact, and how did they transform power hierarchies? How was urbanism sustained by economic structures, social relations and mobility? The authors bring to the debate recently excavated sites and regions that may be unfamiliar to wider (especially Anglophone) scholarship, alongside fresh reappraisals of well-known cities. The variety of urban life, economy and local dynamics prompts us to reconsider ancient urbanism through a comparative perspective.

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