

Preface

The current volume is the product of an international meeting entitled “Spatial analysis in past built environments” which took place in the framework of the Excellence Cluster “Topoi: The formation and transformation of space and knowledge in ancient civilizations”. Topoi is an interdisciplinary research network which is concerned with the study of the ancient world. It was launched in 2008 and is mainly represented by two universities and four research institutions based in Berlin: the Free University, the Humboldt University, the Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences and Humanities (BBAW), the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut (DAI), the Max Planck Institute (MPI) for the History of Science, and the Stiftung Preußischer Kulturbesitz (SPK). The cluster is part of the Excellence Initiative of the German federal and state government and involves the participation of more than 200 researchers from diverse disciplines, such as archaeology, geography, history, cultural studies, linguistics, philology, philosophy, theology, and history of science. To date, the network consists of about 50 research groups that investigate the interdependence of space and knowledge in the civilisations of the Mediterranean, the Ancient Near East, Black Sea and Eurasian steppe regions from the 6th millennium BC to around 500 AD. This research programme acknowledges and explores the important role of spaces, spatial systems and various types of space-related knowledge in the development of ancient cultures.

Since 2008 the Topoi Excellence Cluster has funded and organised at least one international conference or workshop each month, and has published selected contributions presented at these meetings in the “Topoi. Berlin Studies of the Ancient World” series. This series has proven extremely useful for compiling an up-to-date overview of the scientific results of the cluster, and reflects the breadth and multidisciplinary focus of research in Topoi. The present volume is also part of this publication scheme and is expected to contribute conceptually and methodologically to key research areas in the Topoi Excellence Cluster.

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