

# SHAPING REGIONALITY IN SOCIOECONOMIC SYSTEMS

LATE HELLENISTIC – LATE ROMAN  
CERAMIC PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION,  
AND CONSUMPTION IN BOEOTIA,  
CENTRAL GREECE (c. 150 BC–AD 700)

**Dean Peeters**



**Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean Pottery 18**  
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# **Roman and Late Antique Mediterranean Pottery**

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# Introduction

Backpackers see many places in the world that their ancestors may never have heard of. The production of goods and services is increasingly moved to areas in which wages are lower and/or which have preferable business climates. Individual areas on the globe increasingly specialise in the production of certain goods or the diffusion of information, capital, persons, and goods within larger networks. Satellite offices of multinational corporations are established around the globe. The presence of bananas from Columbia in European supermarkets is the norm and not the exception. Hourly weather forecasts for almost any place on earth are a few clicks away. Roughly one-fourth of the world population (over two billion persons) has Chinese, Spanish, Hindustani or English as his/her mother tongue and roughly equal numbers are able to understand others in one of these languages. Some brands of soft drink, fast food, smartphone, etc. are consumed all over the world.

It goes without saying that we are living on a planet that is rapidly globalising. Individuals, communities, and other 'actors' on our planet become more interconnected and interdependent, as innovations seem to lead to an almost ever-increasing mobility of economic actors, information, capital, goods, and services. These globalising processes were, and in some way still are, expected to result in some kind of convergence in inequality across the globe: 'World trade, migration, and flows of capital should all work to take resources and consumption goods from where they are cheap to where they are dear. As they travel with increasing speed and increasing volume as transportation and communication costs fall, these commodity and factor-of-production flows should erode the differences in productivity and living standards between continents and between national economies'.<sup>1</sup> Yet, especially in recent decades, decreasing transaction costs and the increasing diffusion of institutions, technology, knowledge, and skills across borders are acknowledged to not lead to the degrees of convergence that were often expected. Among other things, significant diversity in productivity, the ways in which economies are organised, and income/wealth inequality keep to exist, while they are more and more seen as by-products of globalisation (if not active processes that drive it), rather than its opposite.<sup>2</sup> This is not to argue that some 'developing' countries can, will, or did not become 'developed', that certain possibilities that are offered by this connectivity

are not taken, or that standards of living do not in some way increase on the globe. Yet, in many ways processes of exploitation and extraction keep in place, hampering the levelling of 'wealth' *between* nations and also *within* them.<sup>3</sup> In development economics, the factors and processes that lead to such diversity in economic performance and development are hotly contested and the debate mostly centres on the roles of geography, institutions, and history.

Firstly, there are proponents of the major role of geography, climate, and location on such differentiation. Their key argument is that 'geography is not necessarily destiny, but more than good policy is needed to foster economic growth'.<sup>4</sup> This statement is based on the observations that 'physical geography is highly differentiated and that these differences have a large effect on economic development', including the level of productivity, transport costs, as well as the choice for one economic policy or the other.<sup>5</sup> Secondly, there are proponents of the major influence of institutions on such differentiation. Their key argument is that '[endogenous] economic institutions in society such as the structure of property rights and the presence and perfection of markets' are of primary importance to economic outcomes,<sup>6</sup> since institutions influence the structure of economic incentives, help to allocate resources, and determine who gets profits, revenues, and residual rights of control. In other words, 'societies with economic institutions that facilitate and encourage factor accumulation, innovation and the efficient allocation of resources will prosper'.<sup>7</sup> Thirdly, there are proponents of the influence of history on economic development and differentiation: 'small historical accidents can cause one country to become part of the industrial core while another becomes part of the primary-producing periphery', while 'some more or less arbitrary location becomes the site of a megacity containing ten million or more people' and another settlement on a comparable location merely reaches village level.<sup>8</sup> Although these poles in the debate might sound contradictory, proponents of all these 'sides' in some way recognise that geographies, institutions, and

<sup>1</sup> Dowrick and DeLong 2003: 194.

<sup>2</sup> E.g. Soja 1985: 178–179; Pritchett 1997.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Piketty 2014, Alvaredo *et al.* 2018.

<sup>4</sup> Gallup *et al.* 1999: 204. See also Sachs 2003.

<sup>5</sup> Gallup *et al.* 1999: 184.

<sup>6</sup> Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 389. See also Acemoglu and Robinson 2012 and specifically Mitton 2016 for positive relations between institutions and development in regions within countries that have greater autonomy.

<sup>7</sup> Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 389.

<sup>8</sup> Krugman 1999: 143.

histories are likely to be *all* of some influence, inter-related, and will not uncommonly amplify each other in cases of economic development. Jeffrey Sachs (who is a leading proponent of the ‘geography hypothesis’), for instance, stresses that ‘good institutions certainly matter, and bad institutions can sound the death knell of development even in favourable environments’.<sup>9</sup> Although it should be clear that reality will be far more complex than can be explained on the basis of a single of these lines of thought,<sup>10</sup> the liveliness of such debates illustrate that even (or perhaps especially) in the current globalising world diversity in economic practice and development is much observed.

A second somewhat related debate centres on cultural changes that accompany this increasing interconnectivity and interconnectedness. Especially ‘critics’ of globalisation express worries that cultural diversity will be ‘conquered’ in the modern world. Indeed, at least the understanding of one of the ‘global languages’ seems to become the norm, while iPhones, Coca Colas, and products ‘made in China’ circulate *en masse* even to the most remote corners of the globe. A certain decrease in the diversity of goods in production, circulation, and consumption on our planet can thus be observed and one might argue that an increasing homogenisation of consumption goods, and by extension a reduction in cultural diversity, takes place. This adaptation of such material culture and technologies, as well as diffusion of information and large-scale and long-distance migration, changes societies and individuals within them.<sup>11</sup> It should, however, be stressed that cultural, social, and economic diversity should, and are, hereby not necessarily be drowned out. The standardised soft drinks of the same brand, for example, have slightly different recipes from country to country to cater to the taste preferences of its inhabitants through micro-marketing. By extension and more essentially, the *same* material culture might be acquired differently, used differently, thereby be ascribed different meanings, and/or consumed to give different (conscious or unconscious) signals in different spatial and temporal contexts.<sup>12</sup> Increases in connectivity seem to lead to an increasing global awareness and make one aware of one’s own comparative position, situation, and of how varied and dynamic the world really is. This might foster a greater ‘sense of place’ and local, regional, and supra-regional diversity, while one might argue that ‘the more people who interact, the greater the need to be [and one should add, act] different’.<sup>13</sup> Although

globalising processes in many ways thus change the world, economic, as well as socio-cultural, heterogeneity is thereby not completely drowned out and it can even be questioned if a totally connected and globalised world (whatever that might look like) will do so.<sup>14</sup>

### Research context

This study aims to highlight and explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in Boeotia (Central Greece) from c. 150 BC to AD 700. The start of this introduction might therefore have raised some eyebrows and its relevance may have been questioned. This is especially true since the nature of ‘the’ ancient economy has been and to some extent still is framed in terms of the famous modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist debate. In short, this debate centred on the question if the ancient economy was only *quantitatively* different (making current economic models and methodologies applicable to the ancient world) or also that *qualitatively* different from the modern capitalistic market economy that certain principles, which are seen by most ‘mainstream’ economists as universal (such as the principle of ‘supply and demand’ and the presence of the self-interested, rational, utility-maximising *Homo oeconomicus*), are inapplicable.<sup>15</sup> It should be emphasised that the previous characterisation of the modern world is inevitably incomplete and not meant to answer the question whether ‘globalisation is good or bad’. Nor should this paragraph be interpreted to argue that this picture can be projected to the ancient world: the degrees of connectivity and interdependency that are currently reached were unequalled in the past, as the friction of long-distance movement and mobility, let alone communication and flows of information between individuals, was much larger. Furthermore, the detailed data on the basis of which modern-day economists discuss the causes and effects of increases in connectivity and interdependence (such as detailed data on income, wealth, or the quality of life on the globe and across echelons of society) are unavailable for the ancient world, while the reliability of certain proxies and models that are used to discuss such aspects is continuously up for debate. All this is, however, not to say that some phenomena might not be observed in both the past and present, that similar questions cannot be raised, and even that certain processes cannot be explained or at least explored along similar lines of thought.<sup>16</sup> In the same way that the current situation in the world should not be projected into the past, it is obvious that the past can also not be projected on the present. Yet, among other things, looking into the past provides us a ‘long term’ perspective on how societies and economies changed, how communities handled things and interacted differently with their near and more distant surroundings, and how communities were

<sup>9</sup> Sachs 2003: 39.

<sup>10</sup> It should be stressed that other positions in the debate, such as the role of culture (differences in beliefs, cultural attitudes, and values) on economic development can also be identified, although I agree with Acemoglu and Robinson that these factors are likely to be seen as ‘a consequence of different institutions and institutional histories’ (2012: 63).

<sup>11</sup> Appadurai 1996.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Appadurai 1988. See Gosden and Marshall 1999 and Lucas 2012 for such statements in the archaeological discourse.

<sup>13</sup> Bergendorff 2009: 53. See Whitmarsh 2010: 10; Woolf 2010: 191 for comparable statements in Mediterranean Archaeology.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Lefebvre 1991: 86–88.

<sup>15</sup> See Chapter 1.

<sup>16</sup> See the following sub-sections in this introduction for further discussion in terms of these observations.

at the same time part of larger networks, but daily life might be surprisingly 'local'. Above all, by looking to the past we can identify the mid- and long term effects and consequences of certain causes and human actions, which is something that we can only try to predict for the modern day.

### **Economies in Hellenistic–Late Roman Greece and the Mediterranean: heterogeneity in space and time**

The ever-expanding body of data on the ancient world and comparative and diachronic analyses on a more local or regional scale increasingly provide evidence for socioeconomic diversity and change. In Daniel Stewart's words on Roman Greece: 'there is no single narrative; dissonance is not the result of a lack of harmony within one song, but rather due to the competing songs from the past all sounding at once'.<sup>17</sup> This should neither be taken to imply that no narrative(s) can be written nor that such 'competing songs' were not composed on the basis of the same chromatic scale. Yet, Stewart's phrasing aptly catches the complexity at hand while trying to compare the observed developments and changes in one area (or even site) with other areas (or other sites). It should be stressed that high degrees of complexity, diversity, and change are not exclusive features of the Roman period or Roman Greece. This is particularly true since archaeological and historical records are biased in many ways, which somewhat complicates detailed diachronic comparisons and results in differences in the quantity and quality of the data for individual periods. Yet, on the face of it, at least in Greece, becoming part of the Roman Empire seems to have triggered or reinforced a certain diversification of paths, of which some were already taken in the episodic Hellenistic period or even before.

As a way to illustrate this socioeconomic diversity and change, we might have a look at population dynamics, which are especially in recent decades commonly seen as a proxy for economic growth or 'performance'.<sup>18</sup> Although demographic trends can most of the times be approximated at best, proxy data appear to sketch an image that is characterised by diversity: A handful of sites and areas in Greece seem to reach certain peaks in population levels, or at least the largest site-numbers and/or 'cumulatively occupied surfaces', during the Early Roman Imperial period. Most other areas, however, only seem to experience such high levels centuries later during Late Roman times, when some areas even seem to approach Classical period population levels.<sup>19</sup> In terms of settlement patterning and hierarchies, certain impacts of becoming part of the Roman Empire can be observed. Colonies were, for instance, established at sites such as Corinth, Patras, and the newly founded Nicopolis. The establishment of these colonies was accompanied by substantial population movements,

likely overall demographic decline, and changes in divisions of property in the area.<sup>20</sup> Yet, the number of such colonies in Greece is meagre and some areas did not see the presence of a single colony throughout history, making the widespread influence of such processes in all corners of Greek landscapes questionable. Alongside the establishment of colonies, a relatively select range of Roman cities were granted a free and immune status (*civitas libera et immunis*), a free status (*civitas libera*), or were seen as allies (*civitas foederata*).<sup>21</sup> It should be emphasised that such socio-political as well as economic privileges should be seen in perspective, since also cities that were granted a 'free and immune' status were obviously expected to contribute when certain financial or other demands were raised from the side of Rome. Yet, especially larger cities and colonies with certain privileges arguably seem to have become 'the focus of Roman administration', are furthermore argued to have become also the focus of 'Roman wealth', and are at the same time often observed to have gained 'a substantial increase in their cultivated lands' at the cost of others.<sup>22</sup> Diversity in socioeconomic status is not only observed between, but also *within* communities. For instance, non-Roman Italian peoples that were not belonging to the 'top aristocratic Roman elite', but which certainly held some prominence within local communities in Greece, could evidently be granted Roman citizenship. Up till AD 212, when Caracalla issued his *Constitutio Antoniniana*, however, relatively small numbers of 'Greeks' were granted Roman citizenship. Such an advantageous status seems to have been either acquired by serving in the army or was reserved for influential individuals or families that had a certain history of service to the Roman state.<sup>23</sup> A last indication that will be shortly highlighted here is that also the historical sources illustrate certain degrees of socioeconomic variety *and* change. It should obviously be emphasised that such sources should, especially in the case of Roman Greece, be read with care, since the presence of rhetorical, ideological, and/or politically motivated speech is not uncommon. Although the writings of Strabo are in some way illustrative in this respect, the images sketched by such sources nonetheless seem to hint at varying or changing fortunes of individual cities. He, for instance, narrates on Boeotia that 'Thebes now does not have the character of a noteworthy village' (which contrasts the Thebans of his day with the Thebans that made history in the past), while he continues that this decline 'is the same with other cities, except Tanagra and Thespieae, which have continued quite well, compared with the others'.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>20</sup> E.g. Jones 1940: 65; Alcock 1989: 99; Romano 2003; Rousset 2008: 315. See Karambinis 2018 for the most recent demographic discussion.

<sup>21</sup> Alcock 1993: 22–23.

<sup>22</sup> Rizakis 2014: 241–243.

<sup>23</sup> E.g. Jones 1963: 4–5; Garnsey 2004.

<sup>24</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, 9.2.5. See Schachter 1990 for a critical reading of the passage on Thebes, as this city is in the Early Roman Imperial period, for instance, observed to have been 'prosperous enough to undertake major re-construction at the [sanctuary of the] Kabirion, and important enough to have its own local mint' (p. 105).

<sup>17</sup> Stewart 2014: 120. See also Rousset 2008: 325–326.

<sup>18</sup> Cf. Jongman 2009; Ober 2015.

<sup>19</sup> Bintliff 1997a: 22; Bintliff 2008.

While there are enough reasons to critically approach our sources of information, there thus appear to be a range of indications that suggest certain degrees of (socioeconomic, political, etc.) diversity and change in the archaeological and historical record for Roman Greece. Pottery studies prove to complement to this picture and, among other things, shed interesting lights on locally-anchored and socially-embedded economies, socioeconomic networks, and agency by extension.<sup>25</sup> The previously listed examples and the Boeotian cases that will be explored in detail in this book should/will suffice to illustrate that socioeconomic practice and development was not necessarily different in each valley and not necessarily different from one day to the next, but at least that we should allow for such a possibility. Such a room for variety and change is, however, not always provided in economically-oriented studies on the ancient world. For instance, one of Moses Finley's main concerns in his landmark study *The ancient economy* was to justify his speaking about *the* ancient economy and prove his focus 'on the dominant types, the characteristic modes of behaviour'.<sup>26</sup> It should be stressed that Finley's work is, just like any study, a product of a certain time. Yet, as rightly put by John Davies, such 'simplistic' views of ancient economies are increasingly found to be less appropriate in the current academic climate and on the basis of the current data on the ancient world.<sup>27</sup> Illustrative for such changing perspectives is the increasing preference in more recent literature for speaking about ancient economies, rather than *the* ancient economy.<sup>28</sup> This change in perspective at least partly reflects broader theoretical developments in which the influence of local geographies, institutions, and histories on socioeconomic practice and development in the modern and ancient world is aimed to be better understood. This book extends this line of thought and aims to highlight and explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in space and time to get a more solid and nuanced understanding of the nature and workings of local economies.

### Research questions

This leaves us to the main research questions of this study:

- How did local and regional economies look, work from within, and link into larger socioeconomic networks and systems?
- How were differences in the workings and development of economies and communities shaped in space and time?

### Approaching local economies and diversity: complex economic systems

These two main research questions can be addressed in a range of ways and on the basis of a range of concepts, theories, methodologies, as well as different kinds of data. Similarly, these questions might be raised for the current and the ancient world. As a result, catch phrases that are not uncommonly encountered in debates on the nature and functioning of the modern world, such as *globalisation*, *connectivity*, and *integration*, also recur in recent publications that aim to better understand the nature of past networks and ancient communities that were tied in them. Studies diving into a certain dialogue between the 'individual', the 'communal', and the 'trans-communal' and explorations of phenomena/processes that run on a range of spatial and temporal scales hold much potential. In addition, I would like to make explicit that particularly 'lighter' ideas on a phenomenon such as integration that see it not as a 'uniform, pre-determined model', but as an 'ongoing dialogue between local and global' (with 'global' meaning not much more than the world as was known by most of the ancients) also sound attractive for the ancient world.<sup>29</sup> That being said, however, I do believe that the usage of such buzzwords (i.e. globalisation, connectivity, and integration) is not always convenient in the light of their modern-day connotation, especially when communicating ideas and findings across (sub)disciplines and when talking about the ancient world, which was radically different from our current one. In order to address the two main research questions that were raised above adequately, I also believe that we should scale down a bit and provide a proper bottom up perspective. This is not meant to downplay previous notions that certain degrees of connectivity, the character of larger networks and economic systems, as well as actions and processes initiated from above (e.g. by the state), did shape local economies. Yet, in my opinion, a too 'state-centred', 'network-', or 'market-oriented' approach is likely to level away most of the complexity that is at hand when touching upon the nature, functioning, and development of local economies, communities, and specifically the ways in which diversity was shaped.

With the danger of becoming a bit technical and/or metaphorical, I would like to draw attention to a rapidly developing field in which the foundations of modern and ancient economies are revised by seeing such economies as possessing properties of 'complex economic systems'.<sup>30</sup> Complex (economic) systems are far from stable and mechanistic, but dynamic and non-linear in nature and character. Such systems are constituted by a broad range of parts or entities that are interacting with each other on various spatial and temporal scales. Such

<sup>25</sup> See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the analytical potential of ceramic explorations in this respect.

<sup>26</sup> Finley 1985 [1973]: 29 (quote) and 34.

<sup>27</sup> Davies 2005: 132.

<sup>28</sup> E.g. Reger 1994; Feinman 2008; Archibald *et al.* 2011; Lund 2015; Lavan 2015.

<sup>29</sup> Witcher 2017: 36.

<sup>30</sup> E.g. Bintliff 2012a; Poblome 2015. See also van der Leeuw 1981; Bintliff 2004a; Kohler 2012; Daems 2021 for extensive discussion of the properties of complex systems and the applicability of complexity-/chaos-theory and complex systems theory in archaeological research.

interactions might cause emergent properties or certain degrees of self-organisation to arise: a complex system can develop in a certain (unexpected) way all by itself or at least in a semi-autonomous manner. Although being increasingly seen as an unworkable thesis, we might turn to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' to illustrate such emergent properties: 'By pursuing his own interest he [a merchant] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it'.<sup>31</sup> A second important point, in terms of complex systems, is that interactions between entities can cause negative (i.e. 'balancing'/'stabilising') or positive (i.e. 'amplifying') feedback mechanisms. Such feedback mechanisms might culminate on various temporal scales, such as the ones that are defined by the Annales school of geographers as *événements*, *conjunctures* and *longue durée*,<sup>32</sup> and potentially shape history long after. For example, small changes or events in a certain local setting can potentially lead to large (unintended) differences on the level of an empire through positive feedback loops. The most famous poetic metaphor of such positive feedback mechanisms is undoubtedly known as the 'Butterfly effect': a flap of a butterfly's wing in Brazil can set off a series of atmospheric events that, weeks later, spurs the formation of a tornado in Texas. It should be clear that seeing Hellenistic and Roman economies as such complex systems implies that individual parts cannot be understood in total isolation and that one cannot really speak of exogenous (external) and endogenous (internal) processes. Yet, the degrees by which earlier noted feedback processes ripple out and trickle down elsewhere or can be amplified through interactions between individual parts rely not only upon the nature of the interactions, but also upon certain conditions and contextual factors that might with some fluidity of definition be characterised as 'endogenous'. For example, the cutting down of one tree can cause erosion to culminate several decades later and lead to environmental change on a larger spatial scale. This does, however, not mean that the cutting down of just *any tree* in a forest, that the cutting down of a tree in just *any forest*, nor that the cutting down of the same tree this *year or in ten years* will initiate or amplify similar changes and processes: (Local) histories and contexts matter. A second somewhat related point that should be stressed is that the workings of systems might be considerably influenced by a range of (structural) contingencies. The presence of such contingencies implies that there is no single or best way in which economic systems can be organised (or organise themselves), because of certain initial conditions and 'uncertainties' (i.e. instability, complexity, diversity, etc.), for instance, in terms of environments and institutions.

Whether one accepts ancient economies as being complex economic systems (in the technical sense) or not, variation and change become increasingly

visible in the archaeological record and the shaping of socioeconomic variety and change through certain actions and processes appears to be far from mechanistic in character. To better understand how diversity came into being we should in some way revise causality and not only focus on processes that trickled down from higher levels in the system or rippled out through 'horizontal' interactions between individual entities on the same level of a system. But, we should perhaps particularly focus on 'more endogenous' factors and processes that were running on the 'micro-' and 'meso-levels' of such systems, where variety and change reached ground and on which micro-economic agents and communities were acting in certain institutionally- and socio-ecologically shaped spheres of action. I believe that such a perspective that might be characterised as more 'bottom-up' not only leads to a better understanding of the 'small scale' (or the 'particular' and the 'exceptional'), but also builds a basis to better understand the workings of (complex) economic systems as a whole.

### Highlighting and explaining diversity: regions and regionality

In this book, we will focus upon *regions* to highlight and eventually explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in space and time. In the simplest terms, regions can be identified as 'any tract of the earth's surface with characteristics, either natural or of human origin, which make it different from the areas that surround it'.<sup>33</sup> In this same vein, regions can be defined in the archaeological discourse as 'areas where the archaeology appears to have a degree of coherence, particularly if that coherence sets the area apart from its neighbours'.<sup>34</sup> The identification of such degrees of homo- and heterogeneity in space lies at the heart of Archaeology as a discipline. Coming up with a similar definition for a study on ancient economies requires filling in the characteristics that are aimed to be selected for meaningful comparison in space. Regions might, for example, be characterised by a certain similarity in terms of crops that are cultivated or by the functional characteristics, quantity, provenance, or style of material culture that is produced, exchanged, and/or consumed.

Regions should not only be seen as spaces that are constituted by certain clusters of properties and, as such, as discrete quantitative or geographical tools for the present researcher. Yet, as amply put by John Kantner, regions can be 'spaces for which meaningful relationships can be defined between past human behaviour, the material signatures people left behind, and/or the varied and dynamic physical and social contexts in which human activity occurred'.<sup>35</sup> Archaeologically observed regional patterns thus potentially reflect certain dynamics that were at work in this region. For example,

<sup>31</sup> Smith 1776, Book 4, Chapter 2, 485.

<sup>32</sup> E.g. Braudel 1972: 901; Bintliff 2004a: 176.

<sup>33</sup> Haggett 1979: 258.

<sup>34</sup> Cleary 2013: 9.

<sup>35</sup> Kantner 2008: 41.

the spatial distribution of artefacts might, among other things, reflect a certain influence of institutions that eased or limited the movement of goods in space, certain properties of the natural and man-made landscape that eased or limited such a movement in a similar way, or certain preferences of economic actors for specific goods. With a certain 'socialisation' of the spatial sciences, regions are also in Archaeology more and more considered as 'social constructs reproduced in the *particular, localised cultural practices of individuals embedded in social and natural relationships*, and these practices are repeated over various spatio-temporal scales'.<sup>36</sup> Specifically the cursive part of this quote is of interest here, since 'more endogenous' cultural practices, institutions, socio-ecological relationships, and local histories, which might lead to the formation, maintenance, or enhancement of regions, can vary substantially from community to community. By extension, similar practices or institutions might in some cases result in identifiable archaeological regions, but less so in others, for a range of reasons. In contrast, regions that are not similar, but which are in descriptive terms only slightly different from each other, might have reached the point after which they become archaeologically traceable at different times and/or on the basis of different practices and processes.

This is where the theoretical stance that is adapted in this study (*regionality*) comes in. This line of thought will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but, in short, this geographical concept aims to provide a fluid, rather than fixed, conceptual understanding of regions, as they appear in different forms, sizes, in different strengths, in an institutionalised or non-institutionalised way, etc.<sup>37</sup> The term regionality appears relatively new to our vocabulary and is often used to catch different meanings, so it is important to define what is meant with regionality in this book. I would like to draw upon two different, but in some way related, definitions to catch this meaning. The first is provided by Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter in a chapter on regional integration in the current globalising world, in which they define regionality as 'the variety of emerging forms of regional groupings and agglomerations'.<sup>38</sup> This definition mostly stresses the observation that regions might take different forms. The second definition that I would like to highlight and in some way adopt is provided by Anssi Paasi, who defines regionality as a process in which 'regions have served to determine the activities of the organizations [and one might add other actors] and the geographical areas in which they are active'.<sup>39</sup> Paasi's definition touches upon the active role that regions have in shaping human action. It will here not be attempted to merge both definitions into a single one, as they are in some way illustrating different

properties of regions. Yet, it is the exact combination of the highlighted properties of regions that are of interest for the present study. Exploring regionality goes beyond identifying and discriminating areas on the basis of certain clusters of characteristics, but aims to understand what regions are or can be, what they might look like, how they functioned from within, and how and why regions were shaped not only in space, but also in time. The most essential viewpoints that are elaborated upon in studies on regionality are a certain temporal depth and that regions are continuously in a process. Regions should not be seen as some kind of end product, as they not only *reflect* things (i.e. providing a reflexive proxy of something else), but they potentially also *do* things (i.e. regions potentially shape future action in many ways and potentially for long after). In more technical terms, regions should thus not only be seen as being descriptive spatial tools in the archaeologist's toolkit nor only as reflecting certain past dynamics, as socially construed regions are 'always "more-than-representational": [they are] experienced, lived, performed and felt'.<sup>40</sup>

The exploration of regionality and the way in which regions were functioning and shaped is essential to gain a better understanding of local economic systems and communities. It is on this level that economic practice was in many ways rooted in socio-ecological interactions and through socioeconomic institutions. Socioeconomic diversity between regions might indeed come into being and become articulated through various 'vertical' interactions between individual levels of economic systems and 'horizontal' interactions between regions. As stressed by others, 'the very formation of political, cultural and economic regions and regional identities was never a strictly internal process'.<sup>41</sup> Yet, broader-scale interactions (i.e. inter-regional and supra-regional) 'are essentially built upon the structural foundations of more localised interactions',<sup>42</sup> while we should also not underestimate the power of agency. In this light, I believe that we should make more room for 'bottom-up, spontaneous, and endogenous processes' that contribute to the emergence of regions from 'within'.<sup>43</sup> This includes previously noted socio-ecological interactions, local institutions, histories, and most essentially social constructs, which play a key role in understanding how and why regions were shaped, but also in understanding the nature and functioning of local economies.

### The outline of this book

The first part of this book is constituted by four introductory chapters. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical and conceptual background of this study in more detail. The chapter starts with an evaluation of the 'classic' modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist debate in

<sup>36</sup> Poblome 2015: 102 (emphasis added). See also Soja 1985; Wishart 2004: 308; Börzel and Risse 2016: 6; Campbell 2016 for similar notions in non-archaeological studies.

<sup>37</sup> E.g. Campbell 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Albert and Stetter 2014: 63.

<sup>39</sup> Paasi 1986: 23.

<sup>40</sup> Campbell 2016: 5.

<sup>41</sup> Vlassopoulos 2011: 27.

<sup>42</sup> Stewart 2013: 104.

<sup>43</sup> Börzel and Risse 2016: 8.

Archaeology (and related disciplines) and its 'aftermath'. Afterwards, some developments in New Economic Sociology and New Institutional Economics will be shortly discussed that are highly interesting for any study on ancient economies. In Chapter 1.3 we will bring regions and the concept of regionality to the fore. The primary purpose of this chapter is to further emphasise the need for a proper perspective of what regions are and to discuss the applicability of regionality to get a better understanding of the functioning of local economies and larger networks by extension. Chapter 2 is the first chapter that will 'set the scene' of this study by providing a landscape-oriented introduction of Boeotia. In this chapter we will focus upon the changing and diverse characters of landscapes and activity herein. Specific emphasis will be laid upon the landscapes around Thespieae (also written as Thespiiai), Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra, which will be later in this study explored from a ceramic-based comparative perspective. Chapter 3, which is titled 'A (socioeconomically geared) history and archaeology of Hellenistic-Late Roman Boeotia', offers an introduction and discussion of some developments and themes that are often recurring in economically oriented studies on the Hellenistic-Late Roman world. These main themes include the relationships and interactions between Boeotian communities and larger political powers, inter-communal institutions and interactions in Boeotia, and a certain variety in local institutions and the socioeconomic organisation of communities. In Chapter 4, we will mostly be built upon archaeological data from Boeotia to touch upon urban development and non-urban site patterning in space and time. On the basis of the data generated by the Boeotia Project, other research projects, and published data, we will try to explore such proxy-data and following demographic reconstructions that are arguably seen to reflect 'economic performance' in some way. Although 'hard' data on economic performance in the ancient world do not exist, it is worthwhile to see how Boeotia fits in some 'big pictures' of economic development for the Hellenistic-Late Roman period. This will provide a proper basis against which differences and changes in ceramic production, circulation, and consumption in Boeotia can be compared later on in this book.

The material culture that plays a central role in this study will be introduced in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 starts with an evaluation of the value and functionality of ceramic- and non-ceramic goods in the past. Afterwards, we will discuss the analytical value of using ceramic-generated data and proxies to provide snapshots of various socioeconomic aspects, processes, and actions that are not always as much visible by exploring other proxies on socioeconomic development in the ancient world, such as urbanisation and population dynamics. This chapter primarily aims to illustrate the potential of ceramic studies and the usage of large amounts of ceramic data to highlight and reach a better understanding of local economies and the ways in which regionality was

shaped. In this study, we will mainly draw upon the tension between the general ebbs and flows of supply on the local market places, the agency of potters, the preferences of consumers of various social standings, and the ways in which material culture constituted arenas of social practice. In Chapter 6, the ceramic methodology that was applied during the study campaigns of the Boeotia Project will be discussed. In addition, we will address methodological issues and choices that were made in this study to reconstruct and approximate local ceramic production (and its location) and ceramic circulation/consumption in space and time, largely on the basis of field survey data.

The 'material core' of this book is presented from Chapter 7 onwards, starting with an exploration of the evidence for ceramic production in Boeotia. In Chapter 7, we will discuss the production-related evidence for Thespieae, Askra and the Valley of the Muses, Hyettos and its hinterland, and Tanagra and its hinterland, which were all surveyed by the Boeotia Project. These sub-sections will focus on the Hellenistic-Late Roman period and will provide a first basis for comparative evaluation. The sub-sections are each built around (1) a presentation and discussion of the (sub-)surface evidence and incidental rescue excavations, on the basis of which local ceramic production can be identified, (2) a presentation and discussion of the fabrics that can be related to individual sites or areas of production, and (3) an exploration of the chronological, functional, and rough morphological output of ceramic production in these individual areas. The exploration of ceramic production in Boeotia along these lines provides interesting insights from a comparative perspective, as the output and the chronology of production seems to vary from one site or area of production to the other. Moreover, we can observe certain differences in the morphology and style of production that are/will be published in more detail in other books. Chapter 8 will provide a complementary archaeometrical analysis, on the basis of portable X-Ray Fluorescence spectrometry (pXRF). The main aims of this archaeometrical excursion are to further characterise the previously introduced macroscopically-defined fabric groups from a chemical perspective, to test their chemical coherence, and the postulated association with certain production-related fragments. The application of pXRF studies to analyse ancient ceramics is rapidly increasing, though there is an obvious need to provide a discussion of the possibilities and limits of this methodology, to introduce the applied protocol and sampling strategy, as well as the ways in which the data analysis was carried out in this particular analysis. This chapter aims to provide such methodological information and also discuss some methodological issues. More importantly, the results of this venture will illustrate the potential to provide a quick, affordable, and nonetheless sound first step to gain insights in the chemical consistency of groups of sherds. In Chapter 9, we will explore seeming relationships between the location of ceramic production and the nature of the

output associated with production sites in the ceramic production landscape of Boeotia. This chapter touches upon topics and themes that are generally discussed within the field of Economic Geography, as the main aim of this chapter is to attempt to touch upon some of the agencies and processes that were underlying the choice for one location of production over the other.

After focusing on ceramic production, we will explore the rich Boeotia Project ceramic datasets further and focus on the circulation and consumption of ceramic goods in and around Thespieae, Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra. Chapter 10 serves to introduce the main classes of tablewares and amphorae that are encountered in Boeotia. This introduction will provide a helpful basis to get a better understanding of the range of products that was in circulation in Boeotia and specifically of aspects such as the chronology and place(s) of production, as well as their broader circulation. In this way, we can create a frame of reference against which the data from Boeotian sites can be compared. To make sense of ceramic data, we need to group and visualise local, Boeotian, and imported pottery in some meaningful way. In this chapter we will thus also discuss the ceramological abilities and inabilities on the basis of which the circulation/consumption of ceramics of different provenances and chronologies can/cannot be explored in detail. The ceramic data generated by the Boeotia Project for Thespieae, Askra, Hyettos, Tanagra, and their surroundings will be explored in such a way in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. Each of these chapters will focus upon the chronological and spatial circulation of tablewares and mainly amphorae, as these ceramics can often be dated relatively precise, be ascribed a relatively secure provenance, and as these two classes of ceramics also prove to move differently in socioeconomic networks. These patterns will be complemented and compared with patterns in the circulation of other ceramic categories, such as lamps, beehives, basins, and cooking wares. The main aim of Chapters 11, 12 and 13 is to highlight that individual areas and even individual sites were to different degrees and in different quantities

reached by goods of different provenances over time. In Chapter 14 we will discuss the main trends in ceramic circulation and consumption in (Late) Hellenistic-Late Roman Boeotia from a comparative perspective. This comparative evaluation will, among other patterns, highlight differences in the circulation of pottery from the Western/Central Mediterranean and Eastern Aegean/Eastern Mediterranean throughout Boeotia, as well as differences in the circulation of Boeotian and Central-Greek ceramics in the area. Afterwards, we will make a short excursus and compare the patterns for Boeotia with patterns and trends in the circulation of ceramics and spread of ceramic styles in nearby areas, such as Euboea, Attica, the Northeast Peloponnese, and Phocis.

In Chapter 15 we will firstly discuss the ceramologically generated patterns in relation to the surrounding Boeotian landscapes, activities and interactions herein, the (agricultural) orientation of local economies, and aspects of regional specialisation. In Chapter 15.2, the skews in the distribution of imports in Boeotia and the character of ancient networks will be discussed and explored more heavily, in terms of geographical factors and some specific institutions that articulated relations and eased interaction in such socioeconomic networks. In Chapter 15.3, we will create a dialogue between the spatial and chronological trends in ceramic production, circulation, and consumption in order to identify regions (of various characters, shapes, and sizes) in Boeotia. In the final part of this book, we aim to identify different types of regions and will draw more heavily on the active role of ceramic material culture in shaping actions and interactions that led to the formation, maintenance, and enhancement of them. The ceramic data from Boeotia contribute to gaining a better understanding of regions in the ancient world and not only illustrate the interactions and processes that are *reflected* by the formation of regions, but also provide snapshots of how material culture actively *contributed* to their existence.



# 1.

## Approaching local economies, regions, and regionality in the ancient world

Data on the ancient world increasingly illustrate that it is more appropriate to talk about *economies*, rather than a single (type of) Greco-Roman economy: Different areas prove to have developed differently; communities organised their economies differently from an institutional point of view; communities tried to sustain themselves in different ways through production, exchange, and socio-ecological interactions that were adapted to, maintained, and also changed their near surroundings; etc. In terms of socioeconomic practice, variety and change thus appear to become or be the norm and not the exception. Such differences and changes might have come into being or have been amplified through a range of factors and processes, including being part of larger kingdoms, empires, and larger networks of interaction. To get a more solid basis for understanding how variety and change was shaped, however, it is here argued that it is key to get grip on local institutional and geographical contexts and histories. For instance, paths that were taken in the past potentially changed socioeconomic action in a range of ways for long after, while certain events, choices, or societal processes might have triggered or amplified the changing fortunes of individuals and whole communities overnight or on longer scales of time. Certain physical features of the landscape and one's comparative position herein might provide specific possibilities and to some extent also limits for socioeconomic action. The same properties should obviously be ascribed to institutions. It should be made explicit that path-trajectories, local geographies, and institutional frameworks are not 'destiny', as consciously or unconsciously, paths can be broken, landscapes can degenerate or be improved, and institutions be changed for the better or the worse. To better understand the character, functioning, and development of socioeconomic practice and local economies we need a concept in which various aspects and processes come together. On the one hand, we need geography, formal and informal institutions, and histories to link up in some way. On the other hand, we need a concept in which there is room for a certain fluidity and temporal depth that allows for diachronic study and which facilitates exploring the complex interplay of different factors and processes influencing ancient economic activity.

In this study, I will focus upon regions in an attempt to explore the functioning and development of ancient economies. Regions can be defined as 'any tract of the earth's surface with characteristics, either natural or of human origin, which make it different from the areas that

surround it'.<sup>1</sup> Regions might be defined on the basis of a broad range of properties. This includes physical features in the landscape on the basis of which, for instance, mountainous-, coastal-, or tropical landscapes and zones can be defined and distinguished. Although such physical or environmental regions can be of some value to explore the past, a better understanding of what regions are, how they worked from within, and the nature of socioeconomic activity and development in them requires seeing regions as being 'human in origin'. Socioeconomic activity in one coastal zone might have been organised in a very different manner than in another, while the economic development of individual sites might vary substantially (even within the same coastal region). By seeing regions as 'human in origin', I would like to emphasise that regions are shaped by repeated actions of human individuals over time that form, maintain, articulate, and enhance regions. Such action, be it economic, social, cultural, or religious in character is socially embedded, making regions not uncommonly recognised, lived, felt, and essentially social constructs. The human activities that create or articulate individual regions appear to be commonly shaped through the interplay of 'exogenous' and 'endogenous' processes that one might put under the umbrellas of (physical) geography, institutions, and histories. As the same might be said about socioeconomic activity and development, I believe that defining and identifying *what* regions are and a better understanding of *how* regions were shaped by and shaping activity has much potential for exploring Greco-Roman economies.

This chapter starts with a short introduction to the modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist debate in Anthropology, History, and Archaeology. For more than half a century, this classic debate coloured economically-oriented archaeological studies in many ways. Although this study tries to go 'beyond' this debate, it is important to understand where studies on the ancient economy have come from and especially to highlight that regions, in the way as they are defined here, only appear to have had a minor role in such discussions. Hereafter, relevant theoretical developments ascribed to New Economic Sociology and New Institutional Economics will be discussed. These bodies of theories are especially relevant for approaching local economies and regions. This chapter will close with an extensive discussion of what regions are or might be, which will illustrate the reflective *and* active properties of regions. Last, but

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<sup>1</sup> Haggett 1979: 258.

not least, we will explore the geographical concept of regionality that is adopted in this study to highlight and explain the shaping of socioeconomic variation and change in space and time.

### 1.1 A short framing of the modernist/formalist – primitivist/substantivist debate and its aftermath

Debates regarding the nature of the Greco-Roman economy have long been caught, and to some extent are often still framed, in terms of ‘modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist’ discussions. To summarise both positions in a short, extreme, and somewhat provocative way:

1. Modernists believe that *the* ancient economy can be described in modern terms. Formalists share this ideal and, by extension, analyse the ancient economy along (neoclassical) economic models and theories. According to the modernist/formalist positions in the debate, ancient/pre-modern economies were only *quantitatively* different from modern economies. The scale of activities and processes is recognised to be different in the past, though the economy was similar in structure, character, and nature in both past and present. On the basis of these premises, principles underlying the production, exchange, and consumption of goods, such as comparative advantages and markets and prices that were set through supply and demand, are seen as being applicable to past and present. The ancients were of the same mythical species that currently walks the earth (the *Homo oeconomicus*) that is known for its economising and self-interested rational actions: choices are driven by specific and predetermined wants or desires to maximise utility (‘the satisfaction people derive from their consumption activities’)<sup>2</sup> with the lowest possible costs.
2. In contrast, primitivists/substantivists argue that *the* ancient economy was not only quantitatively, but also *qualitatively*, that different from the way in which (capitalist market) economies function today that universal laws or principles, such as the ones of ‘supply and demand’, do not hold and are inapplicable to the ancient world. ‘Economic’ choices were not or less driven by commercial enterprises and utility maximising economising behaviour: enhancing or maintaining one’s position on the socioeconomic ladder (and not necessarily the attaining of goals in an economically efficient way) was the major driving concern of the ancient Greeks and Romans. This makes the ancients, in the strict sense, not efficiently utility maximising and thus, again in the strict definition, a different species from the *Homo oeconomicus*. Single markets did not exist, as markets were less integrated, but could be linked up. Specialisation and production beyond subsistence were present, but such levels are

argued to have been not reached by broad echelons of society. These characteristics, as well as a relatively stagnant technology, hampered economic growth and are argued to have made the ancient economy qualitatively different.

When put in dichotomies, the debate might be summarised as, ‘primitivist versus modernist, no-trade versus long-distance trade, autarky versus integrated markets, technological stagnation versus technological progress, no economic growth versus growth, non-rationalist traditionalist versus rational individualists’.<sup>3</sup> The two most-cited ancient historians that are seen to represent the respective modernist/formalist and primitivist/substantivist positions in this fierce scholarly debate are undoubtedly (the ‘arch-modernist’) Michael Rostovtzeff and (the ‘arch-primitivist’) Moses Finley with their landmark contributions *The social and economic history of the Hellenistic world/Roman empire* and *The ancient economy*.<sup>4</sup> These two authors certainly advocate views on the ancient economy that are in many ways opposing. A closer reading of their contributions, however, reveals that their visions are not uncommonly slightly mischaracterised in later publications. Finley, for instance, did not deny the existence of agricultural specialisation (especially in higher echelons of society), traders and ‘substantial flows of trade’, some degrees of vertical mobility, and ‘commercial centres’ in the Roman world.<sup>5</sup> Without evaluating the contributions by Finley, Rostovtzeff, and other scholars from sentence to sentence, it should be clear that this classic debate might indeed in some way be characterised by the dichotomies that were listed above. Yet, in many ways, such dichotomies only represent the extreme characterisations of the primitivist- and modernist lines of thought.

#### *The aftermath: diversity, change, and ‘the missing region’*

In the current academic climate, there are enough grounds and data to go beyond this somewhat simplistic and dualistic characterisation of scholars and theories or models on the ancient world. A feeling that we should change our perspective and approach ancient economies differently is widely shared. This was first the case among economic anthropologists, who debated similar issues, but who (as usual) saw the heyday of their debate a bit earlier, and more recently also among ancient historians and archaeologists, as dissatisfactions towards ‘the false primitivist-modernist dichotomy’, ‘the old, flaccid debate’, and ‘a debate that many of us are eager to declare settled’ increasingly appear.<sup>6</sup> The importance of the primitivist-modernist debate for this discourse is, however, unquestionable. This holds not as much for the direct

<sup>2</sup> Frank and Bernanke 2009: 128.

<sup>3</sup> Saller 2005: 224. See Pleket 1990: 31–55; Bang 2008: 17–36; Scheidel 2012: 7f for this debate in Archaeology and ancient history.

<sup>4</sup> Rostovtzeff 1941 and 1957 [1926]; Finley 1985 [1973]. See Finley 1965 for a more concise evaluation of economic growth and technological innovation in the ancient world.

<sup>5</sup> Finley 1985 [1973]: 48, 59, 106–107.

<sup>6</sup> Isaac 1993: 229. Feinman and Garraty 2010: 175; Reger 2013: 127; Erdkamp 2015: 18.

outcome, since the question if the ancient economy was only quantitatively or also qualitatively different somewhat fizzled out, without being settled.

Nonetheless, an important 'result' of the modernist-primitivist debate for the study of ancient economic systems can be found on the empirical side of the coin: this fierce debate worked in an amplifying manner and generated an enormous amount of studies that presented and discussed a huge amount of archaeological, historical, epigraphic, bio-/geoarchaeological, osteological, and other data on the ancient Mediterranean. As stressed before, this increase in the amount and the quality of data is accompanied by high degrees of diversity and change that are highlighted through comparative and diachronic studies. This seems especially true for the archaeological record, thereby facilitating the means to get a better understanding of the complex functioning and socioeconomic development of individual communities, regions, and local economies. For instance, communities in the Greco-Roman world appear to be commonly linked up in broader networks, but were at the same time participating in different ways and in different intensities in them. Cities were part of the same state or empire, but had different relations with hegemonic rulers in webs of power. By extension, the micro-ecologies that constitute the Mediterranean provided certain possibilities for action, but also communities that were situated in comparable landscapes and environments by times had substantially different socio-ecological interactions with their surroundings, organised economic practice differently through institutions, and also prove to have developed differently from a socioeconomic point of view.

Variety and change in socioeconomic practice, structures, and development are thus increasingly highlighted in the archaeological record. Although this is partly the result of the increase in data and comparative work that has been carried out during the last decades, the topics of change, local particularities, or regional differences appear to be only to a limited degree picked up in the 'classic' contributions to the modernist-primitivist debate. Moses Finley was, for instance, not blind for variation in the landscape (i.e. fertility, suitability for specific crops, the presence/absence of mineral resources) and also variations in social structure, land tenure, and labour systems were not left unnoticed.<sup>7</sup> Yet, these variations were levelled away in the quest for understanding 'the dominant types, the characteristic modes of behaviour' in terms of socioeconomic practice.<sup>8</sup> The same might be said about the role or possibility of change and socioeconomic development over time: Some observations and peculiarities are explicitly mentioned as being more common in the Greek or Roman world and one can taste a certain Marxist urge to contrast

these periods with the economy of Medieval Europe. Yet, Finley's main argument is that 'the dominant modes of behaviour', especially the status structures, remained largely unchanged from Classical Greece (if not before) up till c. 500 AD, which is argued to have left only little space for the *Homo oeconomicus* to mature. From the sounds that were expressed out of the modernist corner in the debate, there, by essence, appears to be more room change, as both the present and the Greco-Roman world are commonly argued to have experienced more widespread technological innovation/adaptation and economic growth.

Only in the 1990s, the potential of comparative archaeological and historical studies to highlight regions and local economies appears to have been more fully acknowledged and increasingly worked out. Communities indeed appear to have been commonly part of larger networks of interaction, though, except for a few exceptional cases, such as Classical Athens, Rome, and Antioch, it appears that communities solved economic problems mostly on something that we might call the 'local' or 'regional' scale. An important contribution in this light is the work by Gary Reger on Hellenistic Delos, in which the relatively prominent role of this site in larger exchange networks is illustrated. Yet, at least epigraphically, it appears that 'the people who can be identified positively as having benefited economically from their relations with Delos tend to come from a much more limited geographical setting'.<sup>9</sup> Reger furthermore emphasises an eminent need to speak of Cycladic economies, rather than a unified Cycladic (let alone a Mediterranean) economy, 'some overlapping, some isolate, with constantly changing relations among them'.<sup>10</sup> Archaeological data, such as certain patterns in the production, distribution, and consumption of goods, have much potential to contribute to the identification of regions and a better understanding of the workings of local economies, economic systems, and networks of interaction in space and time. There, however, remains some need to answer remaining questions such as 'what regions are', 'what they reflect', and by extension 'what they do'. At the same time, a multitude of regions can be constructed: 'Regions defined on the basis of an object, regions defined as ethnic territories, regions defined by physiographic features like rainfall, regions defined by political authority, regions defined by a research agenda'.<sup>11</sup>

## 1.2 Socialising and institutionalising economies: New Economic Sociology and New Institutional Economics

To touch upon the potential of regions as meaningful entities, we can draw upon a certain cross-fertilisation across disciplines, such as Economy, Sociology, and Geography, as well as insights that are in the field of

<sup>7</sup> Finley 1985 [1973]: 32.

<sup>8</sup> Finley 1985 [1973]: 29.

<sup>9</sup> Reger 1994: 58. See p. 58–72 for a discussion of the evidence.

<sup>10</sup> Reger 1994: 49.

<sup>11</sup> Reger 2013: 127.

Economics commonly ascribed to New Institutional Economics. Advances in these disciplines laid important theoretical foundations for approaching regions and seeing regions as meaningful *for* and *in* the ancient world.

The role of maintaining or enhancing one's comparative status in society through activities, which are in the modern day seen as 'economic', has been extensively discussed in the previously highlighted debate. As advocated by the primitivists/substantivists, decision making processes appear to have been not purely geared towards behaviour that can be seen as 'economising' in the strict sense, but are argued to have been mainly influenced by the 'social' or the 'political' in the ancient world. Also for the modern world, an increasing conceptual role is given to the 'social', especially in terms of agency, economic practice, and structures. Key in this development appear to have been contributions that can be grouped under the heading of New Economic Sociology (NES). The main argument of this line of thought is that economic activity is 'socially embedded'. NES advocates that, contrary to 'undersocialised' (i.e. neoclassical) views on the economy, 'actors do not behave or decide as atoms outside a social context [...], [but] are instead embedded in concrete, ongoing systems of social relations'.<sup>12</sup> The three main assumptions that underlie NES can be summarised in the following manner: (1) Economic action is embedded in networks of social relationships and economic practice is heavily influenced by the degrees of trust in other actors. (2) Economic action is directed at the pursuit of both economic and non-economic goals. (3) Economic institutions are socially constructed.<sup>13</sup> In the context of the previously highlighted primitivist-modernist debate on the ancient economy, these statements obviously sound familiar. However, in several ways, NES' socially embedded economy provides more conceptual fluidity and analytical depth, which appear not irrelevant for ancient economies. For instance, the nature and settings of socially-/societally embedded economic actions are portrayed as less static, but more fluid and dynamic. Customs, habits, or norms are not seen to be 'followed mechanically and automatically' by actors, though are by definition highly varied and heavily influenced by the nature of the relationship between actors, by their past behaviour and interactions, as well as by prospects or wishes of having 'ongoing social relations with others'.<sup>14</sup>

The general dissatisfactions with the foundations presented by Neoclassical Economics have also been taken up by the sub-discipline that is known as New Institutional Economics (NIE). NIE focuses on the role of institutions in decreasing transaction costs in economic interaction and exchange and was particularly during the early stages of development characterised as 'transaction

cost economics'. Ronald Coase provides us with a range of such transaction costs when thinking about market transactions: 'it is necessary to discover who it is that one wishes to deal with, to inform people that one wishes to deal and on what terms, to conduct negotiations leading up to a bargain, to draw up the contract, to undertake the inspection needed to make sure that the terms of the contract are being observed, and so on'.<sup>15</sup> Although transaction costs are not always easy to quantify, economic interaction and exchange are accompanied by certain frictions that might drive up the price of goods, potentially make deals collapse, and might hamper that actors who are willing to exchange know about the other's willingness or existence. The main argument of NIE is that institutions play an important role in economies by easing economic interaction through lowering transaction costs and providing a certain structure and stability, on the basis of which actors do 'not have to think about problems or to make choices'.<sup>16</sup> Such institutions can be defined as 'the rules of the game in a society or, more formally, the humanly devised constraints that shape human interaction'.<sup>17</sup> They are sub-divided into formal and informal institutions. 'Formal institutions' comprise rules, laws, and contracts that are consciously designed and which might change because of changes in regime or policy. 'Informal institutions' are formed by customs, habits, and norms, and are commonly a bit more conservative in nature and less prone to change, as, even in cases of a wholesale change of formal rules, informal institutions prove to 'still resolve basic exchange problems among the participants, be they social, political, or economic'.<sup>18</sup> Critical in the maturing of NIE has been the work of Douglass North, who left the notion that (formal) institutions are *always* efficient.<sup>19</sup> This redefinition of what institutions are somewhat opened up NIE towards not that dissimilar sociological and cultural approaches by stressing the influence of socio-cultural norms, values, and customs on economically oriented activities and structures.

The bottom-line of NIE is that 'institutions affect the performance of the economy by their effect on the costs of exchange and production. Together with the technology employed, they determine the transaction and transformation (production) costs that make up total costs'.<sup>20</sup> Formal institutions such as laws might, for example, be designed to define agreements or property rights and to protect or enforce those rules. The protection of property rights can amplify or secure economic actors to invest in physical and human capital, in themselves and others, and lead to the innovation

<sup>12</sup> Granovetter 1985: 487.

<sup>13</sup> Granovetter 1992: 4.

<sup>14</sup> Granovetter 1985: 485.

<sup>15</sup> Coase 1960: 5.

<sup>16</sup> North 1990: 22.

<sup>17</sup> North 1990: 3. It should be emphasised that the field of NIE generated different definitions of institutions, often on the basis of specific research questions or different theoretical backgrounds (cf. Aoki 2001: 10; Ogilvie 2007: 660–661).

<sup>18</sup> North 1990: 4–6 and 91; Aoki 2001: 5.

<sup>19</sup> North 1990: 6. See also North 1981: 1.

<sup>20</sup> North 1990: 5–6.

and subsequent adaptation of technologies.<sup>21</sup> In terms of exchange, formal and informal institutions can maintain or strengthen a certain trust that goes beyond social relations and the influence of social capital: institutionally controlled or agreed upon standards of measurement and quality, prices, or forms of exchange might provide a form of stability and trust 'in the market' that are an incentive for trade-offs between people who are completely unknown to each other. In the common economic terminology, 'successful' institutions can lead to an increasing interdependence of economic actors on each other and might initiate the expansion of markets, which on their turn might reinforce decreases in transaction costs. On the production side, institutions can lower transaction costs during the production process. Such costs might rise exponentially when comparative advantages are more fully exploited through specialisation and a division of labour.<sup>22</sup> This is true for cases where production processes are 'internalised' and also for cases where production processes involve 'external' exchanges between economic actors. Institutions are thus potentially originating out of (and contributing to) the division of labour and specialisation, which are, especially in the Neoclassical tradition, on themselves seen to lead to aggregate economic growth.

Although decreasing transaction costs and the generation of a certain trust can lead to the efficient running of economies, not all institutions are thus efficient in solving economic coordination problems *per se*. In understanding why such efficiency is not taken up in total and ever-increasing, it is important to build a bridge between the distribution of coercive power and the design of institutions, as institutions 'influence not only the size of the aggregate pie, but how this pie is divided among different groups and individuals in society'.<sup>23</sup> The other way around, the distribution of wealth and coercive power might influence the design of institutions: those in rule might try to protect their ideals, their own interests, or the interests of their political base, making it possible that 'relatively inefficient forms of organization will survive if more efficient forms threaten the survival of the ruler from within or without'.<sup>24</sup> The role of politics and the distribution of wealth in society appears to be of major influence in answering the questions why 'successful' or 'efficient' institutions are not diffused across the globe and why the adaptation of similar institutions will not result lead to similar outcomes in any context. There might, however, be other factors and processes that lead to the 'inefficient' running of institutions, such as the conservative nature of norms, values, and customs and the 'costs' of replacing institutions that are in some way anchored in society.

Since the 1990s, NIE has been increasingly applied in historical and archaeological studies on the Greco-Roman world.<sup>25</sup> This body of theory proves to be an attractive basis in order to approach and explore ancient economies and especially the way in which communities or states influenced socioeconomic life and aspects. Especially, the friction of movement, information, and imperfect markets with considerable transaction costs, which characterise the ancient world, facilitated a certain potential for NIE to develop. On some level, modern-day issues that are discussed by proponents of NIE are also discussed for the past, such as the role of institutions in distributing resources and the (positive) effects of institutions on aggregate economic development. The formal and informal institutions of ancient Greece are, for example seen as the major factor that 'enabled the Greek world to rise to greatness from humble beginnings',<sup>26</sup> while especially the flexibility of its institutional system is stressed to 'have established an exceptionally dynamic and prosperous economy that exploited to the maximum the possibilities offered by its environment'.<sup>27</sup> Cause and effect are not always easy to link up in terms of the specification and structuring of property rights. Yet, a certain institutionalised protection of democratic values, officials that controlled transactions on the market place, systems of inter-polis governance and cooperation (that did not replace, but complement, polis politics), and institutionalised links in larger networks of interaction are not uncommonly seen as institutions that were in some way efficient by contributing to economic performance and development.

The dominant role of past institutions in terms of the promotion of economic activity, interaction, and performance is not always accepted or taken at face value. Peter Bang, for example, argues for considerable institutional heterogeneity regarding the functioning and integration of markets in the Roman world and the way in which institutions provided information upon which actors could develop expectations: 'imbalances, asymmetries and bottlenecks in transport, goods, information and social institutionalisation, were a chronic feature', while also significant variation in standards of goods and commercial customs are observed.<sup>28</sup> According to Bang, the world of the Roman trader was characterised by low transparency and high unpredictability of interaction, while traders are argued to have been more reliant on social connections and relations, in a way that reminds of the playing field of the previously introduced school of NES.<sup>29</sup> The evidence presented by Bang illustrates that institutions might have varied considerably, which is highly visible in the historical and epigraphic record. For example, although being part of the Roman Empire, local legal systems kept

<sup>21</sup> E.g. North 1981: 43; North 1990: 61; Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 389.

<sup>22</sup> North 1981: 41.

<sup>23</sup> Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 390.

<sup>24</sup> North 1990: 43. See also Acemoglu and Robinson 2012: 44.

<sup>25</sup> E.g. Frier and Kehoe 2007; Bresson 2015; Ober 2015; Verboven 2015.

<sup>26</sup> Ober 2015: 6.

<sup>27</sup> Bresson 2015: 221.

<sup>28</sup> Bang 2008: 195 (quote), 191–199.

<sup>29</sup> Bang 2008: 198.

in operation across most domains in Greece, at least up till the 3rd century AD, and many legal matters appear to have been mostly monitored and settled on the level of communities.<sup>30</sup> Furthermore, especially during the Hellenistic period, it can be traced that different poleis institutionalised links in larger networks of interaction differently in a formal manner. Whatever the processes that led to their emergence, institutions could thus be long-lived, but also change. Even when becoming part of a larger kingdom or empire, formal and informal institutions are likely and prove to exhibit high degrees of variation on the local scale. It was on this level, where communities gave a structure to daily life that, alongside local geographies and histories, shaped socioeconomically oriented practice and other action in a range of ways.

### 1.3 Regions and economies: types of regions, New Regional Geography, and regionality

In order to better understand the character, functioning and development of socioeconomic practice and local economies in space and time, this study will turn to regions. Geographical thought, models, and methodologies have been adopted in many ways in Archaeology and especially the more recent interest in material culture and materiality on the side of the geographers makes the two disciplines certainly ‘no strange bedfellows’.<sup>31</sup> Although economic activity, structures, and regions might take form on the basis of a range of processes (including geographies, formal and informal institutions, and histories), the underlying thought of this study is that none of these factors will be deterministic on themselves in a way that there is no escape from paths that were taken in the past or room for change or the improvement of landscapes or institutions. Factors that can be grouped under the umbrellas of (physical) geography/environments, institutions or historical paths are, however, all of some influence. I believe that it is in the interaction of such processes, which might run on a range of spatial and temporal scales, but which touch the ground in regions, through which socioeconomic activity, structures, and development are shaped. In Jeroen Poblome’s words, ‘it is the long-term production of the region that provides clues for sustainable social and economic development’.<sup>32</sup> Although archaeological and material culture studies can often at best provide a materialised snapshot of some interactions that might hint at the extent, functioning, creation, and development of regions, the spatial and chronological parameters that can be set on the basis of archaeological materials potentially provide

unique opportunities to reach in-depth explorations of socioeconomic practice, structures, and development in space and time.

Regions are in everyday conversations not uncommonly used to catch a certain sense of scale in between the ‘local’ and the ‘national’ or the ‘national’ and the ‘global’.<sup>33</sup> Yet, in this study, I would like to leave these scalar notions aside and focus on the properties ‘that make one area different from others that surround it’.<sup>34</sup> Although regions can be defined on the basis of environmental characteristics and physical natures in the landscape, I will essentially see regions as being of *human origin*. Again drawing upon the view of Poblome: regions are ‘social constructs reproduced in the particular, localised cultural practices of individuals embedded in social and natural relationships, and these practices are repeated over various spatio-temporal scales’.<sup>35</sup> By extension, environments and landscapes are in the modern day increasingly and recognisably shaped by (conscious and unconscious) human action and, although in seemingly less dramatic ways, the same should be said about the past. To touch upon the full potential of the region as a concept requires to go beyond seeing them as mere tools in the spatial sciences to group areas in a manner that is only useful for research purposes. Not all characteristics on the basis of which regions can be identified will be as ‘telling’ as others. This is particularly true when we are talking about evidence from the past that will be in many ways fragmented and biased and, as such, identifiable regions will not uncommonly be heavily shaped by the state of research or the quality of the underlying data. Yet, depending on the research questions, all characteristics that make one region different from the other are at least potentially meaningful when we see regions as social constructs and products of social practice. Instead of the more ‘neutral’ definition of regions that was illustrated above, I therefore like to argue for a definition of regions that comes close to the one defined by the archaeologist John Kantner: ‘spaces for which *meaningful relationships* can be defined between past human behavior, the material signatures people left behind, and/or the varied and dynamic physical and social contexts in which human activity occurred’.<sup>36</sup>

<sup>30</sup> Jones 1963: 4; Marshall 1980: 645. It should, however, be stressed that Roman legislative items were to some extent imported in Greek legislative systems and that the Roman authorities, such as the Senate (that held the force of law), governors, and even emperors, could assist or intervene in ‘local’ matters, especially when cases that appeared to be hard to settle were brought to their attention.

<sup>31</sup> Hill 2015.

<sup>32</sup> Poblome 2015: 102.

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Wolf 2002; Börzel and Risse 2016: 6; van Wijngaarden *et al.* 2021: 155–156.

<sup>34</sup> Haggett 1979: 258.

<sup>35</sup> Poblome 2015: 102. See also van Wijngaarden *et al.* 2021 for a recent archaeological study in which micro-regions are ‘conceived of as areas where the natural constraints evoke specific and similar strategies. In other words, micro-regions are spatially defined areas with distinctive social practices resulting from interactions with the landscape. These spaces are not constant, but their size and boundaries may vary over time because of changes in ecology and, especially, in social practices. Thus defined, micro-regions are strongly linked to social identities of people, which originate in the sharing of social and material practices in a specific landscape’ (p. 156).

<sup>36</sup> Kantner 2008: 41.

### **Three main types of regions: formal, functional, and perceptual**

In Geography, regions are commonly grouped into three major types of regions with certain characteristics.

Firstly, there are *formal regions*. The definition for formal regions is relatively general. They are defined as being ‘homogenous within the limits set by criteria and in terms of association of features as defined by the criteria [...] whatever is stated about one part of it is true of any other part; it is the largest area over which a generalization remains valid’.<sup>37</sup> This definition thus heavily builds upon a certain homogeneity in terms of the properties that are selected. Although this does not mean that there does not exist a certain ‘acceptable’ range of internal variation in such regions, this variation is, as for all regions, smaller than ‘inside-outside’ differences. Formal regions are characterised as parts of a certain hierarchy in which they take a defined position. An important characteristic of such regions is that they are by definition not overlapping.<sup>38</sup> This type of region is commonly used to denote areas with official or formalised boundaries, such as continents, nations, provinces, municipalities, cities, and towns, but also areas defined on the basis of cultural aspects (e.g. language; ‘the French-speaking region’), economic aspects (e.g. ‘an industrial region’) or physical/environmental properties of the landscape (e.g. ‘the tropical zone’) might be seen as such. Formalised regions instinctively seem to denote a certain fixity, though they might obviously also change on the basis of changing borders, merging municipalities, changing landscapes/environments, or cultural changes.

The second type of region is the *functional region*.<sup>39</sup> This type of region is distinguishable and characterised ‘by the degree to which they are integrated or the extent to which the component parts interact [...] interaction of components within a region is significant compared to interaction with other places’.<sup>40</sup> In other words, functional regions can be seen as laying ‘emphasis on systems of functional relations within an integrated territorial system’.<sup>41</sup> The interactions that shape a functional region can be traced in a range of ways, including commuter flows, the spatial distribution of certain newspapers, the distribution of goods, the area over which certain services are provided, etc. In a similar way as formal regions, functional regions can occur in a range of sizes. In contrast, however, functional regions might considerably overlap and are focused on the repeated and overlapping interactions or movements of individuals. The human activity, interactions and relations between actors that shape a functional regions are likely to be in some way

influenced by the formal and informal ‘rules of the game’ and the formation or extent of formal regions (be them administrative, cultural, or physical/environmental). In my opinion, however, it would go too far to argue that such functional spatial systems have a ‘shared political, social, or economic purpose [...] [For instance, an] urban area, defined by people moving toward and within it, is a functional region [...] the people within the region function together politically, socially, or economically’.<sup>42</sup> From my point of view, such a city and its hinterland can no doubt be seen as a functional region. Furthermore, cities or other nucleated settlements almost by definition appear to have certain political, social, or economic functions to individuals in their surroundings, while cities can purposely be designed in such a way to accommodate and provide such functions. Yet, the interactions and movements that contribute to seeing an area as a functional region are essentially shaped at a ‘grass root level’ through complex decision making processes and (conscious and unconscious) actions of actors with their own aims and goals.

Some of the previously discussed matters touch upon a specific subtype of functional region: the nodal region. Nodal regions are not uncommonly approached from an economic perspective and are in such a light defined as being ‘based primarily on a hierarchical system of trade relationships. Small business centers may depend on large centers, and both small cities and large centres may depend on a still larger business center for specialised economic goods’.<sup>43</sup> A nodal region is, in contrast to the more general type of functional region, by definition centring on a focal point in the area near which activity and overlapping interactions are more intense and ‘goes on diminishing towards the periphery’.<sup>44</sup> Similarities with Central Place Theory, in which the spatial organisation of settlements with certain and differing ‘central functions’, including ‘non-economic’ ones, is explored, can here not be left unnoticed. In Walter Christaller’s (translated) words, ‘all regions have some centres which are closer, yet their centers of a higher order are found in larger towns which satisfy those demands [e.g. for goods and services] of the country and of the smaller towns which the little towns are not able to satisfy’. All central places are accompanied by a certain *Ergänzungsgebiet* for which this place provides certain functions.<sup>45</sup>

A last type of region is defined as the *perceptual region*. In contrast to the previously introduced formal and functional regions, perceptual regions have not been a traditional concern of geographers. The conceptual foundations of perceptual regions were traditionally developed in Sociology, in which Howard Odum defines a region as ‘an area of which the inhabitants feel

<sup>37</sup> Rana 2008: 423–424 (emphasis added). See also Smith 1976: 6; Fouberg et al. 2012: 25.

<sup>38</sup> Rana 2008: 423.

<sup>39</sup> In the German speaking literature, such regions might be termed as *Aktivitätsregionen* (cf. Blotevogel 1996: 59).

<sup>40</sup> Blair 1995: 16 (emphasis added). See also Fouberg et al. 2012: 25.

<sup>41</sup> Smith 1976: 6.

<sup>42</sup> Fouberg et al. 2012: 25–26 (emphasis added).

<sup>43</sup> Blair 1995: 16.

<sup>44</sup> Pandit 1990: 52. See also Haggett 1979: 258; Wishart 2004: 306.

<sup>45</sup> Christaller 1966: 16 (quote) and 21.

themselves a part'.<sup>46</sup> From the 1960s onwards, perceptual regions entered the geographical discipline, as such regions (that are '*perceived to exist by their inhabitants and other members of the population at large [...] [being] the product of the spatial perception of average people [...] [and] composites of the mental maps of the population*')<sup>47</sup> were increasingly seen to be relevant for the actions of individuals in space and time. Such senses of place or forms of regional consciousness might include a range of physical, cultural, economic, historical, or religious aspects. A sub-type of the perceptual region is the vernacular region, which is, rather than the 'population at large', based on the shared perception or meaning given to a region *by its inhabitants*, as it is 'based on the notion of place that people perceive to be a part of their cultural identity'.<sup>48</sup> Such vernacular regions are, however, not only formed 'from within', as experiencing and thinking about something as a region by definition implies a certain dialogue with 'the outside', which is felt or promoted to be different. As a way to illustrate what kind of regions we might see as vernacular (and thus also as perceptual), we can turn to an exploration of vernacular regions in the United States, in which such regions were classified under the following headings: environmental (e.g. 'the Great Plains'), directional (e.g. 'Eastern Arkansas'), political/administrative (e.g. 'a tri-state area'), promotional (e.g. 'the Sun Belt'), farcical-interpretive (e.g. 'the Bible Belt'), and economic-agricultural (e.g. 'the Cotton belt').<sup>49</sup> Although such regions might be maintained and 'inherited' and as such exist for generations, for instance without that cotton is anymore produced in an area, they are, just like other types of regions, not fixed. It is important to stress that perceptual regions might not only exist in the mind, but can be articulated in a concrete way, for example, through the names given to areas and organisations, but also in stylistic aspects of the production of material culture and regionally specific norms in terms of its consumption.

These three introduced main types of regions obviously focus on different aspects, though depending on the research questions they are all meaningful for present researchers and essentially the product of human decisions and actions. The boundaries between identifiable formal, functional, and perceptual regions should not necessarily (or can more commonly not) be drawn on the same spot, while the degrees of overlap between these regions might vary considerably. Formal, functional, and perceptual regions are, however, likely to exhibit some kind of overlap, as they are shaped and influencing the actions of the same individuals, and I would therefore not like to argue for a view in which these regions are solely viewed in isolation. For instance, the shared formal institutions that are characteristic

for a formal region might obviously influence the interactions that are characteristic for a functional region, which on their turn influence how individuals or whole communities perceive certain senses of place.

### ***The active properties and emergence of regions – New Regional Geography***

For a better understanding of how regions, whatever their type may be, work from within and emerge, I would like to highlight a range of studies that are commonly grouped under the umbrella of New Regional Geography (NRG), which led to a renewed interest in 'the region' in a range of fields that is echoing down to the modern day. The adoption and adaptation of theories that traditionally belonged to the field of Sociology can be seen as a kind of reaction against quantitative approaches in spatial and regional sciences that were building upon 'over-mechanistic models of man and society'.<sup>50</sup> A key role in NRG is played by social practice and the way in which actors and communities perceive, structure, organise, and develop meaningful spaces or regions and the way in which such spaces on their turn shape human action.

Classic contributions to this line of thinking were developed by Anthony Giddens in the framework of his structuration theory, by establishing links between social structure and the action of individuals, attempting to better understand the reproduction of social practice, systems, and institutions in contextually-laden spaces. This reproduction of social structures and practice was seen by Giddens to be not 'a mechanical outcome, [but] [...] an active constituting process, accomplished by, and consisting in, the doings of active subjects'.<sup>51</sup> Central in his thought is what is called 'the duality of structure':<sup>52</sup> societal norms, values, and other informal and formal institutions not only set certain possibilities and constraints for action of individuals within societies, but societal structures are also reproduced by the active participation and (conscious and particularly unconscious) 'routinized' actions that are carried out by their members, on the basis of pre-existing interpretative schemes, resources, and institutions.<sup>53</sup> Giddens stresses that his usage of the term region 'always carries the connotation of the structuration of social conduct across time-space'.<sup>54</sup> Whether being locales or regions according to Giddens' 'conceptual taxonomy', such settings of interaction and their contextuality (i.e. time- and space-specific interactions) have been shaped by societal

<sup>46</sup> Odum 1942: 430.

<sup>47</sup> Jordan 1978: 293 (emphasis added). See also Wishart 2004: 306; Rana 2008: 426; Fouberg *et al.* 2012: 26.

<sup>48</sup> Vukosav and Fuerst-Bjeliš 2016: 457.

<sup>49</sup> Good 1981: table 1.

<sup>50</sup> Claval 1998: 22.

<sup>51</sup> Giddens 1993: 121.

<sup>52</sup> Giddens 1984: 16–17 and 181.

<sup>53</sup> This is what is described by Torsten Hägerstrand, as 'when Robinson Crusoe found himself alone on his island, he could make up his program without regard to a pre-existing socioeconomic system [...] An individual who migrates into an established society, either by being born into it or by moving into it from outside, is in a very different position. He will at once find that the set of potentially possible actions is severely restricted by the presence of other people and by a maze of cultural and legal rules' (1970, 11).

<sup>54</sup> Giddens 1984: 118 and 122.



norms, rules, values *and* are argued to play a central and active role in the reproduction of societal structures in time and space.

The usage of the terms locale, place, and region alongside each other, but the apparent preference of Giddens and geographers, such as Alan Pred and Nigel Thrift,<sup>55</sup> for using one of these terms at the cost of others (often without being very clear about their exact definitions and criteria for discrimination), is in some way illustrative for a certain reorientation of regional geography that was argued for by scholars in NRG. For the sake of a certain clarity, it is in the present study, however, important to somehow define what regions are, can be, or can do. Regarding the properties and qualities of regions, I therefore would like to draw upon Thrift's view of regions, who regards a region as being a 'meeting place of social structure and human agency, substantive enough to be the *generator and conductor of structure*, but still intimate enough to ensure that the "*creature-like aspects*" of human beings are not lost'.<sup>56</sup> Formal and informal institutions are important in the functioning, maintenance, and articulation of regions. The region should be regarded as an institutional sphere 'with an explicit *collective dimension* which represents institutional practices and the *history of the region*, not the *history of an individual* as a place does'. It 'is an entity that cannot be experienced directly, but is represented in the everyday lives of individuals by symbolic means through political, economic, legal and other institutions and the power relations associated with them'.<sup>57</sup> By seeing regions as an 'institutionalised sphere' that has some kind of 'collective dimension' or shared awareness and regional history, we might use them as a basis to explore a whole range of social and societal structures and processes that are in constant dialogue with the actions of individual actors in society, thereby influencing socioeconomic and socio-ecological practice and interactions in space and in time and playing an important role in shaping regionality. Regions are essentially human or social phenomena, products of social practice and social constructs,<sup>58</sup> making regions not only meaningful categories for *present* analytical purposes, but also meaningful entities in the *past*.

After attempting to define what regions are or can be, we can focus on some important developments in the field of NRG that contributed to a better conceptualisation of the temporal depth and emergence of regions, which are evidently of interest for Archaeology as a discipline. From my point of view, such a more fluid perspective and a more solid understanding of the creation and development of regions is, for instance, lacking in the work of Giddens. Although he provided some temporal

depth in his model and Giddens emphasised the active role of agents, his main focus was on the reproduction of societal structures.<sup>59</sup> Giddens' theory is also not much geared towards explaining the emergence of locales or regions that influence and are influenced by the actions of individuals.<sup>60</sup> In the background of the current study on the exploration of socioeconomic differences and a better understanding of the shaping of regionality, it can be added that the structuration theory does not lay much emphasis on the different forms and shapes locales or regions can have, the different ways through which they can shape the actions of individuals, and the different meanings that regions can have to individuals.

In NRG, regions are essentially seen as being 'in a process' and 'lived through, not in',<sup>61</sup> rather than as static settings and sceneries for action that were always 'there'. Important work to conceptualise regions as a process and to better understand the temporal dimensions of regions has been carried out by Anssi Paasi. Paasi lays much focus on the 'institutionalization' of regions that he defines as 'a socio-spatial [and geohistorical] process during which some territorial unit emerges as a part of the spatial structure of a society and becomes established and clearly identified in different spheres of social action and social consciousness'.<sup>62</sup> In his work, Paasi divides the development of regions in four successive stages:<sup>63</sup> (1) the assumption of territorial shape, during which some kind of boundaries are formed; (2) the development of conceptual (symbolic) shape that provides a framework for personal or collective experience; (3) the development of (economic, political, legal, educational, cultural, etc.) institutions that contribute to reproducing a certain regional consciousness; and (4) the establishment as part of the regional system and regional consciousness of the society concerned, during which the region has achieved an established status in the spatial structure of society and its social consciousness. During this phase it is argued that the region is given an '*identity* which comprises not only a material basis (e.g. nature, landscapes, culture, economic system) but also a "mental sphere", i.e. images which together establish the foundation for the structures of expectations'.<sup>64</sup> Although having an 'established status in the spatial structure of society', it should obviously be stressed that achieving this fourth phase does not imply that such regions cannot change anymore in size, shape, or strength: 'individuals come and go, regions remain [but] are *[also] transformed*' and 'will probably eventually disappear'.<sup>65</sup>

<sup>55</sup> E.g. Pred 1984: 281–282; Thrift 1983: 40.

<sup>56</sup> Thrift 1983: 38 (emphasis added).

<sup>57</sup> Paasi 1986a: 113, 114, and 139 (original emphases).

<sup>58</sup> Soja 1985: 177; Murphy 1991; Claval 1998: 46; Paasi 2010; Börzel and Risse 2016: 6; Paasi 2022: 3.

<sup>59</sup> E.g. Giddens 1984: 125.

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Paasi 1991: 243.

<sup>61</sup> E.g. Thrift 1983; Pred 1984: 282f; Paasi 1986a.

<sup>62</sup> Paasi 1986a: 121; Paasi 2022: 2.

<sup>63</sup> Paasi 1986a: 121f; Paasi 1991: 244f.

<sup>64</sup> Paasi 1986a: 130 (original emphasis). Paasi sees regional identity as going beyond 'regional consciousness' and 'the identity of its inhabitants' (1986: 132).

<sup>65</sup> Paasi 1991: 249; 2010: 2299.

Although archaeological and historical data will in the overwhelming majority of times be of a chronology that is too coarse to allow for detailed reconstructions of the institutionalisation process of regions, a broad range of data is available to touch upon the way in which different regions were constructed, maintained, and to some extent emerging and changing. For instance, we might think about boundary stones, epigraphically preserved dialects, any type of phenomenon that hints at a certain local stylistic expression or type of socioeconomic organisation, epigraphic or historical sources that hint at a certain consciousness or identity, etc. Distribution patterns of artefacts might also be of help, for example, to reconstruct the way in which exchange patterns might be shaped by institutions or consumer preferences, which are both in some way embedded in social and societal milieus of interaction. It should, however, be stressed that such patterns will come into being by repeated actions, which might in fact be separated by generations or centuries, though are likely to appear with relatively broad chronologies in archaeological datasets. Furthermore, regions might, for a range of reasons, be of different forms or turn in phases at different times, some regions might not reach any form of institutionalisation, regions can also disappear or change dramatically, or regions might not be recognised as such in the archaeological and historical record. Applying Paasi's model directly on the archaeological record thus provides some limitations and difficulties, while he also notes some fluidity and variation in the real world in terms of his model. Yet, seeing regions as being in a 'continuous process', rather than as static entities, lays some needed emphasis on the dynamic and fluid nature of actions in societies, socio-spatial organisation and practice, and regions. Societal reproduction remains a big theme in NRG, though, as extensively argued by Pred and elaborated upon by Robert Dodgshon: although societies have many forms of inertia, there is always some room for change, while social reproduction can also take different dimensions and societal institutions might be more capable or prone to change in some contexts than others.<sup>66</sup> This sounds especially attractive for archaeologists that see socioeconomic change more and more as the rule (and not the exception) and it should be stressed that, even for the relatively coarse chronological resolutions on which we are often forced to approach the past, we should also expect considerable variety and change over time, whether they are clearly identifiable or not.

### ***Regions and regionality***

As is argued for above, regions are social constructs. They are, whatever their type (formal, functional, or perceptual), essentially shaped through human actions/choices and social, societal, and socio-ecological interactions. Regions are(/were) continuously in a

process that unfolds in space and in time. Historical path-trajectories, physical geographies, and formal and informal institutions thus in some way all come together in the shaping of regions and on these premises we might expect considerable change and variation that is articulated in regions. Regions can vary in form, size, strength, and be institutionalised or not, while also the processes and dominant forces that shape regions can be substantially different. This does, however, not make regions useless as analytical categories. To the contrary, acknowledging the fluidity of regions in space and time, emphasising that they are continuously shaped and no end products, and not seeing regions as only existing in the mind of researchers or only reflecting or representing certain processes, but also as taking active roles in the shaping of socioeconomic action and histories, contributes to seeing regions as meaningful and attractive concepts to work with. It should again be stressed that the degrees of heterogeneity and change in terms of socioeconomic practice, organisation, and development, as well as the shapes and sizes of archaeologically observed regions, are served by such a fluid definition.

In this study, we will explore the shaping of local economies, regions, and regionality in space and time. Especially the term 'regionality' deserves some more attention, since it is increasingly featuring in historical, archaeological and other spatial studies, though is seldom clearly defined and often merely used as a synonym for regional differences.<sup>67</sup> The identification of regional differences plays an important role in the study of regionality, though I would like to advocate to go beyond this step in various ways to reach what is aimed to be caught with regionality in this book. Regionality is not as much a concept, but can be seen as a certain theoretical stance towards approaching regions, which in some way relates to earlier discussed views in this section. The political scientists Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter define regionality as 'the variety of emerging forms of regional groupings and agglomerations'.<sup>68</sup> In contrast, Paasi defines regionality as a process in which 'regions have served to determine the activities of the organizations [and one might add other actors] and the geographical areas in which they are active'.<sup>69</sup> The two definitions obviously touch upon two different aspects of regions (their varying forms and their active properties). Both can, however, not be seen in isolation, hereby referring to the previously illustrated discussions in NRG in which the repeated actions/interactions of individuals/other economic actors in society are both contributing to the creation of regions of different forms *and* are at the same time influenced by the pre-existence of such socio-

<sup>66</sup> Pred 1984: 280–285; Dodgshon 1998: 6–7, 84, 126–127.

<sup>67</sup> See Swift 2000; Pitts 2005: 51; Wickham 2005: 481; Vlassopoulos 2011: 9; Cleary 2013: 9; Stewart 2013: 104; Lund 2015: 236; Lund 2021 for a selection of archaeological and historical studies in which the term regionality is occurring.

<sup>68</sup> Albert and Stetter 2014: 63.

<sup>69</sup> Paasi 1986b: 23.

spatial structures and systems of interaction. In this study, I will not draw upon only one of these definitions and aim to focus on both aspects, thereby attempting to build a bridge to explore the two related research questions that were raised in the introduction from the bottom up: *How did local and regional economies function and develop within larger networks and systems?* and *How and why were differences in the workings and development of economies shaped in space and time?*. In this way, I would like to make room for ‘bottom-up, spontaneous, and endogenous processes’ that contribute to the emergence of socioeconomic and regional variation and change from ‘within’.<sup>70</sup> It should be emphasised that regions are never formed in isolation and that ‘exogenous’ structures, institutions, processes and interactions (such as connectivity in networks, ‘trans-local’ and ‘-regional’ sentiments, and border-crossing complexities) are in recent relational geographical approaches seen to be major factors in the developing of meaningful spaces and regions by extension.<sup>71</sup> It was, however, by the repeated actions and social interactions, which were resulting from complex decision making processes of individuals, through which regions were consciously, but perhaps mainly unconsciously, maintained, articulated, but also formed and changed.

Studies on regionality can be multi-faceted, but one of the main recurring characteristics of such explorations is that regions and regionality are seen as something that is ‘always “more-than-representational” [...] [it is] experienced, lived, performed and felt’<sup>72</sup>. In the same vein as the earlier illustrated views by Giddens, Pred, Thrift, Paasi, and others, such ‘experienced, lived, performed, and felt’ regions of all sorts, forms, or characters are here also seen as possessing active properties and *doing*

things, thereby shaping future action in many ways (not exclusively only reproducing) and potentially for long after. Essential in any study of regionality is the view that regions are seen as being in a process and that they can originate and develop in a variety of ways, thereby shaping their own history, characteristics, and properties: in a range of ways, one region is/was not the other. In this sense, regionality can be seen as a certain reaction against studies that are by Neil Campbell characterised as ‘regionalism’. In Campbell’s words, ‘regionalism seems to solidify [the local/regional] into a *fixed and knowable* set of beliefs, an “ism” to put alongside all the other “isms” that we know as completed and defined concepts [...] Thus, what regionalism so often achieves is a containment of doctrines, principles, orders about regions, a misplaced concreteness’.<sup>73</sup> In contrast, studies on regionality rely on a more dynamic view, thereby aiming to explore *what regions are (or can be), how they might look like, how they functioned from within, and how and why regions were shaped* not only in space (but perhaps particularly in time). It is an archaeological utopia to develop a proper ‘diachronical’ approach to the emergence and institutionalisation of regions in the ancient world, as the archaeologically observable remnants of regions provide a materialised snapshot (a ‘still life’) of a process that was rooted in the repeated actions of populations in space and time. Nevertheless, by attempting to approach and explore the formation, maintenance, articulation, and possible disappearance of regional forms of any shape in a diachronic way and by seeing past regions as having been in a continuous process, I believe we will gain a better understanding of both *how* and *why* local economies and regionality were shaped, through a complex mix of actions and processes in space and time.

<sup>70</sup> Börzel and Risse 2016: 8.

<sup>71</sup> E.g. Allen *et al.* 1998, 50; Thrift 2004: 59; Greiner and Sakdapolrak 2013.

<sup>72</sup> Campbell 2016: 5 (emphasis added).

<sup>73</sup> Campbell 2016: 14–15 (emphasis added).

## 2. The Geographies of Boeotia

The studying of local economies and societies through the lens of regionality especially holds potential for areas that are traditionally seen as ‘regions’. Although the previous chapter should have illustrated that a whole range of regions might be defined and identified, Boeotia (also written as Boiotia) is often seen as such a ‘region’. Certain features in the landscape, for example, characterise the area in some way, whereas some ‘natural breaks’ in the landscape were to some extent also identifiably delimitating the area known as Boeotia in the past. Furthermore, a certain Boeotian dialect can be traced epigraphically, while people referring to themselves and others as *Boiōtoi* reveal certain social constructs. In the Archaic period, myths of ‘origin’ developed, in which the *Boiōtoi* are described to have been expelled from earlier occupied lands in Thessaly after the Trojan War and to have moved into the area that later became known as Boeotia.<sup>1</sup> Perhaps especially the development of such communal feelings or a certain regional awareness into institutional structures before or after the battle between the Boeotians and Athenians at Koroneia in 447/446 BC (when the Boeotian League/*koinon* was formed)<sup>2</sup> contributes to seeing Boeotia as a region in between the ‘local’ and the ‘inter-regional’. Boeotia, however, comprises a wide array of landscapes that potentially provided different economic resources and opportunities for inhabitants. Besides such variation in ‘natural features’, similar landscapes were not always extracted or managed in a similar way through socio-ecological relationships. Just as physical landscapes, institutional frameworks are potentially different from community to community. Moreover, different Boeotian communities prove to have had different histories, making Boeotia an interesting case for explorations regarding the shaping of socioeconomic regionality on a relatively small spatial scale.

<sup>1</sup> E.g. Buck 1979: 75–81. See Larson 2007 for a characterisation how such an early Boeotian communal identity was formed and maintained.

<sup>2</sup> Several scholars argue for the existence of such a League in the Archaic period (e.g. Head 1881: 10; Buck 1972), mostly being fuelled by Theban, Haliartian, and Tanagran coinage from the first half of the 6th–early 5th century BC, which sees the presence of shared symbolism (the ‘Boeotian shield’). Although Head argued that ‘no ancient money is more clearly federal in character’ (Head 1881: 10), more recent evaluations reject this existence of a Boeotian League in this span of time and argue that such indications for ‘regional awareness’ and/or collaboration should not necessarily reflect the existence of a ‘political organisation’, whereas historical sources are often inappropriately retrojected into the Archaic period (Hansen 1995: 30–31; Larson 2007: 150f, esp. 180–188; Ma 2016: 34)

Chapters 2 and 3 aim to ‘set the scene’ before exploring ceramic and socioeconomic regionality in Boeotia from a comparative perspective. This chapter will serve to introduce the Boeotian landscapes in terms of their topographies, geographies, and the ways in which individuals and communities interacted with and adapted to their ‘natural’ surroundings. This chapter will start with a short introduction of the Boeotian landscape, including the boundaries of the area. After this, the physical landscapes, geology, vegetation, and certain socio-ecological interactions around the nucleated settlements Thespieae (also written as Thespiiai), Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra will be discussed in more detail. These sub-sections will provide some in-depth context that will later be evaluated against the patterning regarding the production, circulation, and consumption of ceramics in the survey datasets. This chapter will close with an introduction to the (former) polis-landscape in the area. Boeotia already saw the flourishing of urban centres and organisation of cities and territories into a polis-landscape before the period under focus in this study. As these historical paths were already to some extent unfolded and such histories, including adaptations and investments in the landscape, could and did also shape socioeconomic possibilities and limitations in later periods, it is necessary to also draw upon sources of evidence before the (Late) Hellenistic period.

### 2.1 Boeotian landscapes and the boundaries of Boeotia

Boeotia is situated in central Greece and forms a ‘land bridge’ between the Megaris, Attica, and the Peloponnese (in the south) and Phocis, Locris, and the rest of mainland Greece (in the north and west). The area comprises two large tectonic depressions and a range of smaller alluvial plains or valleys that are generally oriented in a NW–SE direction. In the northwest, the Copaic basin covers an area of a bit more than 1000km<sup>2</sup>, while the Theban basin covers a roughly similar area in central and south-eastern Boeotia.<sup>3</sup> Although mountain ranges, such as the Helikon Massif and Mt. Kithairon, respectively rise up to 1749m and 1409m above sea level (asl.), Boeotia is less dominated by mountainous landscapes than other areas in mainland Greece. GIS-based calculations, for example, show that between less than 10% and

<sup>3</sup> González 2005: 45. In this calculation, the Tanagran ‘basin’ is included as part of the Theban basin. The Tanagran ‘basin’ is a ‘Tafel’ landscape in morphological terms, but ‘it is filled by the same tertiary formation as the basin of Thebes’ (Farinetti 2011: appendix 2, p. 15).

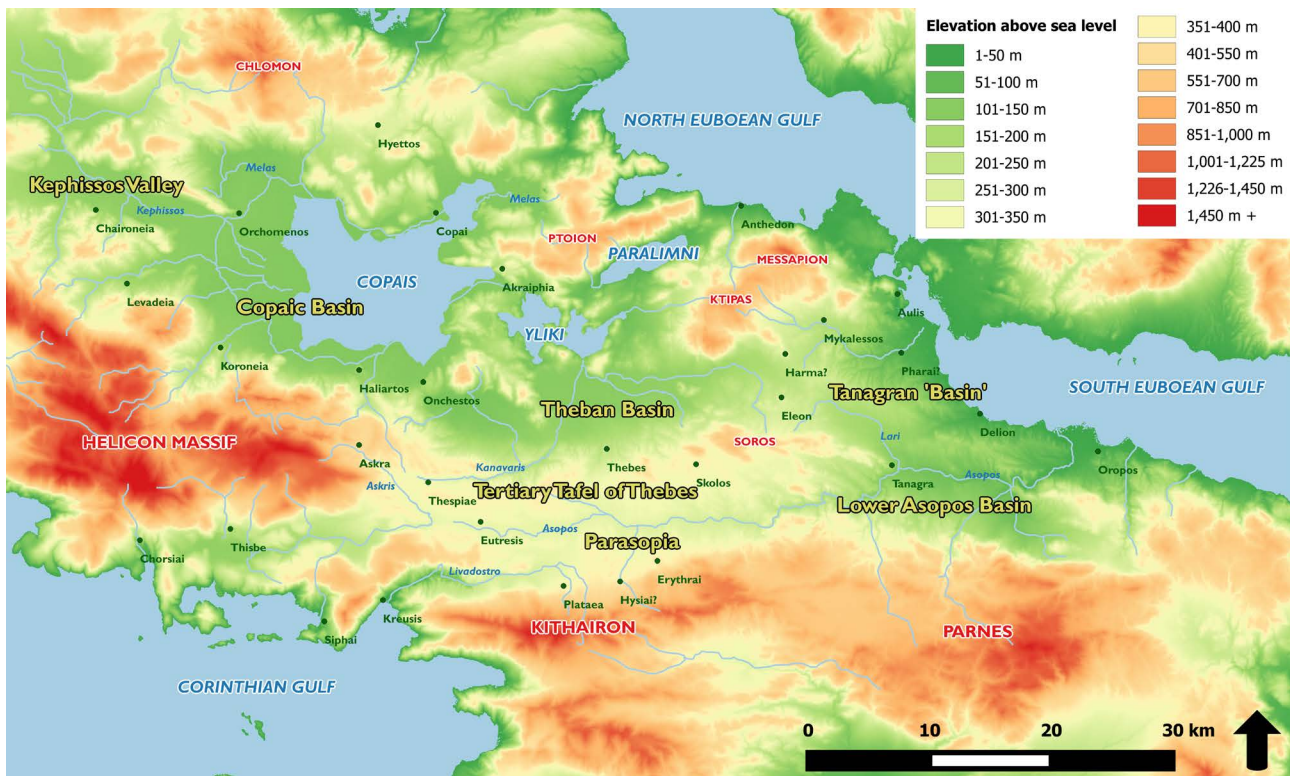


FIGURE 1. TOPOGRAPHICAL MAP OF BOEOTIA

(MAXIMUM EXTENT OF LAKE COPAIS AFTER FARINETTI 2008 AND 2011; THE ELEVATION MAP IS GENERATED ON THE BASIS OF VERSION 1 OF THE ASTER EU-DEM RASTER DATASET THAT PROVIDES ELEVATION DATA ON A RESOLUTION OF C. 30M).

11.5% of the landscape is situated more than 600m asl., while c. 13%, c. 37%, and c. 40% of the landscape lie on altitudes between 401–600m, 201–400m, and 0–200m asl. respectively (Figure 1).<sup>4</sup> Most areas in Boeotia should thus be more appropriately characterised as ‘hilly landscapes’. The Boeotian landscapes are generally characterised by the presence of calcareous material. In the uplands, Mesozoic chrystalline limestones are dominant. Below them, Tertiary and Pliocene soft limestones, marls, and calcareous sandstones are dominant in the hill-land and plateaus. The soils that eroded and which were afterwards deposited in the area ‘are always calcareous and seldom very different from their parent materials’.<sup>5</sup> In antiquity, Boeotia was already recognised as being constituted by relatively fertile lands, as Strabo notes that ‘in the fertility of its soil it is far superior’ to Attica.<sup>6</sup>

Mountain ranges and other physical features appear to have played an important role in defining the extent and boundaries of Boeotia. In the south, the easternmost part of the Gulf of Corinth, Mt. Kithairon, and Mt. Parnes form natural breaks in the landscape, whereas the Helikon Massif and the Euboean Gulf can be noted as such features in the west and east. In the north and southeast, boundaries with Phocis and Attica appear to be less easily defined by major physical features.<sup>7</sup> The alluvial

plain that is watered by the Kephissos River, draining down from Mt. Parnassos, for instance, extends from Phocis into Boeotia. In a similar way, the plains around Oropos in the southeast can be seen as a ‘continuation’ of Boeotia from a geographical perspective.<sup>8</sup> In the absence of major breaks in the landscape, more ‘minor’ natural features, such as the Asopos river and ‘a tributary of the Kephissos’,<sup>9</sup> are argued to have potentially functioned as lines of demarcation with Attica and Phocis respectively.

Although the absence or presence of such physical features in the landscape was to some extent shaping the borders of Boeotia in the past (and present), such boundaries were not fixed and above all not defined by physical features, but by social constructs, contributing to their fluidity. The absence of major breaks in the landscape towards the Oropia in the southeast, for instance, led to Boeotian and Athenian interest in the area and borders are documented to have shifted frequently, especially in times of conflict in Central Greece. As a way of illustration: after gaining power in the area during the episodic Early Hellenistic period in 312 BC, Antigonos I (‘the One-eyed’) granted Oropos, which he seized from Cassander and which was ‘independent’ in the decades before, to the Boeotians. Not more than a decade later, his son (Demetrios Poliorketes) granted the city and its territory, as well as the defensive strongholds of Pyle,

<sup>4</sup> E.g. González 2005: 44; Farinetti 2011: 52.

<sup>5</sup> Rackham 1983: 296–297.

<sup>6</sup> Strabo, *Geography*, IX.2.1.

<sup>7</sup> E.g. Farinetti 2011: 48–49.

<sup>8</sup> Cosmopoulos 2001: 6.

<sup>9</sup> Roller 1988: 9; Fossey 1988: 10.

to the Athenians after he strengthened Antigonid rule in Central Greece in 304 BC. After 287 BC, Oropos was again part of the Boeotian League until the dissolution of the League in 171 BC.<sup>10</sup> After a brief period of independence, Oropos was for historically unknown reasons sacked by the Athenians and the area again came under their sphere of influence. Despite brief episodes of independence that were granted by Julius Caesar and Octavian to punish the Athenians for betting on the wrong horses of Pompey and Mark Anthony, Athenians kept on playing the stage by owning property in the Oropia and by holding office, including the priesthood of Amphiaraos, during the 2nd and 3rd century AD.<sup>11</sup> These developments should certainly be put in their dynamic historical context and also the significance of controlling the sanctuary of the Amphiareion (that was a place of supra-regional significance and interaction)<sup>12</sup> should not be underestimated. As stressed by Sylvian Fachard and Daniele Pirisino, these territorial disputes ‘were no doubt fuelled by economic motives’,<sup>13</sup> while this Boeotian and Athenian interest in the area likely seems to have been affected by the relatively ‘open’ nature of the landscape in this area. Yet, even in cases where major breaks in the landscape were present, border conflicts evidently arose. Political developments, such as Plataea’s resistance to come under Theban hegemony and the following alliance with Athens during the late 6th century BC, for example, led to a situation in which a Boeotian city that was situated to the north of Mt. Kithairon was for some time, at least politically, not part of Boeotia, but allied to Athens.<sup>14</sup>

When discussing the nature of any Mediterranean landscape and specifically a certain fragmentation and diversity herein, Horden’s and Purcell’s landmark study *The corrupting sea* is an essential starting point for discussion. The Mediterranean is comprised by a kaleidoscope of micro-ecologies or localities with ‘a distinctive identity derived from the set of available productive opportunities and the particular interplay of human responses to them found in a given period’.<sup>15</sup> Boeotia is not different. Variability in the landscape and environment is present on the local scale, hinting at different ‘available productive opportunities’. Although it was illustrated above that most parts of Boeotia are not mountainous, mountains, hills, and lower ridges in the landscape create many pockets in the landscape that might have provided different niches for opportunity.

To some degree, certain ‘human responses’ or strategies to improve or to adapt to certain settings and circumstances can also be traced for the past. A historically recorded example of such investments and

socio-ecological strategies in the landscape is provided for the marshy Domvraina Valley near Thisbe. In this marshy valley, Pausanias describes the presence of a ‘strong dyke right through it’ that functioned to ‘divert the water to the farther side of the dyke, and farm the other side [every other year]’, which prevented ‘the plain between the mountains [from] becoming a lake’.<sup>16</sup>

For the reconstruction of the vegetation and crops that were cultivated by the ancients, a range of historical descriptions by writers such as Theophrastus, Herakleides Kritikos, Strabo, and Pausanias are available, while studies by John Fossey, Oliver Rackham, Emeri Farinetti, and Robert Shiel complement the images sketched by the ancient sources with observations on the landscape of the last century or so (not incidentally illustrating differences in terms of land-use and cultivation in space and time). In this respect, we should stress that ‘modern’ cultivation should not be directly projected into the past. In addition, certain passages in some ancient sources make one wonder if some ancient writers did actually visit the places that they described, while also the potential presence of certain biases, which purposely turned vinegar into a top vintage of wine, should not be underestimated.<sup>17</sup>

In any case, land-use, environments and landscapes change and are far from the ‘seemingly timeless, static, and constant’ sceneries that they were especially in past studies supposed to be.<sup>18</sup> A prime Boeotian example of this seems to be offered by the now drained Lake Copais and its surroundings, for which it should be stressed that it was more of a marsh than an ‘open lake’.<sup>19</sup> The water level of this lake was subjected to substantial fluctuations on an annual and seasonal basis. The range of these fluctuations is most strikingly illustrated by models by Emeri Farinetti, on the basis of archaeological indications and palaeo-environmental and geomorphological studies: Lake Copais reached a maximum depth of not more than 2.5 to 3m and extent of 250km<sup>2</sup> during the winter months in wet years, whereas its depth might have decreased up till almost complete drainage during dry periods in dry years.<sup>20</sup> Changes in the landscape on a larger temporal scale are illustrated

<sup>10</sup> E.g. Mackil 2013: 94–95, 98, 140 for these Early Hellenistic developments.

<sup>11</sup> Cosmopoulos 2001: 15–16.

<sup>12</sup> E.g. Schachter 1981: 19–26 on the Amphiareion.

<sup>13</sup> Fachard and Pirisino 2015: 146.

<sup>14</sup> E.g. Herodotus, *Histories*, 6.108.

<sup>15</sup> Horden and Purcell 2000: 80 (quote), 78–80.

<sup>16</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.32.3. Kahrstedt notes that the ‘stone foundations with the water passages’ were still observed during the 19th century by Frazer, while he also notes that this dyke was ‘of course, much older than the Imperial era’ (1954: 102). See also Knauss 1989.

<sup>17</sup> The presence of rhetorical speech in these writings is perhaps best illustrated in the writings of Herakleides (‘On Greek Cities’), who concluded his passage 1.25 with the words ‘if you are wise, keep away from Boeotia’.

<sup>18</sup> Pettegrew 2016: x.

<sup>19</sup> Cores from the lakebed, for example, show accumulations of peat from c. 3000 BC onwards (Greig and Turner 1974: 190; Allen 1990: 180).

<sup>20</sup> Farinetti 2008. Farinetti modelled the (seasonal) extent of the lake (2008: Figure 1) on the basis of studies and indications summarised in Knauss 1985. Philippson 1951: 478 argued for a maximum depth of 5m, seemingly on the basis of the Early Modern level of the lake before drainage during the end of the 19th century. See Theophrastus, *Enquiry into Plants*, IV, XI, 3 for an ancient source describing the fluctuating level of Lake Copais.

by geoarchaeological studies in the (former) coastal strip near Aulis, where several cores hint at relatively abrupt changes from ‘open’ to ‘closed’ lagoon environments over time. Around c. 1500 BC and between 1050 and 400 BC, the bay got silted up by marine and fluvial sediments and/or sea level rise, after which the area turned into a coastal swamp between c. 200–500 AD.<sup>21</sup> Although such detailed diachronic environmental studies are not available for much of Boeotia, these examples suffice to illustrate that the past Boeotian landscapes and environments were far from stable. Socio-ecological adaptations and relations might by extension have shaped landscapes differently on the local scale or even larger.<sup>22</sup> The increasing application of geoarchaeological and palaeo-environmental studies will shed more light on such matter, though it should be stressed that such data are currently unavailable for many parts of Boeotia. High degrees of variability in terms of the landscape and environment are, however, observable and in the remainder of this chapter the landscapes around Thespieae, Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra, which will function as case studies later on in this book, will be introduced to get some idea on the landscapes in which and with which ancient actors were interacting.

## 2.2 Valleys near the foothills of Helikon: the landscapes around Thespieae and Askra

Thespieae (also written as Thespiiai) and Askra are situated in central-western Boeotia in a small basin within the larger ‘Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes’ (Figure 1). To the north, this basin is bordered by a series of ridges and uplands that form the northern edge of this *tafel* landscape. These ridges and uplands run from the south of Haliartos, to the north of Askra and Thespieae, before extending eastwards to the south of Thebes and Mt. Soros. In the west, the basin is largely bordered by the Helikon Massif, where the Valley of the Muses extends some 3km west of Askra up till the spurs of the Helikon. Further south, a rounded limestone ridge forms some sort of natural break in the landscape. This ridge is situated some 3km to the west of the relatively sharp turn of the Askris (Potamos) in this direction, after which the Askris drains into the Xironomi and Domvraina basins towards Thisbe and Siphai.<sup>23</sup> In the south, a ridge that is known as Korombili separates the basin in which Thespieae is situated from the Livadostro valley, which culminates near Kreusis. In the east, less clear breaks in the landscape can be identified, although John Fossey notes the presence of some minor physical features and observes that ‘a sequence of low hills does in fact separate the bulk of the Asopos valley from the Thespian plains’.<sup>24</sup>

In terms of the nature of the sediments in the area, it is likely that the Askris once had one or more easterly courses and both the upper Asopos and the Kanavaris valleys are suggested to have been possible continuations of this river system in the distant past.<sup>25</sup>

This ‘Thespian basin’ is constituted by two main types of landscape, which are not totally homogeneous, but can be characterised as ‘the rolling upland landscape of Pleistocene age and the relatively flat Holocene floodplain’.<sup>26</sup> This former type of landscape is mainly characterised by the presence of regosols and/or lithosols (that comprise relatively much stones and have relatively thin topsoils), whereas these latter landscapes are characterised by the formation of luvisols and fluvisols (that are deeper, are able to hold more significant amounts of water, and see the presence of alluvial processes).<sup>27</sup> The landscapes around Thespieae and Askra are to a relatively large extent shaped by river courses and streams, which are argued to have deposited materials that eroded from the Helikon Massif and its environs from the Pleistocene onwards.<sup>28</sup> Although the Askris and Kanavaris are reported to contain water in some summers, most water was undoubtedly carried during the winter months, when these streams, at least incidentally, seem to have flooded beyond their courses into and even beyond their floodplains, thereby depositing ‘sandy through silty to clayey’ deposits on an increasing distance from these streams.<sup>29</sup>

On a general level, the larger Tertiary *tafel* of Thebes is characterised by its fertile soils. This appears to be especially true for the basin in which Thespieae was situated that Farinetti considers to be ‘one of the most fertile soils of Greece’.<sup>30</sup> Shiel’s and Stewart’s detailed analysis of the soils in the area, however, note some differences in terms of the fertility and possibilities for cultivations of several soil types in the area. The alluviation of nutrient- and organic-rich deposits in and beyond the flood beds, for example, led to the formation of luvi- and fluvisols, of which specifically the latter ‘will give good yields of summer crops with only a small risk of damage from excess water, but will be very risky for winter crops, such as wheat, and impractical for permanent crops such as grapes’. In contrast, the regosols (or lithosols) that are situated in more elevated landscapes in the area are without accompanying irrigation best ‘for permanent crops [such as grapes] and those growing in the winter which have a deep root system [...], though they will not give very large yields because of the other limitations they suffer, such as stoniness and lack of nutrients’.<sup>31</sup> It is observed that especially ‘olives, almonds, barley and

<sup>21</sup> Ghilardi *et al.* 2013: 2078–2079.

<sup>22</sup> See, for instance, the human impact of the partial drainage of Lake Copais and the dykes and polders that were created around the fortified site Gla in the Late Helladic/Late Bronze Age period (c. 1300–1190 BC), which was situated on a limestone outcrop in the east of this basin (see Lane and Aravantinos 2021 for the most recent evaluation and reconstruction of this hydraulic system).

<sup>23</sup> Farinetti 2011: 155.

<sup>24</sup> Fossey 1988: 164. This Upper Asopos Valley was in antiquity known as the Parasopia.

<sup>25</sup> Farinetti 2011: 155; Bintliff *et al.* 2017: 21.

<sup>26</sup> Shiel and Stewart 2007: 95.

<sup>27</sup> See Shiel and Stewart 2007: 99f for a detailed analysis of the soils in this area.

<sup>28</sup> Shiel and Stewart 2007: 98.

<sup>29</sup> Shiel and Stewart 2007: 97–98.

<sup>30</sup> Farinetti 2011: 157.

<sup>31</sup> Shiel and Stewart 2007: 102.



wheat, which can grow under drier conditions' appear to do well on these soils that generally have a lower water table.<sup>32</sup> Large tracts of the landscape around Thespieae and Askra appear to be suitable for intensive crop production. Specifically, the Valley of the Muses is often seen as a very good place for vineyards.<sup>33</sup> As is illustrated by Ottoman tax records that were analysed in detail by Machiel Kiel and interpreted by Athanasios Vionis, vineyards were also present in this vale in a more distant past. During the first part of the 16th century, the inhabitants of the village Panaya, which was gridded as site VM4 during the surveys, for example, can be reconstructed to have practiced cereal production, stockbreeding, cotton production and particularly also viticulture, whereas most emphasis later in that century appears to have been laid on the breeding of sheep and the production of honey.<sup>34</sup>

Turning to the vegetation and crops that were produced in the area in ancient times, we can draw upon a relatively select range of sources and inscriptions. The most extensive discussion on the cultivation of plants and daily life in the area is provided by Hesiod, who was an inhabitant of Askra during the Archaic period. In his *Works and Days*, Hesiod commonly mentions equipment for the cultivation and processing of cereal and notes products, such as wheat bread and barley cake, making the cultivation of emmer-wheat and barley in the area probable.<sup>35</sup> Alongside these cereals, the vine is discussed in such a detailed way that Anthony Edwards argues that they 'claim an important position in the household economy'.<sup>36</sup> It should be emphasised that the sketched society and type of economy, and possibly also the landscape in which Hesiod was living, looked significantly different in Hellenistic-Roman times. Yet, this emphasis on cereal and especially vine cultivation appears interesting in terms of the earlier sketched image on the basis of Ottoman sources and more recent observations. Viticultural practices are, for instance, also attested for the Hellenistic-Roman period, as vines are specifically mentioned to have been cultivated in an inscription from the second half of the 3rd century BC from Thespieae.<sup>37</sup> It should, however, be noted that a passage in Strabo's work leads to some confusion in this respect: around the turn to our Era, the writings of Hesiod were already famous and Strabo evidently raised some eyebrows when he read or heard Hesiod's work.<sup>38</sup> Although Strabo seems

to provide a contrasting image than the ones that can be created on the basis of other sources, this passage does not necessarily downplay the suitability of the area for viticulture or reject such practices. For instance, viticulture might not have been practiced during Strabo's day (i.e. Askra is reported to have been deserted not more than a century later),<sup>39</sup> while it cannot be excluded that Strabo was only aware of parts of Hesiod's *Works and Days* (on the basis of his rather literal reading of a particular line of the text) and it can even be questioned if he ever visited (all of) Boeotia.<sup>40</sup> Interestingly, however, also Pausanias does not mention any cultivation of vines, but notes Askra as being 'rich in corn',<sup>41</sup> whereas other sources heard of Askra as being known for their high-quality mangolds.<sup>42</sup> Arguments on the basis of a certain 'silence' in the historical and epigraphic record are dangerous, though it can be observed that specifically the olive, which is currently cultivated on some scale in the area, is not mentioned extensively by these sources for most parts of Boeotia. Evidence for oleiculture is speculative at best: sacred lands in Thespieae's territory that are defined as 'the "oil-land" sacred to Hermes' are epigraphically recorded to have been leased out for 40 years beginning somewhere between the early 220s and 215 BC.<sup>43</sup> In any case, the production of generally small-sized ceramic containers at Thespieae and specifically Askra, which will be explored in Chapter 7, hints at a certain need to store goods and agricultural produce in the area.

The observed fertility, but also variation in the landscapes around Thespieae and Askra, thus appear to have provided certain possibilities for the cultivation of a range of crops, as there appear to be only small tracts of land that provided severe issues in terms of soils and slopes for cultivation. Especially more distant areas that were controlled by the ancient city of Thespieae did, however, comprise parts of landscapes that saw a bit more limitations to intensive agriculture and might as such have been prime settings for pastoral activities. Thespieae's *chora*, for example, included parts of the Helikon, where, according to Pausanias, 'the wild-strawberry bushes supply to the goats sweeter fruit than that growing anywhere else'.<sup>44</sup> A 2nd century AD border dispute between Koroneia and Thisbe provides further indications for pastoral activity in the mountainous landscape of Mt. Helikon. One of the letters from the Koroneian epigraphic archive documents communication between the civic bodies of these cities and Antoninus Pius, who was, just as his adoptive father Hadrian, approached to settle a conflict in which the Koroneians accused the Thisbeans that they 'intruded into their territory and that they [the Koroneians] were getting ready to prevent you [the

<sup>32</sup> Shiel and Stewart 2007: 99.

<sup>33</sup> Frazer 1898: V, 151; Kosso 1993: 43; Peppas 2002: 83.

<sup>34</sup> Vionis 2016: 374–375.

<sup>35</sup> Edwards 2004: 142 specifically on Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 443–444 and 582–597.

<sup>36</sup> Edwards 2004: 145.

<sup>37</sup> IG VII 1740. Roesch 1982: 134; Fossey 1988: 165.

<sup>38</sup> Strabo wrote: 'Zenodotus, however, when he writes the verse ["they who occupied Askra abounding with vines"] thus does not seem to have read Hesiod's description of his native country ["Askra; bad in winter, in summer intolerable, and worthless at any season"; Hesiod, *Works and Days*, 639], and what has been said by Eudoxus, who relates things much more to the disparagement of Askra. For how could anyone believe that such a place could have been described by the poet as "abounding with vines"? (Strabo, *Geography*, 9.2.25).

<sup>39</sup> Cf. Plutarch, *Matters relating to customs and mores*, 82; Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.2.25 and 29.2.

<sup>40</sup> E.g. Wallace 1972: 71.

<sup>41</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.38.4.

<sup>42</sup> Athenaeus I, 4d and Pollux VI, 63 in Fossey 1988: 165.

<sup>43</sup> Osborne 2017: 225.

<sup>44</sup> Pausanias, *Description of Greece*, 9.28.1.