
Modelling Spheres of Interaction in the European First Millennium BCE: Key concepts

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Résumé

This talk aims at presenting the key concepts and methods for the study of European interactions in the first millennium BCE. It will serve as an introduction to the specific presentations of the session.

The first millennium BCE is successively marked by key social, economic and political changes, as the setting up of new cultural complexes, the democratization of bronze and iron metallurgies, the intensification of agricultural productions and the process of complexification crystallised in the emergence of the State, as a new political organisation and the creation of the first urban cities in Middle Europe.

These changes have to be correlated with a strong intensification of long-distance exchanges and the emergence of network hubs, which are able to centralize and redistribute traded goods, at different periods:

- During the Final Bronze Age (1350-800 BCE), this role is played by fortified sites, such as Biskupin in Poland, and prevailing farms, such as Trims in Germany,

- During the Hallstatt period, those hubs are to be found in the princely seats (e.g. Mont Lassois, in France)

- And during the La Tène period, this phenomenon reaches its climax with the central urban sites, called "oppida" by J. Caesar in the *Commentarii*.

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In Archaeology, interaction studies are often summarised by the identification of exogenous products, most of the time without trying to identify the models of exchange responsible for these cultural transfers. Interactions must be defined, for all the meanings they embrace, in terms of simple cultural transfers as much as in wider terms, as prescribed by C. Renfrew since 1986, under the concept of "peer polities", opening up very large fields of research.

Two consistent methodological families have emerged to meet the requirement of researches in the field of interactions. The first one is devoted to the study of material evidences, which physically highlight clues of interactions. Using modelling or simulations relying on those material evidences, the second one seeks to extrapolate these archaeological data in order to recreate several possible versions of interaction systems. They are used as hypotheses allowing researchers to initiate hypothetico-deductive approaches, an unavoidable step of scientific reasoning.

This session aims at playing with both of these two methods to better depict the interactions systems of the first millennium BCE in Europe.

Mots-Clés: systems of interaction, complexity, methodology, Europe, 1st millennium BCE