

City and Micro-region in the Ancient Mediterranean (and Beyond)

Conference highlights research on cities and micro-regions in the ancient Mediterranean

Following a successful launch in Madrid in May, the international conference series **City and Micro-region in the Ancient Mediterranean (and Beyond)** continued its discussions from October 30 to November 1, 2025, at the Istanbul department of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI). International researchers came together to shed light on the complex relationships between ancient cities and their micro-regions: “With this two-part conference, jointly conceived by the Madrid and Istanbul departments of the DAI and hosted at both locations, we deliberately harnessed the DAI’s potential to connect people and spaces across its network and facilitate exchange. Understanding the division of the Mediterranean into multiple microcosms, their interactions, and the role of cities requires perspectives from both the West and East, as well as neighboring regions,” emphasizes Prof. Dr. Felix Pirson, Director of the Istanbul Department at the DAI.

Interrelationships between ancient cities and micro-regions

“Settlement history, urban landscapes, economic foundations, and their environmental impact are better understood and reinterpreted within the context of micro-regions. This approach helps us move beyond the traditional hierarchical distinction between city and surroundings, which often obscures ancient realities,” adds PD Dr. Paul Scheduling, Director of the Madrid Department at the DAI and co-organizer of the conference. The series examines ancient cities as part of complex socio-ecological systems within their micro-regions, emphasizing interrelationships across space and time. Its aim is to promote a diachronic and comparative understanding of urban and regional dynamics in the past, contributing to contemporary debates on cities, society, and the environment.

Global perspectives

In Istanbul, discussions extended beyond specific city-micro-region configurations, addressing connectivity, integration, and regional and maritime interdependencies beyond the Mediterranean. One of the highlights of the event was the public evening lecture by **Prof. Dr. John Ma** (Columbia), “*On Micro-regionalism*”. In his presentation, Ma took a fundamental look at micro-regions and encouraged critical reflection on the concept of micro-regionalism. This raised the question of what potential insights might be lost through such a perspective and what new insights might be gained as a result. The evening concluded with a reception at the German Consulate General.

After three days of lectures and intensive discussions about ancient cities and their micro-regions, the conference concluded with a round-table moderated by Prof. Dr. Nadine Vierman (Durham), exploring the fundamental questions, challenges, and capacities of ancient cities and micro-regions.

Research dynamics in International Exchange

The conference series is jointly organized by the Istanbul and Madrid departments of the German Archaeological Institute (DAI) in cooperation with the [TransArea Network Mediterranean Archaeology](#). Its scientific framework is supported by a panel of international experts in the field, including Manuel Fernández-Götz (Oxford), Elif Koparal (Istanbul), Naoíse MacSweeney (Vienna),

Jeroen Poblome (Leuven), Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Cambridge), and Martin Zimmermann (Munich).

With its interdisciplinary approach and close international cooperation, the conference series fosters exchange across space, time, and disciplines, contributing significantly to the understanding of both ancient and modern urban systems.

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Fig. 1: International conference “City and Micro-region in the Ancient Mediterranean (and Beyond),” Istanbul, October 30 to November 1, 2025 © DAI Istanbul // Nike Lehman-Spalleck

Fig. 2: Opening and welcome address at the “City and Micro-region in the Ancient Mediterranean (and Beyond)” conference by the organizers Prof. Dr. Felix Pirson (Istanbul) and PD Dr. Paul Scheduling (Madrid) © DAI Istanbul // Mareke Johanne Ubben.

Fig. 3: Group photo of participants at the “City and Micro-region in the Ancient Mediterranean (and Beyond)” conference in Istanbul © DAI Istanbul // Berna Güler-Mania.

German Archaeological Institute

Research worldwide

The German Archaeological Institute (DAI) is an internationally active research institution within the remit of the Federal Foreign Office. Since its foundation in 1829, it has developed into one of the largest research institutions in the field of archaeology and classical studies. Through global initiatives and a diverse network, the DAI promotes dialogue between cultures and is an important partner in German foreign cultural and educational policy.

With a total of eleven large branches—the headquarters in Berlin, three commissions in Bonn, Frankfurt am Main, and Munich, and seven departments in Athens, Berlin, Istanbul, Cairo, Madrid, and Rome—the DAI has a presence both in Germany and abroad. The departments and commissions are supported by additional offices in Tehran, Sana'a, Baghdad, Damascus, and Beijing, as well as research centers in Lisbon, Ulaanbaatar, and Budapest, which strengthen close cooperation with local colleagues and institutions and thus contribute to the protection and preservation of cultural heritage worldwide.