



FORSCHUNGSSTELLE
MANCHING
Holger Wendling M.A. (Dr. des.)
Auf der Schanz 45
D-85049 Ingolstadt

Tel.: (+49 841) 93 11 404
Fax: (+49 841) 93 11 428
wendling@rgk.dainst.de
www.dainst.de

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Preferred panel: **Nr. 13 “Urban Spaces”**

Title of paper: **Urban Space in Celtic Europe – A Reflection of Mediterranean Models?**

Abstract

Late Iron Age Oppida in Central Europe are commonly considered to be an initial step towards urbanisation and urban planning of a fundamentally rural celtic society. Besides contextual and functional aspects (administration, religion etc.) whose detection is elusive on a predominantly material basis, their urban layout and structure are rather more easily to be observed. In this respect, urban space is expressed in different edificial and symbolic arrangements in the organisation and layout of the Oppida: at Manching (Germany) – to name but one example – elaborate fortifications, complex street grids, central places, functional and social territories such as craftsmen’s or aristocratic quarters are quite well preserved in the archaeological record.

The question to what extent these urban features are endogenously developed out of a Central European tradition of settlement organisation or represent an adoption of exogeneous mediterranean models of urbanism is being discussed. Intensified contact of rural celtic societies with urban hellenistic mediterranean cultures during the celtic migrations of the 4th and 3rd c. BC had fostered the acquisition of certain cultural traits of Greek and Roman origin. The delimitation of a distinct urban space and its internal organisation might thus reflect a number of characteristics of hellenistic towns, but might otherwise portray elements of internal development and adjustments to special ‘celtic’ needs. A systematic archaeological and historical comparison of various features

of Late Iron Age Oppida and large unenclosed settlements with those of mediterranean *poleis*, *urbes* and *civitates* will reveal the process and role of cultural transfer and the degree of acceptance of an ‘urban paradigm’ by the celtic communities of Central Europe. Any reverse effects, i.e. cultural impetus from the celtic side, as is shown for example in military equipment, might also be traced by a comprehensive analysis.

Literature

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