

## Call for Papers

### ***Urbes clariores aliis* - Urban Transitions in Roman Egypt from the Third to the Fourth Century CE**

**Istituto Svizzero in Rome, May 11-12, 2023**

Organizers: Stefania Alfarano, François Gerardin, Sabine Huebner

Ancient writers testify to the renown and significance of Egyptian cities (Lat. *civitates*, Gr. *poleis*) in the Roman Empire of the Fourth Century CE: thus, in his ethnographic digression on Egypt, Ammianus Marcellinus provides a list of such “cities more renowned than others” (*urban clariores*) in the Thebaid or “largest cities” (*urbes maximae*) in “Egypt itself,” i.e. the Delta and Middle Egypt.<sup>1</sup> From literary sources, whether historiography, hagiography, or else, to archaeology, coins, and documentary texts, not least papyri, the multifaceted evidence from urban sites in Egypt suggests tremendous activity and, arguably, significant change from the third to the fourth century CE. Yet despite, or perhaps owing to, the wealth and complexity of these data, Egypt too often cuts a pale figure in the discussion of cities’ role in the transition to Late Antiquity. How did the cities of Egypt in the fourth century differ from those of the third, in relation to one another and individually? Which forces, political, cultural, or economic, did contribute most to refashion the urban landscape of Egypt? And, finally, did cities evolve along similar or different lines than other provinces in the Roman Empire? With these questions in mind, the conference purports to demonstrate the relevance of Egyptian urbanism to the transition of the Roman world into Late Antiquity.

\*Note that Alexandria, the greatest of all cities in/near Egypt, will feature heavily in this conference as a mine of information, and model, for other Egyptian cities, but will not be examined for its own sake.

The event is part of the Basel research project **Urban Biographies of the Roman and Late Antique Worlds: Antinoopolis and Heracleopolis in Egypt, c. 100 – c. 650 CE** and is sponsored by the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNSF). More information is available at <https://romeegyptcities.philhlist.unibas.ch/>.

We welcome abstracts of about 300 words. Papers should be 20 minutes in length, allowing for 10 minutes of discussion time after each paper, and should be in English. We encourage junior researchers and recent PhD holders to apply as well. We plan to publish the proceedings of the conference in open access with EpiPuglia in the Pragmateiai.series.

The Keynote Lecture will be given by Noel Lenski (Yale). Confirmed speakers include: Jose Luis Alonso (Zürich), Nicola Aravecchia (Washington University Saint Louis), Alberto Camplani (Sapienza), Paola Davoli (University of Salento), Alexander Free (LMU/Yale), Krzysztof Jakubiak (Warsaw), Irene Soto Marin (Harvard), Matthias Stern (LMU).

Please submit your abstract by e-mail to Dr. François Gerardin ([françois.gerardin@unibas.ch](mailto:françois.gerardin@unibas.ch)) or Prof. Dr. Sabine R. Huebner ([sabine.huebner@unibas.ch](mailto:sabine.huebner@unibas.ch)), including the full title of your paper, a

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<sup>1</sup> Amm. Marc. 22.16.

short biographical note on your affiliation and previous research, and the panel at which you would like to present. The deadline for proposals is 30 June 2022.

Themes for Panels:

1. The Shape of the City: how do different types of sources (archaeology, texts) reflect change in the organization of urban space? What is driving these transformations?
2. City and Government: what was the impact of the Diocletianic and other imperial reforms on city life in Egypt? How did municipal institutions evolve? How did city government interact with imperial administration?
3. Urban Economies: What was the material basis of prosperity in the cities of Egypt and how did that change from the third to the fourth century? How did an economic crisis affect a particular city and why? Were urban societies reconfigured as a result, in particular the urban élite?
4. The Cultural Landscape: What were the main features of urban culture in Roman Egypt and did that change from the third to the fourth century? Which impact did the rise of Christianity have on cities?