URBAN EXPERIENCES IN EARLY IRON AGE EUROPE: CENTRAL PLACES AND SOCIAL COMPLEXITY

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Abstract

In recent years, both regional approaches in urban studies and the investigation of processes of centralisation have contributed fundamentally to a reassessment of our understanding of Iron Age urbanisation in Central Europe. Thanks to large-scale research projects, nowadays it is possible to assert that the term 'urban' already applies to some of the so-called *Fürstensitze* of the Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène periods. In some cases these centres of power could cover an area of several dozen or even more than 100 hectares, and are testimony to a process of centralisation that led to the establishment of the first urban and proto-urban settlements in the history of Central Europe. However, this early process of centralisation and urbanisation was followed by a phase of decentralisation that set in at different times in different areas, and can be seen as a specific instance of the non-linear character of events.

Keywords: Urbanism, Complexity, Iron Age, Central Europe, *Fürstensitze*

Resumen

Durante los últimos años, tanto las aproximaciones regionales al estudio del urbanismo como la investigación de los procesos de centralización han contribuido a repensar profundamente nuestra comprensión de la urbanización protohistórica en Europa Central. Gracias al desarrollo de proyectos de investigación a gran escala, actualmente resulta posible afirmar que el término "urbano" puede ser aplicado ya a algunos de los denominados *Fürstensitze* del Hallstatt Final y La Tène Inicial. En algunos casos, estos centros de poder llegaron a alcanzar una superficie de varias decenas o incluso de más de 100 ha y son testimonio de un proceso de centralización que llevó al desarrollo de los primeros asentamientos urbanos y protourbanos en la historia de Europa Central. No obstante, este temprano proceso de centralización y urbanización fue seguido por una fase de descentralización que se inició en distintos momentos en las diversas áreas y que constituye un ejemplo del carácter no lineal de la Historia.

Palabras clave: urbanismo, complejidad, Edad del Hierro, Europa Central, *Fürstensitze*

INTRODUCTION
CHANGING PARADIGMS: EARLY IRON AGE URBANISM?

Exploring the genesis of large fortified central places constitutes one of the main challenges facing archaeological and ancient historical research (for a recent approach, see Fernández-Götz and Krausse, in press a). Since the beginnings of Iron Age archaeology in the 19th century, scholars have

focused on the emergence and characteristics of Europe's 'earliest towns north of the Alps' (Collis 1984; Fernández-Götz *et al.* 2014; Guichard *et al.* 2000; Sievers and Schönfelder 2012). These were traditionally perceived as a common trait of Late Iron Age communities, following J. Déchelette's fundamental paraphrase of the '*civilisation des oppida*' of the 2nd and 1st centuries BC (Déchelette 1914). However, large-scale research projects carried out during recent years have radically changed this picture (Baitinger 2013; Brun and Chaume 2013; Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2013). In the light of new data, we can conclude that the first urban and proto-urban centres of temperate Europe developed between the end of the 7th and the 5th centuries BC in an area stretching from Závist in Bohemia, to the Heuneburg in Southern Germany and Bourges in Central France (Augier *et al.* 2012; Biel and Krausse 2005; Chaume and Mordant 2011; Drda and Rybová 2008; Krausse 2008a, 2010; Milcent 2007) (Figure 1).

These so-called *Fürstensitze* or 'princely sites' are testimony to a process of differentiation and hierarchisation in the pattern of settlement that was at the same time both an expression and a catalyst for increasing social inequality. Common to almost all of them is the fact that they were only settled for a relatively short period that spanned a mere few generations, generally about 100-200 years. However, it seems also clear that the *Fürstensitze* in no way constituted a unified group of settlements (Krausse 2008a, 2010). Rather, they were centres of power that often differed significantly from each other as far as the date of their establishment, their architecture and their function as a central hub are concerned. It has to be stressed that while some centres such as the Heuneburg or Bourges can be described as 'cities' on the basis of criteria such as housing a population of several thousand inhabit-
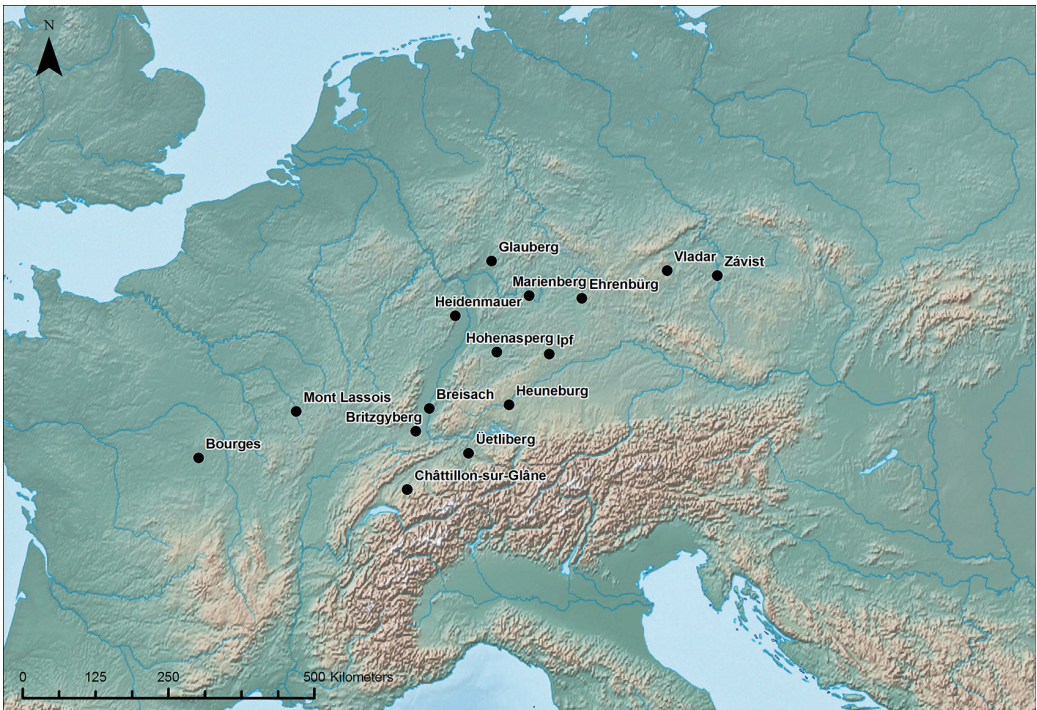
Figure 1. The main centres of power from the 7th to the 5th centuries BC in the region directly north of the Alps (after Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2013).

ants, bringing together different categories of population and activities, acting as central places for the communities in the hinterland, etc. (see below), other *Fürstensitze* are not worthy of the name. Thus some centres like the Glauberg seem to have been enormous assembly places, refuges or religious sites rather than 'towns'.

Whereas scholars working on the Mediterranean world make widespread use of the terms 'towns' and 'cities' to designate a wide range of settlements of the First Millennium BC, the use of such categorisations is still contested when it comes to Temperate Europe. However, this reluctance that is ultimately based on the unacceptable distinction between a 'civilised' south and a 'barbarian' north has often more to do with modern prejudices than with the past reality of ancient societies. In 2013, I proposed a context-dependent definition of 'city' which recognises the high levels of variation that often exist between and within different urban traditions: "a numerically significant aggregation of people permanently living together in a settlement which fulfils central place functions for a wider environment" (Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2013: 480).

Looking forward, a central aim should be to place the development of urban centres in Iron Age Europe in the broader field of comparative urban studies (Fernández-Götz and Krausse in press a). As M. E. Smith (2014: v) has recently stated, "From one perspective, the question of whether the Heuneburg is classified as an urban settlement is not important. For our understanding of that site, it is far more important to describe and explain the particular manifestations of Iron Age life and society than to classify the settlement […] But from the broader perspective of comparative urbanism, reclassifying the Heuneburg as an urban settlement has two big advantages. First, it allows data from that site –and other Early Iron Age sites– to contribute to discussions of the nature of urbanism around the world. Comparative urban scholars can add another case –a unique and fascinating case– to our sample of early urban societies. Second, archaeologists who work at the Heuneburg can draw on the concepts and insights of comparative urban studies to add richness to their reconstructions of life, society, and change at the Heuneburg".

## FIRST URBAN EXPERIENCE?
THE HEUNEBURG AGGLOMERATION

The Heuneburg on the Upper Danube has been one of the best-known archaeological sites of Iron Age Europe since the first settlement excavations of the 1950s. Particularly striking was the spectacular discovery on the 3 ha hilltop plateau of a mudbrick wall based on Mediterranean prototypes and probably erected about 600 BC. The excavations were continued until 1979 and produced further, substantial results. The archaeological material is unusually rich and allows the reconstruction of 14 structural phases during the Late Hallstatt period, together with 10 phases for the fortifications (Fernández-Götz 2014b; Gersbach 1989, 1995, 1996; Krausse *et al.* 2015).

Iron Age settlement activity at the Heuneburg started towards the end of the 7th century BC, when a box-rampart was erected over the remains of the old Bronze Age fortification. Initially several groups of farmsteads within palisaded enclosures were built in the interior of the plateau (period IVc of the Heuneburg stratigraphy). These scattered groups of farms with their outbuildings suggest the transfer of rural settlement patterns to a more confined area, in other words a kind of 'translocated landscape', whereby it is possible to recognise the elements of a carefully thought out plan.

Around or soon after 600 BC the Heuneburg was completely restructured, an act that is to be interpreted as the result of a planned political decision (Periods IVb-IVa). A fortification that was unparalleled and quite unique north of the Alps was constructed along the circuit of the Heuneburg, replacing the old earth and timber rampart; it consisted of mudbricks set on a stone foundation (Gersbach 1995). It has been estimated that approximately 500,000 mudbricks were required, which

were then plastered with daub and then whitewashed with lime. The wall was 3 m wide, and probably 5 m high, including a timber parapet, the charred remains of whose beams were found. Masonry plinths and mudbricks were widespread in the Mediterranean from the Bronze Age, but no other examples of this construction technique are known from the Early Iron Age in Central Europe to date (Hailer 2010). Although it certainly will also have functioned as a fortification, the structure is to be understood as a conscious demonstration of power and status that underlined the role of the Heuneburg as the political and economic centre of an extensive region, probably the territory of a polity. This interpretation is also supported by the fact that 17 towers projected from the western and northern fronts of the plateau.

    At the same time, the internal arrangement of the hilltop plateau was modified. Without any traces of fire all of the farmsteads were demolished, probably parallel to the construction of the mudbrick wall, and a regular town plan was established with rows of houses along a network of streets that crossed at an angle (Figure 2). Investigations in the southern section produced evidence for the presence of specialised crafts in the form of finds and several kilns (Gersbach 1995). So far no indications have been found for the presence of genuine 'palace buildings' during this stage in the 1 ha of the
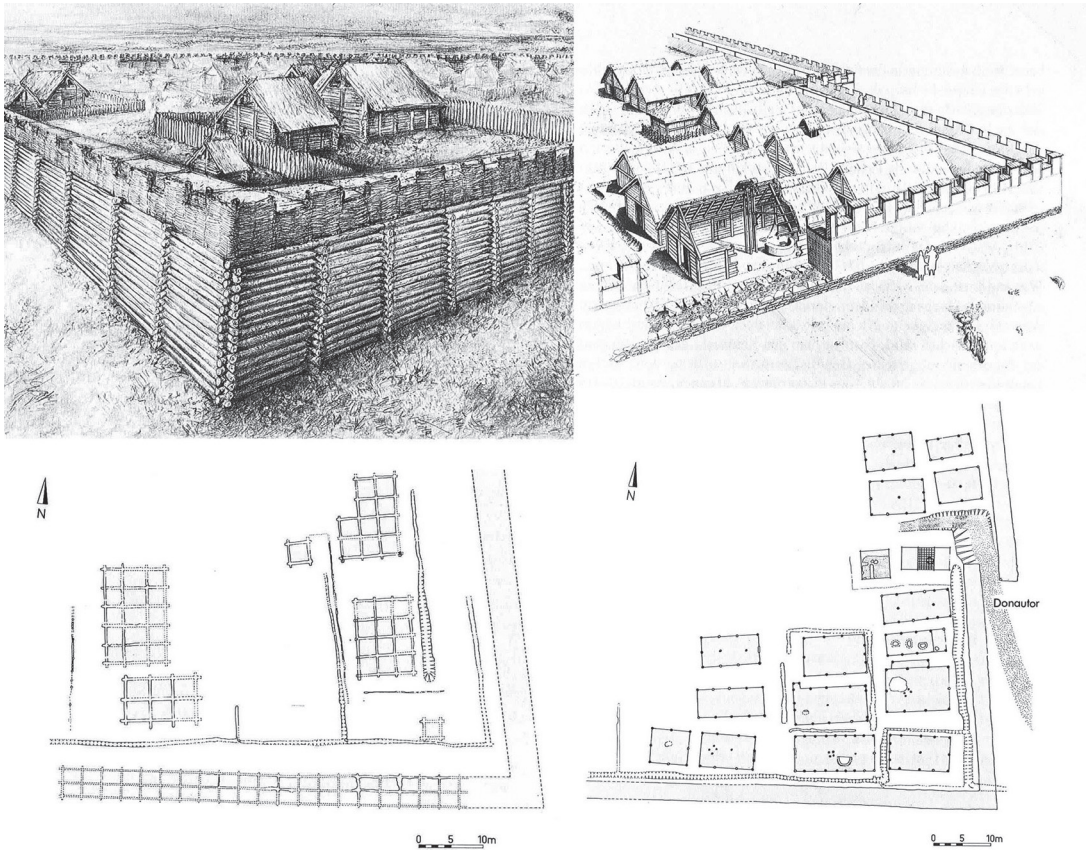
Figure 2. Reconstruction and plan of the south-east corner of the Heuneburg hilltop plateau during period IV (Ha D1). Left: phase before the mudbrick wall; right: period of the mudbrick wall (after Kimmig 1983).

hilltop plateau area that has been examined, although some of the structures can in all probability be interpreted as residences of the higher social classes (e.g. a house in the south-west with an area of 130 m² and high-status furnishings). In addition, there is clear evidence that residences of the social elite were also located outside the plateau; for example, a monumental building with several rooms covering an area of c. 320 m² was found beneath barrow 4 of the Gießübel-Talhau necropolis that was built over it. The structure and layout of the building recalls the Etruscan palaces of Murlo and Acquarossa (Verger 2008a).

The archaeological research conducted during the last two decades has in fact revealed that the Heuneburg was much more than just the actual hilltop plateau (Krausse and Fernández-Götz 2012; Kurz 2000, 2010). The hilltop plateau can be better described as the 'tip of the iceberg', for during Hallstatt D1 the entire complex of the Heuneburg consisted of three areas: the hilltop plateau (*acropolis*), lower town and outer settlement (*suburbium*). When in 2004 numerous finds of timber were made in the ditch beneath the northern promontory of the hilltop plateau, it was finally clear that the fortification of the lower town was not medieval, as scholars had long assumed, but in fact formed a significant contribution to the appearance of the Heuneburg in the late Hallstatt period. Dendrochronological analysis dated the timbers to the first quarter of the 6th century BC. They were part of a bridge that was apparently erected around 590 BC and remained in use for at least 10 years, being modified or repaired on several occasions (Bofinger and Goldner-Bofinger 2008).

A further highlight came with the excavation in 2005-2008 of a monumental stone gate from the Late Hallstatt period. It was constructed in the 6th century BC and, just like the wall on the plateau, it consisted of mudbricks set on a stone foundation (Kurz G. 2008). The gatehouse was quite impressive: it was more than 16 m deep and some 10 m wide. It is to be understood as a consciously conceived demonstration of power by the local elite (Fernández-Götz in press a).

The recent results from the outer settlement are also of particular importance for our understanding of the Heuneburg. The new excavations and surveys revealed that at least in the first half of the 6th century BC an enormous area of some 100 hectares to the north, west and southwest of the hilltop plateau was taken up by closely spaced farmsteads enclosed by rectangular palisades (Kurz 2010), thus representing a perfect example of low-density urbanism (Fletcher 2012). This huge outer settlement was divided into smaller quarters by an extensive system of banks and ditches. These in turn then enclosed various 'properties' of between 1 and 1.5 hectares that were surrounded by massively built timber fences. The parts of the outer settlement that were reasonably suitable for settlement will have provided sufficient space for some 50 such units (Figure 3). Here the majority of the various groups who had come together during a process of synoecism will have lived. The division of the outer settlement into separate quarters could also be evidence for the existence of different kinship groups, each inhabiting one of these quarters – perhaps similar to the situation in early Rome, where the Claudii clan were awarded their own quarter.

The new discoveries made in the last ten years have now radically changed our traditional image of the Heuneburg: instead of a small hillfort of only a few hectares, in the first half of the 6th century BC we are now looking at an enormous settlement of 100 hectares with an estimated population of at least 5,000 inhabitants (Krausse and Fernández-Götz 2012) (Figure 4). Moreover, during the Late Hallstatt period the Heuneburg constituted an important production and distribution centre, where not only pottery, but also other artisanal wares were manufactured, for example fibulae and textiles. The settlement is also significant from an archaeozoological point of view; recent stable isotope analysis shows that during the mudbrick wall period, with its highly concentrated population, a significant proportion of the animals were imported over a distance of 50-60 km. On the basis of the new research evidence, we can conclude that the Heuneburg constituted the central place of an important Early Iron Age polity (Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2013), comparable in power and influence to Etruscan city-states of the Archaic Period such as Tarquinia, Veii or Orvieto (Leighton 2013).

Figure 3. Division of the settlement areas in the outer settlement of the Heuneburg into smaller quarters, each containing several farmsteads (S. Kurz, Landesamt für Denkmalpflege Baden-Württemberg).

Given its early date, the Heuneburg has often been described as the 'first city north of the Alps' (Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2012). According to Smith (in press), there are two major ways to define a city: the demographic definition, based on criteria such as permanence, large population size or social heterogeneity; and the functional definition, where the settlement in question has to be the setting for people and institutions that impacted a larger realm (Figure 5). In this sense, the Heuneburg seems to conform to the notion of urbanism from either definition, at least for the period of the mudbrick wall (c. 600/590–540/530 BC). The huge extent of the settlement with its 100 hectares, the population size (very large for its time), significant status differences, and craft specialisation fit the demographic definition. As for the functional definition, the main urban functions seem to be craft production and exchange, which presumably served a larger hinterland; and political status, as suggested by the astonishing concentration of sumptuous burials around the settlement, and perhaps also by the monumental walls, towers and gates which could be signals of a political capital.

Be that as it may, it is important to realise that the extent and the significance of the Late Hallstatt Heuneburg by no means remained unchanged over the period of less than 200 years during which it was occupied. On the contrary, the various destruction levels, structural and restructuring phases are testimony to an eventful history and dynamic social change (Arnold 2010). A significant hiatus in the history of the settlement at the Heuneburg came after the middle of the 6th century BC, when a devastat-

Figure 4. Idealised reconstruction of the Heuneburg at the height of its prosperity in the first half of the 6th century BC (after Krausse *et al.* 2015).

ing fire occurred. The fact that after this traumatic event the mudbrick fortification was replaced with a more traditional timber and earth construction, that the layout of the interior of the hilltop plateau was radically altered and that the greater part of the outer settlement was abandoned suggest that violent conflict occurring around 540/530 BC was the most likely cause. Possibly this took the form of an attack by an external enemy or internal conflict between rival factions. In any case, the fact that the reconstruction was carried out on a completely different (or better: 'traditional old') pattern is suggestive of deep ideological chang-es. Confirmation for this hypothesis comes from the necropolis at Gießübel-Talhau, which was es-tablished about or just before 540/530 BC. This group of barrows was erected on the top of the remains of the outer settlement.
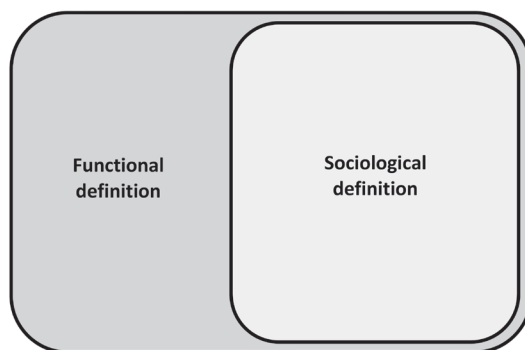
Figure 5. The relationship between the functional and sociological definitions of urbanism. All 'sociological' cities also fit the functional definition, whereas the converse is not true (after Smith in press).

The interior of the hilltop plateau also underwent fundamental change. Instead of the relatively uniform, row-like arrangement of the houses of the mudbrick phase, in period III buildings of different size and function appear, including imposing structures of enormous dimensions, so-called *Herren-häuser* (Gersbach 1996). Various suggestions have been made for their interpretation: royal or aristocratic residences, meeting halls for the councils of leading families, etc., although these interpretations are by no means mutually exclusive. At the same time, settlement in the lower town became more intensive. Here, during the last quarter of the 6th and the early 5th century BC, closely spaced structures were built in terraced areas that have produced large quantities of finds and appear also to have housed artisans and other sections of the population that were involved in supplying services.

As for the question of the end of the Heuneburg, the latest work has unfortunately not produced any conclusive new evidence. We must assume that settlement on the hilltop plateau and in the area of the lower town came to an end towards the middle of the 5th century BC. The reasons why a settlement that had once been so important apparently came to an relatively abrupt end are still shrouded in mystery. However, that surprises are still to be expected is shown by finds made during a watching brief at construction work below the Heuneburg in 2009-2010. Directly beneath the Heuneburg, a number of prehistoric finds were made that had been deposited there secondarily, including at least two Early La Tène bronze fibulae and a further Early to Middle La Tène example made of iron. These La Tène fibulae are indication of previously unrecognised activity in the direct vicinity of the Heuneburg (Krausse *et al.* 2013).

A ROYAL CENTRE IN BURGUNDY?
MONT LASSOIS AND ITS ENVIRONMENT

The site that is most frequently compared with the Heuneburg is Mont Lassois in the French region of Burgundy (Chaume and Mordant 2011; Chaume *et al.* 2012). The settlement lies on the upper reaches of the Seine near today's small town of Chatillon-sur-Seine. Mont Lassois became famous above all due to the discovery in 1953 of the nearby rich burial at Vix (Rolley 2003). Here a woman was buried about or soon after 500 BC, and the grave goods include a chariot, rich jewellery, and above all an enormous bronze *krater*. With a capacity of 1,100 litres, a height of 1.63 m and a total weight of more than 200 kg, the *krater* is the largest metal vessel known from the entire ancient world. This unique find is the work of one of the Greek colonies in *Magna Graecia* in South Italy and probably made its way to Burgundy as a diplomatic gift (Verger 2008b).

Various authors have suggested that the lady who was buried at Vix could have performed the role of a priestess during her lifetime; among other indications, the silver *phiale* for libations found in her grave is interpreted as evidence for this. Such a religious function would in no way have been incompatible with her parallel role as 'queen'. In fact, Milcent (2003) has even proposed the existence of a 'female dynasty' at the end of the Early Iron Age on the basis of the three 'princely' graves near Mont Lassois for women (Vix and the two at Sainte-Colombe-sur-Seine).

Near the tomb of the Lady of Vix, a ditched funerary complex 25 metres square was found in the 1990s. By the entrance the archaeologists found the limestone sculptures of a seated woman and a male warrior (Chaume and Reinhard 2007). Most probably the enclosure at Vix 'Les Herbues' was a *heroon* — in other words, a place of ancestral worship that was dedicated to the ruling family of Mont Lassois.

The settlement itself was until recently relatively poorly researched. Large-scale geomagnetic surveys that were carried out in 2003 changed this completely (Figure 6). The results revealed an overall settlement layout that was adapted to the topography of the plateau. The main axis ran north-south and there were complex arrangements of timber buildings on both sides that were typically enclosed by

Figure 6. Mont Lassois: Geomagnetic plan of the plateau of Saint-Marcel, showing the well-organised structure of the settlement (after Chaume and Mordant 2011).

ditches, with settlement pits, sunken houses, as well as plans of buildings of differing size and form. All told the picture that we have of the structure of the settlement suggests that it was planned, organised and complex (Chaume and Mordant 2011; Chaume *et al.* 2012).

However, the most exciting discoveries were a range of large apsidal structures that were identified in recent years and are a real sensation. One of them has already been fully excavated (Chaume and Mordant 2011; Mötsch 2010). The building measures 33 x 20 m with a semicircular apse forming one end (Figure 7). Both the size of the structure, as well as its unusual architecture and elaborate decoration with wall paintings suggest that it enjoyed a highly prestigious significance. This is emphasised by the discovery of wine amphorae from Massalia, imported Attic ceramics, etc. Probably it was a place for public meetings and feasts, perhaps a combination of political decision making and ritual activities.

## AT THE DAWN OF HISTORY: BOURGES/*AVARICUM*

Further to the west of Mont Lassois lies a site that in the 5th century BC apparently surpassed all other centres of power north of the Alps: Bourges in the Berry region of France (Augier *et al.* 2007, 2012; Milcent 2007). Until a few years ago, the site of the settlement was best known for the Late La Tène *oppidum* that is mentioned in the written sources. This was indeed the site of the mighty town of *Avaricum*, the capital of the tribe of the Bituriges and which Caesar besieged and captured. It is in the context of this event that we have the famous description of the fortification in the form of a *murus gallicus* (Caesar, *De Bello Gallico* VII, 23), although it has hardly been possible to find archaeological traces of the Late La Tène settlement.

The fact that Bourges has been continuously settled until the present day means that we have only a patchy image of the internal structure of the Iron Age settlement, and then above all of peripheral areas. In spite of this restriction, work carried out in recent years has produced important information on the Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène periods (Augier *et al.* 2007, 2012; Milcent 2007, 2014;
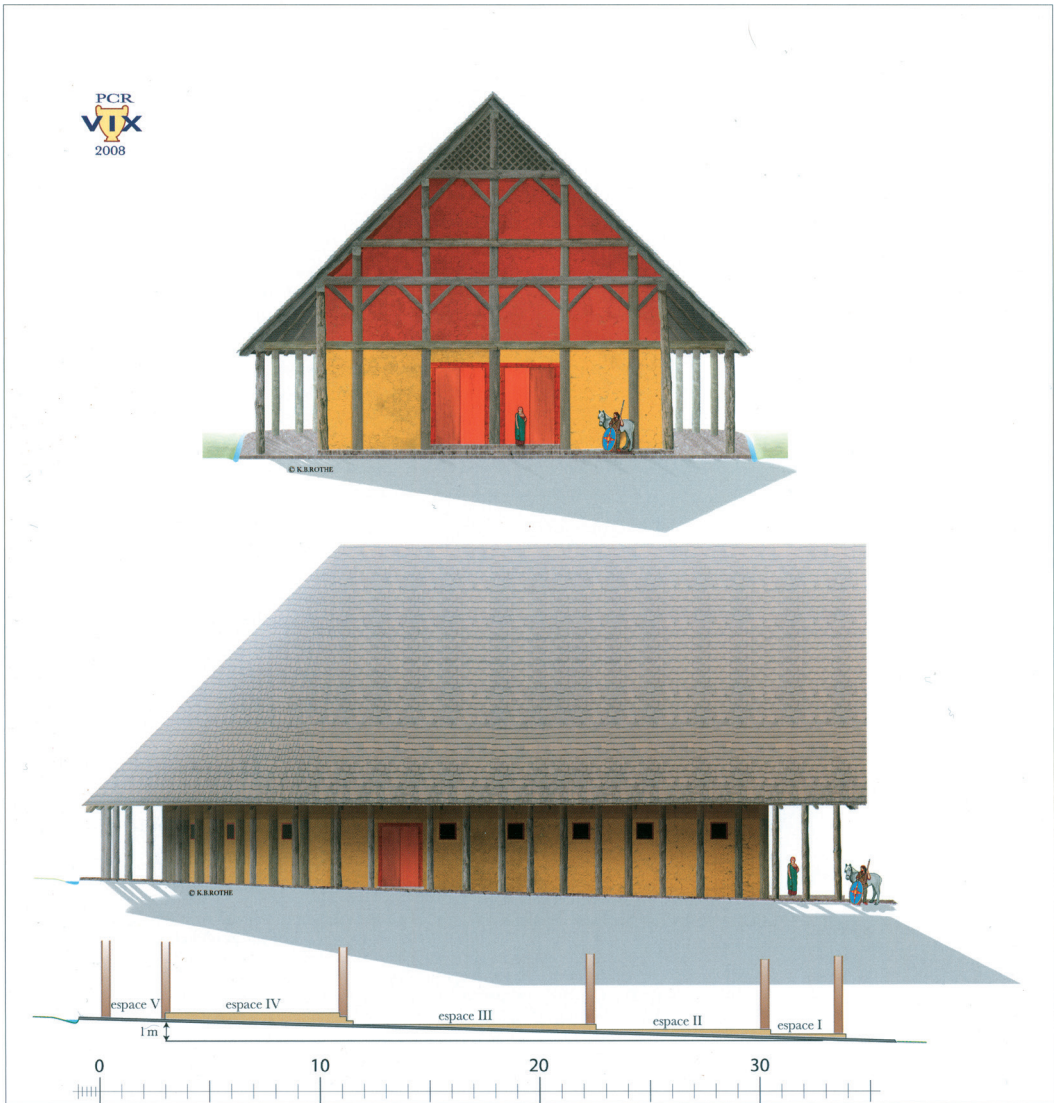
Figure 7. Idealised reconstruction of the large apsidal building on Mont Lassois (after Chaume *et al.* 2012).

Ralston 2010). In the 5th century BC an enormous settlement with several foci stretched around the promontory on which the cathedral today stands. The entire settlement complex coved several hundred hectares, although the density of settlement in some areas was relatively low (Figure 8). Just as with other *Fürstensize*, Bourges was a combination of rich burials, an acropolis and suburbs characterised by artisanal activities. Settlement on the promontory began at the beginning of the 6th century BC, but Bourges reached its zenith in the third quarter of the 5th century BC, in other words at the same time as the Heuneburg and Mont Lassois were abandoned.
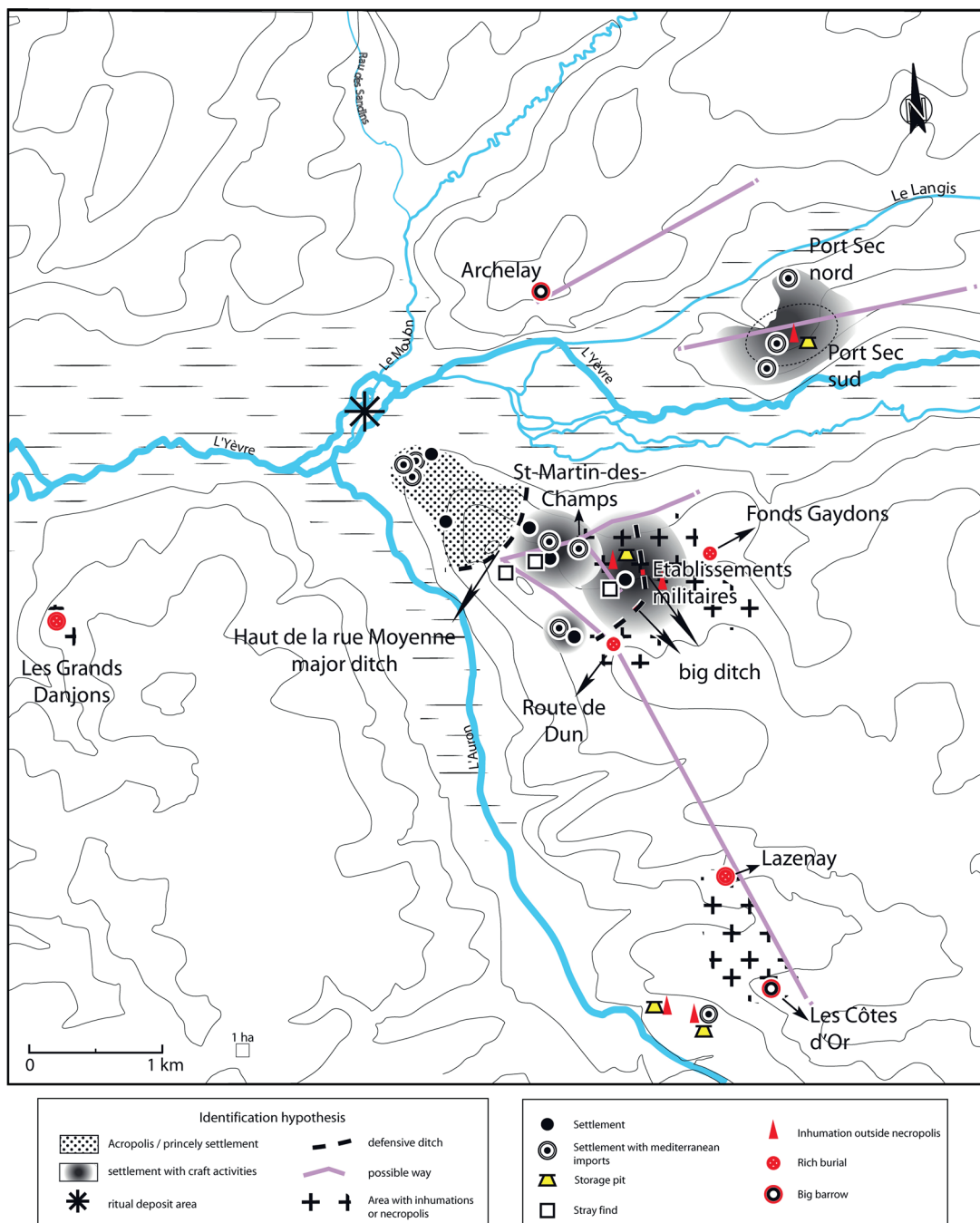
Figure 8. The agglomeration of Bourges/*Avaricum* during the Hallstatt D3-La Tène A1 period (ca. 510-425 BC) (after Milcent 2014).

P.-Y. Milcent has identified this mighty Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène settlement with the capital of the legendary kingdom of Ambigatus (Milcent 2007). According to Livy (V, 34), under Ambigatus the Bituriges were the most powerful tribe in Gaul, but due to the pressure of overpopulation they sent large groups of people to Italy and the Balkans. Since this event is generally dated around 400 BC, and about this time settlement at Bourges more or less ends, it is tempting to link the two events. In other words, the end of this central place could have been the result of the emigration of large sections of the population to Italy in the course of the famous 'Celtic' migrations. Although this is no more than a hypothesis, it nevertheless shows what sort of scale we are dealing with at sites such as Bourges. Here we are at the threshold of Prehistory to early History, when the first towns north of the Alps were established and archaic states came into being around centres such as the Heuneburg or Bourges (Figure 9).
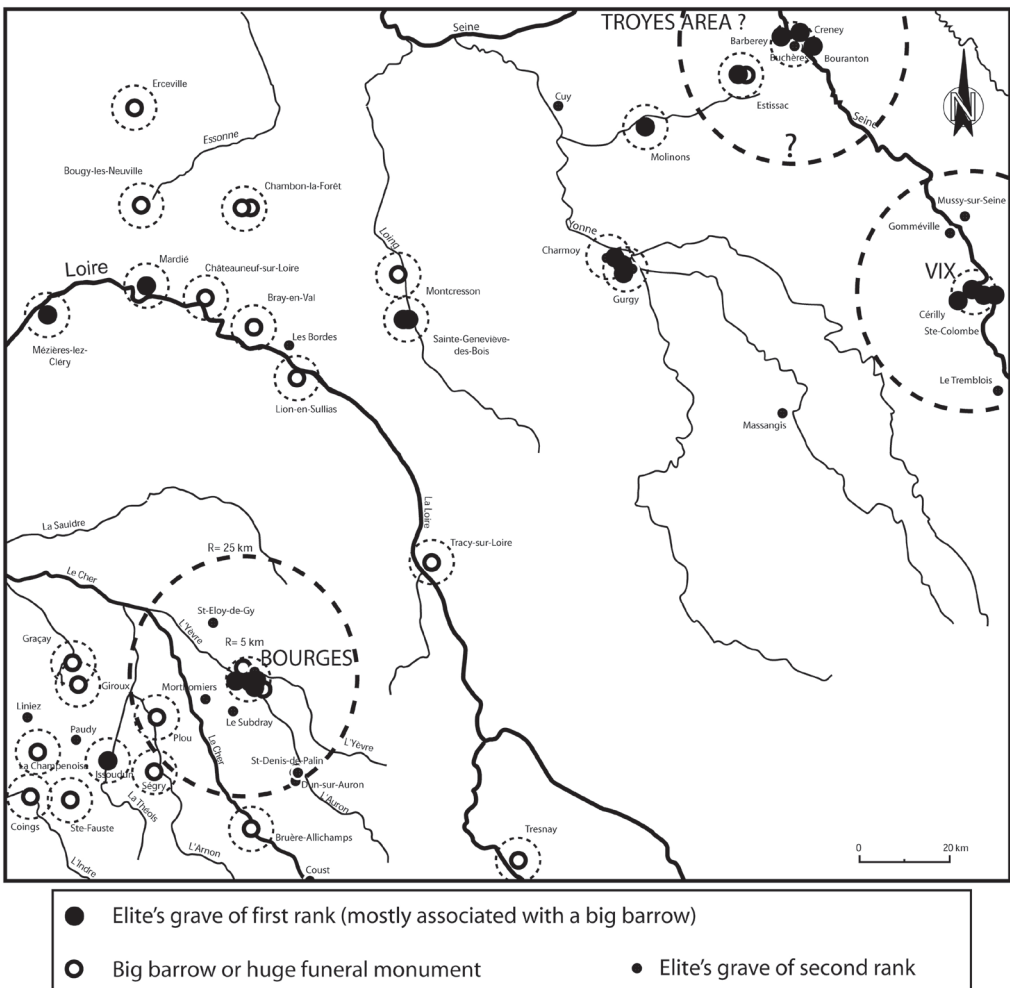
Figure 9. Elite burials and possible territories in Central-Eastern Gaul at the end of the Early Iron Age (after Milcent 2014).

CULTURAL CHANGE AND SOCIAL TYPOLOGIES

Even if the genesis of the *Fürstensitze* cannot be analysed completely independently of the simultaneous processes of urbanisation in the Mediterranean (Garcia 2013; Osborne and Cunliffe 2005), it will have been above all indigenous factors that were responsible for the foundation of these early centres of power north of the Alps. Rich burials of the phase Hallstatt C, such as Gomadingen on the Swabian Alb or the sumptuous grave from Frankfurt-Oberad, bear witness to the fact that the increase in social hierarchisation and the development of powerful local elites had begun several decades before the arrival of the Greek colonists in the South of France and the foundation of *Massalia* (Marseille) around 600 BC, and so were primarily of an indigenous nature. Trade with the Mediterranean was not the main motor of cultural change, but rather a consequence of demographic growth and increasing internal inequalities. Power and status would have depended mainly on land ownership and the control of local production (Gosden 1985). In the case of the Heuneburg, and leaving aside the mudbrick wall, evidence for Mediterranean contact and influence is minimal until the restructuring that took place after the major fire of around 540 BC (Kimmig 2000) (Figure 10).

Taking a broader look, the results of the work carried out in recent years serve to indicate that the political and demographic dimensions of Central European societies in the 6th and 5th centuries BC have to date been under- rather than overestimated (Krausse 2008a, 2010). There is a great deal of evidence that during the course of the Hallstatt and Early La Tène periods numerous local and regional groups were integrated into larger collectives (Fernández-Götz 2014a; Krausse 2006). With regard to the 'social typologies' that have been defined by authors such as Johnson and Earle (2000), the communities which were established around centres of power such as the Heuneburg, Hohenasperg, Mont Lassois or Bourges can best be placed at the transition from complex chiefdoms to early states, and in a few concrete cases the latter term is in fact particularly apposite (Fernández-Götz and Krausse 2013; Ralston 2010) (Figure 11). However, we should be aware that many key questions remain open. As J. Collis (1995: 77) has well expressed: "how do we envisage the Hallstatt D societies of south-

Figure 10. Fragments of Greek pottery from the Heuneburg (Landesmuseum Württemberg).

M.H. Fried 1967	E.R. Service 1962	J.-W. Lapierre 1977	A.W. Johnson & T. Earle 2000	A. Testart 2005
Egalitarian societies	Band	Regulation without intermediary	Family group - Forager	Societies without riches
		Non-specialist intermediary	Family group - Producer	
	Tribe	Specialised authority	Local Group Acephalous Village-Level	Societies with ostentatious riches
		Fractionated political authority (polycephalous)	Local Group - Acephalous Clan-Level	Semi-state societies with lineage organisation
Rank societies		Specialised and concentrated authority	Big Man Collectivity	Semi-state societies with primitive democracy
	Chiefdom	Specialised and hierarchical authority	Regional polity - Simple chiefdom	Semi-state societies with military retinues
Stratified societies		Specialised authority with public force	Regional polity - Complex chiefdom	Despotic and royal societies
	State	with administration and clientship networks	Regional polity - Archaic state	Royal state societies
States		with hierarchical administration	Regional polity - Agrarian state	Class-state societies

Figure 11. Schematic table depicting the 'social typologies' proposed by neo-evolutionary Anthropology and some of the main alternative classifications (after Brun and Ruby 2008, modified).

western Germany? Are the Hohenasperg and Heuneburg part of the same political entity, centers competing with one another within a single political entity, or are they centers of independent political entities, complex chiefdoms in competition with one another?".

Be that as it may, the settlements described above would have constituted the focal points of different entities that might have maintained relations of the type proposed in the peer polity interaction model, as also suggested by their spatial distribution. Within just a few decades these power centres, with areas of settlement of several dozen or even a hundred hectares, and populations as high as several thousands, could attain enormous dimensions (Krausse *et al.* 2012). The 100 hectares of the Heuneburg during the mudbrick phase, or the several hundred hectares at Bourges are impressive examples of the process. Monumental fortifications, profane, sacred and funerary architecture, artisanal quarters and

Mediterranean imports all bear testimony to the manifold functions of such sites. Their fortificational and symbol-laden significance is manifested in the imposing defences with banks, ditches, walls and gates found, for example, at the Heuneburg and Mont Lassois. Moreover, both the monumental sanctuary discovered at Závist and a number of structures related to ancestor worship such as the *heroon* and the 350 m long processional way at the Glauberg, or the enclosure of Vix 'Les Herbues' at Mont Lassois, are evidence for religious and cult aspects. Finally, artisanal and technical, economic and mercantile functions are reflected in the presence of workshops for specialised craftsmen or even entire quarters for them, as at Bourges, as well as in imported goods.

Furthermore, the identification of cemeteries with elite burials in the environs of the central places (e.g. Hohmichele, Gießübel-Talhau, Hochdorf, Grafenbühl, Kleinaspergle, Sainte-Colombe or Vix) suggests that they enjoyed political and administrative functions (Krausse 2006). In particular, the opulent burials for children, such as those found at the Bettelbühl necropolis at the Heuneburg or at Bourges, indicate the establishment of hereditary principles based on social rank and status at this time. The composition and quality of the burial inventories of at least the wealthiest Late Hallstatt and Early La Tène graves allows them to be interpreted as the burials of kings, or in many cases probably of 'sub-kings'. In some cases, for example at Hochdorf or the Glauberg, we can even propose the thesis that there was a sacred kingship since the deceased are presented not only in the execution of their political functions, but also as holders of religious office (Fernández-Götz and Krausse in press b).

CONCLUSIONS
## A MAJOR BREAK: THE END OF THE *FÜRSTENSITZE*

After this first wave of centralisation and urbanisation processes that took place between the 7th and the 5th centuries BC, there followed a phase of decentralisation in the region immediately to the north of the Alps (Fernández-Götz 2014a; Krausse 2008b). This caesura occurred at different times in different regions, and is interpreted as a classic example of the non-linear character of History. Furthermore, it must be emphasised that throughout the whole of the Iron Age, there were not only strongly hierarchical societies, but also other communities, often nearby, in which the structures of power were less clearly defined and which present evidence for a more heterarchical and decentralised landscape (Hill 2011). In other words, there was no such thing as an uniform Iron Age society, nor a continual evolutionary development from simpler to more complex forms of organisation.

The reasons for such an apparently abrupt end of settlement at sites which had been so important remain little understood. Nevertheless, if we look at the development of these central places between Burgundy and Württemberg as a whole, we can at least recognise a pattern. The Heuneburg was abandoned around the middle of the 5th century BC, more or less contemporaneously with comparable power centres such as Mont Lassois in Burgundy. At the same time, a number of central sites became more significant in an area further north — for example, the Hohenasperg, Bad Dürkheim or Glauberg. These centres of power were somewhat younger and were able to maintain their significance somewhat longer, in other words until the end of the 5th century BC. But they too were abandoned no later than the early 4th century BC.

The causes of these structural displacements and changes in the landscape of power are still unclear. Yet, it can be assumed that the changes did not always take place peacefully (Fernández-Götz in press b). For example, at Mont Lassois the heads of the two human statues located at the entrance to the sanctuary of Vix 'Les Herbues' were severed, apparently towards the end of the Hallstatt period. A broadly similar situation can also be seen at the Glauberg, where three of the four anthropomorphic stone sculptures were intentionally destroyed. Probably at the end of Period 1 the fate of the Heuneburg was sealed by a catastrophic fire that almost completely destroyed the fortification and the buildings

within the acropolis. The fact that the destruction level was relatively full of finds militates against the idea that the abandonment of the site was planned. It would seem that soon after 400 BC nearly all of the early centres of power had met their end. It is likely that this change was connected with the social processes that were involved in the migration of 'Celtic' groups to Italy and as far as the Balkans, as mentioned in historical sources.

The factors responsible for the decline of the *Fürstensitze* most likely operated at different levels; therefore, monocausal explanations are insufficient. Nevertheless, there are indications that one of the catalysts was climate change: analysis of cores from the Greenland icecap indicate that as early as the first half of the 5th BC century temperatures dropped in the entire northern hemisphere, followed by a rapid climatic decline around 400 BC (Sirocko 2009). At the macroperspective level, the main climatic phases of the 1st millennium BC do indeed correspond with the most important stages of the processes of centralisation and decentralisation that took place north of the Alps (Figure 12). The processes that led to the establishment of the Late Hallstatt *Fürstensitze* or the Late La Tène *oppida* coincide with climatically favourable phases, while the 'Celtic' migrations of the 4th century BC took place during a colder phase (Fernández-Götz 2014a: Chapter 5). However, if we look at the situation
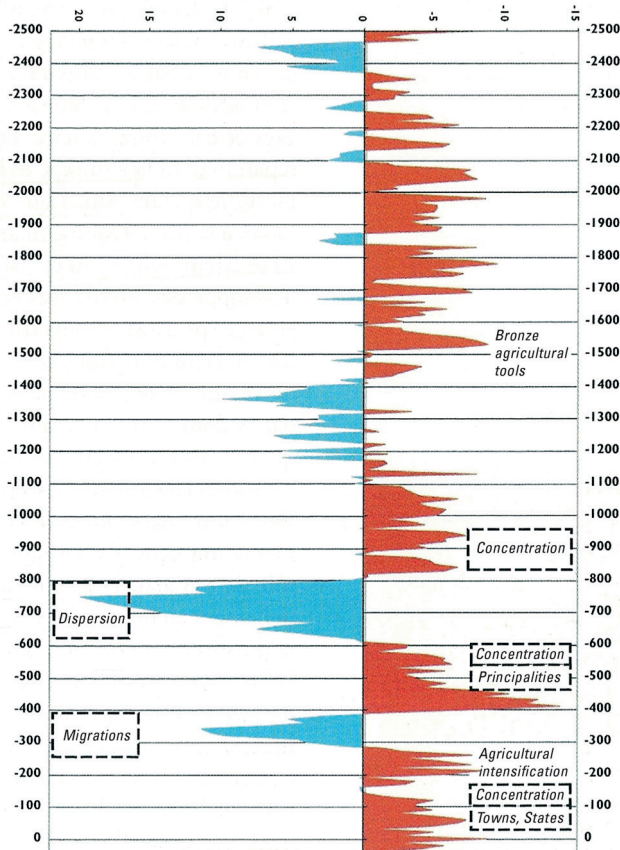
Figure 12. Evolution of solar activity between ca. 2500 BC and the beginning of the Common Era, with cold periods marked in blue and warmer periods in red (after Brun and Ruby 2008).

in detail, then numerous nuances and exceptions must be taken into account. For example, while the decline in population in the Champagne region at the beginning of the 4th century BC appears to coincide fairly closely with climate changes, which probably prompted a considerable part of the population to emigrate, the environmental indicators do not explain so clearly why some *Fürstensitze* such as Heuneburg or Mont Lassois were abandoned around the middle of the 5th century BC, while others such as Breisacher Münsterberg or Hohenasperg continued to function during the second half of the same century.

An explanatory model that should be considered, and is perhaps be complementary to the climate change model, concerns the role of migration as a mechanism for regulating power relationships (Demoule 2006). The emigration of part of the population could indeed have been a means of reducing social inequalities. As a whole series of historical and ethnological studies demonstrate, during the course of history numerous societies have employed various strategies in order to counter the development of state organisations (see, for example, Clastres 1989). The separation of part of the group is a mechanism that is often used in this process, and in the case of the Early Iron Age societies of temperate Europe it could also have served as a reaction to the increasing social inequalities of the 6th and 5th centuries (Fernández-Götz 2014a).

It was not until the 2nd century BC that large urban central places once again appeared north of the Alps, the Late Iron Age *oppida* (Fernández-Götz 2014c; Fichtl 2012). These later sites present a much wider geographical distribution and in many cases also had a larger surface area than the Late Hallstatt/Early La Tène *Fürstensitze*. However, the differences between the two forms of settlement seem to be less marked than traditionally thought. What is more, there are a considerable number of *oppida* that reoccupied sites already fortified at earlier stages of the Iron Age, as in the case of places like Závist, Dünsberg or Bourges. This makes it necessary to reconsider or at least qualify the traditional explanations about the genesis of these sites, placing it into a *longue durée* perspective.

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