

SHAPING REGIONALITY IN SOCIOECONOMIC SYSTEMS

LATE HELLENISTIC – LATE ROMAN CERAMIC
PRODUCTION, CIRCULATION, AND CONSUMPTION
IN BOEOTIA, CENTRAL GREECE (c. 150 BC–AD 700)

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Cover illustration: Photograph of Roman pottery encountered during a visit of the acropolis of Chorsiai in southwestern Boeotia with the Corinthian Gulf in the background.

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Introduction

Backpackers see many places in the world that their ancestors may never have heard of. The production of goods and services is increasingly moved to areas in which wages are lower and/or which have preferable business climates. Individual areas on the globe increasingly specialise in the production of certain goods or the diffusion of information, capital, persons, and goods within larger networks. Satellite offices of multinational corporations are established around the globe. The presence of bananas from Columbia in European supermarkets is the norm and not the exception. Hourly weather forecasts for almost any place on earth are a few clicks away. Roughly one-fourth of the world population (over two billion persons) has Chinese, Spanish, Hindustani or English as his/her mother tongue and roughly equal numbers are able to understand others in one of these languages. Some brands of soft drink, fast food, smartphone, etc. are consumed all over the world.

It goes without saying that we are living on a planet that is rapidly globalising. Individuals, communities, and other 'actors' on our planet become more interconnected and interdependent, as innovations seem to lead to an almost ever-increasing mobility of economic actors, information, capital, goods, and services. These globalising processes were, and in some way still are, expected to result in some kind of convergence in inequality across the globe: 'World trade, migration, and flows of capital should all work to take resources and consumption goods from where they are cheap to where they are dear. As they travel with increasing speed and increasing volume as transportation and communication costs fall, these commodity and factor-of-production flows should erode the differences in productivity and living standards between continents and between national economies'.¹ Yet, especially in recent decades, decreasing transaction costs and the increasing diffusion of institutions, technology, knowledge, and skills across borders are acknowledged to not lead to the degrees of convergence that were often expected. Among other things, significant diversity in productivity, the ways in which economies are organised, and income/wealth inequality keep to exist, while they are more and more seen as by-products of globalisation (if not active processes that drive it), rather than its opposite.² This is not to argue that some 'developing' countries can, will, or did not become 'developed', that certain possibilities that are offered by this connectivity

are not taken, or that standards of living do not in some way increase on the globe. Yet, in many ways processes of exploitation and extraction keep in place, hampering the levelling of 'wealth' *between* nations and also *within* them.³ In development economics, the factors and processes that lead to such diversity in economic performance and development are hotly contested and the debate mostly centres on the roles of geography, institutions, and history.

Firstly, there are proponents of the major role of geography, climate, and location on such differentiation. Their key argument is that 'geography is not necessarily destiny, but more than good policy is needed to foster economic growth'.⁴ This statement is based on the observations that 'physical geography is highly differentiated and that these differences have a large effect on economic development', including the level of productivity, transport costs, as well as the choice for one economic policy or the other.⁵ Secondly, there are proponents of the major influence of institutions on such differentiation. Their key argument is that '[endogenous] economic institutions in society such as the structure of property rights and the presence and perfection of markets' are of primary importance to economic outcomes,⁶ since institutions influence the structure of economic incentives, help to allocate resources, and determine who gets profits, revenues, and residual rights of control. In other words, 'societies with economic institutions that facilitate and encourage factor accumulation, innovation and the efficient allocation of resources will prosper'.⁷ Thirdly, there are proponents of the influence of history on economic development and differentiation: 'small historical accidents can cause one country to become part of the industrial core while another becomes part of the primary-producing periphery', while 'some more or less arbitrary location becomes the site of a megacity containing ten million or more people' and another settlement on a comparable location merely reaches village level.⁸ Although these poles in the debate might sound contradictory, proponents of all these 'sides' in some way recognise that geographies, institutions, and

¹ Dowrick and DeLong 2003: 194.

² E.g. Soja 1985: 178–179; Pritchett 1997.

³ Cf. Piketty 2014, Alvaredo *et al.* 2018.

⁴ Gallup *et al.* 1999: 204. See also Sachs 2003.

⁵ Gallup *et al.* 1999: 184.

⁶ Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 389. See also Acemoglu and Robinson 2012 and specifically Mitton 2016 for positive relations between institutions and development in regions within countries that have greater autonomy.

⁷ Acemoglu *et al.* 2005: 389.

⁸ Krugman 1999: 143.

histories are likely to be *all* of some influence, inter-related, and will not uncommonly amplify each other in cases of economic development. Jeffrey Sachs (who is a leading proponent of the ‘geography hypothesis’), for instance, stresses that ‘good institutions certainly matter, and bad institutions can sound the death knell of development even in favourable environments’.⁹ Although it should be clear that reality will be far more complex than can be explained on the basis of a single of these lines of thought,¹⁰ the liveliness of such debates illustrate that even (or perhaps especially) in the current globalising world diversity in economic practice and development is much observed.

A second somewhat related debate centres on cultural changes that accompany this increasing interconnectivity and interconnectedness. Especially ‘critics’ of globalisation express worries that cultural diversity will be ‘conquered’ in the modern world. Indeed, at least the understanding of one of the ‘global languages’ seems to become the norm, while iPhones, Coca Colas, and products ‘made in China’ circulate *en masse* even to the most remote corners of the globe. A certain decrease in the diversity of goods in production, circulation, and consumption on our planet can thus be observed and one might argue that an increasing homogenisation of consumption goods, and by extension a reduction in cultural diversity, takes place. This adaptation of such material culture and technologies, as well as diffusion of information and large-scale and long-distance migration, changes societies and individuals within them.¹¹ It should, however, be stressed that cultural, social, and economic diversity should, and are, hereby not necessarily be drowned out. The standardised soft drinks of the same brand, for example, have slightly different recipes from country to country to cater to the taste preferences of its inhabitants through micro-marketing. By extension and more essentially, the *same* material culture might be acquired differently, used differently, thereby be ascribed different meanings, and/or consumed to give different (conscious or unconscious) signals in different spatial and temporal contexts.¹² Increases in connectivity seem to lead to an increasing global awareness and make one aware of one’s own comparative position, situation, and of how varied and dynamic the world really is. This might foster a greater ‘sense of place’ and local, regional, and supra-regional diversity, while one might argue that ‘the more people who interact, the greater the need to be [and one should add, act] different’.¹³ Although

globalising processes in many ways thus change the world, economic, as well as socio-cultural, heterogeneity is thereby not completely drowned out and it can even be questioned if a totally connected and globalised world (whatever that might look like) will do so.¹⁴

Research context

This study aims to highlight and explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in Boeotia (Central Greece) from c. 150 BC to AD 700. The start of this introduction might therefore have raised some eyebrows and its relevance may have been questioned. This is especially true since the nature of ‘the’ ancient economy has been and to some extent still is framed in terms of the famous modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist debate. In short, this debate centred on the question if the ancient economy was only *quantitatively* different (making current economic models and methodologies applicable to the ancient world) or also that *qualitatively* different from the modern capitalistic market economy that certain principles, which are seen by most ‘mainstream’ economists as universal (such as the principle of ‘supply and demand’ and the presence of the self-interested, rational, utility-maximising *Homo oeconomicus*), are inapplicable.¹⁵ It should be emphasised that the previous characterisation of the modern world is inevitably incomplete and not meant to answer the question whether ‘globalisation is good or bad’. Nor should this paragraph be interpreted to argue that this picture can be projected to the ancient world: the degrees of connectivity and interdependency that are currently reached were unequalled in the past, as the friction of long-distance movement and mobility, let alone communication and flows of information between individuals, was much larger. Furthermore, the detailed data on the basis of which modern-day economists discuss the causes and effects of increases in connectivity and interdependence (such as detailed data on income, wealth, or the quality of life on the globe and across echelons of society) are unavailable for the ancient world, while the reliability of certain proxies and models that are used to discuss such aspects is continuously up for debate. All this is, however, not to say that some phenomena might not be observed in both the past and present, that similar questions cannot be raised, and even that certain processes cannot be explained or at least explored along similar lines of thought.¹⁶ In the same way that the current situation in the world should not be projected into the past, it is obvious that the past can also not be projected on the present. Yet, among other things, looking into the past provides us a ‘long term’ perspective on how societies and economies changed, how communities handled things and interacted differently with their near and more distant surroundings, and how communities were

⁹ Sachs 2003: 39.

¹⁰ It should be stressed that other positions in the debate, such as the role of culture (differences in beliefs, cultural attitudes, and values) on economic development can also be identified, although I agree with Acemoglu and Robinson that these factors are likely to be seen as ‘a consequence of different institutions and institutional histories’ (2012: 63).

¹¹ Appadurai 1996.

¹² E.g. Appadurai 1988. See Gosden and Marshall 1999 and Lucas 2012 for such statements in the archaeological discourse.

¹³ Bergendorff 2009: 53. See Whitmarsh 2010: 10; Woolf 2010: 191 for comparable statements in Mediterranean Archaeology.

¹⁴ E.g. Lefebvre 1991: 86–88.

¹⁵ See Chapter 1.

¹⁶ See the following sub-sections in this introduction for further discussion in terms of these observations.

at the same time part of larger networks, but daily life might be surprisingly 'local'. Above all, by looking to the past we can identify the mid- and long term effects and consequences of certain causes and human actions, which is something that we can only try to predict for the modern day.

Economies in Hellenistic–Late Roman Greece and the Mediterranean: heterogeneity in space and time

The ever-expanding body of data on the ancient world and comparative and diachronic analyses on a more local or regional scale increasingly provide evidence for socioeconomic diversity and change. In Daniel Stewart's words on Roman Greece: 'there is no single narrative; dissonance is not the result of a lack of harmony within one song, but rather due to the competing songs from the past all sounding at once'.¹⁷ This should neither be taken to imply that no narrative(s) can be written nor that such 'competing songs' were not composed on the basis of the same chromatic scale. Yet, Stewart's phrasing aptly catches the complexity at hand while trying to compare the observed developments and changes in one area (or even site) with other areas (or other sites). It should be stressed that high degrees of complexity, diversity, and change are not exclusive features of the Roman period or Roman Greece. This is particularly true since archaeological and historical records are biased in many ways, which somewhat complicates detailed diachronic comparisons and results in differences in the quantity and quality of the data for individual periods. Yet, on the face of it, at least in Greece, becoming part of the Roman Empire seems to have triggered or reinforced a certain diversification of paths, of which some were already taken in the episodic Hellenistic period or even before.

As a way to illustrate this socioeconomic diversity and change, we might have a look at population dynamics, which are especially in recent decades commonly seen as a proxy for economic growth or 'performance'.¹⁸ Although demographic trends can most of the times be approximated at best, proxy data appear to sketch an image that is characterised by diversity: A handful of sites and areas in Greece seem to reach certain peaks in population levels, or at least the largest site-numbers and/or 'cumulatively occupied surfaces', during the Early Roman Imperial period. Most other areas, however, only seem to experience such high levels centuries later during Late Roman times, when some areas even seem to approach Classical period population levels.¹⁹ In terms of settlement patterning and hierarchies, certain impacts of becoming part of the Roman Empire can be observed. Colonies were, for instance, established at sites such as Corinth, Patras, and the newly founded Nicopolis. The establishment of these colonies was accompanied by substantial population movements,

likely overall demographic decline, and changes in divisions of property in the area.²⁰ Yet, the number of such colonies in Greece is meagre and some areas did not see the presence of a single colony throughout history, making the widespread influence of such processes in all corners of Greek landscapes questionable. Alongside the establishment of colonies, a relatively select range of Roman cities were granted a free and immune status (*civitas libera et immunis*), a free status (*civitas libera*), or were seen as allies (*civitas foederata*).²¹ It should be emphasised that such socio-political as well as economic privileges should be seen in perspective, since also cities that were granted a 'free and immune' status were obviously expected to contribute when certain financial or other demands were raised from the side of Rome. Yet, especially larger cities and colonies with certain privileges arguably seem to have become 'the focus of Roman administration', are furthermore argued to have become also the focus of 'Roman wealth', and are at the same time often observed to have gained 'a substantial increase in their cultivated lands' at the cost of others.²² Diversity in socioeconomic status is not only observed between, but also *within* communities. For instance, non-Roman Italian peoples that were not belonging to the 'top aristocratic Roman elite', but which certainly held some prominence within local communities in Greece, could evidently be granted Roman citizenship. Up till AD 212, when Caracalla issued his *Constitutio Antoniniana*, however, relatively small numbers of 'Greeks' were granted Roman citizenship. Such an advantageous status seems to have been either acquired by serving in the army or was reserved for influential individuals or families that had a certain history of service to the Roman state.²³ A last indication that will be shortly highlighted here is that also the historical sources illustrate certain degrees of socioeconomic variety *and* change. It should obviously be emphasised that such sources should, especially in the case of Roman Greece, be read with care, since the presence of rhetorical, ideological, and/or politically motivated speech is not uncommon. Although the writings of Strabo are in some way illustrative in this respect, the images sketched by such sources nonetheless seem to hint at varying or changing fortunes of individual cities. He, for instance, narrates on Boeotia that 'Thebes now does not have the character of a noteworthy village' (which contrasts the Thebans of his day with the Thebans that made history in the past), while he continues that this decline 'is the same with other cities, except Tanagra and Thespieae, which have continued quite well, compared with the others'.²⁴

²⁰ E.g. Jones 1940: 65; Alcock 1989: 99; Romano 2003; Rousset 2008: 315. See Karambinis 2018 for the most recent demographic discussion.

²¹ Alcock 1993: 22–23.

²² Rizakis 2014: 241–243.

²³ E.g. Jones 1963: 4–5; Garnsey 2004.

²⁴ Strabo, *Geography*, 9.2.5. See Schachter 1990 for a critical reading of the passage on Thebes, as this city is in the Early Roman Imperial period, for instance, observed to have been 'prosperous enough to undertake major re-construction at the [sanctuary of the] Kabirion, and important enough to have its own local mint' (p. 105).

¹⁷ Stewart 2014: 120. See also Rousset 2008: 325–326.

¹⁸ Cf. Jongman 2009; Ober 2015.

¹⁹ Bintliff 1997a: 22; Bintliff 2008.

While there are enough reasons to critically approach our sources of information, there thus appear to be a range of indications that suggest certain degrees of (socioeconomic, political, etc.) diversity and change in the archaeological and historical record for Roman Greece. Pottery studies prove to complement to this picture and, among other things, shed interesting lights on locally-anchored and socially-embedded economies, socioeconomic networks, and agency by extension.²⁵ The previously listed examples and the Boeotian cases that will be explored in detail in this book should/will suffice to illustrate that socioeconomic practice and development was not necessarily different in each valley and not necessarily different from one day to the next, but at least that we should allow for such a possibility. Such a room for variety and change is, however, not always provided in economically-oriented studies on the ancient world. For instance, one of Moses Finley's main concerns in his landmark study *The ancient economy* was to justify his speaking about *the* ancient economy and prove his focus 'on the dominant types, the characteristic modes of behaviour'.²⁶ It should be stressed that Finley's work is, just like any study, a product of a certain time. Yet, as rightly put by John Davies, such 'simplistic' views of ancient economies are increasingly found to be less appropriate in the current academic climate and on the basis of the current data on the ancient world.²⁷ Illustrative for such changing perspectives is the increasing preference in more recent literature for speaking about ancient *economies*, rather than *the* ancient economy.²⁸ This change in perspective at least partly reflects broader theoretical developments in which the influence of local geographies, institutions, and histories on socioeconomic practice and development in the modern and ancient world is aimed to be better understood. This book extends this line of thought and aims to highlight and explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in space and time to get a more solid and nuanced understanding of the nature and workings of local economies.

Research questions

This leaves us to the main research questions of this study:

- How did local and regional economies look, work from within, and link into larger socioeconomic networks and systems?
- How were differences in the workings and development of economies and communities shaped in space and time?

²⁵ See Chapter 5 for a discussion of the analytical potential of ceramic explorations in this respect.

²⁶ Finley 1985 [1973]: 29 (quote) and 34.

²⁷ Davies 2005: 132.

²⁸ E.g. Reger 1994; Feinman 2008; Archibald *et al.* 2011; Lund 2015; Lavan 2015.

Approaching local economies and diversity: complex economic systems

These two main research questions can be addressed in a range of ways and on the basis of a range of concepts, theories, methodologies, as well as different kinds of data. Similarly, these questions might be raised for the current and the ancient world. As a result, catch phrases that are not uncommonly encountered in debates on the nature and functioning of the modern world, such as *globalisation*, *connectivity*, and *integration*, also recur in recent publications that aim to better understand the nature of past networks and ancient communities that were tied in them. Studies diving into a certain dialogue between the 'individual', the 'communal', and the 'trans-communal' and explorations of phenomena/processes that run on a range of spatial and temporal scales hold much potential. In addition, I would like to make explicit that particularly 'lighter' ideas on a phenomenon such as integration that see it not as a 'uniform, pre-determined model', but as an 'ongoing dialogue between local and global' (with 'global' meaning not much more than the world as was known by most of the ancients) also sound attractive for the ancient world.²⁹ That being said, however, I do believe that the usage of such buzzwords (i.e. globalisation, connectivity, and integration) is not always convenient in the light of their modern-day connotation, especially when communicating ideas and findings across (sub)disciplines and when talking about the ancient world, which was radically different from our current one. In order to address the two main research questions that were raised above adequately, I also believe that we should scale down a bit and provide a proper bottom up perspective. This is not meant to downplay previous notions that certain degrees of connectivity, the character of larger networks and economic systems, as well as actions and processes initiated from above (e.g. by the state), did shape local economies. Yet, in my opinion, a too 'state-centred', 'network-', or 'market-oriented' approach is likely to level away most of the complexity that is at hand when touching upon the nature, functioning, and development of local economies, communities, and specifically the ways in which diversity was shaped.

With the danger of becoming a bit technical and/or metaphorical, I would like to draw attention to a rapidly developing field in which the foundations of modern and ancient economies are revised by seeing such economies as possessing properties of 'complex economic systems'.³⁰ Complex (economic) systems are far from stable and mechanistic, but dynamic and non-linear in nature and character. Such systems are constituted by a broad range of parts or entities that are interacting with each other on various spatial and temporal scales. Such

²⁹ Witcher 2017: 36.

³⁰ E.g. Bintliff 2012a; Poblome 2015. See also van der Leeuw 1981; Bintliff 2004a; Kohler 2012; Daems 2021 for extensive discussion of the properties of complex systems and the applicability of complexity-/chaos-theory and complex systems theory in archaeological research.

interactions might cause emergent properties or certain degrees of self-organisation to arise: a complex system can develop in a certain (unexpected) way all by itself or at least in a semi-autonomous manner. Although being increasingly seen as an unworkable thesis, we might turn to Adam Smith's 'invisible hand' to illustrate such emergent properties: 'By pursuing his own interest he [a merchant] frequently promotes that of the society more effectually than when he really intends to promote it'.³¹ A second important point, in terms of complex systems, is that interactions between entities can cause negative (i.e. 'balancing'/'stabilising') or positive (i.e. 'amplifying') feedback mechanisms. Such feedback mechanisms might culminate on various temporal scales, such as the ones that are defined by the Annales school of geographers as *événements*, *conjunctures* and *longue durée*,³² and potentially shape history long after. For example, small changes or events in a certain local setting can potentially lead to large (unintended) differences on the level of an empire through positive feedback loops. The most famous poetic metaphor of such positive feedback mechanisms is undoubtedly known as the 'Butterfly effect': a flap of a butterfly's wing in Brazil can set off a series of atmospheric events that, weeks later, spurs the formation of a tornado in Texas. It should be clear that seeing Hellenistic and Roman economies as such complex systems implies that individual parts cannot be understood in total isolation and that one cannot really speak of exogenous (external) and endogenous (internal) processes. Yet, the degrees by which earlier noted feedback processes ripple out and trickle down elsewhere or can be amplified through interactions between individual parts rely not only upon the nature of the interactions, but also upon certain conditions and contextual factors that might with some fluidity of definition be characterised as 'endogenous'. For example, the cutting down of one tree can cause erosion to culminate several decades later and lead to environmental change on a larger spatial scale. This does, however, not mean that the cutting down of just *any tree* in a forest, that the cutting down of a tree in just *any forest*, nor that the cutting down of the same tree this *year or in ten years* will initiate or amplify similar changes and processes: (Local) histories and contexts matter. A second somewhat related point that should be stressed is that the workings of systems might be considerably influenced by a range of (structural) contingencies. The presence of such contingencies implies that there is no single or best way in which economic systems can be organised (or organise themselves), because of certain initial conditions and 'uncertainties' (i.e. instability, complexity, diversity, etc.), for instance, in terms of environments and institutions.

Whether one accepts ancient economies as being complex economic systems (in the technical sense) or not, variation and change become increasingly

visible in the archaeological record and the shaping of socioeconomic variety and change through certain actions and processes appears to be far from mechanistic in character. To better understand how diversity came into being we should in some way revise causality and not only focus on processes that trickled down from higher levels in the system or rippled out through 'horizontal' interactions between individual entities on the same level of a system. But, we should perhaps particularly focus on 'more endogenous' factors and processes that were running on the 'micro-' and 'meso-levels' of such systems, where variety and change reached ground and on which micro-economic agents and communities were acting in certain institutionally- and socio-ecologically shaped spheres of action. I believe that such a perspective that might be characterised as more 'bottom-up' not only leads to a better understanding of the 'small scale' (or the 'particular' and the 'exceptional'), but also builds a basis to better understand the workings of (complex) economic systems as a whole.

Highlighting and explaining diversity: regions and regionality

In this book, we will focus upon *regions* to highlight and eventually explain the shaping of socioeconomic diversity in space and time. In the simplest terms, regions can be identified as 'any tract of the earth's surface with characteristics, either natural or of human origin, which make it different from the areas that surround it'.³³ In this same vein, regions can be defined in the archaeological discourse as 'areas where the archaeology appears to have a degree of coherence, particularly if that coherence sets the area apart from its neighbours'.³⁴ The identification of such degrees of homo- and heterogeneity in space lies at the heart of Archaeology as a discipline. Coming up with a similar definition for a study on ancient economies requires filling in the characteristics that are aimed to be selected for meaningful comparison in space. Regions might, for example, be characterised by a certain similarity in terms of crops that are cultivated or by the functional characteristics, quantity, provenance, or style of material culture that is produced, exchanged, and/or consumed.

Regions should not only be seen as spaces that are constituted by certain clusters of properties and, as such, as discrete quantitative or geographical tools for the present researcher. Yet, as amply put by John Kantner, regions can be 'spaces for which meaningful relationships can be defined between past human behaviour, the material signatures people left behind, and/or the varied and dynamic physical and social contexts in which human activity occurred'.³⁵ Archaeologically observed regional patterns thus potentially reflect certain dynamics that were at work in this region. For example,

³¹ Smith 1776, Book 4, Chapter 2, 485.

³² E.g. Braudel 1972: 901; Bintliff 2004a: 176.

³³ Haggett 1979: 258.

³⁴ Cleary 2013: 9.

³⁵ Kantner 2008: 41.

the spatial distribution of artefacts might, among other things, reflect a certain influence of institutions that eased or limited the movement of goods in space, certain properties of the natural and man-made landscape that eased or limited such a movement in a similar way, or certain preferences of economic actors for specific goods. With a certain ‘socialisation’ of the spatial sciences, regions are also in Archaeology more and more considered as ‘social constructs reproduced in the *particular, localised cultural practices of individuals embedded in social and natural relationships*, and these practices are repeated over various spatio-temporal scales’.³⁶ Specifically the cursive part of this quote is of interest here, since ‘more endogenous’ cultural practices, institutions, socio-ecological relationships, and local histories, which might lead to the formation, maintenance, or enhancement of regions, can vary substantially from community to community. By extension, similar practices or institutions might in some cases result in identifiable archaeological regions, but less so in others, for a range of reasons. In contrast, regions that are not similar, but which are in descriptive terms only slightly different from each other, might have reached the point after which they become archaeologically traceable at different times and/or on the basis of different practices and processes.

This is where the theoretical stance that is adapted in this study (*regionality*) comes in. This line of thought will be discussed more fully in the next chapter, but, in short, this geographical concept aims to provide a fluid, rather than fixed, conceptual understanding of regions, as they appear in different forms, sizes, in different strengths, in an institutionalised or non-institutionalised way, etc.³⁷ The term regionality appears relatively new to our vocabulary and is often used to catch different meanings, so it is important to define what is meant with regionality in this book. I would like to draw upon two different, but in some way related, definitions to catch this meaning. The first is provided by Mathias Albert and Stephan Stetter in a chapter on regional integration in the current globalising world, in which they define regionality as ‘the variety of emerging forms of regional groupings and agglomerations’.³⁸ This definition mostly stresses the observation that regions might take different forms. The second definition that I would like to highlight and in some way adopt is provided by Anssi Paasi, who defines regionality as a process in which ‘regions have served to determine the activities of the organizations [and one might add other actors] and the geographical areas in which they are active’.³⁹ Paasi’s definition touches upon the active role that regions have in shaping human action. It will here not be attempted to merge both definitions into a single one, as they are in some way illustrating different

properties of regions. Yet, it is the exact combination of the highlighted properties of regions that are of interest for the present study. Exploring regionality goes beyond identifying and discriminating areas on the basis of certain clusters of characteristics, but aims to understand what regions are or can be, what they might look like, how they functioned from within, and how and why regions were shaped not only in space, but also in time. The most essential viewpoints that are elaborated upon in studies on regionality are a certain temporal depth and that regions are continuously in a process. Regions should not be seen as some kind of end product, as they not only *reflect* things (i.e. providing a reflexive proxy of something else), but they potentially also *do* things (i.e. regions potentially shape future action in many ways and potentially for long after). In more technical terms, regions should thus not only be seen as being descriptive spatial tools in the archaeologist’s toolkit nor only as reflecting certain past dynamics, as socially construed regions are ‘always “more-than-representational”: [they are] experienced, lived, performed and felt’.⁴⁰

The exploration of regionality and the way in which regions were functioning and shaped is essential to gain a better understanding of local economic systems and communities. It is on this level that economic practice was in many ways rooted in socio-ecological interactions and through socioeconomic institutions. Socioeconomic diversity between regions might indeed come into being and become articulated through various ‘vertical’ interactions between individual levels of economic systems and ‘horizontal’ interactions between regions. As stressed by others, ‘the very formation of political, cultural and economic regions and regional identities was never a strictly internal process’.⁴¹ Yet, broader-scale interactions (i.e. inter-regional and supra-regional) ‘are essentially built upon the structural foundations of more localised interactions’,⁴² while we should also not underestimate the power of agency. In this light, I believe that we should make more room for ‘bottom-up, spontaneous, and endogenous processes’ that contribute to the emergence of regions from ‘within’.⁴³ This includes previously noted socio-ecological interactions, local institutions, histories, and most essentially social constructs, which play a key role in understanding how and why regions were shaped, but also in understanding the nature and functioning of local economies.

The outline of this book

The first part of this book is constituted by four introductory chapters. Chapter 1 presents the theoretical and conceptual background of this study in more detail. The chapter starts with an evaluation of the ‘classic’ modernist/formalist-primitivist/substantivist debate in

³⁶ Poblome 2015: 102 (emphasis added). See also Soja 1985; Wishart 2004: 308; Börzel and Risse 2016: 6; Campbell 2016 for similar notions in non-archaeological studies.

³⁷ E.g. Campbell 2016.

³⁸ Albert and Stetter 2014: 63.

³⁹ Paasi 1986: 23.

⁴⁰ Campbell 2016: 5.

⁴¹ Vlassopoulos 2011: 27.

⁴² Stewart 2013: 104.

⁴³ Börzel and Risse 2016: 8.

Archaeology (and related disciplines) and its 'aftermath'. Afterwards, some developments in New Economic Sociology and New Institutional Economics will be shortly discussed that are highly interesting for any study on ancient economies. In Chapter 1.3 we will bring regions and the concept of regionality to the fore. The primary purpose of this chapter is to further emphasise the need for a proper perspective of what regions are and to discuss the applicability of regionality to get a better understanding of the functioning of local economies and larger networks by extension. Chapter 2 is the first chapter that will 'set the scene' of this study by providing a landscape-oriented introduction of Boeotia. In this chapter we will focus upon the changing and diverse characters of landscapes and activity herein. Specific emphasis will be laid upon the landscapes around Thespieae (also written as Thespiiai), Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra, which will be later in this study explored from a ceramic-based comparative perspective. Chapter 3, which is titled 'A (socioeconomically geared) history and archaeology of Hellenistic-Late Roman Boeotia', offers an introduction and discussion of some developments and themes that are often recurring in economically oriented studies on the Hellenistic-Late Roman world. These main themes include the relationships and interactions between Boeotian communities and larger political powers, inter-communal institutions and interactions in Boeotia, and a certain variety in local institutions and the socioeconomic organisation of communities. In Chapter 4, we will mostly be built upon archaeological data from Boeotia to touch upon urban development and non-urban site patterning in space and time. On the basis of the data generated by the Boeotia Project, other research projects, and published data, we will try to explore such proxy-data and following demographic reconstructions that are arguably seen to reflect 'economic performance' in some way. Although 'hard' data on economic performance in the ancient world do not exist, it is worthwhile to see how Boeotia fits in some 'big pictures' of economic development for the Hellenistic-Late Roman period. This will provide a proper basis against which differences and changes in ceramic production, circulation, and consumption in Boeotia can be compared later on in this book.

The material culture that plays a central role in this study will be introduced in Chapters 5 and 6. Chapter 5 starts with an evaluation of the value and functionality of ceramic- and non-ceramic goods in the past. Afterwards, we will discuss the analytical value of using ceramic-generated data and proxies to provide snapshots of various socioeconomic aspects, processes, and actions that are not always as much visible by exploring other proxies on socioeconomic development in the ancient world, such as urbanisation and population dynamics. This chapter primarily aims to illustrate the potential of ceramic studies and the usage of large amounts of ceramic data to highlight and reach a better understanding of local economies and the ways in which regionality was

shaped. In this study, we will mainly draw upon the tension between the general ebbs and flows of supply on the local market places, the agency of potters, the preferences of consumers of various social standings, and the ways in which material culture constituted arenas of social practice. In Chapter 6, the ceramic methodology that was applied during the study campaigns of the Boeotia Project will be discussed. In addition, we will address methodological issues and choices that were made in this study to reconstruct and approximate local ceramic production (and its location) and ceramic circulation/consumption in space and time, largely on the basis of field survey data.

The 'material core' of this book is presented from Chapter 7 onwards, starting with an exploration of the evidence for ceramic production in Boeotia. In Chapter 7, we will discuss the production-related evidence for Thespieae, Askra and the Valley of the Muses, Hyettos and its hinterland, and Tanagra and its hinterland, which were all surveyed by the Boeotia Project. These sub-sections will focus on the Hellenistic-Late Roman period and will provide a first basis for comparative evaluation. The sub-sections are each built around (1) a presentation and discussion of the (sub-)surface evidence and incidental rescue excavations, on the basis of which local ceramic production can be identified, (2) a presentation and discussion of the fabrics that can be related to individual sites or areas of production, and (3) an exploration of the chronological, functional, and rough morphological output of ceramic production in these individual areas. The exploration of ceramic production in Boeotia along these lines provides interesting insights from a comparative perspective, as the output and the chronology of production seems to vary from one site or area of production to the other. Moreover, we can observe certain differences in the morphology and style of production that are/will be published in more detail in other books. Chapter 8 will provide a complementary archaeometrical analysis, on the basis of portable X-Ray Fluorescence spectrometry (pXRF). The main aims of this archaeometrical excursion are to further characterise the previously introduced macroscopically-defined fabric groups from a chemical perspective, to test their chemical coherence, and the postulated association with certain production-related fragments. The application of pXRF studies to analyse ancient ceramics is rapidly increasing, though there is an obvious need to provide a discussion of the possibilities and limits of this methodology, to introduce the applied protocol and sampling strategy, as well as the ways in which the data analysis was carried out in this particular analysis. This chapter aims to provide such methodological information and also discuss some methodological issues. More importantly, the results of this venture will illustrate the potential to provide a quick, affordable, and nonetheless sound first step to gain insights in the chemical consistency of groups of sherds. In Chapter 9, we will explore seeming relationships between the location of ceramic production and the nature of the

output associated with production sites in the ceramic production landscape of Boeotia. This chapter touches upon topics and themes that are generally discussed within the field of Economic Geography, as the main aim of this chapter is to attempt to touch upon some of the agencies and processes that were underlying the choice for one location of production over the other.

After focusing on ceramic production, we will explore the rich Boeotia Project ceramic datasets further and focus on the circulation and consumption of ceramic goods in and around Thespieae, Askra, Hyettos, and Tanagra. Chapter 10 serves to introduce the main classes of tablewares and amphorae that are encountered in Boeotia. This introduction will provide a helpful basis to get a better understanding of the range of products that was in circulation in Boeotia and specifically of aspects such as the chronology and place(s) of production, as well as their broader circulation. In this way, we can create a frame of reference against which the data from Boeotian sites can be compared. To make sense of ceramic data, we need to group and visualise local, Boeotian, and imported pottery in some meaningful way. In this chapter we will thus also discuss the ceramological abilities and inabilities on the basis of which the circulation/consumption of ceramics of different provenances and chronologies can/cannot be explored in detail. The ceramic data generated by the Boeotia Project for Thespieae, Askra, Hyettos, Tanagra, and their surroundings will be explored in such a way in Chapters 11, 12, and 13. Each of these chapters will focus upon the chronological and spatial circulation of tablewares and mainly amphorae, as these ceramics can often be dated relatively precise, be ascribed a relatively secure provenance, and as these two classes of ceramics also prove to move differently in socioeconomic networks. These patterns will be complemented and compared with patterns in the circulation of other ceramic categories, such as lamps, beehives, basins, and cooking wares. The main aim of Chapters 11, 12 and 13 is to highlight that individual areas and even individual sites were to different degrees and in different quantities

reached by goods of different provenances over time. In Chapter 14 we will discuss the main trends in ceramic circulation and consumption in (Late) Hellenistic-Late Roman Boeotia from a comparative perspective. This comparative evaluation will, among other patterns, highlight differences in the circulation of pottery from the Western/Central Mediterranean and Eastern Aegean/Eastern Mediterranean throughout Boeotia, as well as differences in the circulation of Boeotian and Central-Greek ceramics in the area. Afterwards, we will make a short excursus and compare the patterns for Boeotia with patterns and trends in the circulation of ceramics and spread of ceramic styles in nearby areas, such as Euboea, Attica, the Northeast Peloponnese, and Phocis.

In Chapter 15 we will firstly discuss the ceramologically generated patterns in relation to the surrounding Boeotian landscapes, activities and interactions herein, the (agricultural) orientation of local economies, and aspects of regional specialisation. In Chapter 15.2, the skews in the distribution of imports in Boeotia and the character of ancient networks will be discussed and explored more heavily, in terms of geographical factors and some specific institutions that articulated relations and eased interaction in such socioeconomic networks. In Chapter 15.3, we will create a dialogue between the spatial and chronological trends in ceramic production, circulation, and consumption in order to identify regions (of various characters, shapes, and sizes) in Boeotia. In the final part of this book, we aim to identify different types of regions and will draw more heavily on the active role of ceramic material culture in shaping actions and interactions that led to the formation, maintenance, and enhancement of them. The ceramic data from Boeotia contribute to gaining a better understanding of regions in the ancient world and not only illustrate the interactions and processes that are *reflected* by the formation of regions, but also provide snapshots of how material culture actively *contributed* to their existence.