A Patchwork of People, Pots and Places

Material engagements and the construction of 'the social' in *Hamwic* (Anglo-Saxon Southampton), UK.

Key Words:

ANT, Anglo-Saxon, Pottery, *Hamwic*, Biography, Engagement.

Abstract:

This study investigates how engagements with objects are active in the construction of a 'social assemblage', drawing on influences from work on 'symmetrical archaeology' and Actor-Network Theory. This interpretive perspective is explored through a case study, investigating the pottery consumed in Anglo-Saxon Southampton, demonstrating how engagements through exchange, use and deposition were active in creating a patchwork of connections which came together to create a distinct social assemblage. In particular the paper considers the multitude of ways that pottery and people were categorized through material engagements and the interpretive and methodological challenges that this presents to archaeology as a whole.

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Introduction

"What was this pot for?" is a question that many of us are asked and we usually give a literal explanation, that it was used in cooking or storage. But we can ask a more pertinent question, "what did this pot do?". This question demands that we think about material agency, to consider how a vessel enabled people to go about their everyday lives and how, in doing this, it fulfilled a further role: as the agency to create the 'social' came to be distributed through the connections made between people and these innocuous objects.

This is the central theme to this paper, which questions how engagements with pottery were active in the creation of a particular social assemblage, that of *Hamwic* (Anglo-Saxon Southampton). I will argue that, by considering the range of ways that people exchanged, used and threw away pottery and how these engagements led to the emergence of categories of pottery and of people, we can explore the role of these engagements which in creating an archaeological context[1]. This approach is grounded in Actor-Network Theory (ANT) which sees categories as fluid, lasting for as long as a particular relationship between human and material actors, and made durable only through the continuing presence of an object, or the continual reproduction of engagements with similar objects. Archaeologists are often encouraged to take such approaches (e.g. Dolwick 2009), but there are few applications of them to archaeological datasets. It is this disjuncture between rhetoric and practice that this paper seeks to address, using this framework to consider the varying engagements that people had with objects through time and space and how these were active in the creation of the patchwork of relationships which constitute a particular social assemblage.

Defining the Approach

Recent 'biographical' studies of objects have demonstrated that they are perceived, or categorised, in a fluid manner, depending upon their relationships to people, other objects and the environment (e.g. Kopytoff, 1986; Morris forthcoming) Studies of categorisation in disciplines such as psychology have demonstrated categories to be relational and for the boundaries between them to be 'fuzzy' (e.g. Kempton 1978), with people's ideas of different types being conditioned by their previous engagements with similar objects. Rosch (1978) argued that at the centre of such a 'fuzzy set' is a mental prototype, against which objects are categorised and which is determined by people's past experiences. This is an idea we shall return to later in considering both how people thought about pottery in the past and how prototypes change through time. This contrasts with the way that categories of artefact are typically formed in archaeological analysis, for example the creation of typologies, which imply that objects were classified and understood in a static and universal way, which reflects an overlying social structure By acknowledging the fluidity of categories and

perceptions of objects, we can expand the active role of artefacts, seeing these engagements and interpretations as central to building a social context, rather than simply reflecting and reproducing it.

This poses interpretive challenges; how can we acknowledge the fluidity of objects and examine the active role of categorisation processes in building a social context? Following Latour (2005) 'the social' is seen as relational, created by associations between human and non-human actors. It is the changing nature of these associations which give categories (and the social contexts in which they are enmeshed) their fluid character. Therefore our interpretations must give equal weight to the role of people and objects, allowing objects to act on people and for the agency for social assembly, durability and categorisation to be distributed between all of these actors. Such an approach can be found in the work of Actor-Network Theory (ANT) scholars such as Law (1986; 1992), Callon (1986; 1999) and Latour (1999; 2005).

This approach is gaining increasing currency in archaeology, particularly following the work of Jones (2007), Knappett (2005) and Hicks (2010) amongst others. Although the terms 'actor', 'network' and 'agency' have been widely used in archaeology, this approach is a complete departure from processual and post-processual approaches, which have centred on issues of structure to some degree, perpetuating the role of 'the social' as explanation for phenomenon (see also Hodder, 2001: 38). This approach takes the opposite viewpoint, *'the social' is not an explanation, but is to be explained*. changing as engagements between actors are formed and dissolve. We can attempt to reconstruct these connections and with them 'the social', by studying the archaeological traces of these engagements, to consider how a particular set of conditions came about.

Within this framework groups (or categories) of people or objects are fluid, indeed Latour (2005: 27) goes as far as to say they do not exist. Groups only last for as long as the interactions which bring them into existence, for example the crowd at a football match only lasts for as long as people engage with the stadium, each other and the game, a process which can be termed 'social assembly'. Rather than seeing 'the social' as a pyramid whereby some assemblages are more important than others, these assemblages are linked to one another on a flat plane, meaning that the social is a web of interconnected assemblages; the football match is constructed in exactly the same way as parliament; these assemblages are simply products of different sets of associations (Law, 1992: 1).

Archaeological analysis allows us to trace some of these engagements, which led to the formation of groups. Objects play a role in making fragile categories and connections durable, as people continually interact with the same object or consume a string of similar objects, solidifying the connections and groups that these engagements bring about. This can apply both to humans (for example a ship's crew are made a durable group through engagements with the ship) and objects (for example 'cooking pot' is a durable group due to repeated engagements with people, a fire, food etc.). This approach allows us to acknowledge the fluidity and plurality of categories, as actors are

categorised in relation to each other and can be categorised through several simultaneous engagements. Rather than having a single meaning and being categorised in a single way, these engagements build a patchwork of meaning (Law and Mol, 1995), as actors are connected to one another through fleeting and prolonged engagements, as these associations dissolve or are made durable.

Next, we need to consider the role of objects and people in these engagements. ANT provides a symmetrical approach, whereby people and objects are given equal interpretive weight (see Shanks, 2007). This does not mean that objects have intentionality or the same agency as humans, but it does mean that they have the ability to act on humans. As 'the social' is constructed through engagements between humans and non-humans, objects *must* have an active role in this process. 'The social' cannot be created by humans alone; this process is distributed between the actors at play. Therefore, we need to see agency not as a property of a human or material actor, but as distributed through all of the actors in an engagement; it is spun between actors as they come together in all manner of ways (Jones and Boivin, 2010; Whatmore 1999: 29). An object's material properties allow it to act in a number of ways, but these 'affordances' (see Knappet, 2004) must be identified by a human actor and thus an object's agency is distributed through human actors, as much as the human's ability to act is distributed through the object. Such approaches have been criticised as reducing the role of human actors to that of pawns in a wider network and it is perhaps true that past approaches have neglected the particular characteristics of human actors (Thrift 2008, 111). Acknowledging the role of objects need not entail ignoring these qualities and here conscious attempts have been made to be truly symmetrical, acknowledging, for example, the human capacity to adapt, remember and innovate whilst acting in a 'social' constituted of both human and material actors (see Olsen 2010: 13).

As an approach, ANT allows us to reconstruct the engagements and actors behind the formulation of a specific context. It lets us consider the nuances of the 'social', as the associations built between actors come together to create a patchwork of agency and meaning, leading to people and objects being categorised in a plurality of ways, all of which are constantly changing as new engagements are stitched on and old ones unpicked. In order to follow this approach we need a methodology which will allow us to reconstruct engagements. Our subject matter needs to be studied in such a way that we can reconstruct an entire biography. Rather than just focussing on an object's provenance, date or production methods, we also need to know how it was exchanged, used and thrown away. In the remainder of this paper I will apply this approach to a case study, demonstrating how engagements between people, pottery, places and other objects acted to create the social assemblage (or collection of associations between people, objects and the environment), which we identify as *Hamwic*.

Defining the Actors: *Hamwic's* Archaeology

If we are to reconstruct the engagements through which the process of social assembly was distributed, we need to first define the human and material actors at play and situate them within our current understanding of *Hamwic's* archaeology. We can then proceed to reconstruct some of these engagements in more detail, through close analysis of the material traces which they left behind.

Hamwic is the historically attested name of the Anglo-Saxon *wic* (or trading centre) of Southampton (Hampshire, UK) (figure 1). It developed in the 7th century (Morton, 1992: 26), possibly from a royal centre (York, 1982: 80). *Hamwic* was likely peopled from its hinterland as it expanded and by the 8th century it was an administrative (Morton, 1992: 69), craft and trading centre, forming part of a network of similar sites across northern Europe. The street layout suggests a degree of planning, but the settlement expanded and contracted through its life (Morton, 1992: 38). Property boundaries were marked by fence lines and pit alignments (Morton, 1992: 46; Andrews 1997), however the redeposition of waste means that we are not able to securely talk about objects related to individual households. *Hamwic* appears to have declined in the 9th century (Morton, 1992: 70) for several reasons including disruption to trade by civil wars in Europe and Viking raids (*ibid*, 76). Numismatic evidence suggests that the nature of trading activity changed, rather than ceasing altogether, and this is evidenced by a continued supply of imported goods into the new town of Southampton (Hall, 2000: 131).

Hamwic's role as a trading centre is attested through the presence of imported goods such as pottery (Timby 1988), glass (Hunter and Heyworth, 1998) and quern stones (Morton, 1992: 66), indexing a trading network stretching from Ireland to Germany and beyond. The nature of trade has been much debated, Hodges (1982) argued that *wic* sites were trading enclaves and that trade was supported by court or monastic agents, but these conclusions have been questioned recently. Current thinking is that rather than acting as centres for sponsored trading activity, *wics* were toll stations, where duty could be collected and the exchange of goods controlled (Cowie and Blackmore, 2008: 158), as well as providing a safe haven for merchants and craft specialists.

Craftsmen were present in *Hamwic*, including antler/bone workers, metal workers and textile manufacturers (Addyman and Hill, 1969; Morton, 1992: 56). There is no concrete evidence of potting, although pot stamps have been recovered (Timby, 1988: 107). Whilst some objects may have been produced under patronage for export to local and international markets, others are likely to have been produced to service the *wic*, or the ships which visited (Hodges, 1982: 148; Palmer, 2003: 60).

The faunal remains from *Hamwic* suggest a relatively homogenous diet across the settlement, but that there were changes in the later phases, when the animals eaten were generally smaller and older (Bourdillon, 1980: 1984, Hamilton-Dyer, 2005). The settlement was probably provisioned through food rents, as there is no direct evidence of agricultural activity within or around *Hamwic* (Hodges, 1982: 142, O'Conner, 2001: 60). Residue analysis of a small quantity of pottery, undertaken during this

research, demonstrates that stews were a common feature of diet and that fish, as well as meat, was eaten (Baeten 2009).

The large ceramic assemblage from *Hamwic* has been the subject of two major studies. The first (Hodges, 1981) concentrating on the imported wares and the second (Timby, 1988) on classifying the local wares. Both classifications are based on fabric, and the authors also discussed the scale and organisation of local pottery production and trade patterns. The pottery has not been closely dated as there are few intercutting sequences of features and many of the excavations were undertaken in rescue conditions with poor levels of onsite recording. It has however been possible to produce a relative chronology for the local wares (Timby, 1988: 111-116). Phase 1 is defined by the presence of Organic-tempered Wares, phase 2 by the presence of Sandy Wares and Chalk-tempered Wares and phase 3 by the presence of Gritty Wares. No absolute dates have been assigned to these phases, but phase 1 appears to relate to the origins of the settlement, phase 2 to its expansion and phase 3 to its decline. Imported wares occur throughout the sequence and appear to have stayed in currency for longer periods of time (see below).

Material Engagements and Categories of Pottery and People

In order to 'reassemble the social' we must reconstruct the connections which constituted it (Latour 2005, 31). This section reconstructs the engagements between people and pottery, to identify some of the associations through which 'the social' in *Hamwic* was created and defined. This data is derived from the author's doctoral research (Jervis, 2011) which was intended to broaden our understanding of the ways that pottery was categorised in the past. Using the existing classifications as a starting point, the distribution of wares was plotted to understand the relationship between how these vessels were exchanged and the categories formed during production. Usewear analysis, following the methodology outlined by Skibo (1992), involving the recording of attrition indicators and sooting patterns, was undertaken to reconstruct everyday engagements between people and pottery, with broad classes of cooking, storage, preparation and serving vessel being identified. Finally, the depositional context of pottery was considered, to investigate how vessels came to be re-categorised as rubbish and the active role of waste management in social assembly.

In all of the local wares, jars are the most common vessel form, with a small quantity of bowls also being present. Forms stay largely unchanged throughout *Hamwic's* occupation, with vessels typically having simple, everted rims and sagging bases (figure 2). All of these vessels are handmade.

Organic-tempered Wares are ubiquitous in 5th-9th century contexts across southern England. The high level of fabric variability in *Hamwic* suggests domestic scale manufacture, within wider traditions (Timby, 1988: 110). This is supported by the distribution of the locally produced fabrics, with different types dominating in certain areas of the settlement (figure 3), suggesting that it is likely that these

wares were exchanged at a neighbourhood scale. This picture can be coupled with evidence that certain neighbourhoods appear to have practiced complementary crafts (Morton, 1992: 57), suggesting a degree of interdependency in the supply of household goods, a phenomena which created categories of localised producer/trader and consumer. Small quantities of non-local pottery are present; types with localised distributions may index the presence of a household who brought pottery from outside of *Hamwic*, perhaps a group of consumer who maintained a link with the hinterland through the sourcing of pottery. Around a third of Organic-tempered Ware vessels were used as cooking pots (table 1). Sooting patterns demonstrate that cooking practices differed. Some vessels were placed directly into the fire, others were suspended above it. Categories of cooking pot and cook emerged through these engagements, with differences perhaps relating to individuals having been socialised in different environments outside of *Hamwic*. Because they had been conditioned to engage with vessels in a particular way, they conceptualised their affordances differently. Vessels used for processing are most common at *Hamwic's* periphery, perhaps indicating that this area was semi-rural in nature. The processing of large quantities of foodstuffs gave rise to a semi-rural category of processor, which may have persisted as a group throughout *Hamwic's* occupation, made durable through continued engagements with unprocessed foodstuffs and processing vessels.

The phase 2 Sandy Wares are something of an anomaly within the local context. Whilst wheelthrown sandy wares were produced and used in eastern England (Blinkhorn, 1999), similar wares are not known from local sites. It is likely that the prototype vessel in the minds of producers and consumers in *Hamwic* was influenced by engagements with imported sandy ware vessels, both from France and eastern England. Most of these wares were produced locally. One fabric is a transitional Organic-tempered Sandy Ware, which likely dates to the transition from phase 1-2. Most of the Sandy Wares were produced relatively locally. As with the Organic-tempered Wares, zoning occurs in their distribution. Although the pots themselves are different, continued localised exchange served to make durable categories of local producer/traders and consumers. These zones are less marked than in phase 1, and pottery from a new source is found across *Hamwic*, perhaps indexing the development of a settlement-wide market for pottery (figure 4). This is also demonstrated through the distribution of Chalk-tempered Wares, probably produced around Winchester to the north, which also date to phase 2 and are present across *Hamwic*. Residue analysis (Baeten 2009.) demonstrates that these vessels were sometimes sealed with beeswax (making them impermeable) and the absence of consistent usewear, coupled with their widespread distribution, suggests that they likely entered *Hamwic* as containers.

In acquiring these wares a class of consumer emerged who engaged in a larger market, as did a class of trader, perhaps a middleman, who exchanged resources from *Hamwic's* hinterland. People probably engaged in both exchange mechanisms, demonstrating how engagements with pottery were active in categorising individuals in a plural manner. A market for imported pottery (see below) and

resources emerged, creating a set of associations which perhaps led to local potters also marketing their wares more widely. Engagements in the marketplace differentiated *Hamwic's* occupants from those of surrounding rural settlements, who continued to produce and acquire pottery at a household scale, leading to a distinctly urban category of consumer emerging. Around a third of the Sandy Ware vessels were cooking pots and, as in phase 1, culinary practices differ across *Hamwic*. In phase 2 the patterning is more clearly marked; at certain sites, particularly in the Six Dials area, there is a noticeably higher incidence of vessel suspension than elsewhere. This may suggest that the learning process was more focused on engagements between households in *Hamwic* than on relationships between *Hamwic's* community and nearby rural populations (table 2). It is possible that a rise in the incidence of vessel suspension relates to engagements between immigrants and local people, as this method of cooking appears common in northern France at this time (e.g. Routier, 2004). Processing vessels are a small component of most assemblages, suggesting that at least some food was processed at the household scale. This small scale processing contrasts the larger scale processing at *Hamwic's* periphery and at nearby rural sites (processes such as dairying; see Cowie and Blackmore, 2008: 152-53), perhaps giving rise to a category of 'urban' processor.

The final ceramic phase is marked by the introduction of gritty wares. Whereas phase 2 appeared to see an opening up of the market for pottery across *Hamwic*, in this phase some types have very localised distributions, suggesting that by the 9th century they were once again produced and exchanged at a household or neighbourhood level, perhaps in relation to the wider economic changes occurring at this time. As in phase 2, localised categories of trader and consumer continued to be made durable by repeated exchange events. This phase sees a change in cooking practice with the vast majority of vessels being placed in or close to the fire, rather than being suspended over it, perhaps in relation to changes in foodstuffs (table 3). Sooting evidence suggests that imported, Shelly Ware, vessels were more likely to be suspended than local coarsewares and it is possible that these index immigrants cooking with imported vessels. Processing vessels are a larger constituent of several assemblages in this phase and it would appear that provisioning was less centralised, with households having to process greater quantities of foodstuffs themselves.

A category of storage vessels was made durable by the engagements in the provisioning of *Hamwic* through food rents, which meant that there were quantities of surplus to store. Engagement with these surpluses, rather than engagement in agricultural practice, gave rise to a category of urban consumer.

Imported wares have previously been treated as a single class (e.g. Brown 1997; Morton 2005) but close analysis demonstrates considerable variation in their exchange and use. These wares are less closely datable than local wares, as similar types were produced from the 7th-11th centuries. Imports are principally from northern France, with reduced wares being the most common types, present as pitchers and jars, often with rouletted or stamped decoration (figure 5). Whitewares occur as pitchers but primarily as jars and bowls. The most common imports are found across *Hamwic* and were likely

marketed centrally, perhaps used to decant imported wine into glass or horn drinking vessels. Imports are not common outside of *Hamwic* and their consumption generated a regionally unique category of consumer, who consumed imported wine in a cosmopolitan manner. Other types, often from more distant sources, have more localised distributions (figure 6). The presence of these wares suggests that some households were more connected to the continent than others; perhaps these wares formed part of a ship's equipment or were brought to *Hamwic* as personal possessions and were broken there, or exchanged for other goods or hospitality. Some imported sandy ware (particularly Greyware) vessels were used as cooking pots and it would appear that they were interchangeable with local equivalents, based on them displaying similar sooting patterns and usewear indicators (table 4).

Analysis of fragmentation and the presence of cross fitting sherds suggests that domestic waste accumulated in middens throughout *Hamwic's* occupation, before being redeposited into abandoned negative features. Redeposition into abandoned features, such as an early sunken featured building in the south of *Hamwic*, cited depositional practice at nearby rural sites (Morris and Jervis forthcoming), emphasising associations with the rural hinterland. Increasingly, waste came to be treated in a distinctly urban manner, being managed so that boundary features[2] were kept clear, and removing waste from the settlement altogether. This collective organisation of waste was one way that a distinctly urban community was created.

Throughout *Hamwic's* life, pottery was recategorised in several ways. Vessels were produced in accordance with the potters mental prototype, in turn forming part of a wider tradition. These were then exchanged through settlement wide, localised or more personal exchange mechanisms, a process which led to consumers developing a prototype based on a particular producer's wares and making categories of localised producer/trader and consumer durable through continued interactions. The emergence of a market for pottery and other goods gave rise to categories of specialist traders (perhaps middlemen) and 'urban' consumers, whose engagements with pottery during exchange differentiated them from those living in *Hamwic's* rural hinterland. Pots were then recategorised through use, with vessels of the same 'type' fulfilling a range of functions. Different cooking practices led to the emergence of varying categories of cook, based upon an individual's socialisation, which determined how they identified the affordances of a cooking pot. Processing, storage and the consumption of food and drink led to the emergence of categories of vessels for these functions, and these engagements simultaneously created distinctly urban groups of consumer. Finally, vessels were re-categorised as waste, firstly by being tossed onto a midden and then, potentially, re-categorised as a resource, useful for filling redundant features or, as part of an amorphous mulch of waste, for fertilising nearby agricultural soils. These categories of pottery and person were fluid and distributed through one another, as they emerged simultaneously and were made durable through continued interactions in everyday activities.

Assembling *Hamwic*

The social assemblage of '*Hamwic'* was formed through a range of engagements with objects, which cited activity in surrounding rural areas and in Europe. So far we have reconstructed these engagements, but now we can consider their role in the assembly of *Hamwic;* in mediating 'a sense of home', creating urban space, infusing the settlement with a cosmopolitan feel and their contribution to *Hamwic's* decline.

A 'sense of home' can be seen to have flowed through engagements. The Organic-tempered pottery used in *Hamwic* is similar to that used by surrounding rural communities (e.g. Fasham and Whinney, 1991), matching these wares in form, colour and texture. One can imagine how past experiences of using pottery would be cited in assessing the suitability of a vessel. Engagements with pottery which conformed to a mental prototype grounded in *Hamwic's* hinterland evoked memory of past engagements in these areas, building associations between the populations of *Hamwic* and surrounding settlements. In some cases this citation was more concrete, as vessels were sourced from these areas, giving rise to the different categories of consumer discussed above. These vessels were themselves the product of a particular set of associations in these rural settlements, both during production, but also in use. We have established that different categories of cook emerged in this phase, based upon how individuals were socialised. The continuation of cooking practices cited and remade links with rural communities, making household networks durable, as rural practice was translated into an increasingly urban setting. The ability to re-create these domestic practices was distributed through the vessels as well as cooks and the foodstuffs; the sensory experiences produced as these actors came together guiding those engaging in cooking, distributing familiarity through these interactions. Usewear indicators act as a materialisation of how a vessel's affordances were perceived, allowing us to identify that people may have built and maintained links with different rural communities by experiencing food and the associated material culture in particular ways. As these associations were remade, they became durable, flowing from one vessel to another, as they were replaced following breakage.

Hamwic's occupants also built close associations with Europe. This relationship can be seen as more fragile than that with surrounding areas. Some merchants (and particularly their crews; see McCormick 2001, 265-6) were a transient presence, rarely mentioned in historical sources (*ibid* 238) and associations between them and the local population may not have been cemented through personal relationships. We should perhaps think in terms of associations with a merchant group, or perhaps a middleman, standing for them[3] (see above). To these people, local vessels may have appeared unusual and inappropriate, but
a sense of familiarity came to be distributed through their engagements with less common imported cooking pots, used in a distinctive fashion. Their use practices transformed foodstuffs in distinctive ways, leading to a distinct set of sensory experiences, which acted as abductive indices[4] of previous

cooking events, distributing memory through these interactions. Their tastes and values in regard to food consumption may have varied from those of local people, perhaps favouring meat cooked more slowly, an attempt to simulate the younger, more tender cuts of meat that richer merchants may have consumed at home (Sykes, 2007: 16). The agency for this translation of engagements into *Hamwic* was distributed through artefacts such as metal pot hooks. Metal vessels fragments may index the transfer of some cooking techniques into a new medium, with vessel suspension potentially citing practices where metal cooking vessels were used, often in high status institutions or feasting (Hagen, 2006: 292). A pot's affordances may have been identified in relation to a functional prototype in a different material, this transfer allowing people to engage with vessels and resources in similar ways, creating what can be termed a 'chain of citation' between material types (Jones, 2007). Like the varying uses of locally produced cooking pots, these engagements created a 'sense of home' for a particular group of people, but also built partial links between households, using similar objects to process foodstuffs in particular ways; citing past experiences and adding to the patchwork of connections which made *Hamwic* a distinctive social assemblage.

Rural depositional practices, such as middening, translated into *Hamwic*, building further links with the hinterland. Middening both cites rural practice and effects citation through sensory experiences, further distributing the agency for the creation of homeliness. The removal of waste from *Hamwic* and, potentially, its use as manure in rural areas, stresses *Hamwic's* reliance on its hinterland for provisions, a process through which categories of trader and rural producer emerged, contrasting the urban consumer. Through the tributary system, the relationship with rural areas became increasingly exploitative, differentiating *Hamwic* from these areas, a process also distributed through the use of middens and pits, which demarcated space, leading to the emergence of a distinctly urban landscape, formed by the associations flowing through it (Ingold, 1993).

Interactions with vessels throughout their use-lives generated a patchwork of connections, whereby people were associating with rural life, but also engaging in new networks, constructing the foundations of urban living. *Hamwic's* urban character did not exist prior to action and neither did people act in a prescribed 'urban' fashion because they lived there. Both developed together, as engagements created urban space, and performance in this space defined and maintained a version of 'urban' society (see Gregson and Rose 2000: 441).

Hamwic's urban nature was also distributed through localised exchange activity. These associations appear to have held some of the agency for the creation of 'neighbourhoods', as local producer/ traders exchanged their pottery in certain areas of *Hamwic*, materialising the limits of interaction (possibly relating to *Hamwic's* original nuclei, which potentially index other, archaeologically invisible, associations). The durability of these neighbourhoods was partly distributed through exchange, as a common prototype vessel emerged, built based on their experiences of ceramic use both in *Hamwic* and elsewhere. As a settlement wide market developed this prototype shifted, thanks to increasing

engagements with imported wares. The shift was a gradual one, with the consumers prototype shifting in relation to cycles of breakage and replacement, increasingly accepting types which were 'fuzzy' in relation to the original prototype, as potters experimented. The experience of urban life was not uniform, as some connections made *Hamwic* a cohesive entity, whilst others continued to make durable more localised groupings, based on long lived associations. The durability of these groupings was mediated through activities such as the maintenance of boundaries and the organisation of craft activities. *Hamwic's* urban nature emerged not only in contrast to rural living, but as the product of the relationships between people and objects within it, which created the mixture of internal cohesiveness and differentiation, so characteristic of town life.

Hamwic was a uniquely cosmopolitan community, imported wares had little impact outside of the settlement. The meaning of this pottery was distributed through relationships with other imported goods, such as glass vessels and wine. People appear to have regularly engaged in continentally influenced consumption practices (Hodges, 1982: 59), drawing the wider population of *Hamwic* into a continental trade and consumption network. This infusion of cosmopolitan tastes into people's lives was not experienced in a uniform way. For some, this consumption cited and re-made associations with the continent, whereas others were building new associations through consumption within the context of *Hamwic*, leading to the development of an increasingly cosmopolitan consumer who generated, rather than remade, European ties. These vessels do not appear to have been universally replaced (Hodges, 1982: 59), meaning that unlike the consistent supply and use of locally produced wares, these networks were fragile; at times people made durable links with the continent through these practices, whereas at others they were allowed to dissolve. Cosmopolitan practices, such as wine drinking, created a series of partial connections, with the substances consumed and the vessels used acting to bring continuity to the lives of some but mediating change in the lives of others, through imitation. Engagement in practices such as wine drinking constructed multiple realities, which contributed to the social in *Hamwic* being a patchwork of partial associations, not an imposed socio-economic phenomena.

Through this mixture of associations *Hamwic* developed a distinct sense of place, making it unique within its regional context. One materialisation of this process are the hybridized Sandy Wares. These appear to have come about in part through engagements with imported Greywares, used as cooking vessels across *Hamwic*. Both were used in the same way and may have constituted a single functional category. These vessels had different material properties to the Organic-tempered Wares and the presence of some exploded, imported, cooking pots perhaps suggests that people struggled to understand these vessels' affordances. Although the prototype pottery fabric shifted, indexing increased associations between the people of *Hamwic* and the finer, imported vessels, ties with the rural areas were not entirely lost. The form and occasional decoration of these vessels continued to index vessels used outside of *Hamwic*. These vessels were the result of partial connections between *Hamwic*, its local hinterland and northern France. As people learnt to use these new pots within the

context of *Hamwic*, wider networks of ceramic use developed, with a greater level of homogeneity in cooking practices emerging in particular neighbourhoods, as people cited experience gained through talking about food, experiencing the food of others and observing their cooking practices. *Hamwic's* character as an urban diaspora flowed through these engagements, within and between households, distributing the emergence of cosmopolitan tastes and the durability of longer lived practices and ideas through the partial connections which domestic life strung together. 'The social' in *Hamwic* was constituted of partial ties both with its region, with wider contacts and between its inhabitants, and its unique sense of places was distributed through these connections.

Hamwic's role as an international trading centre was formed by participation in regional and international exchange networks (see Sindbaek, 2005: 128-9), with pottery indexing how recursive trading made this network durable. The mediatory role played by imported goods was short lived in exchange, but was constantly repeated as subsequent goods were traded through *Hamwic*. The recursive trading and consumption of prestige goods and the collection of tolls served to build and make durable links with royal and ecclesiastical elites (Palmer, 2003: 53). *Hamwic* acted in longer chains of exchange, whereby 'elites' generated further connections; the agency for the generation of power being partly distributed through continental associations.

A key area in which these connections mediated power was in consumption. There is some evidence for periodic feasting in *Hamwic*, principally a large deposit of vessels and food debris close to St. Mary's Church (Morton, 1992: MF G1). This event was part of a wider cycle of activities, structured to define and maintain relationships between participants and distinguished from other meals through the unique set of connections made with foodstuffs, places and individuals. The location of this deposit implies that it is related to people making durable their associations with the church, through periodic religious feasting (Hodges, 2004: 143). Such cyclical activities may have been important, given the increasing differentiation between religious observance and economic life (Theuws, 2004: 135) (evidenced through the relative lack of churches and religious communities in *wics*), even though the church as an institution was a major player in economic activity (Theuws, 2004: 151; Hodges, 2004). Rather than seeing religion as controlling 'the social', such activity demonstrates how it is simply one component of it, with its elevated role in administration and as a focal point for communities being brought about by its high level of connections (Law, 1992), both locally and internationally. Associations through religious feasting added to the various multiple realities which were experienced through engagements with pottery and therefore to the patchwork of partial associations which constructed *Hamwic* as a social assemblage.

So far, we have considered how *Hamwic* was assembled and defined, but we are also able to consider its decline. Phase 3 was a period of change, in which previous associations were dissolved and new ones formed. The period sees a shift in the type of pottery used, from sandy to gritty fabrics, possibly relating to similar changes in the hinterland. The rural types had a similar influence on the

prototype pottery in *Hamwic*, to that which the imported wares had in phase 2, suggesting that stronger ties with the hinterland emerged. This process is not as simple as saying that continental ties were replaced by local ones however; coarser wares were increasingly used in northern France, the shelly wares at the *wic* of *Quentovic* for example (Worthington, 1993). The prototype coarseware was derived from rural areas around *Hamwic* as part of a much wider change, but we need to ask *why* this occurred. It would seem to relate to developments in diet, occurring both in *Hamwic* and on the continent (Bourdillon, 1984: 83; Sykes, 2007: 39), meaning that the demands placed on pottery during use changed. This change can, perhaps, be seen as an overflow of developments in subsistence practices and provisioning strategies (Hamerow, 1991: 61-17; Sykes, 2007: 38-9; Hughes 1984) . The gritty wares stand for new connections, partly associated with changing agricultural practices, which in turn relate to the growth of rural estates and climatic changes. This transition in the lives of *Hamwic's* occupants is also materialised in the physical remodelling of *Hamwic*, as secondary and tertiary waste was used to close boundaries dissolving existing networks of spatial use and mediating the creation of new ones. The affordances of pits changed in this phase, with them now becoming foci for waste disposal. Some of the associations which gave *Hamwic* its distinctive character were removed, the engagements which had mediated continuity now mediated change, as rural developments overflowed into *Hamwic*. As trade became less frequent, possibly due to recession and a changing relationship between the Carolingian and Scandinavian world (Hall, 2000; Theuews, 2004: 136), *Hamwic's* European ties diminished, meaning that its role as a trading centre became less important, as the associations which brought it into being and sustained it as an entity faded; the diminishing of economic links meant that *Hamwic* and its counterparts no longer had a defined role to play (Theuws, 2004: 136).

The ceramic evidences indexes a range of partial connections between actors, both human and material which came together to create a patchwork; the social assemblage of *Hamwic*. A 'sense of home' was mediated through the translation of domestic practices from surrounding areas and the continent, with the increasing hybridization caused by continental associations contributing to *Hamwic* developing a unique sense of place. The settlement developed into an urban entity, with the landscape materialising spatial control and the emergence of neighbourhood groupings, whilst cohesiveness came to be distributed, in part, through engagements with a central market, the emergence of which also served to differentiate *Hamwic* from its rural hinterland. A key motivation for *Hamwic's* foundation was trade and it was made durable through engagements with imported artefacts, engagements through which power and identity were mediated. Life in *Hamwic* was an individualised experience however. For some, engagements with imported pottery brought familiarity, for others it allowed them to develop a new and fleeting sense of cosmopolitan identity. It was the partial connections between these individual social realities which stitched together to create *Hamwic* as a patchwork of connections between actors within and outside of the settlement. *Hamwic's* decline was also distributed through material engagements, the changes in ceramic use being distributed through wider developments in agricultural and economic practices across the North Sea zone. The

subsequent decline in trading activity dissolved the connections which had brought it into being, changing the character of the settlement dramatically. *Hamwic* as a social entity was ever changing, as the occupants made and re-made connections with those outside, as well as their neighbours; associations of citation and provisioning, through exchange, domestic activity and deposition, all of which contributed to a unique process of social assembly .

Conclusions

Our textbooks tell us that *Hamwic* was an economic entity, constructed by elites with a predefined social structure. Whilst elements of this are undoubtedly correct, the nuances of life are ignored. We are left wondering how its urban character emerged and what affect the performance of trade, craft activity and domestic life had on the settlement as a social assemblage. This approach has allowed us to consider these nuances, to explore how engagements with pottery created a 'sense of home', how engagements with waste and in exchange created urban space and how power structures and a sense of cosmopolitan living were distributed through the everyday engagements between people and their material culture. To get the most out of this approach, detailed study is required and it is hoped that the focus on one settlement has illustrated the potential impact of non-representational thought on the interpretation on any archaeological context. By taking this approach life has been animated, no longer do we need to see material culture as reflecting past action; we can consider the nature and, crucially, the affect of performance, a process which can enrich archaeological interpretation. What this study has achieved, to some extent at least, is to move beyond citing 'social explanations' in the understanding of distribution or depositional patterning, to consider the role of these engagements in the emergence, maintenance and dissolution of a particular social context.

This perspective also makes us reconsider our methodological approaches and develop the archaeological process. We are required to look at objects in new ways, to implement a biographical approach and reconstruct engagements, rather than focussing on production or producing generalised statements about an object's potential function. Certainly this is a challenge, but one that our analytical methodologies are developed enough to meet. By going beyond production in ceramic analysis we are able to consider a fuller range of engagements, and through the traces these leave, consider how groups of pottery and people simultaneously emerged. This approach is well suited to a data heavy analysis, as it encourages us to follow the evidence and the more we have, the more associations we can draw and the more engagements we can reconstruct. It will be most successful where specialists collaborate, to identify interconnections between the traces of engagements, breaking down ontological boundaries between settlement and burial contexts or types of material, to consider the interconnectedness of these spheres of engagement, allowing us to develop a uniquely archaeological translation of non-representational thought. Objects are one of the core resources we have for understanding the past. Whilst we may never be able to fully understand their role in past societies, by taking a symmetrical approach, acknowledging that they have the potential to act,

considering how, like people, they are made of a multitude of connections and generated a plurality of meanings, we can better understand what they have to tell us.

Acknowledgements

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[1] Taken here to mean the set of associations between archaeological features, objects and people, both in the past and present, which define our understanding of a particular archaeological site or set of sites, rather than in the sense of a 'single context' or archaeological feature.

[2] It should be noted that boundary features became increasingly common in rural contexts from the 7th century. Whereas boundaries in Hamwic tended to delineate house plots, these boundaries in rural contexts typically enclosed larger areas or entire settlements (see Reynolds 2003).

[3] It has been suggested that at the comparative site of Ribe (Denmark) that visiting merchants dealt only with a middleman, who then marketed their goods more widely (Feveite 2009) whilst at Hedeby (Germany) it has been suggested that much exchange took place at the waterfront and that traders may not have come into the settlement itself, based on the presence of coins which apparently slipped through the holes in jetties (Kalmring 2009).

[4] That is their interpretation of the index is guided by previous experience (see Knappett, 2005:93).

Captions:

Figure 1: Location Maps.
A) The location of *Hamwic* in relation to other sites mentioned in the text.
B) Plan illustrating archaeological excavations in *Hamwic*.

Figure 2: Examples of the local wares.

Figure 3: Stylised plan of Hamwic showing the distribution of the principle, locally produced, phase 1 fabrics.

Figure 4: Distribution of selected phase 2 pottery fabrics. Black dots denote sites where the proportion of the fabric is higher than the proportion of the total assemblage from that site. Grey dots denote the presence of that fabric.

Figure 5: Examples of the imported wares.

Figure 6: Distribution of selected imported wares. A) Alsace Ware. B) Argonne Ware. C) Badorf Ware. D) Loire Valley,

Table 1: Usewear on phase 1 pottery from *Hamwic* (Maximum Vessel Count).
Table 2: Usewear on phase 2 pottery from *Hamwic* (Maximum Vessel Count).
Table 3: Usewear on phase 3 pottery from *Hamwic* (Maximum Vessel Count).
Table 4: Usewear on imported wares from *Hamwic* (Maximum Vessel Count).