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The Archaeology of Emptiness?

Understanding Open Urban Spaces in the Medieval World

ABSTRACT Using examples from medieval Europe and Africa, an approach to understanding urban open spaces is proposed. We argue that new digital and high-resolution methodologies, combined with interpretive frameworks which stress the affective capacities of the material world, call for a reappraisal of open spaces as places of disruption, creativity, and emergent urbanity. We advance an intensive approach to create a methodological basis on which to reimagine emptiness as a stimulus for interaction, applying Deleuze and Guattari's concept of smooth/striated space. Key themes are the role of open spaces in the negotiation of power, their capacity to facilitate encounters, and their role as a resource from which distinctive forms of urbanity might emerge. The paper advocates for greater attention to be paid to open spaces in the study of medieval urbanism.

KEYWORDS Empty space; build exterior; assemblage theory; streetscape; medieval; urban gardens; community; power

Introduction: Why Consider 'Emptiness' in the Medieval World?

Open spaces are common to towns and cities across the world. They may constitute places for public gatherings, gardens, spaces for transit or be indicative of dereliction. Despite their ubiquity, these spaces, which might incorporate public spaces such as streets, squares, quaysides, and gardens and undeveloped areas such as derelict and abandoned spaces in the urban landscape, are under-theorized by archaeologists when compared to the built elements of the landscape. The archaeological record suggests that these spaces were empty, void of buildings, yet they form an important, and familiar, element of urban life.

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How can we conceptualize and understand the role of these ambiguous open spaces in the past? Benjamin W. Stanley and others (2012, 1093) developed a typology of urban open spaces, defining spaces of food production, parks and gardens, recreation, plazas, streets, transport facilities, and incidental spaces. However, they also acknowledge the variability in these spaces; open space is versatile, continually reproduced through social practice and a resource for, potentially disruptive, community action (Stanley and others 2012, 1109–19). They also identify that spaces may be planned 'top-down' or emerge through processes of urban life as 'bottom-up' developments. Their category of incidental space captures the spaces which develop as 'leftovers' from architectural design. They may be planned spaces and they might function in a range of ways. More specifically in relation to the medieval towns, which are the focus of this paper, Paweł Cembrzyński and Maciej Radomski (2020) conceptualized empty spaces as peripheral, negligible, and difficult to trace, and they distinguish three categories: emptiness, deserted area, and green space. Building on this work, we propose that open spaces have an inherent 'in-betweenness', they are flexible spaces. Rute Sousa Matos (2009) has defined them 'interstitial spaces', physical spaces located at the interstices of social, economic, temporal, and spatial elements of urban life. This approach echoes Monica L. Smith's (2008) important work, which highlights the value of empty spaces for urban archaeology. She argues that in urban areas they are spaces of creativity and flexibility and, critically, places of collaboration and consensus building. Where there are competing demands for space, leaving an area open is representative of consensus among urban communities. Throughout this paper we define space variously as empty (implying a space intentionally or unintentionally left vacant and undeveloped within an urban landscape) and open (spaces lacking structures but with a defined function, such as streets, market squares, or gardens). Whilst empty and open spaces are distinct from one another, we argue for a commonality in the importance of these spaces in the negotiation of forms of medieval urbanity. As such, this paper is intended to put forward a comparative approach to studying these spaces in relation to medieval towns and cities, arguing that innovative combinations of method and theory can allow us to critically understand the role of apparently empty spaces to urban life.

In this contribution we propose that the increasing application of scientific techniques in urban archaeology (e.g. soil micromorphology, chemical analysis of soils), which allow urban life to be understood in 'high definition' by revealing detailed insights into the use of urban space, has pulled open and seemingly empty urban spaces into focus. We seek to build a framework for understanding these spaces and their implications within the context of the material and ontological turns in both archaeological and urban theory (see Farías and Bender 2010; Hicks 2010; Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Metzger 2016a; Jervis 2019). We argue that studies using these techniques have shifted focus from built spaces to the performance of urban life and its consequences. This is a move paralleled by advancements in archaeological thought and associated developments in urban theory, which have shifted emphasis towards understanding the city as affective bundles of interaction. Rather than understanding urban spaces as fixed 'stages' or 'frames' for urban life, they are perceived of as constituted by, and constitutive of, forms of urbanity; space is fluid and malleable, being an active participant in the unfolding of urban existence (e.g. McFarlane 2011; Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Metzger 2016b). Within the context of urban studies this paper can be situated within a literature on open, particularly public, spaces in contemporary cities (e.g. Low 2006; Hou 2010), which has emerged out of an increasing awareness of the loss of these spaces and of their potential for facilitating encounters and urban community building (Stanley and others 2012; Bodnár 2015).

The particular focus of this paper is the consideration of open and empty spaces in medieval towns and cities, drawing on examples from northern, central, and Mediterranean Europe as well as the Swahili coast in eastern Africa, reflecting areas in which high-resolution archaeological techniques have been fruitfully applied. Emergent, or re-emergent, urbanism is recognized as a key characteristic of the Middle Ages (e.g. Christopherson 2015; De Weerdt 2013; Hodges 2012; LaViolette and Fleisher 2009; Kaner and others 2020; Fleisher 2010a; Jervis 2016; Monroe 2018; Sindbæk 2007; Smith 2006, Tys 2018), being endemic of the period as an 'age of intensity' (Moore 2016). However, to paraphrase Geraldine Heng (2014, 240), we suggest that urbanism took a range of forms within the Middle Ages, as well as between the Middle Ages and other periods; as Julia McClure (2015, 616) states 'in our age of multiple modernities, we must explore the history of our multiple medievalisms'. In this specific context to understand the varied forms and implications of urbanity today, we must recognize and understand the commonality and diversity of medieval urban experience (Leyser, Standen, and Wynne-Jones 2018). Importantly, this multiplicity is multi-scalar; urbanism takes different forms across the medieval world, but apparently similar phenomena

such as the emergence of market squares in the towns of northern Europe were not identical, with changes to the urban landscape being relational negotiations between different elements of urban society and the imperatives for the performance of a range of processes (Tys 2020, 80). By situating this paper within the context of contemporary concerns with urban empty spaces we are not proposing that the Middle Ages are the same as later periods (Heng 2014, 239), but seeking to understand how and why such spaces emerge and function as a characteristic of urbanity in a variety of contexts. We do this by drawing on our varied experiences of working on urban archaeology in different areas of Europe and on the Swahili coast, not to put forward a formal comparative perspective, but to allow us to create a dialogue between scales of analysis, from the stratigraphy of individual spaces to whole urban landscapes and wider networks of urban places. Our intention is to develop an understanding of the variety of ways in which these apparently empty spaces might function, how they might lead to the negotiation or emergence of multiple urbanisms, and to make the case for their study as a means of furthering our knowledge of what it meant and means to be 'urban'. We begin by outlining a methodological and theoretical approach to urban spaces which embraces their potential for generating particular forms of urbanism. In the second part we apply these ideas in relation to three themes: power, encounter, and urban resources.

Towards Productive Urbanism

Twenty years ago Peter Arnade, Martha Howell, and Walter Simons (2002, 516) were among the first to draw focus to the productive capacities of the medieval city, calling on historians to view cities not as inert material structures but as being 'alive with generative capacity', and highlighting the potential of speculative approaches which use this contention as a starting point. This work emphasizes urban spaces as intensive, that is defined not by fixed, physical structures, but by the performance of urban life which takes place in, but also generates, urban space. This challenge has not been taken up in archaeology with a great deal of enthusiasm, despite the increasing application of new materialist approaches which stress process and the implications of material engagements. As Bisserka Gaydarska (2016) argues, urban archaeology is still framed, in many contexts, by essentialist ideas of the city; ideas which are Eurocentric in origin and stress, for example, dichotomies between planned and organic growth and between urban and rural. The perspective offered by Arnade, Howell, and Simons (2002)

provides an alternative way to consider the city, not as a specific social form defined by a defined set of criteria, but rather as a complex set of contextual socio-spatial processes.[1] It is out of these processes that diverse urban forms emerge — including the types of urban space identified by Stanley and others (2012) — and are sustained. We contend that open or empty spaces within the urban landscape derive their significance as elements of those processes.

Modern cities defy neat characterization; the sprawling favelas of Rio are entirely different from the ordered boulevards of a European capital or the rapidly changing megacities of Asia. As Monica L. Smith (2019, 20–22) argues, our understanding of the city might be enhanced by focusing on perception over definition. An essentialist understanding of what the city is and can be constrains our ability to imagine urbanism otherwise; to appreciate and nurture the alternative forms of urbanism which emerge out of the entanglements of urban life. In other words, a focus on what the city 'is' limits our ability to understand what it can do (e.g. Braidotti 1994, 145; McFarlane 2011, 652–54; Frichot, Gabrielsson, and Metzger 2016b; Wallenstein 2016, 114). Our contention is that we can better understand the variability in urban experience, both within the medieval world and between the medieval and modern periods, through a focus on the areas within towns and cities with significant productive potential — spaces of emptiness. Urban diversity is not a modern phenomenon. Detailed studies of urban landscape reveal that even the most apparently rigidly planned town is overtaken by performances of urban life; plots are abandoned or amalgamated, and suburbs grow for example (see Untermann 2008a; Smith 2010; Lilley 2015; Hansen 2015; Jervis 2017a; 2017b). The forms taken by urban centres are the result of a highly variable interplay between local and external factors. The dispersed, potentially polyfocal, form of Anglo-Saxon ports at Hamwic and Lundenwic contrasts the densely focused medieval successor settlements of Southampton and London (Blair 2018, 163–74). In Africa, multiple urban trajectories can be discerned, with some sites developing initially as centres of power, which became a focus for trade, and others emerging at strategic locations on trading routes.[2] In eastern Africa, archaeological work reveals how Swahili urbanism was not the result of the imposition of urban life by Islamic incomers, but rather has a deeper history, being the outcome of centuries of contact and adaptation, leading to the

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1 See also Haase 2019 on the 'bottom-up' emergence of urban life.
2 For West Africa, see Monroe 2018.

emergence of both a distinctive settlement pattern and maritime identity (Wynne-Jones and LaViolette 2018; LaViolette and Fleisher 2009; Fleisher 2010a). In Europe too, our understanding of urban life is one of diversity. Whilst there are commonalities, the landscapes of Iberian Islamic cities vary from their Christian counterparts, and the Italian cities of Venice and Florence are a considerably different proposition to the northern towns of Bergen and London. The results of archaeological work there-fore demand an alternative conceptualization of the urban, one in which we are not shackled by essential-ism, one in which variability rather than uniformity is the default position.

An awareness of this productive capacity is appar-ent in Richard Wilk and Michael B. Schiffer's (1979) formative analysis of vacant lots in Tucson, Arizona. By analysing vacant lots as archaeological sites they documented evidence for storage and waste depo-sition, informal living, play (both by children and adults), and transit. By focusing on behaviour and practice they reveal spaces which might be perceived as negative waste in the urban landscape, as vibrant loci of material encounter. These are essential parts of the fabric of urban life and experience, but places in which the order of urban landscapes and society might be subverted. A change in our approach to these spaces in medieval towns can be facilitated through the development of a theoretical framework which privileges the intensive (that is, productive interac-tions) over the extensive (that is, of mapping phys-ical spaces) (De Landa 2016, 76). Whereas spaces appear empty and unoccupied in extensive terms, a focus on how they are performed reveals them to be generative forms of urbanity. The evolution in the interpretation of 'dark earths' in western-Euro-pean towns is an example of this. Once regarded as simple deposits of organic waste or husbandry lay-ers that separated the Roman from the medieval towns, it is now apparent that they represent another kind of 'urban life', being common open spaces that were used quite intensively during their formation processes (MacPhail, Galinié, and Verhaeghe 2003; Nicosia and Devos 2014; Wouters 2020). Such an approach helps us to overcome the inherent problem with a typological approach to urban space; whilst Stanley and others (2012) create a complex typo-logical scheme, which combines activities and scale, any typology serves to smooth out difference and, in doing so, prohibits us from developing a fuller under-standing of the productive capacities of particular occurrences of urban emptiness. To paraphrase Rosi Braidotti (2013, 99), typologies privilege particu-lar forms, stealing alternative forms from us, mean-ing we fail to understand the entirety of what a city

might be able to do. This is a challenge recognized by Stanley and others (2012, 1108–09) in their con-sideration of the dynamic character of urban open spaces, and one which the approach advocated here seeks to overcome.

The potential to develop new approaches to urban emptiness is strengthened by the increasing awareness of both archaeologists and historians of the importance of material processes in surfacing variable forms of urbanity. At a general level, both Bert de Munck (2017) and Dorothee Brantz (2017) call for a shift in focus from an analysis of the city to a consideration of the material processes which constitute it, echoing the argument put forward by Arnade and others (2002). Axel Christopherson's (2015) consideration of medieval urbanism as social practice is perhaps the most explicit attempt to draw focus away from stable urban form to dynamic urban process, a perspective which is also clearly evident in considerations of the relationship between urban-ity and consumption (e.g. Immonen 2007; Wynne-Jones 2007; Naum 2014; Linaa 2016). All of these approaches move from defining the urban to under-standing how urban communities emerge and persist, how urbanity is surfaced through certain interac-tions, being what Ben Jervis (2016, 393) considers a 'flickering quality' which is visible through certain interactions and not through others.

It is then the relationship between open space and productive interactions, between the extensive and intensive, which allows us to engage with the role of these spaces in emergent, varied, medieval urbanities. Urban life, we might perceive, is framed by boundaries which fragment space both physi-cally and socially, polarizing relations through the creation of spaces of exclusivity and marginaliza-tion (Sousa Matos 2009; McFarlane 2018, 1010). It is in understanding the relationship between exten-sive and intensive space that we can consider the affective potential of urban space; the vacant lots in Tucson might be understood as residues of pro-cesses of spatial production in which urban space is subdivided into property or functional zones, yet they are also affective spaces out of which forms of urbanity emerge (Sousa Matos 2009, 62; Hou 2010). Even spaces like market squares, which appear formal-ized, might be transformed through their entangle-ment in other processes, of protest or performance, for example. Traditional topographic approaches to urban space are well suited to mapping extensive space, however archaeological methods focused on performance and activities are required to under-stand intensity, and it is to this task emerging digi-tal and high-resolution archaeological approaches are particularly suited.

From Theory to Method: 'Empty' Spaces and Urban Landscapes

Changing perceptions of urbanism have been accompanied in archaeological research by methodological developments, although these two developmental trajectories have tended to progress independently of one another. Here we focus on two sets of methods which can be particularly effective in building an understanding of apparently empty spaces in medieval towns and cities. The first focuses on an understanding of the use of space through well-established techniques for examining urban planning and the increasing application of digital technologies to create sophisticated perspectives on urban morphology. In particular we argue that the application of GIS promotes a shift in focus from an emphasis on the 'extensive' spaces which appear when plans are used in a representational sense, to understanding towns and cities as 'intensive', performed spaces. The second focuses on what has been termed 'high-definition archaeology' (Raja and Sindbæk 2018; 2020), the innovative combination of techniques including soil micromorphology, phytolith analysis, and geochemical analysis, coupled with traditional excavation. Such approaches can also be combined with the collation of small-scale interventions into historic towns and cities which, when pieced together, provide fresh insights into activities across urban space.

Mapping Urban Space: From Extensive Space to Intensive Space

A consideration of topography is essential to understanding urban spaces. Several questions might be asked; are open or empty spaces the result of planning, or do they emerge out of the rhythms of urban life? If they are planned, what were they for, and how regulated was their use? The domination of squares and streets by administrative and religious buildings shows how some spaces form a planned 'built exterior', a space in which power could be negotiated and displayed, behaviour observed and controlled (see Fleisher 2013; Gilibert 2011; Jöchner 2008; Fisher and Creekmore 2014). Other spaces are the residues of planning or private building initiatives, which reflect the fragmentation of property and the dispersal of power to shape urban experience, a phenomenon discussed further below. In the case of European medieval towns, empty spaces were often at the margins of the urban core, functioning as reserves for future development (Cembrzyński and Radomski 2020). Even famous large towns such as Bruges, Belgium (the third largest town of late medieval Europe north of the Alps), contained large empty spaces between the first and second town wall, spaces that would not be inhabited until the nineteenth century. In some cases, open spaces might be designed in such a way as to marginalize those who engage with them, as can be seen in the marginal positioning of Jewish cemeteries in English towns (Hinton 2003). As they are enrolled into urban practice, empty spaces can be understood as trapping communities into particular sets of dependencies (Hodder 2016, 75), these spaces are retained and curated as they are necessary for forms of urban life and community to persist (see Smith 2008). These are spaces defined by relations and with multiple temporalities. They are defined, for example, through the enforcement of urban regulations, which are affective only because of the persistent materiality of buildings or boundaries. These spaces are therefore prone to disappear or change as the relations that define them dissolve or realign (Jervis 2018a). Moving away from a linear understanding of urbanism, conceptualized in terms of how current urban forms developed, our methods can be applied to identifying the various loose threads and dead ends of urban development which have been erased from contemporary landscapes.

An illustrative example is provided by GIS analysis of newly founded towns in north Wales in the thirteenth century, which reveals commonalities in planning principles, but also divergences in developmental trajectories. These towns, founded by an English king to colonize a hostile environment, were formally laid out with plots, some of which remained empty and unoccupied. This meant that the intended ordering of the urban landscape broke down, as empty spaces were amalgamated into larger plots, giving the appearance of a town which developed in a piecemeal way (Lilley, Lloyd, and Trick 2007, 291). This shows how dichotomies between planned and unplanned or occupied and unoccupied spaces are problematic, as these judgements, based on an extensive understanding of space (that is an understanding concerned with mappable, physical structures), do not account for the ways in which the intensive performances of urban life might break down and reshape urban spaces in the manner described by Arnade, Howell, and Simons (2002). GIS analysis can also reveal how apparently open spaces articulate with the wider urban landscape. Applying a space syntax approach, a quantitative analysis of the relationship between landscape features, Monika Baumanova, Ladislav Smejda, and Heinz Rüther (2019) show how in the West African cities of Timbuktu and Djenné, both in Mali, open spaces and streets were important spaces for connectivity and interaction, emerging as commerce brought together multiple
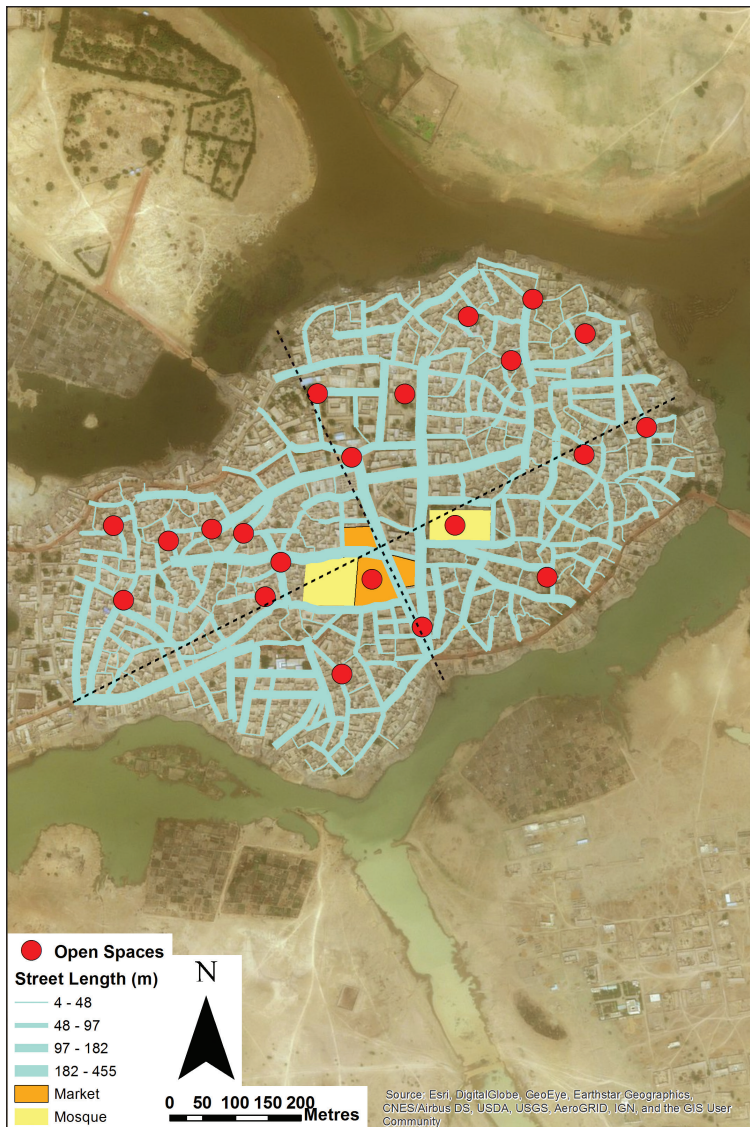
Figure 11.1. GIS analysis of the street network at Djenné, Mali. The thickness of the streets represents their relative length, and the red dots indicate the location of open spaces. Markets and mosques are also indicated. Reproduced by permission of Monika Baumanova.

one which emerges from the performance of research, rather than activity in the past, through allowing the combination of multiple information sources which, in turn, allow for an informed modelling of past town-scapes (Vetch, Clarke, and Lilley 2011, 373). Such blank spaces may emerge due to the destruction of deposits, a lack of excavation, or the performance of activities which leave only minimal archaeological traces and, critically, relate primarily to the absence of structures which can be depicted in a traditional map, rather than an absence of activity. GIS analysis therefore becomes an intervention in urban space. It allows us to rethink what maps are for. Rather than being simple representations of space they become tools in the performative emergence of past urban spaces in the present. Maps need not present the definitive view of a townscape as a static entry, but can be active in the imagining of what these spaces might become (Lilley and Dean 2015, 289). Following the Deleuzian use of the term 'virtual', these spaces are no less real than those spaces actualized through built form, and, just like these material spaces, have implications for the kinds of urban understanding which might emerge from engagement with them (see also De Landa 2005; De Landa and Harman 2017, 65; Harris 2017). If we understand empty spaces as 'blanks' in a map which is predicated on a rep-resentation of extensive space, we lack the ability to perceive of alternative forms of urban space, based on a mapping of intensities through the combina-tion of topographic, archaeological, and historical data. Rethinking maps as more-than-representational and spaces as intensive allows for the development of new digital methodologies which embrace the dynamism of the urban environment, to reimagine open and empty spaces, not as spatial voids, but as spaces of productive interaction.

From Space to Practice: The Micro-Archaeology of Empty Space

The archaeological data required to produce such maps of urban intensity are necessarily derived from fieldwork. In currently occupied towns and cities excavation is typically predicated not on a solely aca-demic research design, but as a response to contem-porary urban development. Where judgements are made about the potential significance of archaeo-logical remains, which might be encountered or dis-turbed by development, spaces which appear histor-ically empty are likely to be considered as a low pri-ority for work, delivering a low return on the invest-ment required to undertake archaeological research if this is measured in terms of artefact retrieval or

settlement foci, with open spaces being a feature of the main transit routes (Fig. 11.1). In this context, open spaces can be understood as spaces of dialogue between visitors and residents, a materialization of the expansive character of urban networks of which external relations are a key feature.

Mapping, particularly through the application of GIS, is more than a tool for representing urban space, it reveals the ways in which it is constituted as a product of spatial processes (Lilley and Dean 2015, 288–89). Some spaces appear empty through the medium of extensive mapping due to a lack of evidence. GIS analysis offers a means of filling these voids which are a distinctive form of 'empty space',

Figure 11.2. Kazimierz near Kraków. Fragment of a plan of Kraków and its suburbs, here oriented towards the north. '*Kołłątajowski*' *plan*, Kraków, Archive of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków. 1785. Reproduced with the permission of Archive of the Historical Museum of the City of Kraków.

the uncovering of structures, and not being recognized as having research potential. However, the keyholes offered by development-related excavations do allow insights to be developed into intensities of urban practice. Analysis of processes of later medieval urban change in small towns in southern England, for example, revealed a complex range of adaptations and responses to demographic and economic developments in the fifteenth century, from investment in new architecture, to the contraction of urban space or the adoption of lower-density forms of urban living (Jervis 2017b). A further challenge is posed by longer-term urban developments. For example, the 1785 map of Kazimierz, Poland, seen in Figure 11.2 shows large empty areas, which subsequently disappeared under densely built-up houses, factories, and municipal gasworks (Noga 2007, map 1.13). Similarly, medieval gardens and vineyards existed between the urban core and line of

fortifications in Cologne, Germany, until the nineteenth century, when large buildings destroyed the ephemeral archaeological evidence of the use of this peripheral space (Herborn and Koster 1997). It is clear that the long-term history of urban development as well as established archaeological research priorities have limited the potential to develop detailed knowledge about the importance of open or empty spaces to medieval urban society.

In instances where urban settlements are no longer intensively occupied, opportunities exist for detailed sampling, which can, in turn, inform our approaches to spaces which appear empty elsewhere. At Songo Mnara, Tanzania, for example, intensive shovel test-pitting combined with geophysical survey,
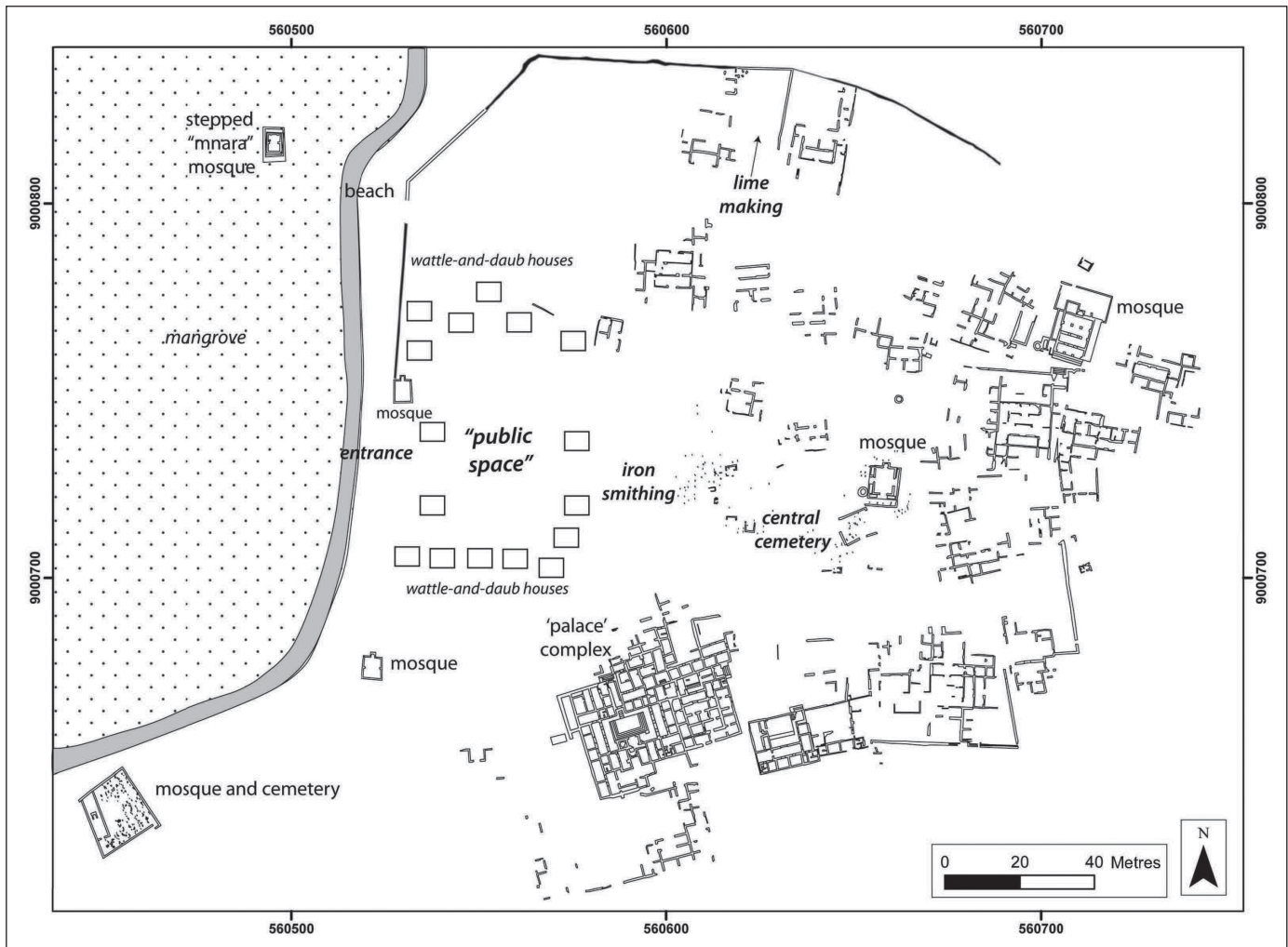
Figure 11.3. Plan of archaeological features at Songo Mnara, Tanzania, depicting open spaces and activity areas. Plan by Jeff Fleisher.

revealed a range of open spaces across the townscape, which could be distinguished through geochemical and micromorphological analysis (Fig. 11.3). This detailed work revealed areas of urban horticulture, specifically the existence of tree and orchard spaces that were distinct from grass-dominated areas elsewhere. Analysis of phytoliths from those open areas revealed broad patterns such as the presence of animal fodder showing the stabling of animals outside houses, as well as particular acts such as the laying of palm fronds on a particular tomb (Sulas and Madella 2012, 155). Against this busy background, the maintenance of an open space towards the town entrance is particularly notable, clear of domestic debris and buildings (Fleisher and Wynne-Jones 2012, 194), corresponding with Smith's (2008) contention that open spaces require consensus and legitimate authority to remain as such. Geochemical analysis here reveals evidence suggestive of these being dynamic spaces however, used for activities such as the processing

of fish, drying of nets, craft and bead production (Fleisher and Sulas 2015), activities which, if we follow Smith (2008), would have been undertaken within a common understanding of the acceptability of these activities in these spaces.

The application of geochemical and soil micromorphology also creates opportunities to examine the changing character of empty spaces in the urban landscape, to understand how their disruptive potential was realized (for example, through evidence of wild-plant growth, suggesting a space of dereliction and abandonment) (see also Gandy 2016), or, indeed, to understand how these spaces might have been formalized, enfolded into regulated performances of urban life (see Wouters 2020). Changes in the urban landscape can be identified in Kraków, Poland, for example, where combined geochemical and micromorphological analysis show the changes to hydrology and soil chemistry brought about by anthropogenic activities such as waste deposition (Mazurek and others 2016). However, as with any archaeological analysis, the potential of such work

is limited if it is not considered within a broader historical and archaeological context.

An example of such contextualized work is analysis of the development of the market square at Lier, Belgium (Wouters and others 2017). Here the development of the land surface from the pre-urban stage to the formalization of the market could be reconstructed through the identification of a series of 'dark earth' layers, representative of varied activities. The first anthropogenic layer has the characteristics of an agricultural top-soil, enriched through manuring and possibly ploughed. Botanical evidence from this deposit is also suggestive of agricultural cultivation, principally flax. The development of the town of Lier in the later twelfth century is marked by a significant change in land use. The development started from an oppidum, or fortification, the area of the later marketplace being at that time an open wasteland at the entry of the town core. The waste present changes in character to being indicative of craft and domestic activities, whilst botanical remains suggest the processing, rather than cultivation, of cereals. This deposit is sealed by a sand layer and overlain by a compacted dark earth similar in character to the underlying deposit. The final deposit, dating to the later fourteenth century or later, comprises the sand surface, probably a base for a cobbled market. This open space can be understood as a part of the 'built exterior' of Lier, a defined open area in the core of the town, which was clearly planned. Yet, the archaeological evidence jars with our understanding of markets as formal, regulated spaces. This empty space, until the late fourteenth century, was a dirty space, in which a range of activities took place. We typically identify such dirty, ambiguous, and multifunctional spaces as being situated at the periphery, but here we can see an intensive area of such activity in the urban core. The laying of a sand layer, and finally the cobbling of this space, can be understood as a physical manifestation of a desire to not only regulate and formalize this space but also to transform the identity of public space and thus the general townscape. The cobbling went hand in hand with the building of civic monumental architecture, such as the town hall. Public space was thus renegotiated from marginal in the context of a feudal fortress to central in the new urban world of the late medieval merchant town.

These examples, which focus specifically on open or empty spaces, can be situated within a more general trend towards the application of high-definition archaeological techniques to understanding urban spaces and processes (e.g. Devos and others 2013; Wouters and others 2016; Banjera and others 2017; Wouters 2018; 2020). Applications have typically

focused on the analysis of floor surfaces to understand the use of built space, but they also provide the evidential basis for understanding how these spaces were performed. Understanding why spaces remain empty and how they were used and the extent to which access and performance were restricted is critical to revealing the structures and dynamics of power at play within urban communities.

Entangling Method and Theory: Towards an Urban Archaeology of Intensity

Spatial and high-resolution archaeological techniques allow us to approach urban space differently. A focus on process shifts our understanding from seeing the city as a solely material or social entity, to being a generative bundle of interactions; the city is constantly 'taking place', always changing and requiring work to persist (McFarlane 2011, 650–51). In doing so, such approaches provide the archaeological data required to identify power as multi-textured and emergent from practice, rather than as imposed onto the urban landscape (Dovey 2011; Tonkiss 2011). A focus on process and intensity reminds us that the city is unstable, as Manuel De Landa (1997) discusses. As a coagulation of flows of people, matter, capital, and so forth the physical environment of the city is not fixed but mobile, constantly in the process of becoming something else, potentially extending beyond its bounds. The urban assemblage is an enfolding of multiple temporalities, given the appearance of durability by the relative material stability of stone or brick, the enforcement of regulation and the performance of repetitive acts (Jervis 2018a). A tension is therefore apparent
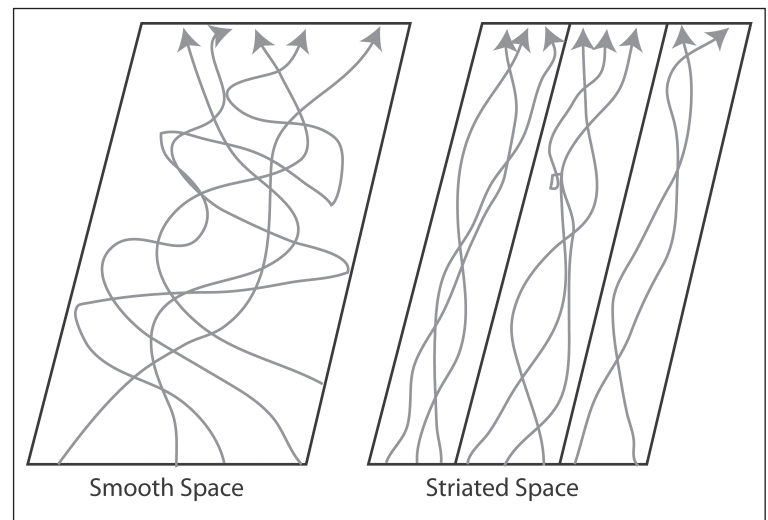

Figure 11.4. Depiction of flows of matter and relations across smooth and striated spaces. Illustration by Ben Jervis.

Figure 11.5. François Duchatel, 'Ghent Vrijdagmarkt (Friday Market) depicted in 1666 during the inauguration of Charles II', Ghent City Museum. Painted *c.* 1666–1668. Image in public domain.

between extensive and intensive understandings of the city. From an extensive perspective, the city is stable, however stability is the result of work by the physical, legal, cultural, and social structures which prevent alternative forms of urbanism from emerging (Wallenstein 2016, 118). However, these apparently stable structures are themselves intensive; materials decay, and rules and customs are enacted. Empty spaces are a particularly interesting focus of study in this regard. They are spaces in which a range of activities take place, which may challenge perceptions of urbanity or hegemonic structures of power — the encounters and confrontations which take place in them have implications for what the city might become. In this context, methodological developments in the practice of urban archaeology are particularly exciting, as they place an emphasis on understanding these micro-processes, rather than mapping the city as an extensive, stable whole.

How then, can we engage with the intensive character of urban empty spaces? We propose that concepts drawn from the assemblage thought of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari (1972; 1987) are particularly useful. The concept of the assemblage, as a dynamic and productive bundle of interactions, has been applied both within archaeology and urban studies as a means to move beyond representational approaches, towards considerations of affect; in seeing continuity and change as emerging out of relations (see De Landa 2005; McFarlane 2011; Jervis 2019). Assemblage thought is a valuable approach for engaging with the complexity and messiness of social life and the productive capacities of the material. In addition to the concepts of intensive and extensive space, a further means of understanding spaces as 'smooth' or 'striated' is particularly valuable (Fig. 11.4).

Open spaces are defined in extensive terms by the structures which enclose them, both physically and legally. For example, the enclosure of the market squares in northern European cities can be understood as a process of fragmentation which restricts the affordances of these spaces, limiting what they can become and the forms of becoming that can emerge from them (Fig. 11.5). This can be understood as a process of 'striation', a process through which space becomes structured in ways which facilitate repetition and replication. This process of striation limits the forms of urbanity which can emerge, making urban places and communities that are extensive or clearly definable. We might consider that the civic urbanity of northern Europe emerged and was underpinned by such processes of striation, being an assemblage of institutions and spaces defined in extensive terms; the market square, civic buildings, and, crucially, the rules and regulations which are designed to govern them and restrict their use, and, therefore, the potential for them to become something else, to become a part of other performances of community (see Jervis 2018b). Such an approach to regulation draws on Bruno Latour's (2010) ethnography of law, in which law is not a set of written regulations but an assemblage constantly reiterated through legal practice. It is this practice which striates public spaces, the accessibility of which creates the potential for enrolment in other practices of community.

The example of Lier, discussed above, provides a tangible example of how these concepts can come together in practice. The regulation of the market striated a previously smooth space, whilst it became bounded by a built exterior which afforded surveillance. Excavations in a number of other squares in the Low Countries reveal similar dynamic processes of change (Tys 2020, 73–74). As it became striated, as a location for specific activities, it did, however, retain a degree of productive potential. Similarly, discussing Songo Mnara, Stephanie Wynne-Jones and Jeffrey Fleisher (2016) identify how the urban landscape is composed of territories which materialize out of and also structure the practices of social, economic, and environmental interaction which constitute urban life; productive smooth space exists in the cracks between the striations created through the fragmentation of this landscape.

Whilst some spaces, such as gardens or markets, exist specifically as planned infrastructure, they always have the potential to exceed this purpose; gardens become spaces of play, vacant lots come to be used for mending cars. Empty spaces are, therefore, outside of architecture (that is, the built elements of the landscape inhabited by people) (Wilkinson 2019), but are formed in relation to it. They form a 'built exterior', a space which is outside but is not a neutral void; spaces which are inherently public and have the potential to become meaningful in a multitude of ways through action (see Fleisher 2013). These empty spaces have an 'infrastructure potential': they can become formal or informal conduits for people and goods (streets or cut-throughs), they can become spaces for storage, they can form boundaries, but they are brought alive by being drawn into engagements with people. Seeing these only as empty spaces in the extensive sense masks their virtual capacity to become otherwise as well as credits the striation of this space, for example through regulation, with creating the fallacy of a single, stable urbanity.

Whilst developments in archaeological method emphasize the study of behaviour and practice, an approach inspired by assemblage thought adds a

further depth to analysis; it allows us to consider the implications of behaviour, to understand how stable spatial formations came about, how their disruptive potential affected emergent urbanities, and the extent to which urban communities were able to exercise control over the forms of urbanity which emerged (see also Haase 2019, 69–70). A focus on open or empty space therefore allows us to retreat from a view of cities as static material constructions, towards the smoother areas of tension and production which are encapsulated in the fallacy of emptiness that an extensive mapping of urban space brings about. This causes us to reflect on our role as urban archaeologists. It seems antithetical to focus on the empty; by definition there are no structures to excavate, the spaces are blank on plans or maps. But a focus on the practices which constitute these places allows us to make an intervention into the lived experiences of past urban life. Rather than tracing the lines of fragmentation which constitute the physical landscape, we can understand the intensive practices which comprise urbanity. By drawing these materials and spaces into our research we become equipped to harness the productive potential of these spaces by drawing them into relation with archaeological methods and knowledge to build a more dynamic understanding of medieval urbanism.

Performing Emptiness

In the first parts of this paper, we have outlined an approach to understanding open or empty urban spaces, which highlights their potential as being generative of particular forms of urbanity, and shown that archaeological methods are increasingly able to facilitate such research. Following De Landa (1997) we might understand empty spaces as stores of potential, which can be released through their enrolment in urban performance. This potential can be conceptualized as power, not in the sense of oppressive control, but rather the power to shape forms of urban existence (Dovey 2011, 349). As such, open spaces are locations in which authority over the urban landscape could be contested and in which material surroundings might be manipulated in the emergence of communities. The 'smooth' character of these public spaces affords the potential for unplanned interactions and for alternative forms of power to emerge, meaning that unintentionally empty spaces had to be striated, folded into performances of urbanity to limit this disruptive potential. In this section we explore the implications of empty space through a consideration of power and the built exterior, encounters in empty space, and abandonment.

Power and the Built Exterior

The examples of Lier and Songo Mnara reveal how open spaces might facilitate the emergence of different forms of power. At Songo Mnara we observe a fluid space, which could be used for a variety of functions, suggestive of communal consensus and a recognition of the infrastructure potential of this space. Claims on this space were made through daily interactions with it, but also, potentially, through its enrolment in public rituals. Drawing on ethnographic evidence, Fleisher (2013, 268–69) proposes that the open spaces in Swahili towns, such as that identified through the high-resolution techniques applied at Songo Mnara, could be used periodically for public performances of dance. These performances could relate to communal processions, associated, for example, with religious festivals or rites of passage and show how the space could be bound up in the performance of urban communities at multiple scales. In contrast, the formalization of the marketplace in Lier, and at other towns in northern Europe, reveals a process of striation, an imposition of power by an emergent mercantile elite, who secured their rights to administer this space through regulations and the incorporation of this space into a built exterior by enclosing it with guild buildings (Tys 2020, 78–79) (Fig. 11.5). At Songo Mnara we see the public space enclosed by domestic buildings, implying a different form of surveillance over this space, perhaps a form of communal guardianship rather than an explicit imposition of control (Fig. 11.3). However, one particular part of the public space was also overlooked by the palace complex, a more withdrawn, but imposing, form of surveillance over this space. In these two examples we see different relationships emerging between public space and the private spaces which bound them, which can be understood as different strategies of claiming and enacting power over the urban landscape and the activities which constitute it (see Dovey and Wood 2015, 13). These are spaces which are striated differently, retaining disruptive capacities in their smooth space which are suppressed by different forms of action (see Gandy 2016), from ritual activity to physical enclosure.

The open nature of this space at Songo Mnara suggests that it was open to all, and that townspeople were participants, or at least observers in, public performances including initiation rituals and the receiving of visitors. It is common to understand such performances as promoting a sense of civic unity and togetherness, but they were also likely carefully choreographed to realize the potential of the built exterior in framing and shaping performance;

as a means of stimulating repetition through ritual practice. At Songo Mnara this may have included the enrolment of this space in processional routes between the mosques, whereas in London, for example, processional routes were designed to highlight the purity of the city as a spiritual body, purging its filthiness through utilizing conduits in the route and transforming urban infrastructure from simply being a source of water, to being a source of civic power and spirituality (DeVries 1996, 417; see also Lilley 2004), suppressing the disruptive potential of streets through building collective meaning. In sixteenth-century Florence, Italy, public performance became a means of uniting court and city in the context of rising ducal power, using the streets overtly to dominate the urban landscape in order to suppress the more dispersed structure of power which characterized earlier periods (Canguilhem 2010). Elements of the built exterior suggest that components of urban landscapes were specifically designed to have potential for the performance of community building and the exertion of political agency. This might take the form of the domination of public spaces or the use of architectural features, such as displays of coats of arms in later medieval Italian cities; to make 'a visual claim on the public spaces on to which their buildings projected' (Nevola 2010, 353). We can also understand the built exterior as fluid; for example, during royal visits to York, England, banners were unfurled to emphasize civic power, manipulating the spaces of the streets by temporarily politicizing them, or at least making their political nature overt (Murphy 2006, 246–48), revealing how the smoothness of streets allows their potential to be manipulated through the material relations in which they are entangled. These spaces are instrumental in the performance of urban communities, providing arenas for communities and households to mark their presence, but also providing spaces in which power could be claimed and contested (Nevola 2010, 353). The openness around the built environment is essential for these buildings to function as impressive or dominant structures. Open spaces are therefore embroiled within a tension between extensive representations of power and the resultant physical domination of space and the emergence of alternative, potentially disruptive, forms of power from the open smooth spaces in between.

Analysis of urban politics in northern Europe reveals how these spaces also provided venues in which power could be tested. As Marc Boone (2002, 623) states in the case of later medieval Flanders, 'urban space offered urban factions concrete sites for consolidating power relations among themselves and staging, often theatrically, the conflicts

between the city and its princely rivals'. Spaces such as squares represent substantial investment but can be easily appropriated for political or other means (Stanley and others 2012, 1103), emphasizing the tensions between open or empty spaces as extensive forms and intensive processes emerging out of the smooth spaces in between. The process of formalizing market spaces not only provided a delimited space in which trade and commerce could be regulated, but around which a built exterior could be created, framing squares for example with guildhalls and patrician houses as seen around the central squares in Ghent, Belgium, and Lille, France, for example (Boone 2002, 624; Tys 2020). In 1432, Ghent's marketplace was occupied by the guilds contesting ducal power, whilst in 1381 the open space at Blackheath outside of the city of London was used as a gathering place during the uprising of the Peasants' Revolt (see DeVries 1996, 409). In German and Flemish cities, processions, often understood as promoting civic unity, also brought communal tensions to the forefront, for example as guilds jostled over their rights to perform particular roles (Boone 2002, 632; Arlinghaus 2010, 228). The built exterior striated urban space, imposing power over open spaces through overt symbolism and regulation of activities, but the public nature of these spaces created tension. They could be used to test the boundaries of power (Boone 2002, 633) as elements of urban communities exploited the smooth space between the regulatory and spatial striations imposed on these spaces, seeking to release the disruptive energy, or political capital, bound up in them. It is in this smoothness, this productive potential, that commonalities can be drawn between these apparently formal open spaces such as squares and seemingly unrelated empty spaces such as vacant plots, and the extent to which this potential can be suppressed makes them distinctive from each other.

Urban Encounters

Streets and other public spaces are places in which we encounter others. These encounters may be passive, fleeting, or more sustained. Different types of space afford different types of encounter, and therefore can have varying implications for experiences of urbanity (Stanley and others 2012, 1105; Mehta 2018, 33–34; Rosén 2019). Repetitive use of spaces, for example to visit a market, may facilitate conversations with people who are regularly encountered and may become a distinctive social event. Streets, spaces associated with transit, may afford more passive encounters or confrontations. Encounters with

people or things may be genuinely transformative and enfold experiences in public space with encounters in private spaces but might also lead to feelings of unease or the contestation of power (Öbrink 2019, 163). A focus on encounter emphasizes the intensive character of open space. A range of strategies might be used to manage this intensity or productive potential, including spatial segregation and the heightening of awareness of the social implications of particular forms of behaviour, exacerbated through a sense of surveillance inherent within a deliberately oppressive built exterior (Bodnár 2015, 2092).

Markets and quaysides were particular areas of encounter with others, not just with other people, but also with unfamiliar commodities and ways of life. Studies of consumption, focused on the occurrence of goods within households, necessarily enfold encounters in these spaces with the emergence of urban ways of life, whilst variability in consumption might provide a proxy for the segregation of communities and, therefore, the control over these spaces of encounter. These encounters create tension between the maintenance of difference and the role of markets and quaysides as sites for the enfolding of spaces and communities into wider economic or cultural networks. An example is provided by the assimilation of German commodities into the households of medieval Tallin, Estonia, but at the same time, there is a continued expression of ethnic identity through distinctive dress (Naum 2014). Here, we can understand streets and markets not simply as the extensive space of the urban landscape, but as spaces of encounter and negotiation out of which particular forms of identity and urbanity emerged through the enfolding, of commodities with space, resulting in the emergence of distinctive urban cultures.

It was not only through trade that commodities, people, and spaces became entangled in processes of cultural production. The open space at Songo Mnara probably did not find regular use as a market — our understanding of Swahili exchange suggests that trade was carried out within houses (Allen 1979; Wynne-Jones 2013; Wynne-Jones and Fleisher 2016). However, spaces and traded commodities came together in different ways. Imports were prestige items traded privately and used in public display, for example, in public feasts within open space, in which relations of status and difference could be visibly emphasized (Wynne-Jones 2007; Fleisher 2010b). These two cases demonstrate an advantage of relational approaches to emergent urbanity; scales of analysis, in this case the urban landscape and portable objects, are enfolded and the relationship between them considered not as reflec-

tive of an urban culture but as productive of urbanity. They situate open spaces as spaces of encounter, as active in the constitution of urban life, rather than being a residue of it.

Cemeteries are a particular type of open space that archaeologists have increasingly recognized as playing host to public, constitutive events. For example, Meredith S. Chesson (2001, 3) argues that mortuary ceremonies, carried out in open spaces, were important 'public arenas for communication and assessment of individuals, social groups, and social relationships'. According to Philippe Ariès (1977), cemeteries were one of the most crowded spaces in European medieval towns and cities. They were locations for sacral events, doing business, socializing and pleasure, as well as being safe havens for people fleeing from urban jurisdiction. Analysing activities in two cemeteries in Odense, Denmark, Jakob T. Christensen (2019) observes spatial differences in devotional and social activities in these spaces, related to wider social dynamics between groups within the urban community. Archaeological research conducted in graveyards surrounding churches in medieval Wrocław, Poland, revealed pottery and animal bones, a clay-horse fragment, clay balls, a weight, and elements of clothing. Such artefacts were found in trampling layers, and they were interpreted as traces of waste removal, games, play, and trading (Wojcieszak 2012, 105). Similarly, in Copenhagen, Denmark, excavation has revealed evidence of social gathering and blacksmithing within and around cemetery spaces (Jensen 2019). The public spaces of cemeteries in Swahili towns were similarly dynamic, with evidence of trash deposition and iron production, as well as being central places where ancestry and commemoration were enacted through prayers and offerings left at the graveside (Fleisher 2014). Archaeological data from the central cemetery at Songo Mnara indicates three types of public activities: 'the necropolitics of mortuary rituals; the use of the cemetery as a site of public performance related to politics and life-cycle events; and the continuous reuse of the cemetery in the ongoing commemoration of particular individuals at grave's edge' (Fleisher 2014, 19). The public qualities of these activities were heightened by the visibility of the cemetery from the most prominent structures at the site, suggesting that 'what happened in the cemetery was meant to be seen' (Fleisher 2014, 19).

Open spaces could facilitate encounter and the emergence of communities. Carole Rawcliffe (2009) describes how areas of European cities were set aside for the laundering of clothes and, as such, became sites for the negotiation and maintenance of gendered and professional identities, becoming, simultane-
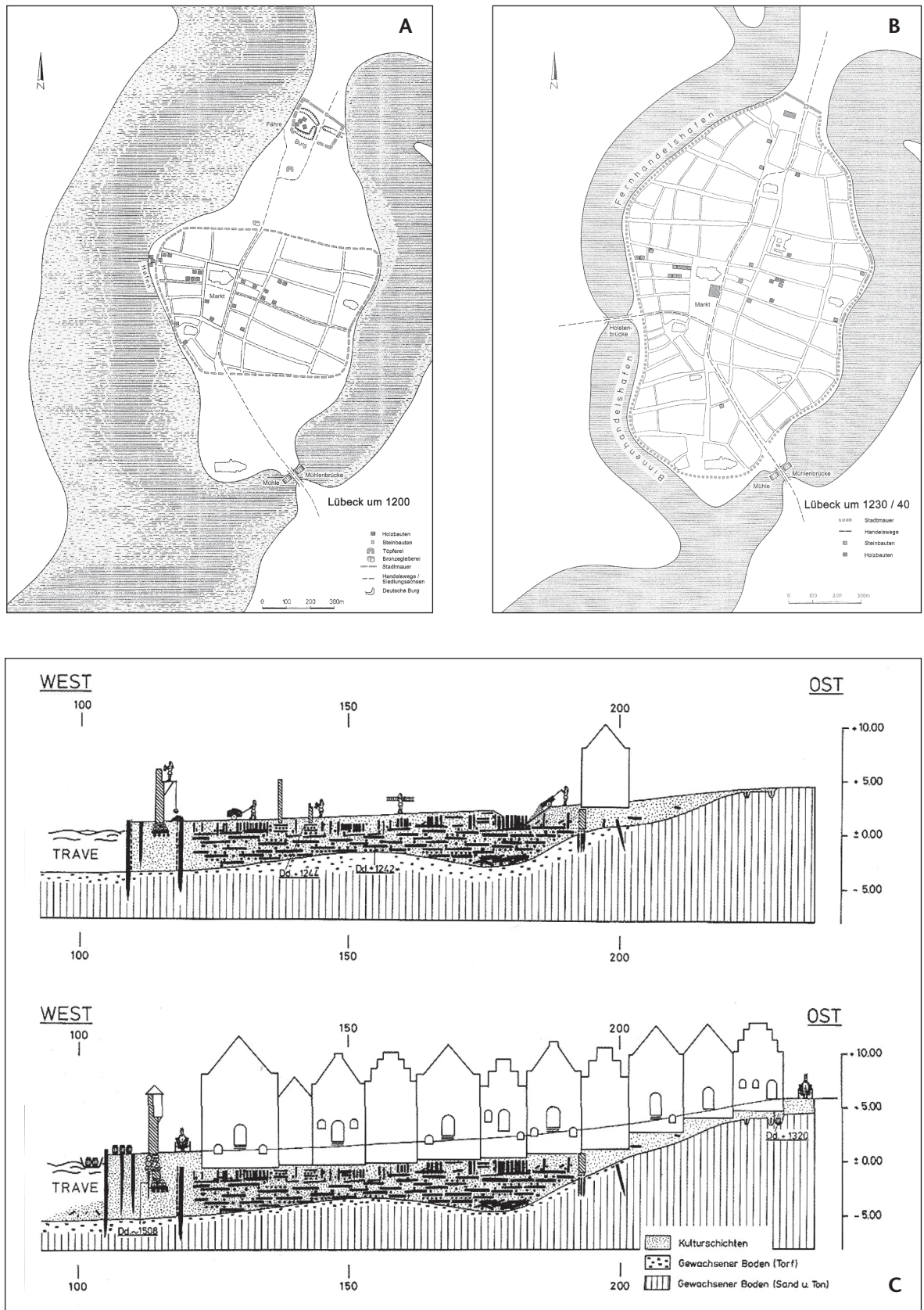
Figure 11.6. Lübeck, reconstruction of land reclamation: A. Topography of Lübeck at the end of the twelfth century; B. Topography in the middle of the thirteenth century; C. Reconstruction of land reclamation on Große Petersgrube street from first half of the thirteenth century (upper) to the second half of the thirteenth century (lower). Bereich Archäologie und Denkmalpflege der Hansestadt Lübeck, by Manfred Gläser.

ously, places for the strengthening of communities and the othering of the women engaged in this menial task. Marginalization and segregation is a strategy for restricting the disruptive potential of encounter, a means not only of marginalizing 'others' but of creating this distinction; restricting the potential forms of urbanity which might emerge; striating urban spaces. As David Sibley (2001, 248) concludes 'the city is for many people not a space of unanticipated encounters, but a space of closure and predictability, encouraged by the circulation of fantasies of threatening otherness'. In European towns the segregation of Jewish communities in marginal areas (in part due to the agency of lordship in settling Jewish communities in areas under their own, rather than burghers' control) and the codification of this in regulation and fees served to minimize the risk of encounters with otherness (Scholz 2018, 56; Hinton 2003). Similar deliberate segregation can be seen in Iberian towns between Islamic and Christian communities following the Reconquista, although evidence of commercial interactions between these groups perhaps points to the potency of open or empty spaces in facilitating encounters which undermine this institutionalized othering (see Gerrard 1999; Trindade 2007). A further example is provided by the replanning of markets in Anglo-Norman Britain, as Norman authorities reoriented the urban landscape, shifting and formalizing places of encounter as an incoming colonial power (Lilley 2017). Such attempts seek to map social difference in extensive terms, to striate the urban landscape. However, smooth space, intensive potential, remains between these striations, in which these spaces play a role both in administering difference but also in blurring it through the emergence of alternative urban realities.

Urban encounters had implications, with the potential to stimulate alternative forms of urban identity which opposed the rigid hierarchical organization imposed by urban elites. Regulation served to prevent the emergence of these alternative forms of power by creating consequences for inappropriate behaviour in public open spaces, to suppress their volatility. This regulation could take the form of legislation but could equally be 'softer', taking the form of the threat of moral judgement. For example, in England, Italy, and elsewhere sumptuary legislation served to restrict consumption in an attempt to reduce its potential for challenging the social order. In engaging with public spaces, people had to take care in presenting themselves — confrontation had implications for the self (Shaw 2005, 154; Jackson 2010; Howell 2010, 234–43). These implications undermined trust, limiting the opportunities

for individuals to engage in economic interactions. Through passive encounters in particular, subverting rules brought judgements, and as Judit Bodnár (2015, 2092) states 'presenting the self in public comes with certain anxiety similar to stage fright', with socially inappropriate display potentially leading to discrimination or worse, violence. Open spaces therefore were not neutral. As spaces of encounter they played a fundamental role as a part of assemblages of regulatory practice, in suppressing otherness and potential defiance, stigmatizing excessive consumption and display, and serving to further fragment the urban community.

Empty Spaces as Resources: Infrastructure, Abandonment, and Renegotiating the Urban

So far, we have focused on formal spaces such as streets and markets, proposing that built exteriors were manipulated to articulate power, but that empty spaces have an inherent disruptive potential. As spaces of encounter they are integral to the emergence of urban communities and cultures, not just as places for communal performance, but for interactions with material things, which might lead to distinctly urban performances, as in the relations with imported goods in Hanseatic and Swahili towns. The disruptive potential of these spaces could be managed through multiple scales of regulation and through the manipulation of the physical landscape. But what of those other empty sites; spaces of dereliction and spaces such as gardens, which challenge our ideas of what urban space should be?

Such places are often found at the peripheries of medieval European towns, away from the urban core and major streets. The location of these spaces might be determined by a variety of factors. In polyfocal towns they could occur in the unbuilt areas between the cores (Piekalski 2001; Cembrzyński and Radomski 2020). Topography could also have an influence. Low-lying areas prone to flooding were not suitable for habitation, but could become communal waste dumps as in Esslingen, Germany (Seidel 2015). Such empty spaces could be enfolded into the planned landscape, a process often requiring substantial capital and political investment, as in Lübeck, Germany, where land was reclaimed (Gläser 2004), a further example of how empty space could become enrolled in political action (Fig. 11.6). Empty space could also emerge as what Stanley and others (2012, 1106–08) term incidental spaces. For example, in many new town foundations land was left for speculative growth. Some were rapidly infilled, whilst others, particularly at the periphery, remained unoccupied. Such

Figure 11.7. Prague New Town, a fragment of the imperial cadastral plan from 1842. Czech Office for Surveying, Mapping and Cadastre <www.cuzk.cz> [accessed 1 July 2021].

piecemeal development can be observed in Wrocław, Poland, where areas inside the first town wall were divided into plots and developed over a period of five decades (Chorowska 2010). Particularly in eastern Europe, peripheral land could also be left vacant as it remained in seignorial possession, creating a reserve of land which could be granted to religious communities or used to construct a castle or residence, as in Głogów, Poland (Adamska 2018) or Wrocław (Eysymontt and Goliński 2017, map 5).

Mapping urban space in extensive terms provides a means to identify such spaces. However, understanding them in intensive terms helps us to better understand the implications of such spaces, not as simply indicative of decay, but as active in the process of urban adaptation. Stanley and others (2012, 1095–97) note the common occurrence of areas for food production in urban landscapes, and the existence of small gardens and larger zones of cultivation in peripheral areas are features of many European towns and cities (Zeven 2003), although peripheral areas could support much larger production. In Cologne a town wall was erected in 1180. This enclosed a large area of former suburbs and four cloisters, extending the enclosed urban area to around 390 ha (Höltken 2016). This enclosed area remained undeveloped until the nineteenth century, being covered with gardens and vineyards that in the seventeenth century accounted for around 30 per cent of the urban space (Herborn and Koster 1997). Similar phenomena can be observed in Bruges, Mechelen, Brussels, all in Belgium, and other towns and also in particular in Prague New Town, Czech Republic, founded by Emperor Charles IV of Luxembourg as his ideological capital in 1348 (Fig. 11.7). In the southern part of the town, written records reveal the presence of areas referred to as *vinea* (vineyard) and *ortus* (garden) (Tomek 1870). Whilst some of these areas were subsequently developed, as was the case in Antwerp, Belgium, where the remaining medieval open areas, such as orchards, provided the space for further urban development during the demographic rise in the sixteenth century (Fig. 11.8), others per-

sisted for several centuries, and archaeological work has identified several long-lived gardens within the city.[3]

The appearance and maintenance of both planned and unplanned open or empty spaces and their reuse for activities such as food production call on us to question where the urban ends and the rural begins and to explore the permeability of this boundary. This is well demonstrated in early medieval Italy, where urban gardens were common features. These are often interpreted as indicative of decay, of a process of 'ruralization', but Caroline Goodson (2018) proposes that they played an important role in the performance of urban life, particularly in the negotiation of power, social cohesion, and devotion, by being a means for landowners to secure foodstuffs, engage in the charitable dona-

Figure 11.8. Antwerp, Vlaeykensgang: this alley was a sixteenth-century development of a former urban garden, due to the increasing demand of lodgings in the successful trades' town of Antwerp. Image in the public domain.

tion of foodstuffs to the church, and display wealth through the visibility of these holdings within the urban landscape. As such these spaces are important, adaptive features of the urban landscape in regard to food security, and it is dangerous to assume that open spaces support a simple narrative of urban decay. Instead, they can be vital resources for the emergence of new forms of urbanity, which challenge a stark dichotomy between urban and rural. Likewise, in Byzantine and Islamic Jerash, Jordan, the creation of urban gardens testify to the ongoing vitality and changing face of the city after the decline of Roman Gerasa (Lichtenberger and Raja 2015). These spaces are bound up in the emergence of different manifestations of the urban to those performed, for example, through formal exchange in markets or civic professions. We can contrast planned empty spaces, either at the margins or in the urban core, places set aside for specific functions in the performance of urban life, against those which are the product of processes of abandonment, decay, and adaptation. A focus on practice, on the activities afforded by these spaces, allows us to move from

understanding them in negative terms as decayed spaces and instead to engage with their 'generative potential' as they become enrolled in urban life in new ways; generating multiple forms of urbanity.

In England, there is a long-running debate over the impact of the Black Death and later medieval economic decline on urban landscapes.[4] Keith D. Lilley (2015) has proposed that urban contraction can be seen in more positive terms, as a process of replanning and adjustment. Archaeological analysis (Jervis 2017b) demonstrates how the abandonment of plots within towns created opportunities for the built exterior to be manipulated and for urban space to be used in new ways, potentially facilitating the emergence of particular forms of urbanism. Demographic decline afforded opportunities to acquire wealth through the acquisition of property and the inflation of wages. Empty plots in towns, as we have proposed, are stores of disruptive potential. In this case, this potential could be unleashed as new landowners emerged who were able to build up substantial urban estates, potentially shifting the balance of power among the urban community. For example, in the port of Winchelsea, East Sussex, there is both archaeological and historical evidence for the subdi-

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3 For the urbanization of open spaces and gardens in sixteenth-century Antwerp, see e.g. Huml 1995; Dragoun 2007; Frolík 1997; Soly 1978.

4 For summaries, see Hadwin 1986; Dyer 1991; Jervis 2017b.

viding of plots and also for engrossment, the merging of plots. In this town, whilst some were disposing of land, others were building up urban estates of rental properties (Martin and Martin 2004, 98–100). The modification of abandoned buildings and the erection of new houses, particularly adopting new architectural styles, allowed this urban wealth to be displayed. This process of rebuilding and altering plot layouts changed the streetscape, altering the interface between public and private, creating new opportunities for display and surveillance as a new built exterior emerged adapted to the changing distribution of wealth and power in the town. Elsewhere spaces could be taken up by institutions. In the nearby town of Rye, for example, the friary was relocated into the town (Draper 2009). Such relocation might be understood in the context of restoring civic pride, and a similar event can be seen in fifteenth-century Siena, Italy, where a new chapel was built on a vacant lot as a means of purifying space and emphasizing civic pride (Nevola 2013, 98). Similarly, in Freiburg im Breisgau, Germany, and Bern, Switzerland, the foundation of mendicant houses in empty peripheries within the town walls was considered as a way to make those areas more attractive (Baeriswyl 2003, 246). In other cases, newly empty spaces became repurposed as urban infrastructure, for example for the drying of cloth; rather than being indicative of decline, they facilitated industrial intensification and economic growth (Jervis 2017b).

Political change could also lead to empty spaces being understood differently, or, indeed, to new empty spaces emerging. In some cases spaces left empty for speculative or seignorial development served as a statement of power and gained symbolic meaning. The ongoing struggle for autonomy between urban communities and their lords often resulted in the destruction of a lord's castle (Untermann 2008b). After such a struggle in Zürich, the town council decided in 1300 to leave the former castle area undeveloped. It remains like this to this day (Lindenhof park) (Untermann 2008b, 12). In Toruń, Poland, the Teutonic Order's castle was destroyed at the beginning of an uprising in 1454, first spontaneously by angry burghers and after that through a planned operation. Later that empty space served as a waste disposal area until it was excavated in 1960 (Biskup 1992, 11). Landscape reconfiguration could also be facilitated by the confrontation between different ways of living, as is the case in Portugal following the Christian Reconquista. Here, an Islamic system of urbanity (based on the separation of activities and privacy) was gradually adapted and erased, as a Christian way of urban life, in which residential and economic activities were not differentiated and

the city was understood as a corporate rather than spiritual entity, emerged. Muslims were pushed to the periphery and, in the centre, empty spaces came to be reconceptualized as places for displays of pageantry and Christian belief, places of messy encounters between the economic and domestic, becoming pivotal in the breaking down of the prevailing system (Trindade 2007, 36–38). We can see the urban landscape as a process of spatial striation and smoothing. As spaces become de-stratified, or over-coded, socio-spatial structures break down. The ambiguity and multifunctionality of empty spaces afford this change, as the collective consensus over their use is withdrawn and they become entangled in a process of urban renegotiation.

Rather than seeing abandoned spaces and gardens as evidence of an underdeveloped or deteriorated form of urban life, it is productive to understand these spaces as indicative of urban maturity: that is, of an urban place which has 'achieved a spatial framework for *generating* and *facilitating* street life, various cultural activities, small business development, land use diversity, and so forth' (Ye and van Nes 2013, 19, our emphasis). Empty spaces, we propose, are transformative; they are places out of which new forms of urbanity could emerge. Whilst some may be unintentional landscapes, others are clear investments in the infrastructure required to sustain urban life, both literally but also spiritually and politically. These spaces certainly challenge our understandings of urban spaces and communities but demonstrate the integral role of empty spaces as a resource for the articulation of urban living, highlighting them as a resource to be taken seriously by archaeologists and historians.

Conclusion

It is our contention that open and empty spaces provide a resource for challenging conventional understanding of medieval urbanism, and that a convergence of methodological and theoretical developments offers an opportunity to realize this potential. Understanding the diversity of these spaces and the encounters which took place within them equips us to be alive to the potential of understanding medieval urbanisms as multiple, as materializations of entangled temporalities, as repeated performances, and as stores of disruptive potential which might force the urban to emerge differently, both in medieval experience and as we reimagine these spaces through analysis. The range of examples discussed here illustrate only a snapshot of the range of urbanities which might emerge in the medieval world but illustrate

how they are integral components in the negotiation of power and community. Far from being residues of urban life, we propose that the blanks in extensive maps of the urban landscape should be viewed as intensive processes, enmeshed in the emergence of complex, multiple, and unstable forms of urbanity. Smith (2008, 219) had already emphasized the importance of understanding activities over spaces. By considering the texture of space as smooth or striated, the ways in which behaviour is restricted by the development of built exteriors, and the enrolment of space in regulatory or repetitive practices we propose that empty spaces are powerful components of the urban landscape. They afford resistance and revolt, community building and the mediation of power (see Haase 2019, 69–70). In contemporary society urban empty spaces are increasingly under threat, as they become colonized for development, and the urban landscape becomes increasingly fragmented. Historicizing empty space has a dual benefit in relation to these debates; historical narratives provide a powerful narrative for the preservation of open space as stores of creative and productive potential, whilst also helping us to understand the potential implications of the spaces which open up between development — to understand the implications of surveillance and access on the forms of urbanity which might emerge and the kinds of social segregation which empty spaces might both facilitate or smooth over (see also Sousa Matos 2009; Stanley and others 2012). Therefore, understanding the ways in which empty spaces emerge and are manipulated deepens our ability to determine why medieval cities took various forms, both physically and socially and to consider the implications of urbanism both in the past and today. Empty spaces have disruptive potential, they facilitate encounters with 'others', they afford gathering, and the activities which take place within them inevitably become enfolded into private lives. Once we begin to attend to the potential of empty and open spaces, an urban archaeology without them becomes unimaginable.

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