

Cross-Field Dialogues: Cultural Heritage and Civilisation

Moesgaard Campus, University of Aarhus



Thursday 19th June 2025, University of Aarhus

Organisers:

Jeremy Smith, Ali Mozaffari and David C Harvey

Cross-Field Dialogues: Cultural Heritage and Civilisation

Conference Programme

Room 4206-121

NB: All times are CET.

From 09.00 – Gather (Coffee and light breakfast available)

09:30–09:45 – Introduction and Opening Conversation

Heritage and Civilisation: Framing the Dialogue, Speakers: Jeremy Smith, Ali Mozaffari, David C Harvey

This opening session introduces the nexus of heritage and civilisation, sets out the goals of the workshop, outlines its conceptual stakes, and previews key questions to be pursued across the day.

09:45–12:00 – Session 1: Heritage, Memory, and Civilisational Identity

This session explores how the past and its material, cultural, or ideological heritage (legacy) is mobilised to construct and legitimise civilisational identities across modern nation-states.

09:45 – Edward Boyle: [*Heritage, industrial civilization, and its discontents*](#) (online presentation)

10:15 – Robert Steele: [*The civilisational discourse and its development in modern Iran*](#)

(Mini-Comfort Break)

11:00 – Carsten Paludan-Müller: [*Balancing heritage – in a world out of balance*](#)

11:30 – John Rundell: [*Multiple modernities and civilisations*](#) (online presentation)

12:00–13:00 – Lunch (Moesgaard Canteen)

13:00–15.15 – Session 2: Institutions of Heritage and Civilisational Staging

This session focuses on contemporary practices, institutions, and interpretive frameworks through which heritage is curated, exhibited, and politicised in civilisational terms.

13:00 – Britt Baillie: [*Civilizational narratives and heritage in the Croatian borderlands*](#)

13:30 – Jeremy Smith: [*Heritage at the edge: coastal currents and their intercivilisational engagement*](#)

14:00 – Vinnie Nørskov: [*Repatriation of cultural heritage as intercivilisational encounters*](#)

14:30–15:00 – Break (Tea/Coffee and Cake)

15:00–17:15 – Session 3: Temporal Orders and Civilisational Politics of the Past

This session explores the framing of time, myth, and memory in heritage discourses and civilisational projects — with attention to how the past is synchronised, contested, and re-narrated.

15:00– Joni Vainikka: [*Civilisations in time: setting territorial temporalities in Finland*](#)

15:30 – Emily Hanscam: [*Roman origin myths as civilizational narratives*](#)

(Mini-Comfort Break)

16:15– Yulia Prozorova: [*Civilizational discourse and the instrumentalization of cultural heritage in contemporary Russia*](#) (online presentation)

16:45– Ali Mozaffari: [*Civilisational Boundaries: Heritage–Border Complexes and the Spatial Logics of Multipolarity*](#)

17:15–17:30 – Closing Remarks

Speakers: Jeremy Smith, Ali Mozaffari, David C Harvey

19:00 onwards – Informal Dinner / Social Gathering in town (TBA)

Abstracts and Biographies

Edward Boyle: *Heritage, industrial civilization, and its discontents*

(Online Presentation)

This paper will discuss the relation between cultural heritage and civilization through the prism of industrial heritage in Japan. Initially associated with the recognition of cultural heritage that traditionally fell beyond the purview in the West, Japan's 21st century embrace of industrial heritage has brought tensions between heritage and civilization into focus. Notably, the controversial 2015 inscription of Sites of Japan's Meiji Industrial Revolution: Iron and Steel, Shipbuilding and Coal Mining has highlighted the multiple layers of political contestation arising at and over sites of cultural heritage which are celebrated as civilizational achievements.

The assertion of the civilizational significance of these sites of heritage situates them beyond their role as local contributions to national development, instead positioning them as an Asian cultural response to modernity. However, as South Korea's protests regarding the dispute reveal, both temporal and spatial borders define this nomination, as what is intended as a celebration of culture is reduced to a particular place (Japan within its current borders) and time (prior to 1910) in order to separate Japan from later imperial linkages with Asia. The nomination therefore both celebrates and decries Japan's connections with the continent.

This post-2015 history of the dispute over this site reveals the implications implicit within the nomination. Japan's claim to materialize a particularly Asian response to western modernity is one with clear geopolitical implications regarding both restitution for the past and imaginations of the future. Yet the broad civilizational 'value' claimed for this heritage does not map easily onto either the individual sites, nor how these are already positioned within local understandings of the connections between heritage and civilization. This paper will dig into the divergence between cultural heritage and industrial civilization as mediated through Japan's heritage today.

Edward Boyle is Associate Professor at the International Research Center for Japanese Studies (Nichibunken), Kyoto, and the editor of *Japan Review*. He researches spaces of connection and contestation in Japan and its neighbourhood, the wider region, and Northeast India. Recent publications include *Contesting Memorial Spaces of Japan's Empire* (Bloomsbury 2024, w. Steven Ivings), *Heritage, Contested Sites, and Borders of Memory in the Asia Pacific* (with Steve Ivings, Brill 2023), and *Geo-Politics in Northeast Asia* (with Iwashita Akihiro and Yong-Chool Ha, Routledge 2022). Ongoing projects include research into the role and significance of borders of memory in Asia (see www.bordersofmemory.com), and a long-term collaborative interdisciplinary investigation entitled 'Island Japan: Fluid Bodies, Senses, and Imaginaries.'

Robert Steele: *The civilisational discourse and its development in modern Iran*

The period around the turn of the twentieth century in Iran has been called ‘the Iranian enlightenment’ (Ansari, 2012), as a generation of intellectuals, inspired by European ideas and writers, and seeking to explain and remedy Iran’s backwardness in comparison to the European powers with which it came into ever more frequent contact, sought to construct a narrative for the Iranian homeland. At this time, as Iran transitioned from an empire to a modern nation, these intellectuals and politicians came to view Iran not as a nation-state in the traditional sense, but as a civilisation.

This paper examines the development of Iran’s civilisational discourse throughout the twentieth century. It examines not only Iranians’ engagement with their own past, but also how concepts of civilisation were influenced by European intellectuals, such as Gustave Le Bon, and by political engagement with other nations with similar claims to civilisational heritage. The educational policies of Reza Shah and the cultural politics of the early Pahlavi state, notably the grand celebration marking the thousandth anniversary of the birth of the great national poet Ferdowsi, demonstrated the state’s attempts to instill a particular understanding of Iranian culture and civilisation in the Iranian consciousness.

The presentation of Iran as a distinct civilisation became a particularly significant aspect of the nation-building project of Shah Mohammad Reza Pahlavi (r. 1941-1979). His relations with other countries, such as Egypt and Ethiopia, were often presented in the press and in public addresses as the coming together of civilisations, yet always on the understanding that Iran was the superior civilisation. In the final decade of his reign, the shah stylised his efforts to bring about social, economic and cultural development as a march towards the ‘era of the great civilisation’.

The paper explores both the language employed by political leaders and intellectuals to express the existence and exceptionality of an Iranian civilisation, as well as the evidence they drew upon, including ancient cities, monuments and artefacts, and how such effects were reimagined and refashioned to fit this discourse. Although this was a state-driven project, implemented with the help of and to a certain degree legitimised by foreign governments and organisations such as UNESCO, local actors engaged with and ultimately helped to shape its development. Thus, the paper questions how this discourse functioned at different scales – local, national and international.

Robert Steele is a researcher at the Institute of Iranian Studies, Austrian Academy of Sciences. He has authored and edited several books on the history of modern Iran, most recently the first English translation of Mohammad Reza Pahlavi’s *Towards the Great Civilization* (I.B. Tauris, 2024). Robert.steele@oeaw.ac.at

Carsten Paludan-Müller: *Balancing heritage – in a world out of balance*

This paper understands history, memory, culture, and heritage as products of long, ongoing network-processes at various scales. It is an understanding that includes a geopolitical perspective on the generation, modification, interpretation, and annihilation of what we call cultural heritage. But it also refers to experiences of individuals and communities that have been uprooted in the maelstroms of history; experiences that reveal our existential connectedness with heritage.

When examining targeted destruction of cultural heritage, we see lost markers of historic depth and cultural identities. Also, we see underlying rationales instrumentalising emotions and their destructive discharge. Cultural heritage constitutes both potent assets and important targets in cognitive and kinetic warfare: it offers entry points to personal lives, to collective identities, and to wider human history. It reaches from the personal to the global level.

Cultural heritage has long been an instrument in conflict. Selective destruction of it serves to delegitimize an adversary. Alternative selections and interpretations of cultural heritage can be used to promote own legitimacy. Heritage is a communicative medium.

During conflicts between dynastic Southern Indian states since the 8th century C.E. victorious rulers are known to have destroyed temples built by adversaries – not for religious reasons but to exclude reference to vanquished rulers from public space. A recent, analogous example is the destruction of monuments for two generations of Syrian dictators.

But other actions aim at delegitimizing entire ethnic groups by obliterating heritage displaying their territorial belonging. Such actions are prevalent in modern times within the context of nation-building, where ethno-cultural homogeneity constitute a primary source of legitimacy. The Armenian genocide beginning in 1915 and the ensuing culticide is one such example. Others are the Israeli nation building since 1948, and the wars of the 1990's, that fragmented Yugoslavia into nation-states. Both saw ethnic cleansing combined with heritage destruction. An earlier example is Titus' sacking of Jerusalem and expulsion of the Jews in 70 C.E.

In the third decade of the 21st century we are amidst another historic reshuffle of geopolitical power. That inevitably involves use and abuse of history and heritage to redefine legitimacies, orders, and rights.

How do we as heritage professionals (re-)act?

Carsten Paludan-Müller is an archaeologist (Ph.D.), educated at the Universities of Copenhagen and Cambridge. He has held leading positions within museums, heritage management and research in Denmark and Norway, advised The Council of Europe, The European Commission, and worked with the World Bank, and the Norwegian MFA. His research focuses on heritage and how it relates to geopolitics, empires, nation building – and conflict. Current affiliations and positions: Cambridge Heritage Research Centre, Deutsche Archäologische Institut, Executive board of ICOMOS.DK. Cultural heritage section of Denmark's National Food and Environment Board of Complaint.

John Rundell: *Multiple modernities and civilisations*

(Online Presentation)

Following the works, of Durkheim, Mauss and Braudel civilizations can be viewed as cultural and material social creations that are instituted in non-state as well as state-based forms of territoriality by figured social groups and actors who also create and mobilise histories of the long-run and power in closed or open ways. If modernity is a civilisation, and we can see it in the terms outlined above, then it is not a unified one, or even a field as such, but a kaleidoscope, a series of prisms of competing social imaginaries in which the temporally and geo-spatially defined notions of civilisations and multiple modernities do not completely capture, however. We must ask what the constituent multiples of multiple modernities are, in the same way that we should ask what the constituent dimensions of civilisations that are alluded to in my opening remark. We can then enter a dialogue regarding their constituting social imaginaries, and thus the meaning and contours of civilisations and multiple modernities. We are thus in a labyrinth; at the crossroads between modernities and civilisations asking questions of what is to be valued or not valued, what is to be preserved, why, and in what form.

John Rundell is Adjunct Professor (Humanities and Social Sciences) at La Trobe University and Principal Honorary in The School of Culture and Communication at The University of Melbourne and has published widely on the topics of the imagination and modernity. His most recent books are *Kant: Anthropology, Imagination, Freedom* (Routledge 2020), *Critical Theories and the Budapest School* (with Jonathan Pickle, Routledge 2018), and *Imaginariness of Modernity* (Routledge 2017). A social theorist and philosopher, his broad range of interests are reflected in the volumes he has edited including *Blurred Boundaries: Migration, Ethnicity, Citizenship* (Routledge 2018), *Classical Readings in Culture and Civilization* (Routledge 2014), *Aesthetics and Modernity: Essays by Agnes Heller* (Rowman and Littlefield 2010), *Recognition, Work, Politics* (Brill 2007), *Contemporary Perspectives in Critical and Social Philosophy* (Brill 2004) and *Critical Theory After Habermas* (Brill 2004).

Britt Baillie: *Civilizational narratives and heritage in the Croatian borderlands*

The territory of the former Yugoslavia has been at the centre of many of the divides described as ‘fault lines’ in civilization narratives. Home to Catholic, Orthodox, Muslim, Jewish, (and other) populations, periods of inter-ethnic hostility and ethnic cleansing have been interspersed with more amicable phases. This paper will explore three modes of mobilization: 1) how religious heritage sites have been subjected to processes and narratives of destruction and competitive reconstruction to reify the post-1990s borders; 2) how memorials (particularly at sites of ethnic cleansing) continue to be erected or erased to bolster civilizational narratives positioning ‘central European’ identities as distinct from the ‘barbaric Eastern other’, 3) how appeals to the ‘deep continuity’ and ‘purity’ of ethnic identities as expressed through heritage are used to attest to the ‘inevitability’ of enmity and are employed to subvert appeals to cross-border Yugoslav ‘Brotherhood and Unity’.

Britt Baillie is an Assistant Professor, Department of Archaeology and Heritage Studies, Aarhus University. Her books include: *Locating Urban Conflicts: Ethnicity, Nationalism and the Everyday* (Palgrave, 2013, co-edited with Wendy Pullan); *Transforming Heritage in the Former Yugoslavia: Synchronous Pasts* (Palgrave, 2021 co-edited with Gruița Bădescu and Francesco Mazzucchelli); and the *Palgrave Encyclopedia of Cultural Heritage and Conflict*, 2024, co-editor-in-chief with Ihab Saloul).

Jeremy Smith: *Heritage at the edge: coastal currents and their intercivilizational engagement*

This paper has three reference points. First, I invoke maritime perspectives relevant to the case study of heritage and civilizations, including Fernand Braudel, Lincoln Paine, and David Abulafia. With this paradigm of oceanography, I suggest that sea and oceanic borders are relevant to studying heritage and civilizations. Second, referring to intercivilizational engagement and intercivilizational encounters, Benjamin Nelson, Roland Robertson, and Johann Arnason are germane to the case study, although none of these three scholars pay much attention to maritime contexts, nor do they relate to problematics of heritage essential to a dialogue between two fields. Third, I propose to explore and exploit the potential for dialogue through the condensation of regional heritage in the city and region of coastal Veracruz. Veracruz is a portal city and coastal state open to the historic currents of intercivilizational encounters and engagement involving inputs from Africa and the Caribbean, Spain, Mexico, and indigenous civilizations. This paper will explore the civilizational legacies and currents of cultural, economic, and political traffic of the Gulf region, long with the heritage that condenses all of this. The paper will also touch on the potential for contestatory geopolitical claims about the civilizational background and heritage of the Gulf of Mexico to emerge during the course of the Trump administration.

Jeremy C A Smith is a historical sociologist and social theorist in the Institute of Education, Arts and Community at Federation University Australia. He is author of *Debating Civilizations: Interrogating Civilizational Analysis in a Global Age* (Manchester University Press, 2017), and a coeditor of *Civilization, Modernity, and Critique: Engaging Johann P. Arnason's Macro-Social Theory* (Routledge, 2023). He is also a Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Social Imaginaries* (Brill).

Vinnie Nørskov: *Repatriation of cultural heritage as intercivilisational encounters*

In the last months of 2024, the Danish museum The New Carlsberg Glyptotek made a dramatic change in their collection management when they decided to return not only a requested bronze head to Turkey, but also 48 terracotta objects that they had discovered had been acquired around the same time. Earlier the same year, the National Museum of Copenhagen had rejected the return of three marble objects to Greece but returned objects to Brazil and Norway.

Repatriation of cultural heritage is a complex process involving historical, political, social and economic dimensions and has become an arena of cultural encounters that can be understood in the framework of intercivilisational encounters. In the paper, I will discuss the concept of civilisation in cultural heritage through two case studies. Theoretically, I draw on the work of Sebastian Spitra on the historical embeddedness of ‘civilisation’ as instrumental in the legal frameworks of heritage politics and the consequences for present discussions of repatriation cases. The analysis is an attempt to apply the concept of intercivilisational encounter as a lens to understand the argumentations and conflicts in the two case studies that have unfolded in Denmark in the last years.

The first case study involves a bronze portrait and 48 terracotta revetments acquired by the New Carlsberg Glyptotek on the international art market in 1970 and returned to Turkey in 2025. The Turkish Embassy formally requested the repatriation of the bronze head in May 2023 and the decision to repatriate was taken by the museum 18 months later. The second case study involves the repatriation claim of sculptures from the Parthenon in Athens, two fragments of which arrived in Denmark in 1688. In 2023 an official request came from the director of the Acropolis Museum to the director of the National Museum in Copenhagen. The rejection of this request led to a discussion in the Cultural Commission (29 February 2024), which provides an insight into the national political discourse on cultural heritage, identity and relation to European culture.

Whereas the Turkish-Danish encounter in the first case can be seen as an intercivilisational encounter rooted in the legal frameworks of heritage politics of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the second case involves several countries that claim the heritage as essential for both national and European identity constructions going back to antiquity. Thus, geographical scale and civilisational process become multidimensional.

Vinnie Nørskov is Associate Professor of Classical Archaeology and Director of the Museum of Ancient Art and Archaeology at Aarhus University. Her research focuses on the uses of the classical past, the reception of classical antiquity, and the history of classical scholarship with a special focus on the collecting of and modern trade in Greek painted pottery. She is currently working on illicit trade in pottery from South Italy in the project *Illicit Antiquities in the Museum*.

Joni Vainikka: *Civilisations in time: setting territorial temporalities in Finland*

In the 19th century, seafarers, railway workers, and telegraphers were the key advocates for shared timekeeping practices – a pressing geographical question of the first geographical congresses. In 1919, the Time Reform Committee of the Geographical Society of Finland wrote that “as almost the only civilised country, Finland does not have legally confirmed norms for keeping time”. The country had been a patchwork of local and railway times, where jurisdictions occasionally followed different clock strikes even across a street. For local life, pocket watches and longcases followed the positions of the sun or the stars rather than time being part of the statecraft, a societal actor impacting the simultaneity of events, traffic, or energy consumption.

A hallmark of modern society is the synchronisation of public life, making, in a Deleuzian sense, time more striated than smooth. In Finland’s autonomous era, abandoning local times was complicated, as factories set their working hours locally, the telegraph was not common, and railways weaved only some towns into the same network. Following a non-local time was a cultural practice no one knew they needed. On the recommendation of the Geographical Society, the time zone was set on the 30th meridian that conveniently intersected with the Rajajoki train station and the last point before the then-border with Soviet Russia. The new Finnish time was 73 seconds from Saint Petersburg time and an hour ahead of other Nordic countries.

This paper discusses the efforts to establish ‘*territorial time*’ and how, through the Greenwich meridian, the entire globe carries the legacy of British navigation systems and maritime power. While adopting standard time represents an event that influences the analysis of local, regional, and national cultural heritage, aligning with a time zone different from the rest of Scandinavia and most of Western Europe affects how Finns have, at times, felt distinct from the European civilisational sphere.

Dr Joni Vainikka is a geographer whose research focuses on identities, anticipatory futures, behavioural responses to the climate crises and time. He works in Strategic Research Council-funded Decarbon-Home consortium and currently serves as the President of the Geographical Society of Finland. Joni earned his PhD from the University of Oulu and MSc from the University of Turku.

Emily Hanscam: *Roman origin myths as civilizational narratives*

The Roman Empire has long since vanished, and yet its influence on the world today is powerful. Origin myths based on the Roman past were a key part of nation-building from the eighteenth century onwards, and continue to influence national identities today. These myths have also had a long-term impact on archaeological research and the production of knowledge about the past. The myth of Roman origins, the myth of Romanization, and the myth of Indigenous origins all depend upon the living legacy of the Roman past, defining modern peoples by how their perceived ancestors related to the Romans. The myths frequently highlight a narrow and uncritical view of the past, perpetuating outdated ideas like the Romans as the key agents bringing law and order to Europe. They influence national narratives and identities across Europe and North America, ranging from Romania, a country named for its connection to the Roman past, to Italy, the UK, Serbia, Germany, France, Spain, the Netherlands, and across the Atlantic to the United States where claims to an intellectual continuity with the Roman republican tradition underpinned the founding of the US. With the advent of the far-right and the policies of the Trump administrations, we are increasingly seeing American politics discussed through the lens of the Roman past from all sides of the political spectrum.

Engaging with historiographical debates, this paper looks critically at the impact of these myths of origin during key moments of political change, ranging from peak periods of nation building in the eighteen to nineteenth centuries, through the present-day global resurgence of the far-right, considering the long-term impact of Roman origin myths as civilizational narratives and how they are reinforced or challenged by contemporary authorised heritage discourse.

Emily Hanscam is a Researcher in Archaeology at Linnaeus University, Sweden, associated with the UNESCO Chair for Heritage Futures, the LNU Centre for Concurrences and LNU Digital Transformations. She earned a PhD in Archaeology from Durham University (2019), researching Roman frontiers, archaeology and nationalism in East-Central Europe. She is co-editor of *Digging Politics: The ancient past and contested present in East-Central Europe* (De Gruyter, 2023), *The Roman Lower Danube Frontier* (Archaeopress, 2023) and the Editor of the *Theoretical Roman Archaeology Journal*.

Yulia Prozorova: *Civilizational discourse and the instrumentalization of cultural heritage in contemporary Russia*

(Online Presentation)

This paper examines how political elites in contemporary Russia employ civilizational imaginaries and cultural heritage to justify political agendas and advance geopolitical strategies. Cultural heritage, particularly Slavic and Orthodox antiquities, has been instrumentalized to provide material representations and symbolic legitimization for civilizational nationalism and, subsequently, a neo-imperial project. The rise of Putin's autocratic regime has been accompanied by a shift away from early post-Soviet pro-Western universalist interpretations of civilization toward civilizational particularism. This transformation has revived the pre-revolutionary notion of Russia as a "distinct" and "unique" civilization and contributed to the development of the concept of the "Russian world" (*Russkii mir*), which frames Russia, Ukraine, and Belarus as a supranational civilizational community united by a shared historical experience and a collective identity as the "heirs of Ancient Rus'," echoing Orthodox-Slavic unity narratives. The archaeological sites of Novgorod and Staraja Ladoga have been appropriated to glorify Russian state origins, with Staraja Ladoga proclaimed "the first capital of Russia" and positioned as an alternative to Kyiv to decenter Ukraine from the shared East Slavic past. Putin's politics of the "gathering of lands" culminated in the annexation of Crimea and the military invasion of Ukraine, also legitimized through historical and cultural references. The ancient site of Chersonesos, located in the Ukrainian city of Sevastopol in Crimea, where Prince Vladimir was baptized, was presented as a sacred locus of Russian civilization and as an integral part of Russia's historical legacy. These cases demonstrate that cultural heritage is mobilized within civilizational discourse, as well as through state-sponsored cultural and educational programs, to construct and reinforce official interpretations of Russia's autochthonous origins and its spatial and historical-civilizational continuity. Heritage sites are also instrumentalized through legal reclassification as national heritage, thereby legitimizing territorial claims and asserting cultural sovereignty. Some sites are sacralized as loci of identity politics, political mythology, and pilgrimage.

Yulia Prozorova is a PhD student in the Department of Anthropology, University of Toronto, Canada, where she is pursuing studies in anthropology and archaeology. She holds a PhD in Sociology and was a Senior Research Fellow at the Sociological Institute of the Federal Center of Theoretical and Applied Sociology, part of the Russian Academy of Sciences, Russia. Her research interests in social sciences include historical sociology, civilizational analysis, modernity, and post-Soviet transformations in Russia.

Ali Mozaffari: *Civilisational Boundaries: Heritage–Border Complexes and the Spatial Logics of Multipolarity*

Proponents of multipolarity—often situated outside the Euro-Western liberal order—frequently imagine a world composed of discrete, culturally specific civilisational blocs, each occupying its own zone of influence. This vision presupposes spatial boundaries and civilisational identities, yet it seldom accounts for the material and symbolic processes through which these boundaries are constructed, negotiated, and legitimised.

This paper argues that the analysis of such processes requires a shift from broad invocations of “culture” to a more focused examination of heritage—understood as a selective imagining of the past, materialised and disseminated through institutionalised, spatialised, and codified practices. It proposes that heritage plays a central role in the production of civilisational space, particularly when viewed through what may be termed *heritage–border complexes (HBCs)*: the mutually constitutive entanglements of heritage and border-making.

HBCs offer a conceptual lens for examining how civilisational narratives prompt specific configurations of territory, memory, and legitimacy. These dynamics are especially visible in *contact zones*—spatial formations where civilisational imaginaries overlap, conflict, or fuse. Here, the assumed boundedness of civilisations begins to unravel, revealing instead contingent and contested processes of bordering and meaning-making. Attention should be given to how these processes operate across scales, from the inscription of local sites to the construction of transregional and global zones of influence.

This analytical approach exposes the categorical essentialism underlying many civilisational claims advanced in multipolar discourses. It repositions civilisation as a strategic discourse and spatial project, deployed by actors such as China and Russia to legitimise transnational influence. Brief illustrative vignettes show how heritage infrastructures—such as World Heritage listings, cultural corridors, and sacred geographies—are mobilised to support these spatialised civilisational claims. This paper opens a new line of inquiry into the symbolic and spatial infrastructures of civilisation in the twenty-first century.

Ali Mozaffari is Honorary Senior Fellow with the Asia Institute at the University of Melbourne, a former Australian Research Council DECRA Fellow, and serves as Vice President (Communications) of the Association for Critical Heritage Studies. He researches the geopolitics of the past, culture, and the built environment in West Asia. His publications include *Heritage Movements in Asia* (Berghahn Books, 2020), *Development, Architecture and the Formation of Heritage in Late-Twentieth Century Iran* (Manchester University Press, 2020), and *World Heritage in Iran* (Routledge, 2016). He co-edits

Berghahn's Explorations in Heritage Studies and co-founded the Heritage and Transnationalism Network (ACHS).

MOESGAARD CAMPUS



From Central Aarhus, you should take **Bus 18**:

Bus 18 ([see timetable](#)) is a yellow city bus, which leaves from Park Allé ([see map](#)) three times an hour during the day (direction: Moesgård). **Note that you have to purchase your ticket BEFORE you get on the bus - either through the Midttrafik app or through their webshop ([Link to app and webshop](#)).** Get off at the bus stop "Moesgård Museum" (end station) - the ride takes approximately 25 min. From there, it is only a 300 m walk to the Campus ([see map](#)).

The Conference Venue is located in Building 4206 (on your left when you arrive from the bus and enter the main Courtyard). We will be in **Lecture Room 121**

To find Room 121, enter the building via one of the entrances marked with a **green arrow**, in the map below; Room 121 is marked in **green**.

