

Panel at **AIAC 2018**, proposed for **sessions 11 or 12**

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## **Wealthy and Healthy?**

### **Methodological approaches to non-élite burials**

Dichotomies are often rejected as misrepresenting the complexities of past societies. This is also the case for the distinction between élite and non-élite parts of the population. In this respect, economical aspects have been considered crucial for the constitution of ancient society: from the determinant for a class-based society to being an oscillation within the stratified pyramidal model of Roman society. In social history current research emphasizes the basic legal inequality in antiquity and a social stratification along the lines of status, honors and life style as opposed to modern time functional divisions. Consequently changes in wealth distribution potentially threaten the social order. Hence income based power relations e.g. performing euergetism may support political integration in a competitive society, but economical changes such as large accumulations result in political disintegration.

This model of social stratification is consistent with ancient sources and related topics in archaeology such as the Roman *domus*. Yet the analysis of ancient societies beyond the political system, leading actors and élite groups relies heavily on the archaeological record. Abundantly preserved burial sites present a major part of ancient testimonies. But again research on élite grave monuments is rather extensive whilst the evaluation of numerous less conspicuous burials in the Classical world remains wanting.

In terms of methodology quantifications prevailed, which – claiming an often class-based straightforward correlation between dimension and investment to status and wealth respectively – tended to disregard all manipulations of the dead as much as personal choices. Accordingly, the qualitative analysis of graves gained ground taking the social, relational and situational agency into account, but mostly without considering the nature of the postulated urban civic society. Thus, the social interpretation of funerary contexts including grave goods or, generally speaking, of value and its material equivalent in a particular time and place remains challenging.

Applicants are invited to use approaches in various fields of research employing archaeological and anthropological data as well as epigraphical records. Starting points to identify social settings may be health and nutrition, burial practices, variation and standardization in grave monuments, etc. Special interest will be given to medium-range theories taking case-based evidence into account.