The assembled palace of Samosata: object vibrancy in 1st C. BCE Commagene

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Chapter 3. Towards vibrant objects. Theory and methodology.

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was argued that, in order to understand the palace of Samosata as a real, actual and material entity, an analytical approach is needed that goes beyond existing acculturative, representational and anthropocentric understandings of material culture. Although Versluys's model of glocal Hellenisms offers a valuable set of concepts to overcome acculturative thinking (derived from globalization theory), it was considered a problematic analytical starting point for the purposes of this dissertation, as it retains a pre-theoretical notion of 'things Greek', and ignores the more-than-representational and more-than-intentional aspects of objects. A necessary analytical approach that takes the objects making up the palace of Samosata seriously, should acknowledge the complex relationality of objects, their wide-ranging capacities and their actual impact – *beyond* cultural categorization and representation.

This chapter draws on concepts and approaches from a theoretical field known as 'New Materialism' – more particularly its 'Assemblage Theory' – in order to develop an alternative analytical approach to *glocal* objects in Late-Hellenistic Samosata. In its shortest definition, assemblages are '*compositions that act*'.[279] Assemblage Theory provides a well-developed ontological framework in which people, things and ideas are related in radically different ways than is the case in traditional Cartesian dualist ontologies that underlie conventional archaeological thinking (not in the least that of Hellenism discourse). Recent applications of assemblage thinking in archaeological analyses have by now proved it to be highly advantageous for our understanding of the relationality, capacities and impact of material culture and its complex relation to humans.[280] It helps us, for instance, to break away from the often very restrictive subject-object opposition in our archaeological analyses, a problem that lies at the core of much acculturative and representational thinking. The notion of a passive material world (for instance a tessellated mosaic) that is imbued with 'concepts' (for instance 'Greekness' or 'civilization') by active human actors (like king Antiochos I) maintains this dualist ontology.

As approaches like this are relatively new to the field of Hellenistic-Roman archaeology, this chapter will elaborate on New Materialism and Assemblage theory, before presenting it as a methodology to study the palace of Samosata and its place in the material transformations of Samosata during the 4th c. BCE – 1st c. CE. In section 3.2, I will therefore first explore briefly the philosophical foundations of New Materialism and then turn to its application in archaeology.

[279] Due 2002, 32.
[280] For many examples, see Crellin et al. 2021. See 3.2.2. of this dissertation for a discussion of archaeological applications of Assemblage Theory.

Here I will spend some time considering how the adoption of Assemblage Theory in archaeology differs from other archaeological theoretical approaches that belong to the broader 'material turn' (e.g. Gell's object agency, and the symmetrical archaeologies based on Latour's ANT or on Harman's OOO). Subsequently, I will briefly discuss the ethical implications of post-anthropocentric approaches in the ancient world. In section 3.3, I will explore how a New Materialist approach can help us to fundamentally rethink the notion of Hellenistic courts and palaces, understanding these as post-anthropocentric, relational and emergent assemblages instead of the more representational notions of palaces as '*manifestations*' of *'a monarch's wealth and power'* that '*embody the ideas and values of his kingship'*.[281] A turn to the actual and virtual capacities of the elements that make up Hellenistic palaces can help to go beyond such representational notions and to become aware of the processes and vibrancy of the palace as an assemblage. In section 3.4, I will develop a methodology to study the palace of Samosata and its place in material transformations in Late-Hellenistic Samosata in terms of assemblages. This means that I will consider two types of assemblages, namely 'vibrant objectscapes' and 'glocal genealogies', notions that I further elucidate at the end of this chapter.

3.2 New Materialism, assemblage thinking and its application in archaeology and the study of the ancient world

This section introduces 'New Materialism', Assemblage Theory and its application in archaeology. I will first outline the philosophical foundations of this theoretical corpus, focusing specifically on its discontents with traditional dualist ontologies (paragraph 3.2.1). After this, I will consider its application in archaeology and how this differs from other, related archaeological theory that draws on the broader 'Material Turn', especially the so-called 'first-wave symmetrical archaeology' based on Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT) and the 'second-wave symmetrical archaeology', based on Graham Harman's Object Oriented Ontology (OOO) (paragraph 3.2.2). After this, I will briefly comment on a recent debate about the perceived ethical implications of employing New Materialist approaches in our study of the ancient world (paragraph 3.2.2).

[281] Citations from Kropp 2013, 94.

3.2.1 New Materialism

New Materialism and Assemblage Theory are related bodies of post-humanist theory[282] that are applied and adapted in a range of different disciplines, but find a shared origin in the philosophical work of Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, Manuel DeLanda, Jane Bennett, Donna Haraway, Karen Barad, and Quentin Meillasoux, to name its most influential protagonists.[283] Although the work of these authors is in many ways wildly different, diverging and often contradicting, what they share is a post-anthropocentric and anti-dualistic critique of what they consider the arbitrary nature of Western, Cartesian thought and its Enlightenment taxonomies. Importantly, New Materialism moves away from a philosophical stance now known as 'correlationism', for which all knowledge about the 'being' of objects was considered to be constricted by our human cognition.[284] As an alternative, New Materialists argue from a philosophical stance (or 'meta-ontology') that is known as 'Speculative Realism', which posits that there exists a reality independent from human subjectivity and that it is possible to speculate about the nature (or ontology) of that reality.[285] This means, for instance, that the palace of Samosata can be understood as a real and actual entity that is presumed to have existed independent from human thoughts, intentions and concepts. New

[282] Posthumanism is a broad and extremely varied intellectual movement and ontological orientation in the social sciences and humanities characterized by a general desire to move beyond humanist worldviews, Cartesian dualisms and anthropocentrism. Especially the humanist's insistence on the idea of the individual human subject is considered fundamentally problematic as it implies a universal and transcendent ontological status of this human subject and does not explore its emergence and immanence. For a good introduction see Ferrando 2019.

[283] Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 1980, 2004; DeLanda 2006; 2016; Bennett 2010; Barad 2007; Haraway 2008; Meillasoux 2008. A good introduction to these philosophical foundations of New Materialism is offered by Coole and Frost 2010; as well as by Dolphijn and Van der Tuin 2013.

[284] Speculative realist Quentin Meillassoux coined correlationism as '*the idea [that] we only ever have access to the correlation between thinking and being, and never to either term considered apart from the other*' (Meillassoux 2008, 5). From that perspective, humans are always trapped in a circle of thought, an imminent dialectic between thought and the world. Graham Harman refers to the basic correlationist stance as '*we can't think an X outside of thought without thinking it, and thereby we cannot escape the circle of thought*' (Harman 2012). Levi Bryant describes that what followed from this perspective was an anthropocentric '*subordination of ontology to epistemology*' (Bryant 2011, 35) because it could not be asked anymore what an object was *as such*, only what an object was *for* humans, *in relation to* humans. This idea probably finds its origin in Kant's *Critique of Pure Reason*, where he stated: *'[u]p to now it has been assumed that all our cognition must conform to the objects; but all attempts to find out something about them a priori through concepts that would extend our cognition have, on this presupposition, come to nothing. Hence let us once try whether we do not get farther with the problems of metaphysics by assuming that the objects must conform to our cognition, which would agree better with the requested possibility of an a priori cognition of them, which is to establish something about objects before they are given to us*' (Kant 1998, xvi). Peter Heft on Kant's influence on later philosophers: '*Kant cemented correlationism in the minds of philosophers in such a way that everyone from Hegel to Heidegger, Freud to Lacan, and Pierce to Baudrillard were implicated*.' (Heft 2016, 10). This primarily entailed Kant's distinction between '*an inaccessible noumenal world of things-in-themselves'* and *'a phenomenal world of experience*' and his persistence that we can only deal with the latter. Kant stated that the world does not have an inherent structure, but that the phenomenal world is structured by human thought by using categories. This was an affirmation of Berkeley's radical empiricism and immaterialism (it is impossible to think of a thing outside of thought; '*esse est percipi'*) and made the correlationist perspective even stronger. See also Edgeworth 2016.

[285] DeLanda and Harman 2017, 28: '*The world exists outside of human beings' knowledge of it; the world does not depend on human beings'.*

Materialist thinkers furthermore share a conviction of the relational nature of this reality ('relational realism'), suggesting that relationality is a feature of ontology and that no object pre-exists its relations.[286] These relations, furthermore, are understood to form assemblages, relational gatherings (or '*bundles of relations*'[287]) of diverse matter that act, affect and that are emergent, in the sense that they are always 'in a state of becoming'. Importantly for the purpose of this dissertation, New Materialist and Assemblage Theory positions share a desire to give the non-human elements in the world their due, investigating the relations humans have with non-human elements - such as material culture (but also plants and animals) - and exploring the roles these non-human elements play. As a consequence, New Materialists de-centre humans, reconceptualising them as 'one of many'.[288] As such, they allow a much greater deal of 'ontological room' for non-human things, noting that both humans and non-humans function as and participate in assemblages which themselves are often also heterogeneous, consisting of a gathering of human and non-human elements.[289]

A key text for New Materialism is Deleuze and Guattari's 1972 *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*.[290] In a broad sense, their work on assemblages focuses on issues such as becoming, contingency, local difference, and how relationships give rise to things.[291] Deleuze and Guattari were heavily influenced by the work of Baruch Spinoza, whose anti-Cartesian and monistic thinking profoundly informed their ideas about the heterogeneity, and relationality of assemblages as well as their capacity to affect.[292] Spinoza famously claimed that '*no one has yet determined what the body can do*'[293], a notion that planted the seed for an exploration of the undetermined and emergent nature of assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari's philosophical work is wide-ranging and notoriously complex, which has caused many recent, non-philosophical applications of their work in the humanities and social sciences (among them archaeologists) to rely heavily on the reading and further development of their Assemblage theory by philosopher

[286] Barad 2007. Note however that Harman's OOO (see below) already deviates from this position, allowing for a certain object essence that can withdraw from its relations.
[287] Pauketat 2013.
[288] Harman has argued in several places that a fundamental problem with correlationism is the fact that it always assigns to humans 50% of all that exists (all of ontology) and only maximum 50% to everything else, cf. Harman 2018, 56.
[289] Jane Bennett for instance argues that we should not anymore put humans at the '*ontological apex*' of our analyses (Bennett 2010, ix).
[290] Deleuze and Guattari 2004.
[291] As nicely summarized by Fowler 2017, 96.
[292] Deleuze 1998, 124–5; Deleuze and Guattari 1987, 253–60. See Bennett 2010 for an exploration of Spinoza's thinking in relation to Deleuze and Guattari. New Materialist scholarship in general uses the word 'affect' rather than the also common word 'agency', which is considered too much in line with humanist ideals of the individual human subject that is 'agentive', cf. Hamilakis 2017. Affect implies the possibility to affect and be affected. The concept of affect, by comparison, makes it clear that we have the capacity to affect and be affected, describing a relational, two-way street.
[293] Spinoza 1994, 155-156.

Manuel DeLanda.[294] In DeLanda's 2006 *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, he uses the Deleuzian notion of assemblages to describe and analyse social ontologies.[295]

On the basis of Delanda's work, it is possible to characterize assemblages as heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, emergent and vibrant. The first three characteristics are important to elaborate on as they will help us to radically rethink what Hellenistic palaces and courts really are (see 3.3)and they provide a conceptual framework to give hand and feet to Ingold's call for a 'morphogenic approach', a reading creativity forwards (see 2.5). I singled out 'vibrancy' as the central notion of the methodology of this dissertation to analyse the archaeology of Late-Hellenistic Samosata (see paragraphs 3.3.1-4) and therefore I will elaborate on this notion here too.

Assemblages are *heterogeneous*, meaning that they consist of elements that are often considered categorically separate or even opposing, such as human and non-human elements, cultural and natural elements and material and conceptual elements.[296] By freely combining and containing these heterogeneous elements and their (often shifting) relations, assemblages are in essence non-dualistic and post-anthropocentric. This heterogeneity also implies that assemblages have no single point of origin or a singular organizing principle (such as a notion of 'Greekness') but instead are always multiple in terms of the relations and processes they are caught up in. Crucially, Deleuze and Guattari stress that assemblages always consist of both 'material and expressive components', meaning that they are not limited to solely physical elements, and thus often also include signs, gestures, symbols, meanings, identities and emotions.[297] This means that Assemblage Theory accommodates meanings and representations but is not confined to these 'expressive components'; instead of non-representational, assemblages thus are *more-than-representational*, re-situating the relations between material culture and meaning in a shared ontology.[298]

[294] DeLanda 1997; 2006. His reading of Deleuze and Guattari is however contested, with several authors warning for an understanding of Deleuze and Guattari that is in fact more 'DeLandian'. Cf. Hamilakis 2017, who however also admits that Deleuze and Guattari themselves encouraged the selective reading of their own work and the work of others.
[295] In DeLanda 2006, DeLanda develops a critique on organic and totalizing understandings of societies, and instead suggests to conceptualize societies as assemblages in which stabilizing and de-stabilizing processes are constantly at play. By pointing to the self-subsistent and relational character of all the different elements that make up a society, DeLanda explored how societies emerge and transform into new compositions at a variety of different scales (towns, cities and nations).
[296] Deleuze 2006, 176–177: '[*i*]*n assemblages you find states of things, bodies, various combinations of bodies, hodgepodges; but you also find utterances, modes of expression, and whole regimes of signs'.*
[297] Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 97–98.
[298] Harris 2021, 111.

Assemblages furthermore are also *non-hierarchical*, because they reason from a so-called 'flat ontology'[299]; in principle, there is no *a priori* hierarchy between its heterogeneous elements. With a 'flat ontology' new materialists criticize the conventional hierarchical ontology of the modern 'western' world that places humans above animals, plants, and objects. A 'flat ontology' suggests that this hierarchy can be brought down to one shared ontological plane where things (human and non-human) exist on an equal footing. In the assemblage, human elements are not necessarily more important than non-human elements; concepts are not necessarily more important than material elements.[300]

Thirdly, assemblages are *emergent*, in the sense that they are more than the sum of their gathering parts; we can say that the assemblage is immanent to the relations between its constituent parts. This also relates to the fact that assemblages are never bounded, static or permanent[301]; they are always in a state of becoming and its changing relations create their capacity to affect the world around it.[302] A good example of an assemblage is a pollinating insect (a bee) and a flower[303]; its components are of a different kind (the assemblage is heterogeneous), there is no hierarchy between the insect and the flower (assemblages are non-hierarchical), and the insect-flower relation causes, for instance, the pollination of the flower, the production of honey, and the creation of the flower's offspring (assemblages are emergent). The non-static character of assemblages is witnessed especially in Deleuze and Guattari's notions of 'territorialization' (coming together) and 'de-territorialization' (falling apart), which indicate how assemblages form, transform and dwindle.[304] *Territorialization* describes how some elements that make up an assemblage are acting to stabilize the assemblage, making its boundaries clearer and the elements more homogenous. *De-territorialization*, on the other hand, describes how other elements are trying to break the assemblage apart, to blur its boundaries, making its identity less clear and allowing some parts to fall away.[305] Both territorialization and de-territorialization are always at

[299] DeLanda 2002, 51. This does not mean however that New Materialists believe humans and non-humans to be exactly the same. Rather, it means that humans and non-humans are all equally capable of effect and affect in the world. See also Cipolla and Harris 2017, 147: '*It is also worth emphasising that starting with a flat ontology does not mean ending in the same way – with no variations in power or authority at the end of the analysis. These approaches ask us to explore all of these differences rather than deciding beforehand that one particular difference (that between humans and everything else) is worthy of special, ontological, status*.'
[300] Such a flat ontology does however not necessarily lead to a flat ethics; see paragraph 3.2.3.
[301] Barad 2007.
[302] Fowler 2017, 96: '*an assemblage acts, and acts in a way that none of its components can without being in such a configuration'.*
[303] DeLanda 2006, 15.
[304] *Idem*, 12. See also Barad 2007.
[305] Note that we should not confuse the Deleuzian use of the term 'de-territorialization' with that being used in globalization theory, where it is considered the opposite of 'particularization' (for which, see paragraph 2.4). Whereas the former, Deleuzian concept describes a disintegrating process of entities on an ontological level, the latter describes how a phenomenon's connections to an actual geographic place or area water down through being caught up in a process of increased connectivity. To prevent from conceptual confusion, I will only use the term universalization when discussing it in the latter globalized way.

stake in every assemblage. Importantly, this constant shifting of the boundaries of assemblages and their elements conjures up a world in which there are no bounded subjects and objects and in which the outcome is always contingent and, to some extent, open-ended. If we consider the palace of Samosata as an actual, and real assemblage, it should be acknowledged that it was never *a priori* decided what it would do and become, nor who or what was the driving force in this process.

Lastly, assemblages are *vibrant.* By stressing the emergent nature of assemblages, Assemblage Theory allows for the change and process of these assemblages. Deleuze and Guattari already suggested that change came about through '*a life proper to matter'*[306] and in the work of political theorist and philosopher Jane Bennett this capacity of assemblages to change is further explored and explained through the notion of the 'vitality' or 'vibrancy' of matter, (human ánd non-human) something which itself allows an assemblage to affect the world around it: '*an assemblage owes its agentic capacity to the vitality of the materialities that constitute it*'.[307] By showing how the elements that assemblages consist of are never static, but always in a state of becoming through the vibrancy of its elements, we start appreciating how assemblages exist on different scales[308]; the elements of assemblages are emergent assemblages with vibrant elements in their own right. Bennett located this vibrancy in the notion of capacities; relational characteristics of the assemblage's components that can effect change on the level of the overall assemblage. In her fascinating book *Meeting the Universe Halfway,* feminist theorist and theoretical physicist Karen Barad explores the '*different material configurations of ontological bodies and boundaries, where the actual matter of bodies is what is at issue and at stake'*[309]*,* drawing attention to the intra-actions and capacities of the elements within a relational configuration. Assemblages transform through the vibrant capacities of the elements that it consists of and the specific relational composition of its elements.

There are some crucial differences between New Materialist 'assemblage thinking' and other, related, post-humanist and anti-dualistic theories that have emerged in the humanities and social sciences in the last two decades or so. As these different approaches have also led to very different archaeological applications of these ideas and are moreover often lumped together in critiques on New Materialism (see paragraph 3.2.2), it is useful to briefly consider the main differences. The first and arguably most important of these alternative post-humanist and anti-dualistic approaches is Bruno Latour's Actor Network Theory (ANT), whose post-dualistic thinking already developed in the late 1970s with his *Laboratory Life* and, later, with *We Have Never Been*

[306] Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 454.
[307] Bennett 2010, 34.
[308] Something particularly also explored in DeLanda 2016. See also Harris 2017.
[309] Barad 2007, 155.

Modern.[310] In his 2005 *Reassembling the Social,* Latour reconceptualised society as a heterogeneous network of people and objects that both act through their relations, with agency distributed throughout the network.[311] His thinking meant a radical departure of dualistic understandings of the world, breaking down differences and oppositions between humans and non-humans, culture and nature, reasoning towards a more 'symmetrical' ontology. As such, Latour shares with New Materialism a relational approach that insists on the heterogeneity of networks and, to certain degree, a flat ontology, allowing for both human and non-human 'actants'.[312] However, New Materialist theorists have criticized Latour's ANT for the little analytical room it leaves for explaining change, suggesting that his networks are rather static.[313] The main reason for this is that, for Latour, the nodes in his network are entirely defined by their *actual* relations, which leaves the question how such an air-tight network can ever change.[314] New materialism instead considers relations and objects as co-emergent to one another, allowing for non-activated (non-actual) but enduring object capacities (virtual object capacities, see below) and the vibrancy of matter to affect change.[315] On the other end of the spectrum is Graham Harman's Object Oriented Ontology (OOO), which posits objects as the fundamental ontological building blocks of the world. Harman is strongly influenced by Deleuze and Latour, and hence argues from a largely flat ontology where relations and non-humans have an important role to play, but by insisting that objects (human and non-human) cannot be reduced to their components (as naïve realism has it[316]) nor to their relations (as 'correlationism' has it, see above), he strongly deviates from other New materialists thinkers. This has great repercussions for archaeological

[310] Latour 1979; 1991.
[311] Latour 1999; 2005.
[312]Latour uses the term 'actant' to indicate any entity in the world that is capable of having any type of effect through its relations. In a by now famous example, Latour argued that, when dealing with a person holding a gun, it is not either the human or the gun that has agency, but rather the relational network that both are part of, cf. Latour 1999. Thus, for Latour, agency emerges relationally. See also Robb 2010.
[313] Crellin 2020.
[314] Harman 2009. Note that Ingold has a diametrically opposing reading of Latour, suggesting that Latour prioritizes objects instead of relations. Cf. Ingold 2008.
[315] Fowler and Harris 2015, 135: *'This reading of Barad resolves the question of whether we start with real objects that enter into relationships, or whether we should begin with relationships that are only abstracted, later, into bounded objects. Not only does she reveal that neither is primary, she also shows how both are relational, and dependent on a broader assemblage.'* For vibrancy of matter, see Bennett 2010.
[316] In naïve realism, objects are deemed too superficial, too shallow as they are considered as mere manifestations in the human mind. Following John Locke's empiricism, proponents of naïve realism argue that objects should be studied using our perception and our possibility to experiment, causing us to understand that objects are actually not solid entities at all, as they disintegrate into smaller components such as atoms when we observe them and experiment with them. Harman and others have stressed that this approach to objects can be said to be foundational to most of modern-day natural sciences and tends to break the object into smaller pieces, stating that the object is just a manifestation but that underneath it there is a reality of matter that is much more complex and real than objects as they appear in everyday human experience. In the naïve realism perspective, the world as it manifests itself to us basically is a fake world – an illusion of the human mind - that needs to be deconstructed by studying the real world that lies beneath it. This studying of the real world, according to naïve realists, is possible only by the use of scientific observation and experimentation. See Harman 2012.

applications of OOO, especially when compared to archaeological applications of New materialism, an issue to which we shall turn now.

3.2.2. The application of Assemblage Theory in archaeology

The notion of assemblages is not new in archaeology, but its conventional use in modernist archaeology, where it simply indicates the collection or association of objects or materials, is very different from that of recent archaeological applications of Assemblage Theory.[317] Anthropologist Tim Ingold was one of the first to draw attention to the value of New Materialism for archaeology.[318] He argued that materials and their properties are always caught up in variable relations with the world around it (something he coins a 'meshwork', comparable to an assemblage), and thus form a history of change and transformation instead of having a static nature. Crucially, this theoretical notion of 'vibrant materials' is promising as a way to reconcile the more scientific approaches in archaeology with its more conceptual or theoretical strands of research.[319] Related to this, is Ingold's suggestion that New Materialism can help archaeologists to develop better ways to think about the genesis and formation of forms and the roles of people in the processes behind their 'making'.[320] In paragraph 2.5, I characterized the existing interpretations of the palace of Samosata as strongly related to what Tim Ingold coined the 'hylomorphic' model of creation, in which 'creativity was read backwards', and the interpretation of an object, in this case the palace, was reduced to its human, conscious and intentional genesis.[321] The New Materialist ontology and its specific conceptualization of assemblages indeed is closely related to the 'morphogenic' approach ('reading creativity forward') advocated for by Ingold. Rethinking archaeological objects (like the palace of Samosata) as assemblages makes us aware of the many internal and external relations in which these objects were caught up, the heterogeneity and vibrancy of its constitutive elements, its emergent state, and the processes of territorialization and de-territorialization that were ongoing from the moment an object was assembled (or 'territorialized').[322]

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[317] Hamilakis and Jones 2017, 80: '*in the conventional understanding of assemblages in archaeology, the main emphasis is either on formal and material similarity, or on spatial and chronological co-presence or proximity, in other words on aggregation*'.
[318] Ingold 2007.
[319] A good example of this approach is offered by Conneller 2011.
[320] Cipolla and Harris 2017, 139
[321] Ingold 2012, 432. Cipolla and Harris summarize the critique on hylomorphic thinking well when they state*: 'it tends to emphasise the creativity of the human being at the expense of the materials*' (Cipolla and Harris 2017, 139).
[322] Fowler 2017, 96: *'Assemblages occur at varying scales of space and time, intersect, and can bleed into one another. Assemblages are always in the process of becoming, yet are also definable entities. They are temporary, yet may be of very long duration. Societies or communities are assemblages of humans, things,*

Reflecting an increasing dissatisfaction with the dualistic and anthropocentric nature of most archaeological thought (be it 'cultural historical', 'processual' or 'post-processual'[323]), the last decade has witnessed an enthusiastic adoption and adaption of New Materialist approaches in a range of archaeological studies.[324] Especially noteworthy introductions are a 2017 Special Section on assemblages in the *Cambridge Journal Archaeological Journal* edited by Yannis Hamilakis and Andrew Jones[325] and the introductory *Archaeological Theory in the New Millennium* by Craig Cipolla and Oliver Harris, a book that broadly deals with the many 'Material Turns' of archaeology but also spends considerable attention to New Materialism.[326] Applications of New Materialism to the archaeology of the ancient Mediterranean and Near East is also picking up since the last century.[327] Scholarship following more broadly the 'material turn' of so-called 'symmetrical archaeology' are definitely more widespread however.[328] In a stimulating 'manifesto' from 2014, Versluys argued for the necessity of a 'Romanization Debate 2.0', in which a turn to global object flows and the stylistic and material properties of objects are central.[329] A similar post-representational approach to the Hellenistic world is necessary, but, as I have argued, the current focus on glocal Hellenisms still retains, from its analytical outset, an overtly representational approach to objects. Therefore, a truly New Materialist approach would be highly welcome for the Hellenistic World as well.

Cipolla and Harris summarize the value of proper New Materialism for archaeology as such: '*People are no longer the driving forces of history; instead they are one element of a set of relationships of swirling materials and forces that come together in the world, and allow for certain kinds of action and not others. Archaeological sites are excavated not just to understand the people who lived there but to look at the materials that were transformed there as historical actors in their*

animals, materials, practices, ideas, places, and so on. A broadly Deleuzian reading of assemblages places emphasis on becoming, contingency, local difference, and how relationships give rise to things.'

[323] For a summary of this critique, see Cipolla and Harris 2017, chapter 1. Note that especially critique on the 'textual metaphor' of post-processualism was already fully developed by the first proponents of symmetrical archaeology, cf. Olsen 2003. See also Thomas 2004. For a critique on correlationist thinking (see above) in archaeology, see Thomas 2015, 1291.

[324] Cobb and Croucher 2014; Hamilakis 2013; Fowler 2013; Harris 2014a, 2014b, 2016a, 2016b; Harrison 2011; Jones 2012; Lucas 2012; Normark 2010; Witmore 2014. Hamilakis 2017 suggests that Chapman 2000 should be seen as an exploration of assemblage thinking in archaeology '*avant la lettre*'. Applications of assemblage theory to reflections on the nature of the archaeological discipline are found in Lucas 2012; Fowler 2013; and Hamilakis 2013.

[325] See Hamilakis and Jones 2017 for an introduction to this collection of papers.

[326] Something not surprising since the authors are leading voices of Assemblage Theory in archaeology. See Cipolla and Harris 2017.

[327] For Bronze Age Crete, see Hamilakis 2013. For the Roman world see Mol 2013, 2015, 2021.

[328] For the Roman world, see for instance Versluys 2014, 2015; Van Oyen 2016; and Pitts 2019. For the Near East, see for instance Bahrani 2014; Ristvet 2014a. Below I will follow the distinction made by Cipolla and Harris between 'first wave symmetrical archaeology' (following Latour) and 'second wave symmetrical archaeology' (following Harman).

[329] Versluys 2014.

own right.'[330] Whereas their book is intended more as an undergraduate introduction (or, of course, a postgraduate refresher course) to relational thinking in archaeology, it has a perfect follow-up in the highly stimulating and thorough 2021 *Archaeological Theory in Dialogue*.[331] In this book, five leading voices of Assemblage Theory in archaeology - Rachel Crellin, Craig Cipolla, Lindsay Montgomery, Oliver Harris and Sophie Moore - discuss its advantages for archaeological interpretation, its deviation from other relational approaches and ongoing matters of debate regarding a wide range of issues such as the ontological status of relations, the different conflicting types of 'ontological archaeology', and the need for post-anthropocentric ethics.

Cipolla and Harris make some useful distinctions between assemblage approaches in archaeology on the one hand and other types of semi-related archaeological theory on the other, something which is of importance when we want to 'turn to objects' in the Hellenistic world as well. An important distinction is created by the degree to which such alternative approaches retain some of the anthropocentrism that characterized earlier (mostly 'post-processual') archaeological theory. Despite its general turn to the capacities of objects, anthropologist Alfred Gell's classic 1998 monograph *Art and Agency* is, for instance, considered to largely retain an anthropocentric focus, as Gell differentiated between primary and secondary agency, understanding the agency of objects primarily as an 'index' of human agency.[332] Ian Hodder's 2012 *Entangled* is similarly considered to retain an anthropocentric focus, as his discussions of human-thing entanglement are strongly focused on 'dependence' and its human aspects.[333] A wide range of different archaeological approaches based on Latour's ANT are considered 'first wave symmetrical archaeology' by Cipolla and Harris.[334] Despite its great variety of approaches, in general these approaches share with New Materialism a relational, post-anthropocentric and anti-dualistic approach to material culture that considers the properties of a variety of different 'actants' (human and non-human) in a network and, for instance, understand object meaning as only one of many object capacities. A crucial difference is the New Materialist emphasis on process, the diachronic movement of materials in a world in motion, and the territorialization and de-

[330] Cipolla and Harris 2017, 148. See also the motto of this dissertation.
[331] Crellin et al. 2021.
[332] Gell 1998. See Cipolla and Harris 2017, 72: '*For Gell, humans use the material world to distribute their personhood and agency.'* Note that they do acknowledge that the later parts of Art and Agency explores also less anthropocentric forms of object agency, in which humans are not necessarily always the starting point. Gosden 2005, 196 already remarked the same when he further developed Gell's idea of the inter-artefactual domain (see below).
[333] Hodder 2012. For critiques, also on Hodder's insistence on 'contextual meaning' instead of affects and effects of assemblages, see Jones and Alberti 2013, 27-30; Hamilakis 2013; Cipolla and Harris 2017, 104-106. 'Dependences' are Hodder's main focus in terms of human-thing entanglement and are framed as a relation through which humans use things to accomplish new tasks, hence implying an anthropocentric notion of entanglement.
[334] Olsen 2003; 2010; Witmore 2007; Shanks 2007; Webmoor and Witmore 2008. Olsen et al. 2012. See Cipolla and Harris 2017, 138.

territorialization of gatherings of people and materials.[335] More recently, symmetrical archaeology has developed into what Cipolla and Harris have coined a 'second wave' , which increasingly relies on Harman's OOO rather than Latour's ANT (for which, see paragraph 3.2.1).[336] This has evolved into an anti-human, anti-relational and anti-historical approach, in which materials and objects are considered as withdrawn essences, that, compared to the dynamic assemblages of New Materialism, are problematically static in their very nature.[337] This type of anti-human approach naturally can have ethical implications but, and this is important, should not be considered representative of all New Materialist approaches to material culture. This is an issue I will now briefly discuss in relation to criticisms on the application of New Materialisms in Mediterranean archaeology.

3.2.3 From 'power over' to 'power to': New Materialist archaeology and its ethical implications

In a recent discussion article by Fernandez-Götz, Dominik Maschek and Nico Roymans, the adoption of New Materialism in studies of the Roman world – especially Versluys's 'Romanization 2.0' manifesto - was heavily criticised for its perceived lack of ethical considerations, suggesting that approaches that reason from a 'flat ontology' ignore the unequal and dark 'predatory' character of Roman imperialism, creating '*a sanitized past*'.[338] Misunderstanding post-anthropocentrism as a complete renunciation of 'all things human', Fernandez-Götz et al. furthermore frame archaeological adoptions of New Materialism as causing a new form of 'object fetishism' in archaeology.[339] Since debates about the right application of New Materialist and post-humanist theories are still ongoing, scepticism about the ethical implications of New Materialism is in some sense understandable. However, it overlooks the wide variety of approaches that New Materialist archaeology has to offer.[340] Whereas it is indeed true that the object-oriented, a-humanist and non-relational stance of 'second-wave symmetrical archaeology' (largely based on the idea of withdrawing object 'essences' of Harman's OOO and therefore not really 'New

[335] Cipolla and Harris 2017, 200: '*This emphasis on process and becoming is one of the critical differences between symmetrical archaeology and new materialism'* (Harris).
[336] Olsen 2010; Olsen and Pétursdóttir 2014; Olsen and Witmore 2015; Pétursdóttir 2012; Witmore 2014.
[337] The non-human aspect of these approaches is well captured in Pétursdóttir's interest in '*how things exist, act and inflict on each other (…) outside the human realm*' (Pétursdóttir 2012, 578). See also Olsen and Witmore, who claim that *'things do hold something in reserve, something that cannot be explained by such relational involvement*' (Olsen and Witmore 2015, 190). For a critique see Cipolla and Harris 2017, 188; Crellin et al. 2021
[338] Fernández-Götz et al. 2020; Díaz de Liaño and Fernández-Götz 2021. Echoing also Barret's critique on non-anthropocentrism in archaeology as '*the new antiquarianism*'.
[339] Fernandez-Götz et al. 2020, 1630-1631.
[340] For a critique on Fernandéz-Gotz et al. 2020, see the defence of Versluys 2020. See also Crellin et al. 2021, 133: '*Critics of these new ideas sometimes mischaracterize them as apolitical and ahuman, and whether we agree or not, it is certainly the case that many archaeologists experimenting with these new directions in theory have yet to seriously address the status of power and politics.'*

Materialist', see 3.2.1) leaves very little room for humans and the political and social relations and affects of objects[341], other forms of New Materialist archaeology in fact can be considered to be at the very forefront of decolonial activism in archaeology, developing exciting new posthuman perspectives on issues such as racism, queerness, and inequality in both past and present contexts.[342]

Critically, posthumanism does not mean anti-human or non-human, and it is therefore that several authors now also use post-anthropocentrism instead of non- or anti-anthropocentrism.[343] Humans, including their social inequalities, power structures and other asymmetries, are often still a very important part of the assemblages that New Materialists study. To put it bluntly, it is simply mistaken that an approach that reasons from a 'flat ontology' cannot account for any type of inequalities.[344] Rather, a 'flat ontology' merely creates a level playing field for all that exists at the outset of any analysis, as one cannot know whether a human, an animal, a thing or a landscape will have a more or less important role to play. A post-anthropocentric analysis can however very well detect inequalities in any given assemblage: '*Thus, here the political outcomes, and the ethical impact, of the analysis are not decided in advance, but they follow nonetheless*'.[345] Rachel Crellin has been particularly occupied with developing a New Materialist approach to power in archaeology, investigating how power – both in its negative, repressive form (*potestas*) and its positive, empowering form (*potential*) - is not simply 'possessed' and 'exercised' by human agents but instead relational, multiple and dynamic, emerging from post-anthropocentric assemblages.[346] She states*: 'Power is not limited to humans and is not merely repressive. We need to keep talking about 'power over' but also about 'power to', including non-humans. Power is as much in resistance as in subjugation. The power of a virus to bring down economies, destroy businesses, reconfigure social relations, shift politics, and kill thousands of people. Power, like affect, has nothing to do with human beings. Indeed, it always involves non-humans, because even those assemblages that include humans involve non-humans too. The slave and owner example includes all kinds of non-humans*

[341] See Van Dyke 2021 for a thorough critique. A good example of such a-humanist approaches in archaeology is Pétursdóttir and Olsen 2018. The anti-human stance of such approaches sometimes adopts concepts from post-colonialism ('*Archaeologists should unite in a defence of things, a defence of those subaltern members of the collective that have been silenced and 'othered' by the imperialist social and humanist discourses*', Olsen 2010), which is, to say the least, not very helpful for the post-humanist agenda. Somewhat related is the radical ahumanism in Patricia MacCormack's 'Ahuman Manifesto', which argues for human extinction to end the Anthropocene, cf. MacCormack 2020.

[342] See for instance Alberti 2016; Crellin et al. 2021, 120: '*Why should studies that elevate the non-human be any less concerned with power than anthropocentric approaches?*'.

[343] For the ethics of post-humanism and its discontents with the very narrow and unequal definitions of 'the human' in traditional humanism - see especially Braidotti 2013; 2019. For post-anthropocentrism, see Crellin 2021, 121.

[344] Something that was for instance also suggested in Hodder 2014.

[345] Crellin et al. 2021, 9.

[346] *Idem*, 126, drawing specifically on Deleuze 2006, 60 and his reading of Foucault 1979.

from chains and ships to whips and weapons.'[347] Investigating the roles and capacities of the different elements of an assemblage – for instance a Hellenistic palace – therefore is not a form of 'object fetishism' or a 'new antiquarianism' but a radical investigation of the 'power to' while still acknowledging the 'power over'. This idea I will further explore in relation to Hellenistic palaces as assemblages in the next section.

3.3 The Assembled Palace. Towards a post-anthropocentric and post-representational understanding of Hellenistic courts and their vibrant elements

In this section, I will explore how Assemblage Theory can offer new analytical perspectives to the study of Hellenistic palaces and courts in more general terms. I will first broadly outline some characteristics of current scholarship on Hellenistic palaces, emphasising how these architectural structures are generally understood as representational '*manifestations*' of *'a monarch's wealth and power'* that '*embody the ideas and values of his kingship'*.[348] I will then explore what a rethinking of such palaces as heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, emergent and vibrant assemblages (see paragraph 3.2.1) can add to our analyses and interpretations of the monumental and highly eclectic nature of these royal residences. I will explore how a turn to the actual (local) and virtual (globalizing) capacities of the elements that make up Hellenistic palaces can help to go *beyond* the representational notions and to become aware of the processes and vibrancy of palaces as glocal assemblages.

Scholarship on Hellenistic palaces has increased considerably over the last three decades or so.[349] Known palaces have been re-examined, and new ones have been discovered.[350] Overall, the palaces of the Hellenistic period become increasingly experimental and monumental through time, culminating in the innovative eclecticism of Late-Hellenistic palaces.[351] The formation and functioning of these palatial residences are mostly analysed and understood in the socio-cultural framework of Hellenistic courts and the mechanisms of royal power that constitute such courts.[352] Kropp summarizes the main axioms of this general interpretative framework well when he states: '*Typically, a new king seeks to impress his subjects, satisfy his subordinates, and overshadow his*

[347] Crellin et al. 2021, 126.
[348] Kropp 2013, 94.
[349] Lévy 1987; Brands and Hoepfner 1996; Nielsen 1999; Held 2002; Kropp 2013, 93-173.
[350] E.g. *Vergina*: Saatsoglu-Paliadeli 2001; *'Iraq el-Amir:* Will and Larché 1991. Relatively recent discoveries include, inter alia, *Pella*: Brands and Hoepfner 1996; and the Governor's palace of *Jebel Khalid*: Clarke 2001.
[351] See Kropp 2013 for a good overview. For this move towards eclecticism, see Hoepfner 1996, 43: '*Die architektur der basileia ist anfangs konservativ. Die frühen Paläste zeichnen sich durch hohe Qualität der Bauausführung, aber kaum durch bedeutende Neuerungen aus. (…) 'Neue Formen und farben prägten den Eklektizismus des Hoch- und Späthellenismus.'*
[352] Strootman 2014, chapter 3.

predecessors in magnificence. Royal palaces are a key feature in this visual game of power.'[353] As such, Hellenistic royal palaces are mostly considered as the physical setting of a court, allowing for certain social functions and always subject to 'games of power'. This perspective is greatly indebted to Norbert Elias's classic 1969 *The Court Society*, in which Elias developed a 'sociology of court society', in which he describes the court in the following way: '*At such a 'court' hundreds and often thousands of people were bound together in one place by peculiar restraints which they and outsiders applied to each other and to themselves, as servants, advisers and companions of kings who believed they ruled their countries with absolute power and whose will the fate of all people these people, their rank, their financial support, their rise and fall, depended within certain limits. A more or less fixed hierarchy, a precise etiquette bound them together*'.[354] In Elias's definition, the court is primarily a social entity consisting and created by humans, bound together by hierarchies, ideologies of absolute power and the practices of etiquette; the *material* elements of the court - the physical space of the palace, with its own capacities and demands - however remains largely subordinate to these things.

Following from Elias's influential human-centred, social understanding of the court, scholarship dealing with Hellenistic courts has had the strong tendency to ascribe representational roles to palaces, understanding them primarily as symbolic vehicles meant to signal the royal ideology and power of the king.[355] Related to this interpretative framework is Inge Nielsen's insistence that in Hellenistic palaces 'form always follows function', suggesting that all palatial forms can be 'read back' to one of nine general 'palatial functions', i.e. official, social, religious, defensive, administrative, service, residential for king, royal family and guests, public and recreational.[356] This 'reading back' of palatial residences to ideological concepts and human intentions and functions echoes Ingold's definition of the hylomorphic model of understanding cultural creation. As a consequence, palaces remain static, bounded entities that are strictly reduced to their messages and functions, and are deemed ontologically inferior to their human commissioners and users. Kropp claims: '*the design and decoration of public and semi-public areas of all palaces, such as court rooms, banqueting and reception halls, express ideological messages of legitimation, sacrality and self-aggrandizement* (…) *Great buildings manifest a monarch's wealth and power, and embody the ideas and values of his kingship'*.[357] A fundamental problem with this representational understanding of palatial design and decoration is that it leads to an approach in which the

[353] Kropp 2013, 94. See also Kropp 2013, 348: *'The universal rationale of absolute monarchy, whereby wealth and power needed to be displayed ostentatiously in order to inspire awe and respect*.'
[354] Elias 1969, 35.
[355] E.g. Kopsacheili 2011; Kropp 2013; Strootman 2014.
[356] Nielsen 1999.
[357] Kropp 2013, 94.

'deciphering' of the messages is solely determined by the socio-cultural context.[358] As such, object meaning is always determined by an external, human sphere that completely exhausts the objects under study (e.g. the palace's design and decoration). The point that I try to make in this section is *not* that objects are *never* manifestations of royal power and embodiments of ideas. Rather, I want to explore whether there is also analytical room to consider palaces and their constituent elements as more-than-representational, asking whether the design and decoration of palaces also did something else *besides* 'expressing ideological messages' and participating in 'visual games of power'.[359] Can we consider power to be distributed across the heterogeneous assemblage (following Deleuze and Crellin), not owned by humans or non-humans, but rather emerging from the relations between its different components? Can we allow for the 'power to' of non-human elements in a palace?[360]

What if we rethink Hellenistic palaces and courts as assemblages that are heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, emergent and vibrant instead of solely representational? What would such a relational, post-anthropocentric, post-humanist, truly New Materialist approach to Hellenistic palaces look like? In theoretical studies of architecture, New Materialist approaches have already been enthusiastically adopted[361], a trend that is particularly well captured and further developed in the 2019 edited volume *Elements of Architecture* by Mikkel Bille and Tim Flohr Sørensen.[362] The manifold ways this book investigates and operationalizes the book's analytical starting point – i.e. '*architecture is the assemblage of elements*'[363] – provide promising new avenues of analysis for the study of Hellenistic palaces as well. The editors emphasize time and again how 'assemblage thinking' frees studies of architecture from the limiting and sometimes intellectually suffocating interpretative frameworks that retain reductive, static and dualistic understandings of such

[358] See for instance Kropp 2013, 93: '*In order to "decipher" such messages of the architecture, it is necessary to explore the cultural background of its makers and consumers'.*

[359] Note that Irene Winter claims that '*Any study of the palace, whatever its historical period, is fundamentally linked to the concepts of authority and rule'* (Winter 1993, 36). Zaineb Bahrani rightfully challenges this claim when she states that this type of approach '*continues to equate serious theoretical discussion exclusively with the idea of reducing social practices in Near Eastern antiquity to practices in the service of royal power and overt propaganda.*' (Bahrani 2014, 34).

[360] I follow Rachel Crellin's suggestion that power does not reside with a single idea or person but rather is the emergent quality of a heterogeneous network: '*power does not rest with the monarchy but in relations between flags, anthems, postage stamps, parliament, bank notes, and newspaper front pages. The importance of the monarchy can change; newspapers print stories about scandals or extravagant spending, the flow of power shifts direction and intensity; this in turn elevates some components at the expense of others and thereby shifts public opinion, the relations between monarchy and the public change as people come to think differently of a member of the royal family. Whilst the power in one part of the assemblage is changing elsewhere, other components remain stable: the flags still fly, the Queen's head is still on the postage stamps and coins, and Buckingham Palace remains*.' (Crellin 2021, 126).

[361] Introduced (again) by Ingold 2013, who warned for approaches to architecture that turn 'building' from verb into a noun, from an active process to a passive object (Ingold 2013, 47).

[362] Bille and Sørensen 2016, 3: '*architecture as a process and as a sensory and affective experience, enabling, rather than merely reflecting ideas, hopes, practices, politics, economy and social life'*

[363] *Ibidem*.

architecture: '*architecture is rarely – if ever – a socially and functionally compartmentalised occurrence. A focus on the continuous practices and heterogeneous performances of tangible and intangible elements of architecture goes to show precisely this point*'.[364] Bille and Sørensen's call for a focus on '*the heterogeneous performances of tangible and intangible elements of architecture*' echoes strongly with Jane Bennett's turn to 'the vibrancy of matter' and Crellin's attention for the 'power to'-aspect of elements. It is exactly this kind of perspective that I want to pursue here with regards to Hellenistic palaces, not in the least because their increased eclecticism in the Late-Hellenistic period is probably better understood by looking at its impact than by reducing it to the static 'visual games of power' mentioned by Andreas Kropp (as discussed in paragraph 2.3).

New types of questions concerning the nature of Hellenistic palaces thus emerge: what are these kinds of 'continuous processes' that elements of Hellenistic palaces were caught up in?; Wat role do these tangible and intangible elements have to play? A turn to these questions requires us to radically rethink Hellenistic palaces as heterogeneous, non-hierarchical, emergent and vibrant assemblages (see 3.2.1). I single out the notion of 'vibrancy' to now start building up a methodology to investigate these 'assembled palaces' because I believe that, from the conceptual toolbox of New Materialism, this concept has the most analytical power. A focus on the vibrancy of elements of a palace urges us to question the different types of processes and relational capacities that such elements were caught up in. I make this more concrete by distinguishing between different types of vibrancies, that can in fact be researched for every object or (palatial) assemblage, namely their 1) material vibrancy, 2) sensorial vibrancy, 3) vibrancy through alterity and their 4) vibrancy through virtual glocal relations. It should be remarked that I do not intend these four types of vibrancy to be an exhaustive or mutually exclusive conceptual taxonomy; they overlap and are related, forming an emergent assemblage themselves. Importantly, these four types of vibrancy will return as the four methodological proxies with which I study the object transformation (including the palace) in 4th c. BCE-1st c. CE Samosata (see 3.4 and chapter 7). In the following, I will illustrate the analytical potential of thinking in terms of these vibrancies by exploratively applying them to some well-known Hellenistic palaces.

3.3.1 Material vibrancy

A first type of ongoing processes we can investigate for elements of Hellenistic palaces are their *tangible, material vibrancies*, specifically the properties of the materials with which palaces are made. Karen Barad has made us aware that the experiential qualities of materials (e.g. their colour, hardness) are relational '*but they do not only become attached to other things, but also come to*

[364] Bille and Sørensen 2016, 6.

define them, they are central to the emergence of these things'.[365] This opens up a perspective to Hellenistic palaces that looks at the processual and relational capacities of its materials, asking questions, for instance, about the possibilities and demands that mud-brick walls or limestone floors are engaged in, what flowing water affords, or how the colour of an object defines and constitutes that object.[366] At the famous Hellenistic Qasr el-Abd of Iraq el-Amir, we might ask what the white stone, mentioned explicitly in a description by Flavius Josephus (*ek lithou leukou*), defined the palace itself. [367] What was enabled and restricted by the water in the moat around it? How did *opus caementicium* allow for new forms (cupolas, domes, vaults) in Herod's Third Palace at Jericho and how was the need for Herod's eclectic experimentation nourished by the capacities of this material?[368] How did the ongoing flooding potential of the Wadi at Jericho impact the palaces around it? What was the impact of the '*variety of the stones'*[369] Josephus describes for the palace of Jerusalem? How were the sandstone columns and painted stucco of the northern knife-edge of the northern palace of Masada, with its *belvedere* and *tholos*, affected by wind and rain; how severely did they erode and discolour?[370]

3.3.2 Sensorial vibrancy

This materiality perspective to the ongoing vibrancy of elements in Hellenistic palaces is furthermore strongly connected to questions about the *multi-sensorial capacities* of an assemblage. This approach was particularly developed for archaeology by Yannis Hamilakis, who criticized overtly DeLandian understandings of Assemblages Theory as being too much rooted in modernist sociological thinking (e.g. Max Weber and Erwin Goffman), arguing that this made them too mechanical and systemic, not allowing for the messier, experiential and sensorial aspects of life and matter.[371] This focus on sensoriality in assemblages resonate well with the ethical considerations discussed earlier in this chapter, as Hamilakis' 'sensorial assemblages' or 'multi-sensorial fields', consist of both non-human and human elements, and allows for investigations of the ways that power is distributed along the relations of its assemblage, and not merely 'owned' by a royal commissioner.[372] Sensorial assemblages are defined by Hamilakis as '*the contingent co-presence of heterogeneous elements such as bodies, things, substances, affects, memories, information, and ideas. Sensorial flows and exchanges are part of this sensorial assemblage and at*

[365] Harris 2021, 35, referring to Barad 2007.
[366] See Ingold 2007 for the relational and processual properties of objects. For a good example see Van Oyen 2016, 11-32, reflecting on the redness of terra sigillata.
[367] Joseph. *AJ* 12.230 – 33. For the Qasr el-Abd, see Will and Larché 1991.
[368] For the Third palace of Jericho see Netzer 2001, 93-100.
[369] Joseph. *BJ* 5.176 -81.
[370] For the northern palace of Masada see Netzer 1991, 115-124.
[371] Hamilakis 2013; 2017.
[372] *Idem*, 111: '*Sensorial assemblages produce place and locality through evocative, affective, and mnemonic performances and interactions. At the same time, natural or human-made features in these localities, permanent or not, or buildings and architecture, can become part of sensorial assemblages.'*

the same time the "glue" that holds it together'.[373] Multi-sensoriality of palatial elements points our attention to the intricate and constantly ongoing and shifting combinations of olfactory sensations (e.g. the smell of burning oil lamps), tactility (e.g. narrow corridors; the structure of a tessellated mosaic), vision (e.g. how geometric patterns slow down the eye and the mind[374]), audial sensations (e.g. the acoustics of an inner court, the silence of a secluded room) but for instance also memorial sensations (e.g. how a place or object with much time-depth allows for multi-temporality and conflicting or channelled memorialization[375]). Together, these multi-sensorial fields can function as a form of bio-politics or 'sensorial regimes' that have a certain degree of duration and therewith suppress or enable, limit or empower specific individuals.[376] Hamilakis makes us aware that there is room for cynicism with regards to such bio-politics: '*a 'palatial' building can be a component of a sensorial assemblage where authorities attempt (often unsuccessfully) to establish specific sensorial regimes, and a distinctive, power-laden bio-political and consensual order. These attempts do not go unchallenged by the various participants in these sensorial assemblages*.'[377] These considerations raise a plethora of new approaches to Hellenistic palaces; what kind of multi-sensorial regimes were for instance shaped by the many pools and bathrooms of Hasmonaean palaces?[378]; how did the physical experience of ascending the imposing rock of Masada produce a sensorial memory, and how were such bio-politics challenged?; how did the smells of the gardens at Jericho determine the specific sensorial fields of each different palace?; and how did the vibrancy of flowers growing in the western peristyle court of Jericho's Third Palace enter into complex sensorial relations with the abstracted floral motifs of its painted stucco walls?[379]

[373] Hamilakis 2013, 126.
[374] Gell 1998.
[375] A good example for a place with a lot of time-depth is of course Eski Samsat, with which I started this dissertation (see the introduction). I argued there that the destruction of such a multi-temporal site (with pasts that endure) also means the *de facto* erasure of historical worlds. Hamilakis reminds us that this type of mnemo-politics is always also a multi-sensorial matter.
[376] Hamilakis 2013, 111: '*Such devices produce distinctive sensorial affordances, and often regulate and regiment sensorial experience and interaction. A settlement or a city, a monumental structure, a temple or sanctuary, a 'palatial' building can be a component of a sensorial assemblage where authorities attempt (often unsuccessfully) to establish specific sensorial regimes, and a distinctive, power-laden bio-political and consensual order. These attempts do not go unchallenged by the various participants in these sensorial assemblages.'*
[377] Hamilakis 2013, 127.
[378] Netzer 1975, 74-76.
[379] For the flowers of the western peristyle court, where seven rows of twelve flower pots were found, see Gleason 1993; Nielsen 2001, 180. For the wall painting, see Netzer 2001, 250-251.

3.3.3 Vibrancy through radical alterity

A less tangible, but still very actual type of ongoing object capacities is that of bringing in '*radical alterity*'; aspects of palatial elements that introduce highly different modes of 'existence' and therefore prove to be vibrant and transformative.[380] Colours, styles, materials, concepts, figurative modes, and multi-sensorial fields can all be radically different, unsettling, shocking and shaking the foundations of the pre-existing ontologies in which they appear.[381] This implies an approach to objects as if they are new, encountered for the first time or considered a constitutive part of ontological change. The often highly experimental and eclectic nature of Hellenistic palaces are the ideal context to pursue such questions. What radical alterity did the 'animals of gigantic size' at the façade of the Qasr el-Abd of Iraq el-Amir for instance bring forth?[382] How radically new was the introduction of figurative painted stucco in Jebel Khalid?[383] How was the presence of naturalistic sculpted decoration in the architectural decoration of the 'Dionysian Hall' of Nabatean Beidha - with its Ionic capitals with heads, Medusa heads in the abaci, and elephant heads in the place of volutes - actively altering the ontological status of representation in this region?[384]

3.3.4 Vibrancy through glocal relations

A non-tangible and perhaps even virtual capacity of elements, affecting another type of vibrancy of Hellenistic Palaces as assemblages, are their glocal relations; the ways that object types exist beyond a strictly local level only. The ongoing globalizing processes of universalization and particularization of object types throughout Hellenistic-period Afro-Eurasia caused the virtual relations of objects to always be in flux. As such, individual elements of Hellenistic palaces in part also derived their vibrancy from their virtual and glocal relations with other objects of the same types.[385] For this notion I draw first of all on the work of Chris Gosden, whose seminal 2005 article '*What do Objects Want?*' itself drew on Clarke's famous notion of 'battleship curves'[386] and Gell's notion of an 'inter-artefactual domain'.[387] Gosden made a compelling argument for the importance

[380] For alterity, see Holbraad and Pedersen 2017.
[381] An approach also taken in Bahrani 2014, who frames art objects in the Near East as emergent 'time-travellers', infinite images that can effect change through their alterity.
[382] Joseph. *AJ* 12.230 - 33. Kropp 2013, 100.
[383] Jackson 2016.
[384] Bikai et al. 2008.
[385] For this notion, see also Versluys 2014, who argues that objects, through their globalizing relations, are always 'in motion', even when encountered as static that objects.
[386] Clarke 1978.
[387] Gell 1998, 215 with an analysis of the inter-artefactual domain of Maori meeting houses that only change according to the '*principle of least difference*'. See also Gell 216: '*Culture may dictate the practical and/or symbolic significance of artefacts, and their iconographic interpretation; but the only factor which governs the visual appearance of artefacts is their relationship to other artefacts in the same style. Visual culture is an autonomous domain in the sense that it is only definable in terms of relationships between artefacts and other*

of the way that groups of related objects *en masse* produce 'stylistic universes' that affect producers and users of new objects, being bound to the canons and demands of such object-types.[388] Gosden realized that such perpetuated forms added to and altered these universes through simultaneous processes of standardization and particularization, notions that pleasantly overlap with concepts developed in globalization theory (universalization and particularization). Through such processes, a dynamic genealogy of standardized but not static form-types emerged and with these standardized (or 'canonized') object-types also other things were perpetuated, especially the specific capacities (or, in Gosden's terms 'obligations' and 'requirements') that an object-type afforded.[389] Recently, the New Materialist archaeologist and theorist Chris Fowler has made similar arguments by suggesting that object-types and their genealogies function as assemblages, existing as a relational group of objects that is emergent, dynamic but also, to some extent, enduring.[390] Fowler notices that, while every new local and actual particularization of an object type is a unique 'rearticulation' of the virtual, globalized assemblage, creating a 'momentary presence', this rearticulation does not necessarily change the inter-artefactual assemblage completely at once; in other words: while these standardized object-types should not be understood as static and essential, they nonetheless can have endurance.[391] This means that individual objects never only exist in their actual local relations ('present in the world'); they were

artefacts; it is a mistake to think of 'culture' as a kind of 'head office' which decrees, on the one hand, what form political competition will assume, and on the other, what artefacts will look like. Artefacts are shaped in the 'inter-artefactual domain', obeying the immanent injunctions governing formal stylistic relationships among artefacts, not in response to external injunctions from some imaginary 'head office''. Gosden reflects on Gell: '*Although he doesn't explore the conceptual implications of this idea, Gell's view that artefacts form a world with its own logics somewhat independent of human intentions is vital in demonstrating that there might be many cases in which forms of abstract thought and mental representation take the shape suggested by objects, rather than objects simply manifesting pre-existing forms of thought.*' (Gosden 2005, 196).

[388] Gosden 2005, 194: '*the ways styles of objects set up universes of their own into which people need to fit*.'. See also Pitts 2019, 14-16.

[389] Gosden 2005, 194: '*Objects produced within a recognizable set of forms and styles have influences on the ways in which people make and use them.'* Crucially for the purpose of this dissertation, I believe Gosden's use of the word 'style' is not applicable to the category of 'things Greek' (see the previous chapter) as he is not interested in culture styles but rather in groups of objects that are related in terms of their form. While a 'tessellated mosaic with concentric border decoration' exists in an inter-artefactual domain as its execution was channelled and constrained by the standardization of its form and object-type, a similar argument cannot be made for the much more elusive *conceptual* category of 'things Greek'; it is impossible to say what formal obligations 'things Greek' imposed on new 'things Greek' as there are no clear formal characteristics of 'things Greek'.

[390] Fowler 2013; 2014. See especially Fowler 2017, 95: '*typologies are not constraints to the appreciation of distinctiveness, difference and relationality in the past, but can rather form an important tool in detecting those relations and making sense of different past ways of becoming. Artefacts are assemblages and so are types of artefacts.'* See also Fowler and Harris 2015, 130: '*A group of pots of the same type are just as real – and as relational – as any single pot. (…) The point is that, for archaeologists at least, classification need not separate a thing from its relations, but can rather identify some of the key relations that endure'.*

[391] Fowler 2013, 252: '*The rearticulation of assemblages continually produces momentary presents out of these pasts; but such rearticulations do not change everything at once*'.

also caught up (or '*territorializing'*[392]) into more-than-local assemblages of virtual relations ('real but not actual').[393]

Acknowledging the virtual, more-than-local (glocal) relations of objects as existing within such object-type assemblages is another way of investigating the vibrancy of matter.[394] From these considerations follow that we can investigate the genealogies of palatial elements and consider how these virtual, inter-artefactual assemblages were developing through time and space. We might for instance ask how the genealogy of tessellated concentric border mosaics shaped their occurrence in the Western palace of Masada and how its aniconic particularization meant a strong deviation from the inter-artefactual assemblage.[395] Another example of such virtual relations in Hellenistic palaces is the very standardized 'Masonry Style painting', an inter-artefactual assemblage that channelled and constrained its adoption for instance in the royal palace of Petra.[396]

The four types of 'vibrancy' of elements of Hellenistic palace assemblages explored above open up a lot of analytical room to go beyond anthropocentric and representational approaches and

[392] Deleuze and Guattari 2004, 307.

[393] The distinction between *actual* and *virtual* relations is made by Deleuze: '*the virtual is not opposed to the real, but to the actual*' (Deleuze 2004, 260). In relation to archaeology, Oliver Harris comments: '*the notion of a virtual shaped by history allows us to think about how capacities to act endure, without having to reject the relational existence of the world.'* (Crellin et al. 2021, 45(Harris)). Bille and Sørensen make a similar claim for the importance of exploring the less presentist, actual aspects of architecture, something they call 'entering into the fog of architecture': '*we believe that there is still a pressing need to, also beyond archaeological approaches to architecture, for complementing the presentist bias on the tangible with attention to intangible and ontologically vague phenomena tincturing people's lives. Beyond the steel framework of a building, we need to enter into the fog of architecture and adopt the ontologically indistinct as the starting point for tracing the connections shaping the tangible and intangible aspects of human lives*' (Bille and Sørensen 2016, 3*).* Harris further explores the multi-scalar character of assemblages in Harris 2017, 127, where he concludes that any attempt to privilege a single scale is always reductionist. Note that this position stands in stark contrast to the axioms of especially post-processualist archaeologists, who often consider such larger 'virtual' scales as merely human inventions, artificial concepts that are imposed onto 'reality' in a top-down manner. This very dualist epistemology (of local material reality versus subjective human concepts) is not desired for in assemblage thinking, which has as a key characteristic a commitment to realism (see paragraph 3.1 of this dissertation and DeLanda 2002, 4). Harris shows how assemblages offer '*new ways of thinking about archaeological categories as neither externally imposed reifications, nor simply internally defined essential historical truths'* (Harris 2017, 128). See also Crellin et al. 2021, 43 (Harris). The notion of the 'virtual' is also at odds with Latour's ANT, as there the nodes in the network are solely defined by their *actual* relations, something especially criticized by Harman, who uses the notion of 'potentiality' to deal with object qualities that are not necessarily currently activated. Cf. Harman, 2009, 75. His use of the word 'potentiality' however relies heavily on the notion of the 'withdrawn object', a form of un-relational essentialism that is not suitable for historical analysis as it has an ahistorical character. Following Crellin et al. 2021, I use the word 'capacities' to indicate the relational qualities of objects in an assemblage.

[394] Harris summarizes this relation between virtual relations and vibrant emergence by pointing out how the virtual '*captures the space of potentials that exist in the process of becoming through which things emerge*'. (Harris 2017, 135).

[395] For Herod's aniconism, see Kropp 2013, 148-152.

[396] E.g. Joukowsky 2007.

understandings of these palaces. Rather than culturally labelling the elements that make up these palaces, or 'reading them back' to human intentions and royal ideologies (Ingold's *hylomorphic* model), I have here explored a *morphogenic* approach, reading forward, along with the processes of object capacities, toward palaces as heterogeneous, non-hierarchic, emergent and vibrant assemblages. This implies allowing for the multifarious and multi-scalar character of object assemblages, their actuality as well as their virtuality, their glocal and relational genealogy, their 'radical alterity' and their participation in sensorial fields. The elements that Hellenistic palaces consisted of were anything but static; they were vibrant and in a constant state of becoming.

3.4. Methodology: vibrant objectscapes and glocal genealogies

In the remainder of this chapter, I will briefly explain how this dissertation will employ the theoretical positioning developed in the previous sections to the context of the palace of Samosata. One might in fact read the overall dissertation in a morphogenic way, successively territorializing, assembling first the archaeological elements of Hellenistic-Early Roman Samosata (its architecture, architectural decoration and sculptural evidence, in chapters 4, 5 and 6), and subsequently bundling and applying the notion of assemblages and vibrancies in chapters 7-10. Acknowledging that assemblages are multi-scalar, two slightly overlapping types of assemblages will be considered[397]: first, in chapter 7, the relatively synchronous and actual 'vibrant objectscapes', and, second, in chapters 8-10, the more diachronic and virtual 'glocal genealogies'. I will elaborate on the ways I will investigate these two types of assemblages in the following paragraphs.

3.4.1 *Vibrant objectscapes*

In chapter 7, I will consider four consecutive 'objectscapes' of Hellenistic and 'early Roman' Samosata. Such objectscapes are a type of assemblages that comprise of '*the repertoires of objects at hand in a given locality in a particular historical moment'*.[398] By studying the sequencing of

[397] Such overlapping is inevitable because, as Chris Fowler claimed, *'Assemblages occur at varying scales of space and time, intersect, and can bleed into one another' (*Fowler 2017, 96).

[398] Pitts 2019, 7. For objectscapes, see Versluys 2017b; Pitts 2019, 7–19; Pitts and Versluys 2021. Pitts 2019 is the most in-depth application of the objectscape methodology as of yet. In his impressive monograph '*The Roman Object Revolution*', Pitts investigates the impact of the boom of standardized objects in northwest Europe during 100 BCE-100 CE in terms of shifting objectscapes, using a dataset of thousands of objects, mostly pertaining to funerary contexts. Through the lens of objectscapes, Pitts is capable to discern how increased object standardization allowed for pan-regional societal convergence in Gallia Belgica, southern Britannia and Germania Inferior, with a punctuation in the adoption of standardized objects with Mediterranean genealogies during the Augustan period – a true 'revolution'. Crucially, his approach illustrates how objectscape-thinking provides a way out from problematic acculturative narratives of

multiple succeeding 'objectscapes' in the same locality, one can first of all 'map' cultural changes in a locality in terms of its material transformations; it makes it possible to contextualize the palace in the archaeological and diachronic context of the site. As such, this part of the methodology is not necessarily much different from conventional archaeological diachronic narratives, albeit explicitly focused on the objects of these changes, and not on their representational aspects. However, investigating objectscapes also allows for an investigation of the nature of these material transformations, asking what exactly changed and, more importantly, *how* the different elements of these objectscapes contributed to this change as vibrant historical actors.

This will be done by analysing every objectscape according to four 'proxies' that investigate different relational capacities. These four types of object vibrancy have been discussed in depth in the previous section (3.3) and consist of 1) temporal and geographical genealogies (investigating the vibrancy of glocal relations); 2) materials and colours (investigating the vibrancy of materials and their relational capacities); 3) sensorial capacities (investigating the vibrancy of matter through the multi-sensorial capacities of objects and their place in 'sensorial regimes'); and 4) radical alterity and representation (investigating the vibrancy of 'ontologically unsettling' objects). These proxies help to investigate object-change in Samosata from a post-representational and post-anthropocentric perspective, shedding light on the emergence and affect of these assemblages, while giving non-human elements their due.[399] It situates the palace of Samosata in the context of that change by investigating the sequencing of four objectscapes in Samosata that together span a period between ca. the 4th c. BCE and the 1st c. CE. These consists of the 4th-2nd c. BCE pre-palatial objectscape (section 7.2); the early 1st c. BCE early palatial

cultural change ('romanization') and representational understandings of objects. Note that both Pitts and Versluys consider objectscapes as something distinct from assemblages: '*Unlike the archaeological notion of the assemblage, which consists of a discrete, quantifiable and static group of objects that share an archaeological context, an objectscape comprises a dynamic repertoire of objects in motion'* (Pitts and Versluys 2021, 368). Their definition of assemblages however is solely applicable to the conventional use of the word 'assemblage' in modernist archaeology (for which, see Hamilakis and Jones 2017, 80 and paragraph 3.2.2 of this dissertation), and does not apply at all to the New Materialist, 'Deleuzian' assemblages that I employ here. Therefore, I believe objectscapes can in fact be considered a specific type of New Materialist assemblages because both are focused on the gathering of heterogeneous elements from which emerges something that is 'more than the sum of its parts'; they are both about process and change; and can exist on a variety of scales (although, unlike objectscapes, assemblages can also exist on the object-scale itself – an object as an assemblage - and much 'below' it, down to its very atoms, electrons and neutrons, cf. Barad 2007). Objectscapes, as the name implies, is furthermore focused primarily on the non-human aspect of assemblages ('*non-human agents',* cf. Pitts and Versluys 2021, 367), which makes them suitable as an archaeological methodology, but too dualistic for a theoretical framework - in which case it would have more affinities with Hodder's entanglement or symmetrical archaeology (indeed referred to in Pitts 2019, 7) than with the post-dualism of New Materialism.

[399] This resonates well with the general scope of the objectscapes methodology, cf. Pitts 2019, 8: '*Prioritising this relationality fosters better understandings of what objects did in the past, helping to evade the partial representational logic in many archaeological studies in which objects are reduced to proxies for abstract processes (e.g. Romanisation) or social categories (e.g. ethnicities and identities).'*

objectscape (section 7.3); the mid-late 1st c. BCE later palatial objectscape (section 7.4); and the 1st c. CE post-palatial objectscape (section 7.5).

3.4.2 Glocal genealogies

Whereas chapter 7 focuses on changing objectscapes and considers the genealogical aspect of its elements *only* as one of four proxies to explore the vibrancy of the objectscape, chapter 8-10 investigates such object type genealogies in much more detail, focusing on the role such inter-artefactual assemblages have for the affect and vibrant impact of individual objects. These chapters then present three case studies of different elements that make up the palace, namely a geometric decorative motif (the 'crenellation motif'), a figurative decoration (the 'mask mosaic'), and an architectural lay-out (the 'symmetrical suite').

In each of these case studies, the first part of the analysis is focused on the standardizing, universalizing object-type that the individual object in Samosata belongs to. Following the ideas of Chris Fowler (see paragraph 3.3.4), I understand these standardized object types as virtual assemblages, that define and are defined by their particularized re-articulations. Each case study traces the glocal genealogy of these object-types, resulting in a diachronic narrative of universalization and particularization of the object under scrutiny. For each particularized re-articulation of these object types, it will be investigated how they adhered to or deviated from the standardizing object type. Underlying these object type genealogies, then, are questions about the endurance of object-types, their impact on an individual, actualized level and the ways in which these re-articulations alter the object-type in turn.[400] By approximating the dynamic emergence of an object type, it becomes clear how the particularized, crenellation motif, mask mosaic, and 'symmetrical suite' in the palace of Samosata adhered to the standardized object type, and thus were shaped by their virtual relations. At the same time, it becomes clear how these particularized re-articulations also deviated from the standardized types they were related to, thus altering the inter-artefactual assemblage itself. In the second part of each of these three genealogical case studies, we take this analysis one step further, moving, as it were, from interpretation to 'analytical exploration', asking what the further implications of such relationality might have been. What type of capacities might these object-types have acquired through their glocal genealogies? And how might they have been transformative and vibrant in the context of the palace of Samosata?

[400] The need for such an analysis in archaeology is also formulated by Fowler and Harris 2015, 135: '*What is also needed, however, is an appreciation of the history of the entities producing relations and entities emerging from relations; precise histories for all the elements in the phenomenon. What we require, therefore, is an approach capable of dealing with both episodes of being and the dynamics of becoming, and one that reveals the work required to reveal either configuration*.'