

## Was the Anthropocene anticipated by the Long Walls zone?

Aspassia KOUZOUPI<sup>1\*</sup>, Anna-Maria ANAGNOSTOPOULOU<sup>2</sup>, John SIROPOULOS<sup>2</sup>, Eirini SKIADARESI<sup>2</sup>, Petros KYRIAKOU<sup>3</sup>, Panos KIOUSIS<sup>4</sup>, Konstantinos MORAITIS<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*School of Architecture NTUA, Greece*

<sup>2</sup>*Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus & Islands, Greece*

<sup>3</sup>*School of Rural, Surveying & Geoinformatics Engineering, NTUA, Greece*

<sup>4</sup>*Department of Architecture, UTH, Greece*

\* Corresponding author: Aspassia Kouzoupi. E-mail: [a.space.ia@gmail.com](mailto:a.space.ia@gmail.com)

KEYWORDS: Anthropocene, infrastructural palimpsest, landscape archaeology

We argue that the Anthropocene has been anticipated even in distant historic times, if not earlier. More than a geological era, the Anthropocene as a philosophical concept, may include giga-scale structures which have changed the way the Earth's crust was configured, perceived and experienced. The research and observation of the becoming of such archaeological structures in time, is a way to take advantage of the depth of time that has flowed since their creation. The case study focuses on a characteristic example of classic Antiquity, the parallel Long Walls between Athens and Piraeus. When looking at paleogeographical maps depicting what we acknowledge today as the Piraeus peninsula, we find that Piraeus used to be an island [6800-5400 cal y B.P.]. During classic antiquity, before the Northern Long Wall was constructed, [2450 cal y B.P. alias 5th c. BCE] Piraeus was again almost an island, cut away from the Attica land by a marsh, namely Halipedon. Halipedon was an area heavily modified during the Northern Long Wall's construction, as testified by Plutarch who refers to the expensive, time-consuming task of creating these foundations by the use of huge quantities of gravel and massive stone-blocks. The Southern Long wall was built some decades later, expressing the will of Athenians to make their city a naval node; this was achieved not by moving Athens close to the sea, but by creating an urban di-pole, by linking the historic city with the newly founded city of Piraeus. The Long Walls as fortification structures interrupted the topography which they crossed, being 2 predominantly straight and parallel axes, 6km long. The space they secluded, which was segregated from its rural environment, was a narrow [1 stadium wide] corridor which enabled direct communication between Athens and Piraeus port. Albeit their grandeur as giga-scale structure, the Long Walls double axis did not survive long as a fortification device. For the longest part of their history, they remained deteriorated and practically destroyed: only their foundations survived throughout the centuries, up to modern times. During the 19th century, Athens and Piraeus took again the role of an urban dipole; the newly founded Greek state's capital and its port were connected by 2 major transport axes which duplicated the Long Walls traces. This was the inauguration of an infrastructural palimpsest on one hand. On the other hand, the proximity to the transport axes again resulted in the deterritorialization of the area's rural character, and its transformation into an industrial area. This area today is considered valuable in terms of industrial history, however many among the protected monuments are in a state of abandonment and deterioration. The new face of the Anthropocene in the area takes the form of surface homogenization by logistics, huge commercial complexes. Our interdisciplinary team comprises archaeologists from the Ephorate of Antiquities of Piraeus & Islands, two GIS specialists and two architects. Our task is to find places along the Long Walls course where traces of the area's rich environmental, anthropogenic, and social palimpsest can be traced.