

## SSPARC

### Annual Festival of Social Science 2015

#### Presentation

Sugar, spice and settlement: Urban form as a metamorphosis of food ecosystems

#### Speaker

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#### Abstract

Associating cities with living organisms is not unprecedented in theory and practice of urban design and urban planning. The epistemology of such ontologically abstract theoretical frame of reference for such suppositions however varies vastly from one school of thought, time, socio-eco-geo-political context to the other. Using a comparative analysis in the *longue durée* we study the growth of the two cities; one as a checkpoint on and the other as the destination of the ancient 'spice trade' route; with a particular focus on food and its supply to, transit through and distribution in the city. The former, Hormuz (Iran), is the original city on the mainland of the Strait of Hormuz, mentioned by name after the voyage of Nearchus (325 BCE); today the most economically significant waterway in the world. While the latter, London (UK), was founded soon after the Roman invasion in 43 CE, abandoned after the withdrawal of the Roman legions, reoccupied by the Anglo-Saxons, and becoming the world's largest and most powerful city in the late nineteenth century. The spice trade of the Indian Ocean has received intensive interest among economic historians since Immanuel Wallerstein's World Systems Theory, and more recently has been invoked by Jason Moore in his non-Cartesian reformulation of Marx's metabolic rift theory. However, the implications of seeing empires, trade routes and world systems as ecosystems have yet to be fully thought through. Our research investigates how the spice trade has formed, deformed and reformed the two cities as nodes in distended ecosystems.