



# NWO

## Humanities

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### INTERVIEW KNOWLEDGE UTILISATION IN THE HUMANITIES

#### Shops in ancient Rome: *Building Tabernae* by Miko Flohr

Classicist and archaeologist Miko Flohr will investigate how the emergence of shops in ancient Rome changed the appearance of cities. That will provide a better understanding of the problems involved in urban design and bring the everyday reality of the classical world closer to the public. Flohr has received a Veni grant from NWO for his project.

**You do fundamental research that does not offer any direct possibilities for applications or answers to current societal issues. So where do the opportunities for knowledge utilisation arise in your research?**

'In the Roman world, shops were a relatively new phenomenon. Previously people always made their purchases at markets. How did this economic change influence the design of cities? That has not been investigated yet. Instead the focus has always been on the monumental architecture. I find it interesting that the Romans, just like us now, were forced to think about urban design as a result of extreme urbanisation and the development of crucial new activities. Although Roman culture is different from ours, they had to find solutions for comparable mobility and infrastructure problems. Their solutions were often different from ours, but we can still learn something from them.'



Photo: Miko Flohr

**How do you choose your target groups and how do you set your ambitions?**

'My research results are interesting for professionals and policy makers in the area of urban development or architecture because they say something about the effect of economic changes on a city's appearance and the social processes that these changes give rise to. I hope to reach this target group by becoming involved in the debate about urban design and spatial planning through giving lectures or publishing articles in professional journals. Visitors to archaeological sites are another target group. You rarely hear or read anything about how everyday facilities such as shops determined a city's appearance. It's great to offer tourists a different perspective on such a site, for example via the publication of a booklet. After all, the right of ancient history and archaeology to exist largely depends on public interest.'

**How does knowledge utilisation benefit you as a scholar?**

'That's hard to say at this early stage, as you can only utilise knowledge once you have it. As a scholar you spend about seventy percent of your time acquiring knowledge but this only gains a tangible form in the last phase of the research. Nevertheless it is good to include knowledge utilisation in the research proposal. I think humanities researchers have the important task of inspiring people and of generating ideas that people can use when taking decisions and gaining a better understanding of the world. The grant application forces you to think about that. At the same time NWO gives you enough space to argue why knowledge utilisation has less priority in this project or in this phase of the research.'

**Tips for fellow researchers?**

'Be realistic in the targets you set, ensure that these are feasible and build up a network within the target group for whom your research could be interesting.'