

# Review

FRANK VERMEULEN and ARJAN ZUIDERHOEK (EDS), *SPACE, MOVEMENT AND THE ECONOMY IN ROMAN CITIES IN ITALY AND BEYOND*. (Studies in Roman space and urbanism). London and New York: Routledge, 2021. Pp. 256, 171 b/w illus. ISBN 9780367757229. £108.00.

The impact of non-invasive technologies on archaeological research, as well as theoretical approaches such as the spatial turn, have significantly broadened our understanding of ancient cities. The perception and transformation of the built environment throughout time, its symbiotic relationship with human activity and the redefinition of the city's spatial borders are key aspects that have gained momentum in recent years (e.g. D. Filippi (ed.), *Rethinking the Roman City*, 2022). Based on a 2018 workshop as part of the Structural Determinants of Economic Performance in the Roman World research network, this volume aims to place spatial analysis at the centre of broader debates about the Roman economy.

In the introduction, the editors acknowledge the influence of social scientists such as Quentin Stevens and David Harvey, who see the built environment as the product of specific social groups and ideas, but also as a triggering factor of normative behaviour. This approach is sometimes explicit (ch. 6, Zuiderhoek) but also latent across the volume. Beyond the book's heterogeneous perspectives, the editors identify some relevant umbrella themes: the interactions between economic activity and movement; the importance of in-depth studies of small cities beyond the so-called Vesuvian model of Roman urbanism; and the relevance of economic connectivity between and beyond cities. The conclusions identify two major overlapping trends across chapters: studies that concern uses of spaces, and those that trace the movement of goods, people and technology.

While some contributions concern diverse geographic areas of Italy, Britain and Baetica, the volume pays particular attention to the Adriatic regions and Asia Minor. It is worth highlighting some relevant intersections between chapters and themes. The focus on regional connectivity helps reconstruct the history of partially known towns, such as the Adriatic colony of Sena Gallica (Lepore and Silani, ch. 8). The case of Aquileia's newly discovered market structures (Basso, ch. 9) reinforces the picture of its multi-directional networks, including the Balkans, the Danube and the Amber Road.

The traditional association between urbanisation and economic growth is reassessed by Poblome and Willet (ch. 5), who use isotope and botanical analysis to model a sustainability system that suggests that many cities in Asia Minor still depended on external markets. Looking at examples from Ephesos, Smyrna and Aphrodisias, Zuiderhoek (ch. 6) refers to the 'architectural embeddedness' of economic spaces to move away from models that attribute single functions to buildings, while also considering initiatives that funded them (e.g. euergetism). He shows that a closer look at these investments highlights competition between local elites, but also the impact of the imperial administration on the reconfiguration of economic and social forces.

The irregular distribution of the *tabernā* in Roman Italy leads Flohr (ch. 3) to question not only its typicality but also the often assumed connection between these buildings and economic development. Inspired by the work of the architectural historian William Whyte, Leder-Slotman (ch. 4) contests traditional identifications of market buildings in Asia Minor and also examines the people and the physical context linked to them. Similarly, Dickenson (ch. 7) criticises the scholarly emphasis on the civic-social uses of forum-basilica buildings in Roman Britain, downplaying their economic function. The author also contests the assumption, associated with Roman architecture, that enclosures were typically isolated spaces characterised by their lack of publicness, and suggests that they could have been used for traffic and activity control. Hoffelink (ch. 10) addresses this point by arguing that access to *macella* buildings sometimes seemed to be easier for people than for goods. These obstacles had obvious implications for traffic flow, but they did also facilitate supervision (e.g. fiscal) and commercialisation within these enclosures. This contribution, as well as Wallace-Hadrill's (ch. 11) and Corsi's (ch. 13), pivot around recent influential research on traffic and urban street-systems in Roman cities (e.g. A. Kaiser, *Roman Urban Street Networks*, 2011, and E. E. Poehler, *The Traffic Systems of Pompeii*, 2017). Wallace-Hadrill reconsiders ideas of Roman rational urbanism that tend to overstate for wheeled traffic and overlook alternatives

such as mules or humans. Corsi discusses the Roman ‘hospitality industry’ (e.g. inns and taverns) and its logistics to reflect upon movement in urban space as a transformative force that heavily impacted on cultural and socio-economic processes. The infrastructures that supported the storage and redistribution of goods in the river and maritime harbours of the city of Rome are examined by Malberg (ch. 15) and by Keay, Campbell, Crawford and Moreno Escobar (ch. 16), respectively. Malberg demonstrates how the 18 km long urban river functioned as a port-system in its own right. Both contributions show the successful application of geo-archaeological and spatial models for a better understanding of the coordinated activities that linked ports with cities. Economic models are discussed by Taelman (ch. 12) and Schattner (ch. 14). The latter tests various analytic frameworks to assess the agency of the city of Munigua in the processing and commercialisation of copper and iron extracted from the near mines of Sierra Morena, Baetica, and its impact on the region’s wealth. A transaction-costs approach using GIS simulation models is explored in Taelman’s contribution about marble distribution in Central Adriatic Italy. This ‘energyscape’ shows, however, no direct connection between patterns of consumption and the cost of transport. This leads to the conclusion that this industry was not ‘pure market-driven’, but rather the outcome of social and political forces. The distinction between market and non-market dynamics of supply and demand, which springs from neoclassical economic theory, is debatable and stands in contrast to the editors’ suggestion to consider ‘the multiplicity of forces that shaped and influenced Roman economic spaces and their uses’.

All in all, this volume is a welcome cross-disciplinary contribution to the study of ancient urban spaces and their key function as agents of economic activity and social transformation.

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