

## ***Muros et portas Cicero fecit***

Boundaries and movement in the urban borderscape of ancient Roman Ostia

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Master's Thesis

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New city walls were built in ancient Roman Ostia by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, enclosing the urban space that had expanded remarkably beyond the original colony that was founded three centuries earlier at the mouth of the river Tiber. These walls originated the new urban borderscape that delimited and defined the city until the decline of Roman urbanity in Ostia. The city walls were later augmented by another defensive wall that was built around the extended urban area of the city north of the river, in the *Trastevere Ostiense*. In addition to the city walls, the urban borderscape consisted of many other features, such as natural, magico-religious, hygienic, and economic boundaries, thereby altogether separating what was considered to be urban from suburban and non-urban.

In this study, these boundary features and their biographic development over time is examined. This is furthered with another biographical analysis of the movement that flew through these boundaries. Examination of these phenomena is executed by synthesising all the knowledge on these topics from archaeological data and secondary research. The aim of this analysis is to understand how the urban space of Ostia was defined and perceived, and how it thus participated to the formulation of the urban identity of the Ostians. The spatial and movement studies from the previous decades serve as the theoretical principles of the study in an attempt to make a leap from the material evidence to the interpretation of social and mental features of the ancient Roman society of Ostia.

**Key words:** Ostia, ancient Rome, Roman archaeology, Roman Empire, urban studies, spatial studies, space, urban border, borderscape, movement, city walls, urban identity.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 *Coloniae Ostiensium muros et portas dedit: an introduction*

During archaeological excavations in Ostia in 1909 Dante Vaglieri and his team made remarkable discoveries when they dug into the ground in the eastern side of this ancient Roman city. The findings included remains of a monumental gate belonging to the city walls of Ostia, and this gate was to be known as the *Porta Romana*, for the road running through it was leading towards Rome (*Giornale di Scavo* 1909: 293–295; Vaglieri 1910: 30–31). In the excavations were unearthed also fragments of two semi-identical inscriptions which had undoubtedly belonged to the attic of this gate. The text of the inscriptions was soon to play a major role in the dating of the discovered structures. The latest<sup>1</sup> pivotal and widely accepted reconstruction of the inscriptions was put forth by Fausto Zevi (1998: 85–99; Zevi & Manzini 2008: 201, 205; see figure 1), according to whom the inscriptions read:

SENATVS POPVLVSQVE ROMANVS  
 COLONIAE OSTIENSIVM MVROS ET PORTAS DEDIT  
 M(arcus) TVLLIVS CICERO CO(n)S(ul) FECIT LOCAVITQUE  
 P(ublius) CLODIVS PVLCHER TR(ibunus) PL(ebis) CONSVMMAVIT ET  
 PROBAVIT  
 PORTAM VETVSTATE CORRVP TAM [- -]

The translation is (by author, based on Zevi 1998):

The Senate and the Roman people  
 gave walls and gates to the colony of Ostia.  
 Marcus Tullius Cicero as a consul made and put them in place.  
 Publius Clodius Pulcher as a plebeian tribune completed and approved them.  
 The gate, deteriorated because of old age [- -]

According to Zevi's reading the famous late Republican statesman and literary figure Marcus Tullius Cicero had begun the construction of the city walls in Ostia during his consulship that took place in 63 BCE, and that the project was finalised by his rival Publius Clodius Pulcher during his time as a plebeian tribune that is known to have occurred five years later (Zevi

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<sup>1</sup> The inscription was first published by Vaglieri (1910: 30). However, until the work of Zevi, the prevalent reconstruction was that of *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* (CIL XIV 4707) from 1930, which is still occasionally referenced although the reconstruction by Zevi is generally accepted by scholars. According to CIL, the better-preserved inscription (CIL XIV 4707, Exemplar 1) should have been read as follows:

SENATVS POPVLVSQVE R.  
 COLONIAE OSTIENSIVM MVROS DEDIT  
 M. [- -] O. C [- -] FE [- -] IT OV  
 P. CLODIVS PVLCHER CONSVL [- -]  
 PORTAM VETVSTATE CORRVP TAM [- -]

1998: 100). The inscriptions thus provided a dating for the genesis of the wall circuit to the years 63–58 BCE.<sup>2</sup> Thereby, this proposed reconstruction of the inscriptions did not only establish the precise period for the foundation of the structures, but it also put the construction endeavour into the wider framework of Roman history: the emergence of the city walls probably was a part of a political game played by these major historical figures in the capital.<sup>3</sup> The discussed inscription is not from this period, but probably put in place to the gate in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and it was thus reflecting the historical background of the gate.

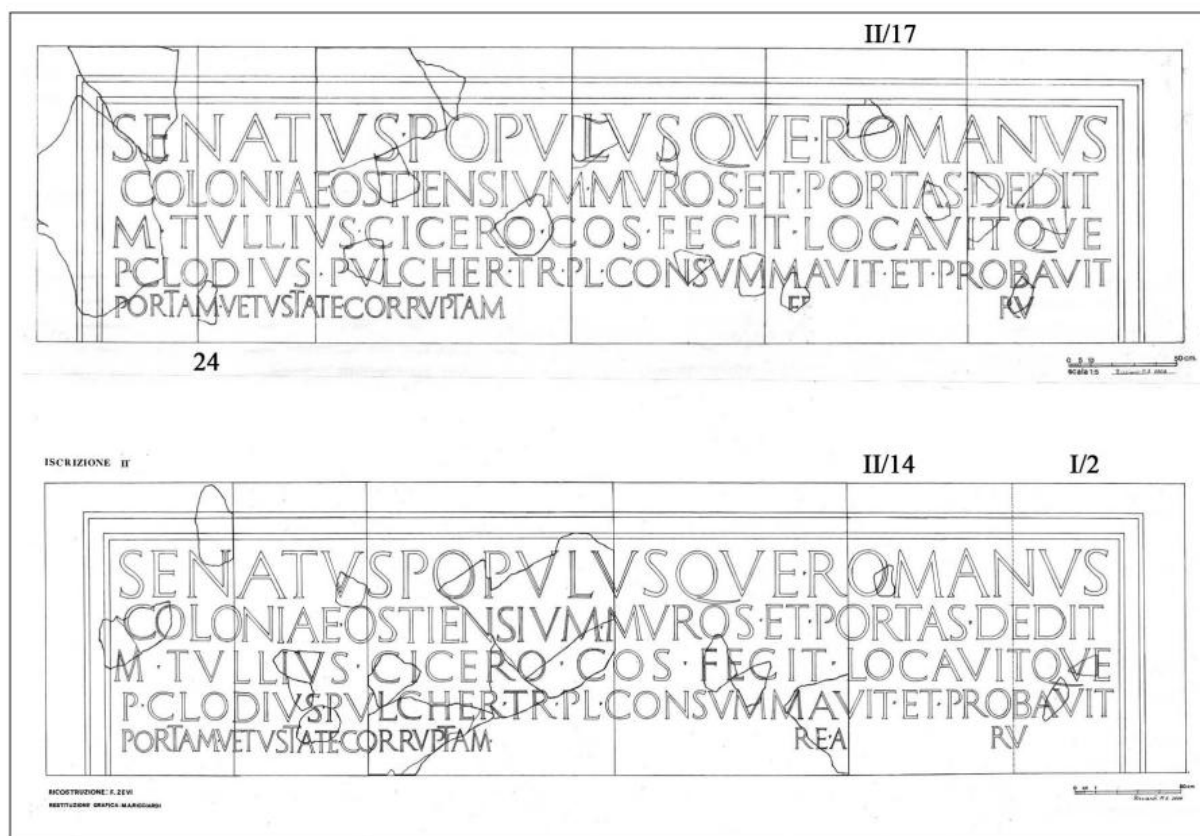


Figure 1: The latest reconstructions of the *Porta Romana* inscriptions by Fausto Zevi & Ilaria Manzini (2008: 205, fig. 4).

The decision by the Roman senate and the following actions executed by Cicero to erect this massive monument in Ostia is also the starting point for this study as I aspire to understand the socio-spatial implications that the urban borders had on the city. The story of Cicero and Clodius illustrates how social behaviour and exercise of power did structure the physical

<sup>2</sup> This chronology is substantiated by recent excavations that have provided a dating to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Heinzelmann 2020: 443).

<sup>3</sup> Zevi (1998: 99–112) proposes an extensive interpretation in which the rivalry between Cicero and his nemesis Clodius was ultimately reflected in construction projects, such as the city walls of Ostia that were began by Cicero but hijacked by Clodius. This is not exceptional, as many wall circuits of Roman Italy were sponsored by influential patrons in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Stevens 2017: 86), thus playing part in the political games.

environment. On the other hand, we can imagine how strongly the walls and other such built features have controlled the urban space and thus, conversely, impacted the behaviour of the people. In short, the urban space is an active part in the societal dynamics (see theory in chapter 1.3). This in mind, in this study at hand, I discuss the borders of the urban space – in particular the late Republican city walls – and the movement related to these borders in ancient Ostia. By examining these phenomena my objective is to understand how the city and its space was defined, delimited and perceived in relation to the spaces beyond the borders, as well as to recognise the role of the borders in these processes.

The protagonist of this research – certainly not Cicero – is indeed Ostia, the harbour city of Rome, located in the place where the river Tiber met the ancient shoreline in the Italian coast of Tyrrhenian Sea. Today the ancient city is largely archaeologically excavated and studied, and available for visitors in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, “the ancient Ostia”, nearby the modern town of Ostia Lido. In antiquity Ostia was, together with the adjacent port of Portus north of the city, the main harbour complex of Rome. Ostia played a crucial role in the maritime traffic arriving from the Mediterranean Sea to the capital, especially when it comes to the grain supply for the *Urbs*, being connected to the territory of the capital also by a road network (see maps in appendices 1–2). In its hey-day in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Ostia was a cosmopolitan city of at least 40 000 inhabitants (Gering 2013: 252).

According to Roman historians (e.g. Liv. I, 33), Ostia was founded by one of the legendary kings of Rome, Ancus Marcius, in the 7<sup>th</sup> century BCE. However, the earliest archaeological evidence for the city is only from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE, which is probably the actual dating for the foundation (Coarelli 2021: 19–27; Meiggs 1973: 16–18). Ostia was founded initially in a form of a small settlement with rectangular walls, resembling a Roman military camp (lat. *castrum*), and thereafter the first centuries of the city are known as the *castrum* phase. The city grew eventually beyond its original limits, but the *castrum* gave the urban centre its regular form with the two main streets, *decumanus* and *cardo*, intersecting in the city’s main square, the *forum* (Laurence 2020: 137–138).

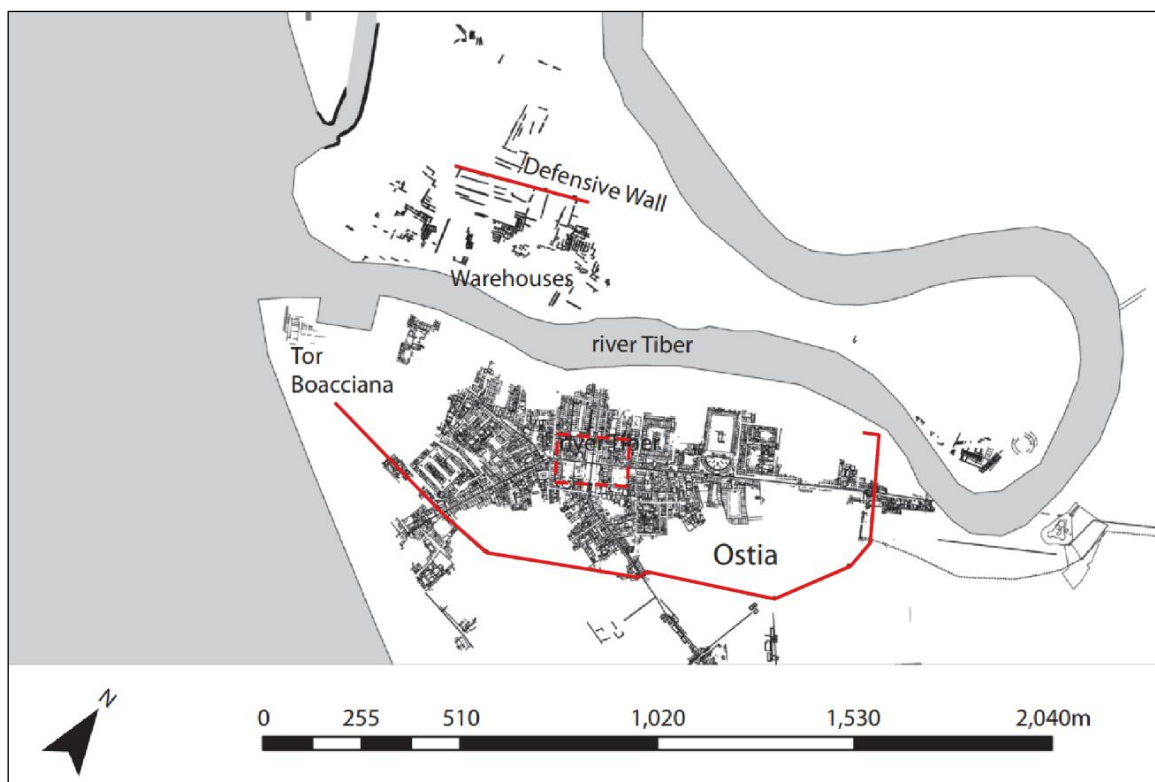


Figure 2: Map of the known archaeological structures in Ostia, including the *Trastevere Ostiense* north of the river. The map presents the fluvial situation in the ancient times with the shoreline and the course of the river Tiber differing from the modern conditions (cf. figure 3). Map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1). The known parts of the city walls (solid line) and the *castrum* walls (dash line) are highlighted in red by author.



Figure 3: Satellite map presenting the modern situation in the approximately same area as in figure 2. Note the changes in the fluvial conditions as well as the modern land use in comparison to the figure above. Map from Google Satellite Hybrid tool in QGIS software, with the known parts of the ancient city walls (solid line) and the *castrum* walls (dash line) marked in red by author.

After expanding spatially and having faced external threats by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, Ostia was provided by the Roman senate – as evinced by the inscriptions above – with new city walls surrounding the extended urban area. These “late Republican walls” served the city for the centuries to come, although they fell out of their primary defensive use already starting from the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE when the fortification structures were begun to be reused for other purposes (Meiggs 1973: 97). The city was expanded to the north of the Tiber to the region of artificial island of *Isola Sacra* after the new port of Portus was founded in mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The new urban area is known in modern literature as the *Trastevere Ostiense*, “Ostia beyond the Tiber”. A defensive wall was built to protect also this area, but the chronology of its construction is still uncertain, with the fortifications probably dating to Late Antiquity (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 163–165). The focus of this study is on these late Republican walls and their counterparts north of the Tiber (see figures 2–3) as well as on the other physical and non-physical borders that can be associated with this boundary zone that the walls had originated.

## 1.2 Materials, methods and concepts

The ancient urban boundaries of Ostia are virtually invisible for a person visiting the archaeological park today. There are only few, if any, structures left visible of the ancient city walls, but the wall circuit has been detected in various archaeological fieldwork projects since mid-1800s. In addition to the publications related to these field studies, the urban borders of Ostia have only recently re-emerged as a subject of interest, especially in the doctoral thesis by H el ene Glogowski (2023). In this thesis Ostia’s late Republican walls and their transformation over time are analysed archaeologically and reflected to the development of adjacent urban quarters by combing data from field analyses<sup>4</sup> and from various archival materials. Glogowski’s comprehensive and detailed work provides an excellent foundation for a study of the urban border. My objective is to further this work by expanding the discussion to all urban boundaries and by analysing them in terms of the spatial configurations and of movement. In addition, the very recent discoveries in the *Trastevere Ostiense* north of the Tiber are not included in Glogowski’s thesis, and my study pursues to fill in this gap. Even though the walls of the *Trastevere* differ chronologically from the late Republican walls, I speculate that the fortifications would have formed a connected border for Ostia’s urban space. As an archaeological reconstruction of the late Republican city walls is already

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<sup>4</sup> Glogowski’s field analyses covered detailed stratigraphic examinations of all visible and accessible sections of the city walls as well as other building in direct contact with them. The analyses included the original structures, the later additions and modern restorations (Glogowski 2023: 47–51).

produced by Glogowski, the details of the structures are not in the focus of this study, but instead their topographic extent and their impact on the urban space. In short, I pursue to produce a comprehensive spatial and topographic overview of the urban borders.<sup>5</sup>

For this exploration of the urban borders in Ostia I review, in addition to Glogowski's thesis, the excavation journals and other fieldwork publications related to the city walls, their gates, and other associated boundary features, as well as those concerning the comprehensive urban topography. I consult documents in the archives of Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica, namely the excavation journals (*Giornale di Scavo*) in Archivio Storico. In addition, I use various fieldwork publications, such as *Scavi di Ostia I* (Calza et al. 1953), *Notizie degli Scavi di Antichità* periodical, and *The Isola Sacra Survey* (Keay et al. ed. 2020). This examination is supported by essential works on the history and archaeology of Ostia, above all *Roman Ostia* (Meiggs 1973) and *Life and Death in Multicultural Harbour City* (Karivieri ed. 2020).

The primary material from Ostia is contextualised with the archaeological knowledge on the overall Roman urbanism and Roman urban borders, focusing on the Roman cities of Italian peninsula. This is conducted with the support from various recent publications, including *City Boundaries and Urban Development in Roman Italy* (Stevens 2017), *City Gates in the Roman West* (van Tilburg 2022) and *Life & Death in Roman Suburbs* (Emmerson 2020). Even though comprehensive comparisons to other Roman cities are not possible within the framework of this thesis, the features of Roman urbanism in general help to understand the characteristics of Ostia and to speculate the existence of phenomena that are absent in Ostia's limited archaeological record. Although my main perspectives for the study are material culture and topography, I also integrate some insight into Ostia and Roman urbanism found in the ancient Roman written sources, such as literature and epigraphic material. The written sources have, however, only contextualising, analogous and supporting role in the study.

Methodically, I conduct my examination as follows: first, I bring together the evidence on the borders limiting the urban space, which are discussed in the main chapter 2. Then, I trace the movement related to these borders by exploring the gates and throughfares of the urban borders, which are dealt with in the main chapter 3. In addition to written descriptions, to illustrate my observations I provide also maps that piece together all the features discussed in

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<sup>5</sup> In addition to Glogowski, the city gates of Ostia are recently examined also in a master's thesis by Niels Tuinman (2014). He presents an overview and map-based analysis of the three main gates of the city, though excluding other gateways and openings.

each section of the main chapters. These maps are composed with AutoCAD (2026) and QGIS (3.30.1) software tools, utilising existing topographical base maps of Ostia, especially from *Scavi di Ostia I* (Calza *et al.* 1953) and *The Isola Sacra Survey* (Keay *et al.* ed. 2020). A complication of the maps can be found in the appendices 3–4. In the main chapter 4 I move forward from the material evidence to the mental and social dimensions of the urban space as I address further questions arising from the spatial role and topography of the boundaries: I discuss the urban identity of Ostia, fundamentally asking what was perceived as the city and as ‘urban’ in Ostia. These three main chapters following this introduction form the general outline of the study, with conclusions presented in chapter 5.

In short, my research questions can be summarised as following:

- 1) What urban borders did limit Ostia’s urban space and what kind of movement was related to them and why?
- 2) What can be interpreted about the urban identity of Ostia based on the spatial configurations and the movement discussed in question 1?

Essentially, although I examine the urban borders, the main subject of this study is the urban space of Ostia. The underlying hypothesis of the questions posed above is that a Roman city, such as Ostia, had its own space that was considered ‘urban’, and that there were boundaries that limited this space in relation to something ‘suburban’ and ‘non-urban’. In this sense, I use the adjective ‘urban’ as synonymous with the city centre. This might be too simplified and rigid way of thinking, and in this study, I will not take it for granted, but this assumption will serve as a starting point for the investigation. Although the idea of ancient urbanity is somehow indefinite, it is important to underscore already at this point, that the Romans had a certain concept of urban-ness, *urbanitas* (Maréchaux 2015). Thus, in the Roman culture a certain urban identity did exist with defined social structures connected to it, separating the urban from the others. This discussion on the concept of ‘urban’ and how it might have been applied to Ostia and its identity will be furthered in chapter 4, but for now I shall settle with the hypothesis on the existence of ancient urban space limited by certain borders. Perhaps, my study is fundamentally asking whether this kind of situation even actually existed – and whether the material culture can provide novel insight into this discussion.

Certainly, it would be naïve to assume that there was a clearly defined urban space with absolute borders resembling to a certain ideal or utopian situation. Instead, as I demonstrate in

the following chapters, in the Roman cities there were various boundaries, physical and non-physical, defining and construing the city, and their purpose, significance and even their form changed over time. Additionally, the borders were pierced by movement, whether permissible or illicit, setting the spaces that the border limited into a state of flux. Because of this complex situation of urban boundaries, I operate in this study with the concept of “borderscape”. This concept is recently applied to the cities of Roman Italy by Stevens (2017; 2021: 268–269), who defines it as a zone in the border of a city that was not purely urban or non-urban. The concept recognises the complex situation in the border as an entity, instead of focusing on single separate boundaries, and it highlights the human agency and interaction. However, in contrast to Stevens, who perceives that a Roman city had multiple borderscapes, such as extramural and intramural ones (Stevens 2017: 9–10), for the sake of not making things too complex, I discuss the urban boundaries of Ostia as a single borderscape entity.

Due to the complexity of the ‘urban’ and its borders, it is challenging – and in the end pointless – to try to capture a single condition in space-time to reflect upon. Therefore, as I examine the urban boundaries in chapter 2, I intend to draw a picture of the lifespan of these borders: a biography of the borderscape. This kind of biographical approach is often applied to archaeology, especially to the research of objects, but it is also recently utilised in the field of Roman urbanism for example in the study of landscapes and monuments (e.g. Carafa 2022; Filippi 2022b).<sup>6</sup> Stimulated by these studies I strive to provide a biography of the borderscape from the genesis of the late Republican city walls in mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE until the final abandonment of the border in the 4<sup>th</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE. As I examine the borders only from certain points of view, I call my interpretation not as *the* biography, but as *a* biography. Accordingly, a similar biographical approach is also applied to the movement related to the borders in chapter 3, creating *another* biography of the borderscape, thus supplementing the picture. These biographies are divided in three phases: the late Republican, the early and high Imperial, and Late Antiquity.<sup>7</sup> This division follows the traditional periodisation of Roman history, but it is also substantiated by the distinct characteristics of urbanity during these phases. Although this may sound somewhat undetailed approach to the phenomena, my aim is also to capture glimpses of Ostia’s everyday life in regards of the border’s lifespan.

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<sup>6</sup> Glogowski’s thesis on the late Republican walls has traits of a biographical study, incorporating all the data from the origin of the walls to the modern restorations, but it is not discussed in term of a ‘biography’.

<sup>7</sup> The rough chronology of these used phases is as follows. The late Republican: mid- and late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. The early and high Imperial: 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE. Late Antiquity: 3<sup>rd</sup>–5<sup>th</sup> centuries CE.

### 1.3 Theory: space and movement as indicators of Roman urbanism

The biographical approach to the examination of Ostia's urban borders and the movement related to them should provide two intermingled stories of the city's borderscape, but this descriptive investigation alone does not answer all the questions posed above. The issues of urban identity and how the city was perceived, which at least partially arise from the exploration of the urban borders, require a more analytical and interpretative processing. The questions on the socio-spatial implications of the borders and the related movement steer the discussion towards spatial and movement theories, which I will now turn to, particularly from the perspective of Roman urbanism. Looking at these theories, I will provide a theoretical framework for the treatment of how Ostia's urban space, defined by the borderscape, can be used to infer social phenomena of this Roman city.

Space and spatiality have been of growing interest in the fields of humanities and social sciences ever since the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Starting from the early 1980s, also archaeology has tackled into spatial issues in terms of recent theory and methodology by looking into the relationship between space and social behaviour in a novel fashion (Blake 2004: 233).<sup>8</sup> In the recent theories, space is not perceived only as a lifeless backdrop of human action, but as an active, generative and dynamic component in human environment and experience, affecting social processes and identity formation (Blake 2004: 234–235). The shift from the earlier more rigid stances into this more multifaceted comprehension of space has been labelled, not only in archaeology but in wide-ranging fields of study, as the 'spatial turn', thus being one of the several late 20<sup>th</sup> century 'cultural turns'<sup>9</sup> in the academia (Bachmann-Medick 2016: 1, 27, 212 *etc.*).

The origins of the spatial turn are commonly traced back to the ideas of two French philosophers Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault (e.g. Blake 2004: 234; Filippi 2022a: 1). Lefebvre's fundamental work *The Production of Space* (1991, original French in 1974) introduces a concept of interrelated human spaces. He presents a unitary theory of three spaces: physical, mental and social (Lefebvre 1991: 11–14). Physical space is that of material world, cosmos; mental space that of abstraction, concepts and logic; and social space that of practise and senses. According to Lefebvre these spaces are interlinked and presupposing each

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<sup>8</sup> For example, the application of spatial theories in archaeology and built environment by Susan Kent (1990).

<sup>9</sup> Cultural turns, starting in 1970s from the breakthrough of the linguistic turn, include also, for example, postcolonial and iconic/pictorial turns (Bachmann-Medick 2016: 1).

other. Another cardinal idea of Lefebvre's work is that space is innately "produced", and this producing creates certain "spatial codes" that reflect the produced space (Lefebvre 1991: 15–18). Each particular society produces its own characteristic spaces and spatial codes. These can be read or "decoded", which provides insight into the processes that produced the space.

Foucault alike, calling the current era the "epoch of space" (Foucault 1984: 22), emphasises the gravity of spatial aspects in the postmodern philosophy, in contrast with the earlier attention on exclusively temporal aspects. He has contributed to the spatial studies particularly by illustrating how the usage of space is ultimately usage of power, and that by spatially describing the discourses of reality we can analyse related power relations (Foucault 1980: 70–71). His famous work *Discipline and Punish* (1995, original in 1977) consequently provides a concrete example how spatial configurations, such as in his case the architecture of a prison, is a part in the mechanisms of power.

Both Lefebvre and Foucault, with their very much philosophical thoughts, have had important role as the *primi motores* of the spatial movement, and their elemental ideas serve as the underlying theoretical principles also in this thesis. But how can these theories be applied in practise to the case of the urban space of Ostia? Following Lefebvre's unitary theory and the concept of produced spaces, we can assume that by knowing archaeologically the physical features of the urban space and its borderscape we can interpret or "decode" mental and social aspects of this very same space and trace back its producers. In other words, by looking at the physical evidence from the city and its borders, we should be able to understand the social processes and the people that created them. Foucault's theory on space and power, in turn, reinforces this analysis by underlining that the bordering of the urban space is ultimately a manifestation of usage of power, which can be exposed by analysing how and why the borders were created in relation to the spaces they limit. Thereby, the urban identity of Ostia and the ancient perception of the city, the quintessence of the main chapter 4, can be approached by analysing the urban space and its borderscape according to these principles.

By anchoring my thesis in these theories of space, I strive to produce relevant and up-to-date approach to this traditional Roman site. However, the spatial turn has had a strong influence on the studies of Roman urbanism already for a long time, and the utilisation of these theories are by no mean novel or innovative on my behalf. Ever since the 1980s scholars of Roman culture have increasingly recognised how space and built environment can reflect social,

political, cultural and economic processes (Flohr 2021: 5–7).<sup>10</sup> Simultaneously the focus has also shifted from single monuments and buildings to networks of interconnected spaces that, in the end, truly create these reflections. Pompeii has been the primary site for piloting new spatial methods in ancient Roman context with ground-breaking works, such as that of Laurence (2007), but also Rome and Ostia have played their part in this development.<sup>11</sup>

The spatial turn in Roman archaeology has been discussed very much until present day, at the latest in such publications as *Urban Space and Urban History in the Roman World* (Flohr ed. 2021) and *Rethinking the Roman City* (Filippi ed. 2022). These recent works illustrate how the field of study has very much a solid foothold in the research of Roman cities, but on the other hand, how the Roman urban space is yet a subject of ongoing debate and development. In the introductory chapter of the latter work Filippi (2022a: 1–3) points out that the spatial studies of Roman urbanism have hitherto had two separate strands of approach, those of topographical issues and those of social concerns, and her aim in the work is to bridge this gap. Therefore, she proposes an adoption of a holistic perspective to the spatial aspects of Roman city, combining all these various perspectives. Similarly, in this study I strive to address the urban space of Ostia by posing both archaeological-topographical and socio-historical questions to the borderscape of the city. Ultimately, this mindset, combining physical and social, returns to the unitary theory proposed by Lefebvre (Filippi 2022a: 3–4).

In recent years, following in the footsteps of the spatial turn, another cultural turn, known as the ‘movement turn’, has guided the gaze increasingly towards the movement taking place in the Roman urban space (Flohr 2021: 5). Works, such as *Rome, Ostia, Pompeii: Movement and Space* (Laurence & Newsome ed. 2011) and *The Moving City* (Östenberg *et al.* ed. 2015), have provided insights into the Roman urban movement by examining in detail a plethora of cases stemming both from historical and archaeological material. In the former, Newsome (2011: 2) encapsulates the essential notion of the movement in ancient urban space by designating how human behaviour and practises in a Roman city did produce manifold movement and interaction, which, in turn, interacted with and contributed to the urban and societal developments. He underlines that the urban movement can be perceived not only as pedestrian or wheeled traffic but also as a social network construed by certain norms and rules. Consequently, we can assume that by looking at the evidence of movement in Ostia’s

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<sup>10</sup> For instance, the study of the social structure of Roman houses by Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (1988).

<sup>11</sup> For an extensive review of urban and spatial studies in Ostia and in Roman archaeology in general, see Stöger 2011: 1–40.

borderscape it should be possible to trace back the ancient socio-spatial actions and dynamics in the borders. Thereby, perhaps, we could gain knowledge about the spaces which these borders limited and about the relationships and networks between them.

Although not being in the prime limelight of spatial and movement studies, Ostia has also been a subject of modern urban research starting from 1980s, although formal methods for analysing space were introduced only in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century (Stöger 2011: 3, 17). The most accomplished and up-to-date research was conducted by Johanna Stöger, whose doctoral thesis (2011) analyses built environment in multiple levels from individual buildings to the entire urban space of the city. Especially Stöger's contribution to the analysis of the street network, public space, and their so-called movement economy (Stöger 2011: 197–228) is of major interest also in this study. Nevertheless, unlike the study at hand, the foci of previous studies on Ostia have been individual buildings or the central areas of the city. This is mostly due to the overall lack of research to the peripheral areas of the city until very lately.<sup>12</sup> As the border areas of the city have not been of substantial interest before recent years, this study aims to address these semi-neglected questions. However, the aforementioned studies have built crucial theoretical and methodological foundations for further research.

Utilising the theoretical principles coined by Lefebvre and Foucault and following the example of the multitude of studies of Roman urbanism, I will proceed to the examination of Ostia's borderscape and then to analyse its socio-spatial implications on the city's urban space. Both space and movement seem applicable theoretical and methodological tools in study of Ostia, which is, although preserved fragmentarily in beautiful ruins and written sources, still in many ways uncovered and distant phenomenon. Analytical interpretation of survived material can nevertheless get us a step closer to the ancient realities.

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<sup>12</sup> The German-American field project and its recent final publication (Heinzelmann 2020), which will be discussed more in-depth in the following chapters, is the most important key for the further research of Ostia's peripheral areas.

## 2 Urban boundaries: a biography of Ostia's borderscape

City walls and such urban boundaries have enclosed settlements ever since the very first urban hubs were founded in the ancient Western Asia over ten millennia ago. The phenomenon has always been a global one as such physical boundaries have emerged in every part of the inhabited Earth (Tracy 2000: 1–2). Therefore, it is not surprising to find the very same also in the ancient Roman culture starting from the very early settlements.<sup>13</sup> In general, Romans did use linear borders on the fringes of their cities, both in material and non-material form, to create different spatial units (Stevens 2017: 3, 9), and this holds true also in the case of Ostia, as we shall see now.

The city walls were undoubtedly – and literally – the most concrete expression of an urban boundary. Indeed, the city walls were essential element in the ancient Roman city. This is evinced notably by Vitruvius, a Roman writer on architecture from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, who tackles the issue of urban fortifications already in the first book of his famous magnum opus *De Architectura*. According to Vitruvius, the establishment of a wall circuit is the first step in the foundation of a city after choosing a healthy location for the settlement (Vitr. *De arch.* 1.5.1).<sup>14</sup> Even in the founding myths of Rome the construction of fortifications is fundamental: Aeneas, desiring to found a city in Latium after fleeing from Troy, marked out the walls as his first task (Verg. *Aen.* 7.156–158). Similarly, Romulus, when he constituted the city of Rome, fortified the newly founded city on the Palatine hill (Liv. I.7.3).

Hence, the Roman literary sources seem to underline the fundamentality of the city walls and, more generally, the fact that a definition of a settlement should be executed with certain (physical) boundaries. Although these texts represent ideal and archetypal situations, they nonetheless reflect the Roman mindset towards urbanity. Traces of such Roman reality can be found also in the archaeological material which embodies this phenomenon in concrete and stone. In fact, in parallel with the abovementioned literary references, the very first structures of the *castrum* phase in Ostia are believed to be namely the rectangular wall circuit built around the military colony (Blid 2020: 103).

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<sup>13</sup> For the early development of Roman urbanism see e.g. Laurence *et al.* 2011.

<sup>14</sup> In fact, when discussing foundation of a city, Vitruvius often speaks of “laying out the walls” instead of founding a city: e.g. *in moenibus conlocandis* (1.4.5), *moenia constituta* (1.4.11), *moenibus circumdatis* (1.6.1). Therein, act of establishing the city walls seems to be synonymous to the foundation of a new settlement. Furthermore, the Latin word for community, *communis*, could be derived from expression “with walls” (*cum + moenia*) (Tracy 2000: 2–3, footnote 9).

The late Republican city walls in Ostia were, however, built centuries after the foundation of the original colony, and therefore this process is not directly related to similar narratives of founding a new settlement as the ones presented above. On the other hand, Ostia had had a certain borderscape related to the fortification walls of the *castrum* already before the late Republican period, and in this sense the late Republican walls were not virtually an innovation within the urban framework of Ostia. However, the new walls should be seen as a considerable turning point in the development of the city as the new urban boundary began by Cicero differed radically in spatial scale from the *castrum* walls. One might ponder whether this immense construction endeavour could have been a certain redefinition of the city – or even a refoundation if we will – in similar vein with the legendary and prototypical stories of Roman history. This will be discussed more in-depth in chapter 4, but now it suffices to underline that the establishment of the late Republican city walls was a turning point in the urban history of the city: and a suitable place to begin a biography of Ostia’s borderscape.

## 2.1 Defining the city of the late Republic

Some historical background is necessary to begin with. In the traditional research the late Republican wall circuit is known as the “Sullan walls” due to its earlier dating to the period when Roman general Lucius Cornelius Sulla was a prominent general and eventually the dictator in Rome in the 80s BCE (e.g. Calza *et al.* 1953: 79–83; Meiggs 1973: 34–36). Nowadays the walls are usually referred as the “late Republican walls” following the new dating to 63–58 BCE provided by the aforementioned study by Zevi (1998). The built environment of Ostia had extended beyond the walls of the *castrum* already starting from the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE (Meiggs 1973: 31–32, 120), but it was not until the very last decades of the Republic that the fortification of the urban area became relevant – an evidently urgent.

Indeed, the genesis of Ostia’s new wall circuit – and hence of the discussed borderscape – is entwined in the political and military history leading towards the final struggles of the Republican Rome.<sup>15</sup> This was already evinced by the *Porta Romana* inscription touched upon in the introduction. The significance of the political rivalry between Cicero and Clodius, projected upon the construction of the walls in Ostia, is without question considerable and intriguing, but the root causes for fortifying a city should be more manifold.

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<sup>15</sup> Emmerson (2020: 50) has questioned whether there were actual military threats upon Roman cities during the late Republican period that truly required construction of fortifications. The historical evidence on Ostia, however, paints a different picture, with the city facing multiple disruptions.

Historically – and very much logically – the construction of the late Republican city walls is linked to military threats that Ostia faced in the first half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE. Amidst their strive for power, Ostia was occupied by the two foremost Roman generals of their time, first by Gaius Marius and then by aforesaid Sulla. These intrusions to the city were before associated directly to the construction of the city walls (Meiggs 1973: 34–35), but this narrative is questioned after the emergence of the new later dating for the fortifications. Yet, the story of Marius’ occupation over Ostia is of value, as it indicates that Ostia did not have city walls around the expanded urban area during the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE when Marius’ attack took place: the city had a cavalry garrison at the time, and if Ostia had fortification walls, infantry would have been more sensible option to secure the city (Meiggs 1973: 35–36). This story reveals that Ostia did not have a wall circuit that could be dated between *castrum* phase and the late Republican walls.

After the recent dating of the late Republican walls to 63–58 BCE, the construction of the walls is alternatively seen related to the raid of pirates that took place in 67 BCE, rather than to the operations of Marius and Sulla (Zevi 1998: 99–100). It would seem logical that the constant external threats to Ostia, culminating in this assault by pirates, would have provoked the Roman senate to take action to protect the harbour that was so vital for the functions of the capital.<sup>16</sup> However, it is rather too simplifying to try to associate the origin of the borderscape to single historical events, but the initial incentive for the late Republican walls nevertheless appears to have been primarily politico-military. These should not be considered to be the sole impetus of the novel border, but they certainly seem the most prominent in this chronological context. As we will see shortly, the construction of the walls was more deeply entwined in the Roman urban culture and identity with numerous related boundary phenomena.

Thereupon, by the year 58 BCE, the late Republican city walls were built around the urban area of Ostia, in the western, southern, and eastern sides of the city. In the northern side the city was protected by the waters of the river Tiber. The new city walls were an imposing monument consisting of the fortifying wall sections as well as several gateways and towers (figure 4). The gates will be discussed in-depth in chapter 3 in relation to the movement that flew through them, but for now a short introduction is necessary: the wall circuit was pierced by three major gateways, *Porta Romana*, *Porta Laurentina* and *Porta Marina*, which were

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<sup>16</sup> Questioning the actual defensive capabilities of the walls, Glogowski (2023: 267–268) has suggested that the late Republican walls would have also had a reassuring and psychological impact in these uncertain times.

monumental gates flanked by towers. In addition, there were six minor gateways or openings in the city walls, although most of them postdate the initial construction of the wall circuit: *Porta Secundaria*, *Porta di Via del Sabazeo*, *Porta di Via degli Aurighi*, a postern gate and two smaller passageways (Glogowski 2023: 21–25). The names of the gates are modern.

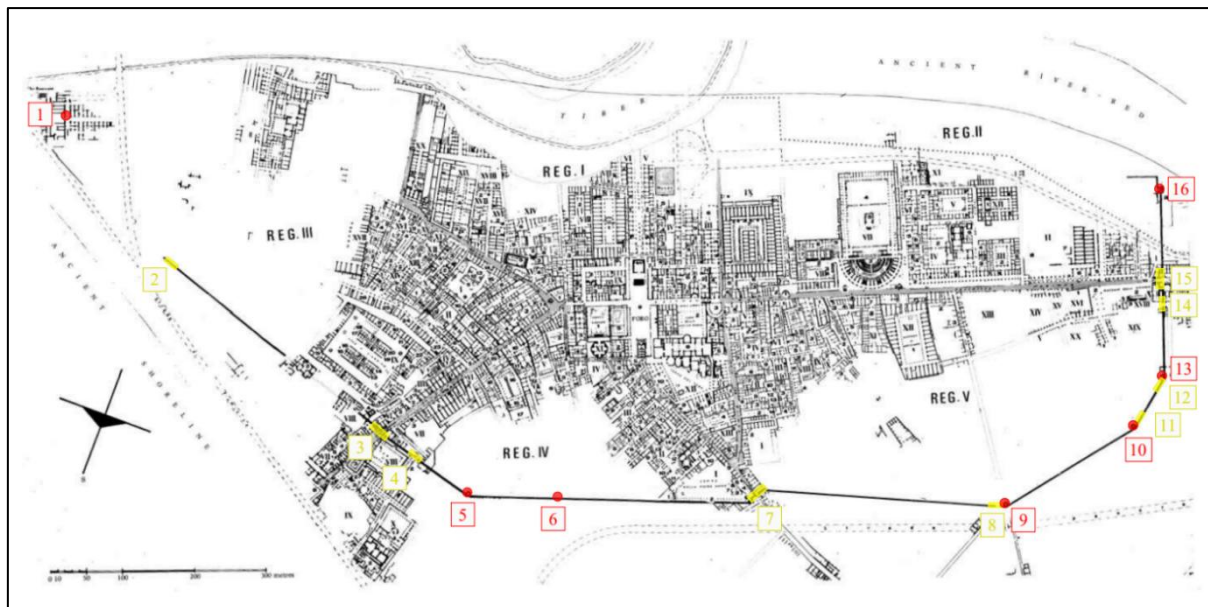


Figure 4: Map of the excavated area of Ostia south of the Tiber with features of the late Republican city walls (bold black line) marked: gates with yellow and towers with red. 1) *Tor Boacciana*, 2) *Porta di Via degli Aurighi* 3) *Porta Marina* 4) Small passageway 5) Round tower 6) Square tower 7) *Porta Laurentina* 8) *Porta di Via del Sabazeo* 9) Round tower 10) Round tower 11) Small passageway 12) Postern 13) Hexagonal tower 14) *Porta Secundaria* 15) *Porta Romana* 16) Square tower. Base map from *Roman Ostia* (Meiggs 1973), with the features marked by author with AutoCAD 2026 software.

As mentioned above, the wall structures are only fragmentarily visible nowadays, and the archaeological reconstruction of the fortifications has required detailed analysis and imaginative interpretation. In fact, Glogowski (2023: 204–227) has pointed out that numerous sections of the walls visible today in the park, even some that seem ancient at first glance, are modern restorations from the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Even before these restorations, the detection of the buried structures has been laborious: Calza (*et al.* 1953: 80), describing his excavations, states that the walls they unearthed were primarily preserved only for a small height above their foundations and on many occasions incorporated in later constructions. Despite these difficulties, the remains of the circuit were extensively excavated starting from the 1850s. These excavations remain as the primary source of information about the wall structures, although some parts of the wall are still today visible and studiable in the archaeological park.

The first discoveries related to the city walls were made by Pietro Ercole Visconti, who excavated in Ostia in 1855–1857. He brought to light a minor gate in the eastern side of the

city, today known as the *Porta Secundaria*, believing it to be the place where people arriving from Rome entered the city (Visconti 1857: 308–309, 314). It was over a half of a century later that the actual major gate in the eastern side of the city, the *Porta Romana*, was discovered when Dante Vaglieri conducted more extensive studies in the eastern border of the city in 1909–1912 (*Giornale di Scavo* 1909, 1910 & 1911). Yet again concentrating on the eastern side of the city, the research on the wall circuit was next pursued by Roberto Parabeni, who excavated parts of the city walls north of the *Porta Romana*, including the northern tower of the gate (*Giornale di Scavo* 1919; Parabeni 1920: 156–160).

Most importantly, however, the city walls were studied by Guido Calza, who undertook the mission to trace the whole perimeter of the wall circuit (*Giornale di Scavo* 1921, 1922, 1923 & 1924; Calza *et al.* 1953: 79). He conducted a series of 167 test pits in 10–15 metre distance from each other, thus uncovering the entire layout of the walls. In addition to the wall structures, Calza also studied the two other major city gates, the *Porta Laurentina* and the *Porta Marina*, as well as detected three smaller openings in the eastern side of the circuit.

Later on, the borderscape and the periphery of the city was of little interest until the project by the Deutsches Archäologisches Institut and the American Academy in Rome (DAI-AAR) that conducted substantial studies in the area in the turn of the millennium (Martin *et al.* 2003; Heinzelmann 2020). These studies combined non-invasive investigations and targeted stratigraphic fieldwork in the unexcavated areas. One of the main focuses was the late Republican walls, and the results included detections of two new smaller passageways and restorations on the structures. Furthermore, also scholars of l'École française de Rome have recently excavated the water tower that was constructed abutting the eastern side of the wall circuit, illuminating the later developments of the wall structures (Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008).

The late Republican walls were first described extensively by Calza (*et al.* 1953: 79–88) and recently thoroughly examined by Glogowski (2023: *passim*, synthesis in 21–26), on whose works I will base the following structural description. With a width of ca. 2 metres at the base and a height of 7–7,5 metres, the walls created a substantial boundary around the city. In those few places where the wall structures are still preserved, the surviving wall is, however, maximum 3,6 metres high, and thus the ancient magnificence of the structures is no more to be experienced. The wall circuit was in total 2136 metres long, beginning in the west from the tower by the mouth of the Tiber, the *Tor Boacciana*, stretching from there to the south of the city and reaching finally the riverside tower east of the city, thereby surrounding an area of 69

hectares. The circuit consisted of eight wall sections which met in obtuse angles. Meiggs (1973: 128) has suggested that the somewhat irregular shape of the circuit was determined by the river and the coastline as the walls ran mostly parallel to them. The riverside of the urban area south of the Tiber was most likely without any fortifications.

There were six known towers located within the wall circuit (Glogowski 2023: 256–262). Two of them were square in shape: one was situated in the eastern part of the walls where the circuit ended by the river north of the *Porta Romana*, and it could have been a lookout post for the riverine traffic arriving from Rome (Calza *et al.* 1953: 83). Another square tower was detected west of the *Porta Laurentina* gate. A hexagonal tower was situated in the eastern side of the city, just next to the postern gate. Three others were round in shape and located in the angles of the walls in the southern and south-eastern parts of the circuit. These towers reinforced the wall structures in the angles and provided places for defence and guarding.

In addition, the *Tor Boacciana*, a lighthouse or a watch tower by the river mouth (Meiggs 1973: 297), may have been part of the circuit. This structure has nowadays a medieval form of a brick tower, but its origin is dated to the Trajanic period (Pavolini 2006: 262). The tower is traditionally interpreted to be the western end of the wall circuit (e.g. Calza *et al.* 1953: 79, 87), but this is impossible to establish certainly as the modern land use has cut the structures separate from the archaeological park by a motorway. The *Tor* could have been preceded by a square tower at the end of the wall circuit, similar to the square tower by the river at the eastern end of the fortifications, but this remains only speculative (Glogowski 2023: 274).

The structures of the wall sections were a typical demonstration of late Republican Roman concrete engineering. The core of the wall was Roman concrete made of lime, red *pozzolana* and small tuff pieces. The external facing was of irregular tuff stonework known as *opus quasi reticulatum* (figure 5). Apparently, the whole construction was uniform when first laid, and the detailed structural analysis by Glogowski (2023: 143–147), detecting only minimal differences in the materials of the structures, confirms this. The facing appears, however, only on the outside of the wall, and the inner side towards the city centre did not receive any beautifying elements. This indicates that an earthen rampart would have been built against the inner side of the wall sections, and this rampart may have been as wide as 4,5 metres (Glogowski 2023: 25–26). Bukowiecki *et al.* (2008: 88) have calculated that the construction of the wall perimeter required an immense number of materials, e.g. two million stones.



Figure 5: A section of the city walls between the *Porta Laurentina* gate (on the right) and its western tower in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. The facing of the walls in *opus quasi reticulatum* is attested, but according to the stratigraphic analysis by Glogowski (2023: 116–120, 128) only the part in the lower right corner, with a more eroded appearance, is original structure. The rest of the wall is either ancient or modern restoration, with Glogowski inclining towards the latter option. Behind and above the walls are the remains of the temple of Bellona. From south-east. Picture by author.

This fortification lay the foundation of Ostia's new borderscape, providing the borderline for the city centre. Although the walls formed undoubtedly the firm core of the new urban boundary, to understand the border more comprehensively we should expand the discussion to the entire borderscape and its numerous features. Indeed, beyond mere city walls, the Roman cities had also other boundaries that limited the urban centres – boundaries that may have left less obvious evidence. Emmerson (2020: 1) has summarized this impeccably:

Undoubtedly, a Roman city was a bounded space. Defined by borders both physical and conceptual – fortification walls, customs checkpoints, sacred perimetres, and more – the city stood apart as a concentration of life and activity that was not only physically but also legally, economically, and ritually separated from its surroundings.

In a more specific sense, van Tilburg (2022: 204) has outlined that the Roman cities had the following boundaries: physical, political, economic, military, hygienic, magico-religious, as well as the boundary between the living and the dead. Glogowski (2023: 237–296) has already touched upon many of these aspects in relation to Ostia when discussing extensively

the status and functions of the late Republican walls, but now I will expand and supplement this by taking more specifically into account the different boundaries.

The late Republican city walls served certainly as the main physical, political and military boundary for the city. Spatially speaking, this massive structure indeed separated effectively the urban area from the surrounding non-urban area, making the access to the city more difficult and the defence of the settlement easier. Further, considering the historical context and the structural features, the late Republican city walls seem to have been – evidently and logically – a boundary of defence and fortification. Calza (*et al.* 1953: 81) takes this military function for granted. Similarly, Glogowski (2023: 249–268) has underlined the military aspect, but has, however, also pointed out many defensive disadvantages: for example, the towers were small in size and thus unable to hold any defensive machinery, and the wall sections did not have useful recesses or sawtooth shapes (Glogowski: 2023: 262). In this sense, Glogowski has deemed the walls relatively ineffective for defence, with only the main gates displaying actual military strength.<sup>17</sup>

With this conflicting situation in the defensive nature of the walls, it would be tempting to juxtapose the features of the Ostian city walls to other comparable cities, but an extensive comparison is not possible within the frames of this short work.<sup>18</sup> However, it is necessary to rule out the two obvious neighbours. Firstly, the city walls of Rome, the mother city of Ostia, were both chronologically and structurally very different from those of Ostia: the Servian Wall from the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE was built of large squared stone blocks, rather resembling the *castrum* walls of Ostia; also the very much later Aurelian Wall, built in brick in the 270s CE in a majestic scale, differ substantially from those of Ostia (Coarelli 2007: 11–13). Secondly, the fortifying walls of neighbouring Portus – albeit the city being founded much later than the construction city walls in Ostia – date considerably later than those of Ostia: the defensive wall in Portus seems to have been constructed in the 5<sup>th</sup> century CE (Keay 2020: 48). Even if these nearby cities did not construct city walls at the same time with Ostia, the wider context of Roman history seems suitable for the endeavour: many (re)constructions of the urban

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<sup>17</sup> Even if the walls were generally ineffective, there were also some clear military advantages, such as the arrangement of the wall sections in obtuse angles and the use of wall structure with a resistant concrete core, reinforced by earthen rampart, which were ideal for defensive purposes (Glogowski 2023: 251–252).

<sup>18</sup> For further research, Pompeii, Minturnae, Terracina and Cosa are potential cities that should be considered for comparison. Especially the topography of Minturnae, with a river running through the city similarly to Ostia, is notable. (Stevens 2017: 79–81; Calza *et al.* 1953: 81).

fortifications did indeed take place in the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE in other Roman cities (Stevens 2017: 124).<sup>19</sup> The context of military history favours the emergence of a defensive boundary.

Another strong physical boundary in Ostia was the river, although it is rarely discussed in terms of boundaries. Nevertheless, the absence of wall circuit in the riverside seems to indicate that the Tiber had the function of an urban boundary in the late Republic when the city was not yet expanded beyond the river. Meiggs (1973: 129) has pointed out that a fortification by the river would have interfered with the riverine trade traffic, and that, in case of an attack, a fleet would have protected the city on the riverside. Indeed, instead of fortifications, the north-western part of the city housed a large river harbour, the oldest phase of which date back to the 4<sup>th</sup> century BCE (Wunderlich *et al.* 2018). Additionally, one might also ponder whether the potential expansion of the city to the other side of the river was already anticipated during the late Republic – this in mind, fortification of the riverside would have been foolish. Furthermore, the riverbanks were often attributed as *loci publici*, public places, which created a legally separate public zone typical to Roman urban borderscapes (Stevens 2017: 117–118). Therefore, the Tiber as well as its river harbour and the (perhaps) unoccupied banks seem to have formed a natural boundary on the northern side of the city.<sup>20</sup>

Moving to other boundaries, the economic functions in the Ostia's borderscape are difficult to trace. However, there may have been a tax border: indeed, the nature of Ostia as a city of trade and harbour – especially providing the grain for the capital – would suggest the existence of such control over the movement of goods and resources. In fact, the harbour tax was the most levied toll in the Roman world (van Tilburg 2022: 184). In the capital the tax border was marked with *cippi*, boundary stones, that have been found near many of the city gates, but it is not certain whether other Roman cities had such borders (Emmerson 2020: 10). The taxes were levied in Ostia, but any archaeological evidence of locations for this function is absent (Glogowski 2023: 281–282). If the city had such border, it would have most likely corresponded to the late Republican city walls and the harbour facilities by the river. Thus, it would have been an intimate part of the borderscape. The discussion of possible tax border and tolls are furthered in relation to the gates and the commercial movement in chapter 3.

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<sup>19</sup> However, simultaneously we have also evidence of dismantling and reuse of fortifications, for example in Pompeii after the city became a Roman colony in 80 BCE (Stevens 2017: 132–136).

<sup>20</sup> In Rome, in a city with a river running similarly through it, the Servian Wall did run in the riverside (Coarelli 2007: 18), in a sharp contrast with the situation in Ostia. Comparison between the role of the river in the urban spaces in Ostia and Rome would be a curious topic for a further study.

Next, if we proceed to the magico-ritual boundaries<sup>21</sup>, it is inevitable to discuss the sacred boundary that each Roman city had – the *pomerium*. The *pomerium* was a continuous ritual boundary line around the city, typically in association with the city walls. Many regulations were related to the crossing of this border, such as the following: no soldiers with weapons were allowed inside the *pomerium*, and the military *imperium* ended there; the *augur* priests could take their auspices only within the limits of the *pomerium*; the foreign cults may not have been allowed to be venerated inside the *pomerium*, although evidence for this is quite thin (Stevens 2017: 26–28, 43). The *pomerium* had a considerable status in the Roman urbanism and in the legal cityscapes, but, in the end, it may have influenced very little the average urban life as it affected only these few certain phenomena (Stevens 2017: 23).

The pomerial line did not necessarily form a physical boundary, although at times it could be marked with boundary stones, such as those related to the extensions of the *pomerium* in Rome (Stevens 2017: 30–31). Additionally, there have been many other suggestions on how the *pomerium* was laid: there could have been a defined area in front of the *pomerium* that was left free of buildings (Laurence *et al.* 2011: 147–148); then again, the course of the walls and *pomerium* may not have always coincided, and they could have been more separated phenomena topographically (Emmerson 2020: 11). Recently, however, Stevens (2017: 28) has proposed – very convincingly – that in most cases the *pomerium* corresponded to the line of the city walls. I follow Stevens in this, assuming that the *pomerium* in Ostia was situated to the same place as the course of the late Republican city walls.

If the *pomerium* was in the same line with the city walls, an exploration of any archaeological traces of pomerial line or so-called pomerial roads outside and inside the city walls would be in vain (Stevens 2017: 28). This kind of hunt for the *pomerium* has been typical for Ostian studies: Meiggs (1973: 116–117, 120) has claimed that already during the *castrum* phase of the city there were spaces reserved for the inner and outer *pomerium* around the rectangular walls of the military colony, and those could be identified from later streets that run in their places. Similarly, in relation to the late Republican walls, Calza (*et al.* 1953: 81) states that the internal *pomerium* could be attested by the streets on the edge of the city. These interpretations stem originally from the excavations themselves that pursued to prove the

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<sup>21</sup> Although discussing Roman religious and legal boundaries in general, Glogowski (2023: 239–245), when describing the functions of the late Republican city walls, does not address the question of whether these boundaries were actually attested also in Ostia.

existence of pomerial roads.<sup>22</sup> However, if we adopt Stevens' interpretation for the line of the *pomerium*, it is unnecessary to try find any tangible evidence for the *pomerium* of Ostia. Thereafter, also the open spaces in parallel with the city walls did not relate to the *pomerium*, and other purposes should be considered for them. These open spaces may have had a military function enabling effective defence, or could have been *loci publici*, public places, that were typical for Roman urban borders (Stevens 2017: 28–30, 222–224).

Even if the search for archaeological traces of the *pomerium* may have been in vain, the fact that the sacred boundary of Ostia was sought after in relation to the city walls both from *castrum* phase and the late Republican period presupposes that the *pomerium* coincided with both of them. Even though the *pomerium* was 'sacred' it was normal for Roman cities to change their ritual boundaries according to their needs (Laurence *et al.* 2011: 148). For example, we have evidence from Rome that the *pomerium* of the capital was enlarged multiple times (Coarelli 2007: 12; Stevens 2017: 30–36). Thus, it would make sense that the *pomerium* in Ostia should have been relocated to the late Republican wall circuit once it was constructed. This must have also reinforced the authority of the new wall circuit. As the *pomerium* was an elemental part of a Roman cityscape, laying down similar rules as the physical borders of the city, it should be considered an integral feature in the borderscape.

In close relation with the *pomerium*, and often mistakenly confused to be the same, there was another ritually defined border in the Roman cities, *sulcus primigenius*. This was the first furrow that was ploughed when a city was founded and above which city's walls were to be raised (Stevens 2017: 13–15): in the ritual the plough was lifted only in the places of the future city gates, which would allow the ritually unclean to cross the border. The dead were not allowed inside this ritual boundary, and thereafter inside the city walls. The furrow probably followed the line of the *pomerium* (Stevens 2017: 25–26). Due to these two ritual boundaries, the city walls and gates were considered as *res sanctae*: being protected by deities and thus inviolable at the risk of a penalty (Stevens 2017: 105–106). There is little evidence of such furrows outside the capital, but it is not impossible idea to assume that such ritual could have been performed also when the late Republican walls were founded in Ostia. This is indirectly evinced by the tombs that were limited outside the walls, as we shall see now.

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<sup>22</sup> Among the excavators of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the pomerial roads were traced at least by Parabeni (e.g. *Giornale di Scavo* 1919: 52, 63–64; Parabeni 1920: 157–159) and by Calza (e.g. *Giornale di Scavo* 1922: 125–127; *Giornale di Scavo* 1924: 110).

In association with the magico-religious beliefs of Romans were hygienic boundary and the boundary between the living and the dead. To understand these boundaries, we should take a peek beyond the urban space: the phenomena that were left outside the city walls. Most importantly, the Roman cemeteries were almost always laid outside the city gates, typically along the roads leading out of the city. Burial and cremation inside the city were legally forbidden due to both religious and hygienic beliefs and factors (Emmerson 2020: 1, 3).<sup>23</sup> As we have just seen, the main barrier separating the dead from the city centre were the city walls in association with the ritual boundary of *sulcus primigenius*. This is often mistakenly related to the *pomerium*, which of course in many cases run in parallel with the *sulcus primigenius*.<sup>24</sup>

In late Republican Ostia the necropoleis can be found around the city, especially by the main gates. When a visitor arrives nowadays to the archaeological park of Ostia, one first sees the extensive burials outside the *Porta Romana* gate. Starting from the Republican times, these tombs flanked *Via Ostiensis*, the road leading from Rome to Ostia, in a distance of over ten kilometres, and notable sections of these tombs have been excavated just outside the city gate (Meiggs 1973: 455). Other studied necropolis lies 50 metres outside the *Porta Laurentina*, which represents one of the cemeteries that were built along the roads leading towards the territory south of the city (Meiggs 1973: *ibid*). Furthermore, in the seaside beyond the *Porta Marina* gate, the first buildings constructed outside the gate in the late Republic and in the Augustan period were notable funerary monuments of illustrious Ostians (Stevens 2017: 207–208; Emmerson 2020: 27).<sup>25</sup> Therefore, all the tombs that postdate the foundation of the late Republican city walls are located outside the wall circuit. This proves that the legal and ritual restrictions related to the dead were strictly respected also in Ostia.

For similar hygienic concerns, also the waste that was produced in the cities were typically transported to the waste pits outside of the urban centre. Evidence from other Roman cities indicate that the dumping of waste, especially manure and corpses, was strictly regulated (Stevens 2017: 63–65). Such was most likely the situation also in Ostia, although the earliest archaeologically known extramural dumps are dated only to the early Imperial period (Emmerson 2020: 120). However, we can assume that rubbish was gathered to certain areas

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<sup>23</sup> A funerary site was considered to be *locus religiosus*, which banned building on that place. Additionally, Romans were concerned of ‘death pollution’ that made people unclean. Restrictions were most likely also based on practical concerns of smell, nuisance and fire hazard. (Stevens 2017: 161–162, 165–166; Emmerson 2020: 3).

<sup>24</sup> In fact, we have evidence of tombs within the *pomerium* in Rome, indicating that the *pomerium* was not the boundary that excluded the dead from the city (Stevens 2017: 193–194).

<sup>25</sup> According to Glogowski (2023: 381–382), the tombs outside the *Porta Marina* did not form a true necropolis, but these few monumental tombs were rather single commemorative monuments.

outside the city walls already during the late Republic, perhaps to the eastern and south-eastern sides of the extramural zone that was utilised for this purpose in the later periods.

By looking at the locations of the necropoleis as well as the possible rubbish dumps, the hygienic boundary and the boundaries between the living and the dead seem to cut these phenomena from Ostia's city centre in a coinciding borderline with other discussed urban boundaries. In fact, the necropoleis are typically considered as an indirect indicator of an urban limit in Roman cities (Stevens 2017: 161). Thereby, Stevens (2017: 163) has proposed that the burials should be regarded as a part of the borderscape, being the interface between the living and the dead – or what was inside the city and what was left outside. Indeed, by this time, there is not yet evidence of any non-sepulchral extramural activity around Ostia that appear as suburbs in later periods. These boundaries did exist, and they were respected.

These certain extramural phenomena strengthen the idea of the borderscape, but it is uncertain whether the borderscape had such related features within its boundaries. The built environment of Ostia seems to have been limited within the borderscape, but although we know that the urban area had largely expanded beyond the *castrum* walls before the genesis of the late Republican circuit, it is difficult to trace the entire extension of the urban development by the time of Cicero. Surviving permanent structures predating the new city walls are rare, but the existence of buildings made of perishable materials, such as sun-dried brick and timber, are speculated (Meiggs 1973: 127–128). Therefore, it is difficult to establish whether the built urban environment covered the entire area enclosed by the late Republican walls or if there were unbuilt open spaces. Even if the densely built space was smaller than the area enclosed by the walls, at least there were plans to expand the urban area: this is indicated for example by the *cippi* of Caninius, boundary stones dating to the second part of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE, which declared a large area north of the eastern *decumanus* extending beyond the later wall circuit as public property (Stevens 2017: 218–219; Meiggs 1973: 32).

In the late Republican period, the newly born borderscape of Ostia (figure 6) seems to have relied largely on the defensive wall circuit and the river which formed a linear border around the city. All the abovementioned urban boundaries can be associated with either of these two physical borders. The urban development was delimited within the borderscape, and reversely all that was considered legally and ritually forbidden from the city centre was strictly left

outside the urban boundaries. In this sense, the late Republican urban space of Ostia seems to have been well-defined and limited by a certain borderscape.

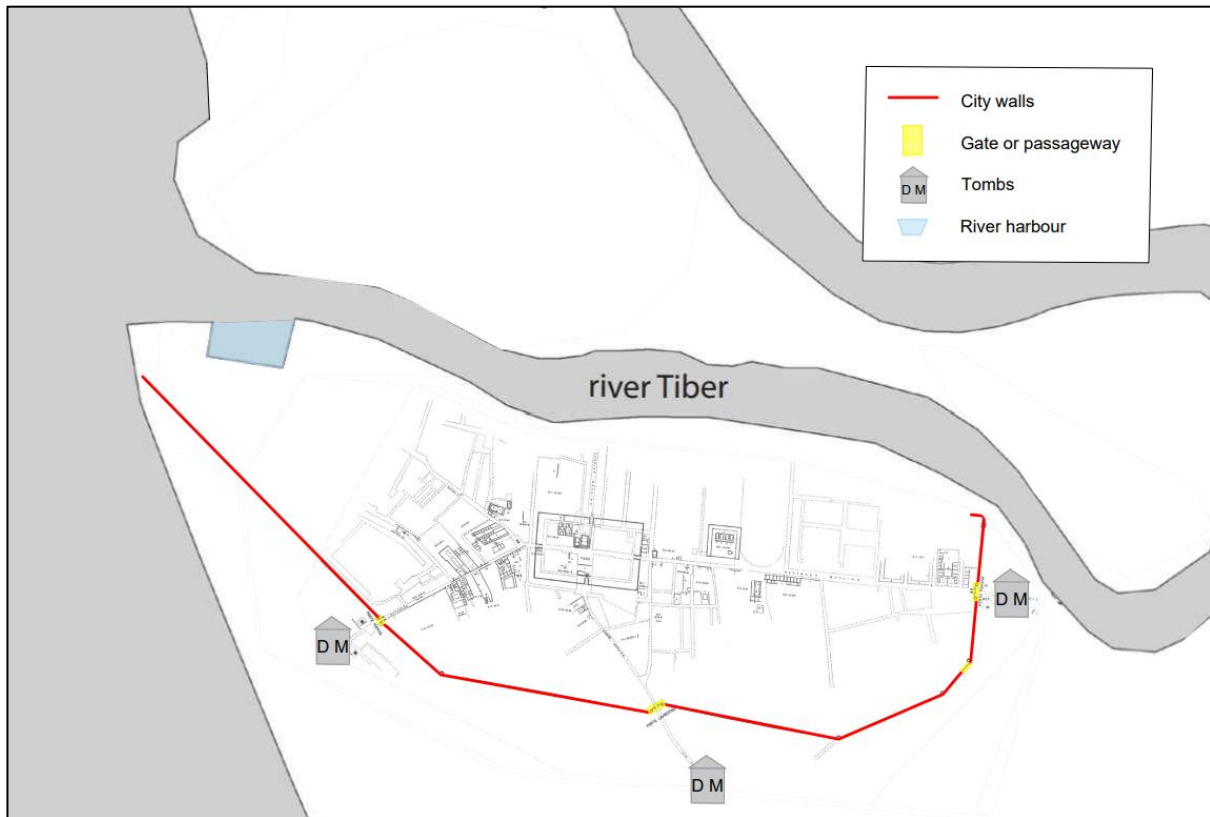


Figure 6: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape in the late Republican period. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features that do not belong to the late Republican phase are covered over, and the map of Republican Ostia by Guido Calza (Calza *et al.* 1953) is cropped and set over the centre of the city. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software.

## 2.2 Changing significances in the Imperial city

The borderscape was thus formed around the late Republican Ostia. However, the features described above represent only the situation of the time period right and shortly after the creation of the city walls. The boundaries tend to reform as the time goes on, and as we move forward in the biography of Ostia's borderscape, from the turmoil of the late Republic to the first centuries of the Roman Empire, there are some significant changes.

Starting from the Augustan period, the two first centuries CE – that is the early and high Empire – were a relatively peaceful era for the Romans. This is traditionally labelled as the time of *Pax Romana*, the Roman peace. This new security changed the needs of the Roman cities as the external threats were not anymore instant, especially when it comes to the Roman Italy in the core of the empire. In general, we see a trend in which city walls and such large

fortifying boundaries are no more necessarily built to the cities of the Empire (Laurence *et al.* 2011: 148): instead, an urban area could be delimited with other less extensive structures, such as arches. This marked a shift from the military urban borders to those with more governmental, symbolic and identity-related purposes. As Stevens (2017: 89) has put it, the city walls and such boundaries would rather become a “statement” by the urban society.

As the old fortifications began to lose their importance, they were often dismantled, reused and incorporated to new buildings (Stevens 2017: 140–150). However, this did not mean that the construction of city walls was abandoned entirely, and some notable new fortifications still appear in this period (Stevens 2017: 86, 88–89). Nevertheless, the new politico-military environment affected the Roman attitudes and ideals towards urbanity. According to Emmerson (2020: 14) there was a new vision of an open and flexible city instead of a strictly enclosed urban hub. Illustratively, even the capital city Rome was virtually without any defensive walls between the end of the Republic and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (Coarelli 2007: 12). Furthermore, the emerging security and these new ideals enabled the expansion of the built environment outside old fortifications, which marked the appearance of suburban areas in the Roman cities (Emmerson 2020: 50–51).

Similar developments can be seen in Ostia. The well-defined borderscape of the late Republic, delimiting the urban development, began to crumble from its original form already starting from the time of Augustus – only a half of a century after its creation. Especially the defensive function of the city walls seems not to have been long-term as structures both replacing and undermining the fortifications started to appear. A detailed archaeological analysis of the known structures built in direct contact with Ostia’s late Republican city walls is already provided by Glogowski (2023: the 2<sup>nd</sup> part of the thesis<sup>26</sup>). Thereafter, I do not go into details here, focusing on the general spatial and topographical extent of the changes.

Examples of new constructions erasing the defensive capabilities of Ostia’s city walls in the early Empire are numerous. In many instances the buildings were constructed against the walls, but often this took place also by reusing or even destroying the actual fortification structures (see overview in Glogowski 2023: 195–200). It is important to underline that this kind of reuse of city walls and other public monuments was not foreign to the Roman world: for instance, we know similar cases from the capital where the Servian Wall was built upon

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<sup>26</sup> Glogowski provides a thorough analysis of the buildings in direct contact with the city walls in the districts of the three main gates, focusing on the buildings’ dating, function and stratigraphic relationship to the city walls.

during the early Principate (Spanu 2012: 37–38). This was neither a new phenomenon in Ostia, as the defensive walls of the *castrum* were incorporated into later buildings as the city grew in the previous centuries (Meiggs 1973: 120; Spanu 2012: 46).

The early change is clear especially in the eastern side of the city. A large tomb was constructed against the southern tower of the *Porta Romana* gate probably already during the third quarter of the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE (Glogowski 2023: 317–320). More notably, a *castellum aquae* of *Porta Romana* – a large water tower where the water from an aqueduct entered the city – was built in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE abutting western perimeter of the city walls south of the *Porta Romana* gate (Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008: 76–79, 92–101; Spanu 2012: 46). In the western side of the city, north of the *Porta Marina* gate, a section of the city walls was built over in the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE, and soon after in the Flavian period it was levelled for a construction of residential buildings (Heinzelmann 2020: 443). Additionally, some early buildings, with only little surviving evidence and thus difficult to date accurately, were also built against the city walls west of the *Porta Laurentina* (Glogowski 2023: 198)

Even if this kind of utilisation of existing structures was typical for the Roman cities, the level of reuse is surprising. The city walls of Ostia were, in the end, a relatively new construction, and the scale of used resources for it were considerable. Also, as we have seen in the previous chapter, the city walls and its gates were in close relation with the ritual boundaries of the city and thus considered to be *res sanctae*, which made them inviolable. Apparently, this sanctity could be bypassed by a permission from the emperor or from a local authority (Stevens 2017: 108), and such must have been the case also in Ostia. The ritual regulations were outweighed by the urban development.

The constructions replacing and reusing the wall structures naturally destroyed the defensive functions of the fortifications, but so did the buildings against and nearby the circuit. Earlier, in the time of military needs, extramural constructions were limited as the buildings outside the city walls could obstruct the view of the surroundings, making the observation of enemies as well as the defence itself difficult (van Tilburg 2022: 136). As the defensive incentives waned, so did the need to prohibit building beyond and abutting the wall circuit.

Building just next to and outside the city walls may have been problematic also because the first strip of extramural land could have been *locus publicus*, a public place. For example, we have evidence from Pompeii that a zone at a distance of ca. 30 metres from the city walls was determined to be *locus publicus* (Stevens 2017: 110–114). To construct a building or a tomb

in a public place required a permission, and the land use was probably charged with a fee or a rent (Stevens 2017: 118). There is no evidence, such as *cippi* marking the area, of *locus publicus* outside the city walls of Ostia: nevertheless, it is possible that the open spaces inside and outside the wall circuit, which are traditionally – and as we have seen, incorrectly – interpreted as pomerial roads, could have been part of the *loci publici* (Stevens 2017: 122). However, having analysed the *Porta Romana* region, Stevens (2017: 222–224) did not find any certainty of such *locus publicus* in the borderscape of Ostia: some of the tombs were built abutting and some only 10 metres away from the wall circuit, making the zone of possible *locus publicus* rather narrow, or perhaps, non-existent. The absence of clear *locus publicus* could have facilitated the construction near the city walls already from early on.

Thereby, the urban development of the expanding city seems to have undermined the borderscape in the early Imperial times. Defensive purposes were destroyed, and the sanctity of the boundaries were violated – even if it was done with the permission of the authorities. Although the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE marked the beginning of the reuse of the late Republican circuit, the walls and especially its gates were not forgotten. The *Porta Romana* gate, interestingly next to the earliest points of known reuse of the walls, was renovated and monumentalised with a new marble facing and a travertine base as well as with the abovementioned inscription mentioning Cicero (Zevi 1998: 67–71). Further, the *Porta Marina* and its towers were erased already by mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE making way to the urban development (Emmerson 2020: 31), and the old gate was replaced by a gateway arch that visually marked the entrance to the city (Calza *et al.* 1953: 88). In addition, new gateways were opened to the wall circuit to facilitate the access to the extramural areas. These are dealt upon in detail when discussing with the city gates in chapter 3.2, but for now it is important to understand that the gates of the late Republican walls were maintained and even beautified, and that new passageways were added even after the city walls had lost their original defensive purpose.

This development underlines that by this point in time the city walls and the borderscape had more to do with purposes other than defence. The structures were cleverly utilised for urban infrastructure, but more importantly the Ostians seem to have wanted to create a monumental image of the city: an urban façade. Indeed, the (re)constructed city walls of Imperial Roman Italy seem to have been more decorative and expressive of civic pride in this period (Stevens 2017: 89–92). The monumentalisation of the *Porta Romana* as well as the new gateway arch at the *Porta Marina* are clear examples of this development. The monumental tombs outside the gates probably had this same function, serving as symbolic landmarks (Stevens 2017:

206). This infers that the residents of Ostia still perceived that the urban border was enclosing the city centre, even without its defensive functions, in the same places as in the late Republic.

At the same time when the city centre received a new urban façade with its beautified gateways, the suburban areas became to appear beyond these gates. Only the area outside the *Porta Romana* gate<sup>27</sup> remained largely sepulchral during the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, with new large tombs appearing, and the suburban development started there more clearly only during the following century (Glogowski 2023: 345–347). On the contrary, beyond the *Porta Laurentina* gate<sup>28</sup> the suburban area was formed in the early Imperial period, although chronology is uncertain: remains of many early buildings are detected against the city walls (Glogowski 2023: 425–427) as well as shops and workshops that partly entwined to the Laurentine cemetery (Emmerson 2020: 125). The rural area towards Laurentum was divided into agricultural plots by an orthogonal street grid in the Augustan period (Stöger 2011: 204–205), which probably stimulated also the suburban development towards this hinterland zone.

The construction of prestigious tombs outside the *Porta Marina* gate<sup>29</sup> started from the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, but it was not long after this that also the development of the suburbs began there (Glogowski 2023: 379–382). After the death of Augustus, a sanctuary of Bona Dea was built near the gate as well as several residential buildings (Emmerson 2020: 27–31). Further in the Flavian period, a large suburban villa was constructed east of the gate (Martin *et al.* 2003: 265–269) as well as the private house *Domus Fulminata* (Calza *et al.* 1953: 83). It has been speculated also with the existence of early thermal baths as well as a sanctuary of Vulcan in the place of the later *Foro di Porta Marina* (Glogowski 2023: 380–381). This anticipates the rapid development towards the seaside that took place in the following century.

We can assume that the extended built area was not considered fully urban but rather namely “suburban”. This is due to the abovementioned observation that the borderscape must have remained in its late Republican circuit line. It is also notable that the suburbs were founded in the places that were distinct for cemeteries and waste pits – beyond the hygienic boundary and that of the living and the dead. Emmerson (2020: 3–5) has claimed that this was of essence for the new suburban areas: despite hygienic and religious concerns, suburbs with semi-urban functions were formed around the Roman cities in midst of these extramural cemeteries, thus

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<sup>27</sup> The area of the *Porta Romana* is analysed by Glogowski (2023: 303–352) and Stevens (2017: 215–230).

<sup>28</sup> The area of the *Porta Laurentina* is analysed by Glogowski (2023: 393–432).

<sup>29</sup> The area of the *Porta Marina* is analysed by Glogowski (2023: 353–392) and Emmerson (2020: 26–33).

combining both features of the living and the dead. We see this also in Ostia in each three of the mentioned suburbs: the presence of tombs seems to have been accepted, or even appreciated: for example, the monumental tombs remained amongst the suburbs of the *Porta Marina* even after the street level was raised (Stevens 2017: 209).

In addition to cemeteries, the suburban areas of the Roman cities remained as places where waste and rubbish were gathered. Rubbish was ever-present in Roman cities, but the larger cesspits were located outside the city walls in the suburbs (Emmerson 2020: 93). In Ostia substantial waste pits have been discovered in the south-eastern and eastern sides of the late Republican walls, especially near the aqueduct and the water tower, dating to the late 1<sup>st</sup> or early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, and this area outside the wall circuit is assumed to have been dedicated to waste disposal (Emmerson 2020: 120; Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008: 145).

The reuse of the city walls and the appearance of the suburbs, begun in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, came to full fruition only during the next century. Indeed, the time of high Empire, when the Roman power had reached its largest geographic extent, marked also the period of Ostia's flourishing. The 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE is regarded as the hey-day of the city with remarkable urban development – so remarkable that Meiggs (1973: 133) has dubbed it as the period of “architectural revolution”. Especially the reign of Hadrian had significant impact on the built environment as the city received many typical Roman amenities, such as monumental baths. A half of the buildings visible today in Ostia derive from this period (Meiggs 1973: 135, 141).

The urban development of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century was, again, done at the cost of the late Republican city walls as the wall circuit was now definitively incorporated to some major new buildings of the city. At the *Porta Romana*, buildings were constructed on both sides of the city walls, most notable of them being an apartment building with shops, known as the *Caseggiato e taberne*, that was built abutting the northern tower of the gate in the north side of the *decumanus* (Glogowski 2023: 303–316; Pavolini 2006: 48). North of the gate, the square tower in the eastern end of the wall circuit was abutted by a Mithraeum (Meiggs 1973: 97). Additionally, further from the gate non-sepulchral buildings appeared: this urban development was done at the expense of the necropolis, with many tombs being destroyed and replaced by residential and commercial buildings (Stevens 2017: 210, 229–230). Therefore, by this time, also the area outside the *Porta Romana* had become clearly suburban.

At the *Porta Laurentina* a large triangular sanctuary complex known as the *Campo di Magna Mater* was constructed next to the gate in the inner side of the walls by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century: a

portico and a temple of Bellona were built against the city walls, and the western tower of the gateway was converted into a cistern<sup>30</sup> (Calza *et al.* 1953: 83; Glogowski 2023: 394–400). On the other side of *cardo*, a building named *Caseggiato e botteghe* was partially built upon the original gate structures (Glogowski 2023: 400–401).

At the *Porta Marina*, new buildings were built upon and against the city walls both inside and outside of the gate. In the inner side, shops and portico were built to the place where a tavern currently known as *Caupona di Alexander e Helix* – nowadays prominently visible at the park – was later built (Glogowski 2023: 365–367; figure 7). On the other side of *decumanus*, a residential insula building preceded a late antique house named *Domus del Ninfeo* (Glogowski 2023: 354). Nearby, the *Terme Marittime* baths incorporated some stretches of the wall circuit in the western side of the city (Calza *et al.* 1953: 83). Outside the gate, the suburbs extended and diversified with an appearance of, for example, multiple bathing complexes, villas and a synagogue. Notable was a vast square just outside the gate, known as *Foro di Porta Marina*,



Figure 7: Gate structures below the current street level in the south-east side of the *Porta Marina* gate in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. The large tuff blocks represent the original gate structures with later brick structures of a building called *Caupona di Alexander e Helix* built upon them. A fragment of the restored walls of the flanking tower in *opus quasi reticulatum*, analysed by Glogowski (2023: 130–135), can be seen in the upper right corner of the picture. From south-west. Picture by author.

<sup>30</sup> The cistern was earlier interpreted as “*fossa sanguinis*”, a place for religious sacrifice (Glogowski 2023: 398).

which served as a sanctuary, perhaps dedicated to Vulcan (Glogowski 2023: 362–365). In general, the focus of the urban development seems to have shifted from the river to the seaside at the latest by the Severan period (Meiggs 1973: 89–90, 146).<sup>31</sup>

Interestingly, the large stretch of the city walls between the *Porta Marina* and the *Porta Romana* were incorporated into the hydraulic system of the city during the reign of Hadrian. In fact, these sections of the city walls supported an aqueduct that provided water from the abovementioned large water tower near the *Porta Romana* for two smaller water towers that were located nearby the *Porta Marina* gate (Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008: 4, 154–158). Van Tilburg (2022: 154) has underlined that the city walls and its gates were practical spaces for location of the hydraulic structures as they both allowed to supervise and protect the all-important water supply and, on the other hand, provided existing constructions to build on. In similar vein, Glogowski (2023: 386) has proposed that the sections of the city walls in Ostia that supported the aqueduct may not have been so much tampered with due to their important function, and thus they may have evaded the destruction visible elsewhere.

These developments of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century are regarded to have been the final end to the defensive purpose of the city walls and its gates (Calza *et al.* 1953: 83; Glogowski 2023: 349). It is hard to assess how the other features of the borderscape prevailed after the city walls had lost their original purpose. Following the destruction and reconstruction of the main gates, the fiscal function – if it ever did happen at the gates – may have been moved to the port facilities or to the markets (Glogowski 2023: 292). As we have seen, the *pomerium* most likely ran in the same place with the city walls, but as the sanctity of the walls was violated, we could question also the importance of the *pomerium* by this time. However, simultaneously at the capital, the *pomerium* was still extended multiple times, indicating its prevailing (Stevens 2017: 30–31). The emergence of the urban façade in the borderscape of Ostia could, nevertheless, hint that the boundary maintained its relevance, and I would suggest that the *pomerium* remained there. Similarly, the absence of tombs and waste pits inside the late Republican circuit seems to indicate that the hygienic boundary was still in its original place, even if the suburban development spread beyond this border. The city centre still preserved its status.

As the borderscape along the city walls in the southern side of the city underwent changes, so did also the northern limit of the urban space. The first two centuries CE marked the

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<sup>31</sup> The studies in the *Porta Marina* suburbs have been recently furthered by the excavations of the “Ostia Post Scriptum” project which began in 2022, but the result of these studies have not been available for me.

appearance of built environment also in the northern bank of the Tiber, in the *Trastevere Ostiense*. Although the area was noted by researchers already before (e.g. Meiggs 1973: 148), it was only recently extensively discovered and studied in the non-intrusive archaeological landscape survey that took place in 2008–2012 in the *Isola Sacra* between Ostia and Portus (Keay *et al.* 2020a: 1–4). The *Isola Sacra* is an artificial island that was limited by the ancient seashore in west, the Tiber in south and east, and by the canal of *Fossa Traiana*<sup>32</sup> in north (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 149; see map in appendix 2). The *Trastevere Ostiense* was discovered in the southern part of this island, on the opposite side of the Tiber in relation to Ostia.

The earliest archaeological evidence for the occupation in the southern part of the *Isola Sacra* dates to the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, but the area was not largely developed until the time of the high-late Empire (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 149, 160). The major structures discovered in the *Trastevere Ostiense* consist of five principal buildings, four of which were most likely warehouses, and a defensive wall enclosing them from north (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 160–165). The defensive wall was probably built in Late Antiquity – we will return to this shortly – but the principal buildings date probably to the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, and thus they may relate to the major urban and suburban developments south of the Tiber (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 162–163).

Also, in the eastern end of the of ancient *Trastevere Ostiense*, another built zone, so-called region of *Fiume Morto*, ‘the dead river’, has been discovered. The area is named so because it is now separated from the *Isola Sacra* by the Tiber as the river changed its course after a heavy flood in 1557, thereafter abandoning its ancient track and taking its new place downstream (Pellegrino *et al.* 1995: 393; see map in appendix 2). Occupation of this area was established in the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 149), at the same time as at the other end of the *Trastevere*. The area included, for instance, baths, warehouses and perhaps harbour facilities, making it an extension of Ostia beyond the river (Pellegrino *et al.* 1995: 396, fig. 1).

The built areas of the *Trastevere Ostiense* and its extension in the *Fiume Morto* region have not been so much discussed as a suburban area of Ostia, in similar fashion with the extramural areas south of the river. However, if we hold on to the supposition that the Tiber would have functioned as an urban boundary – paralleled with the city walls – also this northern built area should be recognised as a suburban one. The region lacks cemeteries typical for the other

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<sup>32</sup> *Fossa Traiana* is an artificial canal south of Portus that directly connected the Tyrrhenian Sea to the Tiber next to the imperial harbour. Despite its name, the canal is dated to the Claudian period, similarly to the first phase of Portus (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 149).

suburban areas, but I would suggest including also the structures of the *Trastevere Ostiense* to the suburbs of Ostia in the period of the early and high Empire. In this conception, the river would still function as the urban boundary of the city centre.

The reuse and neglect of the city walls as well as the appearance of the extramural and beyond-river suburbs question the ideal of well-defined and clearly bounded city that we saw in the late Republican phase. Glogowski (2023: 386) has even proposed that at the *Porta Marina* region the city walls did not function anymore as a boundary of urban space. I do not agree with this: in my opinion, the monumentalisation of the gates, and thus the creation of the urban façade, as well as the probable maintaining of other urban boundaries – especially religious and hygienic – in their late Republican lines seem to indicate that the Ostians still wanted to highlight the actual city centre from its surroundings. The appearance of an aqueduct along the city walls even brought a new function to the boundary. The borderscape prevailed in its place during early and high Imperial times (figure 8), even if its purposes changed notably and its physical features were largely tampered with. In parallel, even in

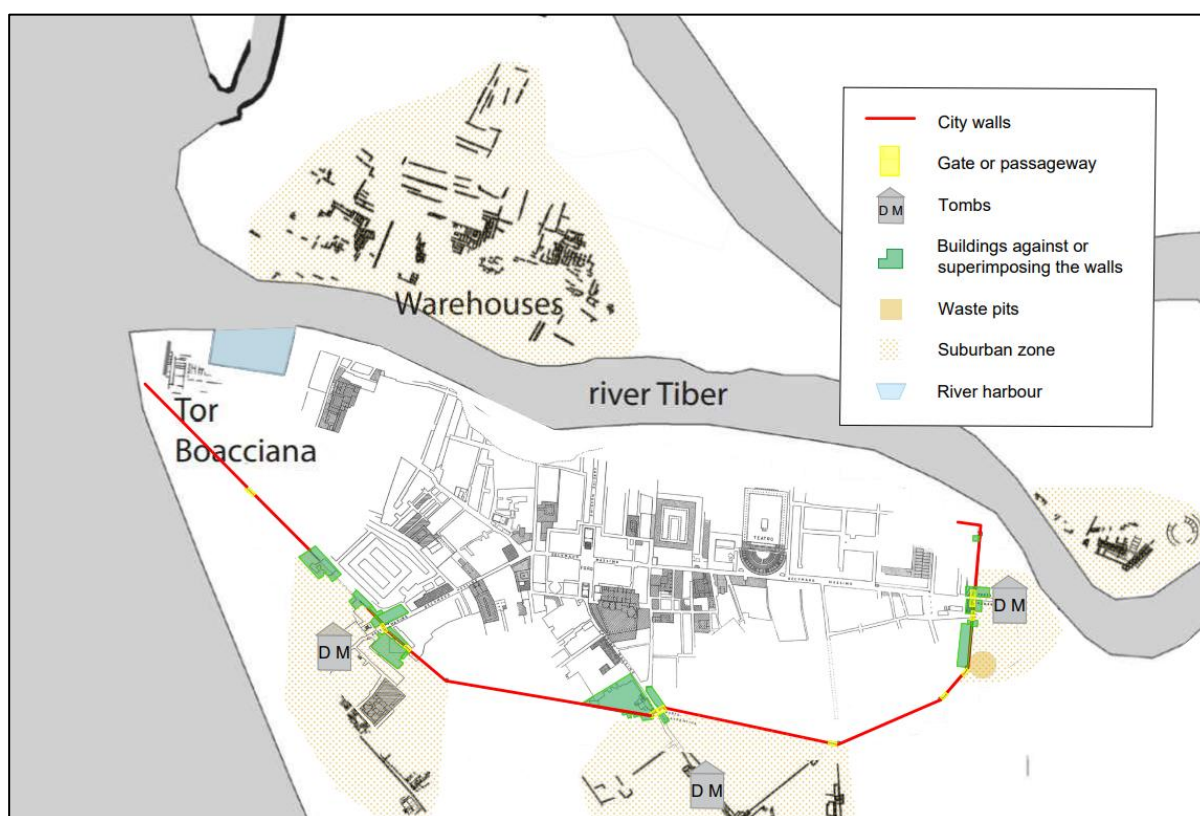


Figure 8: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape in the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features that do not belong to the early and high Imperial phase are covered over, and the map of Antonine Ostia by Guido Calza (Calza *et al.* 1953) is cropped and set over the centre of the city. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software. The buildings against or superimposing the walls are located following the maps by H el ene Glogowski (2023: especially fig. II.1.2; II. 2.1; II.3.1).

Rome the Servian Wall appears to have remained as a boundary of the city centre for a long time after ceasing to be a continuous fortification circuit (Stevens 2017: 242).

It is true, however, that the emergence of suburban areas – with many undoubtedly urban functions – undermined the necessity of a boundary between the urban and the suburban. The distinction between the urban centre and the suburban areas was obscured, even if the urban façade and the functions of the borderscape were maintained. Emmerson (2020: 125) claims that one may not have recognised having exited the city centre as the built environment continued in similar fashion both inside and outside of the gate. The remaining boundaries impacted only few aspects of life, and thus, it is questionable whether the urban border truly affected the everyday life of Ostians who operated between the centre and the suburbs. Even if the urban borderscape prevailed, it may have been rather symbolic and ideal than practical.

### **2.3 Decline and delimitation in Late Antiquity**

The trend of Roman urban boundaries took a drastic turn again in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE as the Empire became more and more restless. Most of the urban centres in the Roman world remained unfortified beforehand, but on the brink of Late Antiquity the situation changed (Intagliata *et al.* 2020: 1). Once again facing external threats, the need for fortifications appeared. This is famously evinced by multiple large-scale fortification endeavours, such as the abovementioned Aurelian Wall in Rome and the defensive walls of Portus. The re-emergence of the military aspect can be seen also in the absence of decoration in the late city gates (van Tilburg 2022: 176). Nevertheless, Intagliata *et al.* (2020: 1) underline that these urban projects, although primarily stemming from defensive needs, were also manifestations of cities' self-representation and local power. Indeed, it has been presumed that the Aurelian Wall served as a stylistic model for other cities, paving the way for the new trend of fortified urbanity (Emmerson 2020: 16).

Although Ostia had somewhat followed the Roman trends of urban boundaries so far in its history – constructing the walls during the turbulences of the late Republic and gradually discontinuing their use during the *Pax Romana* – this was not so clearly the case at this point. The traditional research on Ostia has maintained that, notwithstanding with the late antique trend of fortifying the Roman urban hubs, the late Republican walls in Ostia were neither repaired nor were new walls constructed during this period. Calza (*et al.* 1953: 83) has suspected that the late Republican walls were too much tampered with at this point and therefore could not be reinstated to their original defensive functions.

However, new archaeological research has shown that the decline of the walls may have not been as straight-forward as thought before. Glogowski (2023: 179–195) has provided a synthesis of all of the known ancient restorations that have been identified from the wall structures (figure 9). The dating of these restorations is very difficult, and only the materials and techniques of the constructions provide some indicative chronology of the restorations, suggesting a vast range of dates from the early Empire to Late Antiquity. These restorations, often linked to the deterioration of the structures, to military functions or to be supporting superimposed structures, may have had also aesthetic and symbolic purposes (Glogowski 2023: 191–195), perhaps linked to the urban façade discussed above.

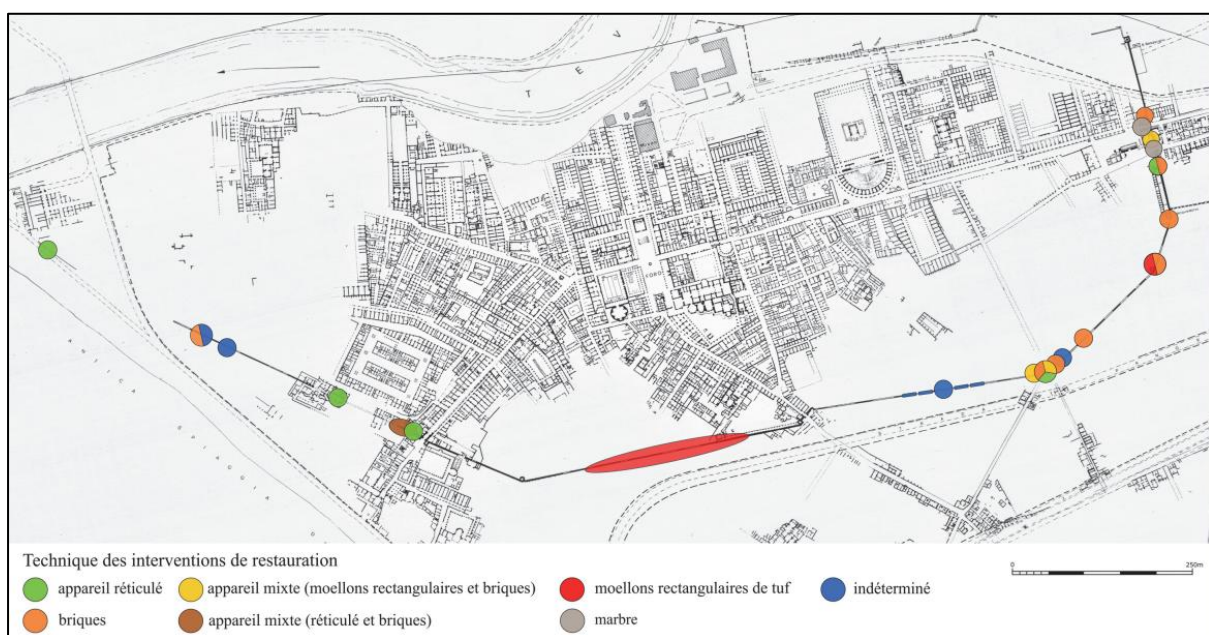


Figure 9: Distribution map of the known ancient restorations in the late Republican city walls of Ostia with different construction techniques coloured. Map by Hélène Glogowski (2023: fig. I.2.21).

Many of these restorations, however, appear rather late. The studies by DAI-AAR project (Heinzelmann 2020: 443–444) have proved that some restorations were made in the city walls in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, probably near the same time as the Aurelian Wall in Rome was established. These restorations included new thresholds for two of the minor gates as well as work on nearby stretches of the wall structures (Martin *et al.* 2003: 265). The gates were of spolia material, which is in the vein with other Roman cities, as there is evidence of systematic reuse of material and structures for urban defence in this period (Intagliata *et al.* 2020: 3). Perhaps also the round tower next to the *Porta di Via del Sabazeo* may date to this period but this remains uncertain (Glogowski 2023: 168, footnote 196). These partial restorations of Ostia’s old wall circuit were, however, only temporary as the new structures were abandoned already in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Emmerson (2020: 53) has even suggested that

these refortifications may have been rather aesthetic than defensive. Even if the restoration lasted only for short period of time, it is important to recognise that the society of Ostia strived to reinforce their urban boundaries in the manner of other contemporary Roman cities.

Even if the city walls were maintained, it is unclear what the situation was with other features of the borderscape. The urban façade of the early Empire seems to have crumbled, especially as the monumental features of the *Porta Romana* gate were destroyed at some point before the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 156). The importance of the *pomerium* may have been undermined enough by later constructions violating its sanctity, so that it would not be surprising if the border was starting to fall into oblivion. Also, with the Christianity becoming more dominant in the religious cityscape by the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (Meiggs 1973: 390–391), the traditional Roman ritual boundaries were probably gradually abandoned. Similarly, the hygienic border of the city seems to have become increasingly elusive: the waste does not seem to have been transported outside the city walls in large quantities after mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, which is indicated by disposed rubbish used to raise the ground level in the city centre (Gering 2013: 272–273). On the contrary, the aqueduct running along the city walls remained in function at least to the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Glogowski 2023: 448).

The borderscape that was founded in the late Republic and maintained so far during the Imperial times, seems to have lost many of its purposes by Late Antiquity. The restorations of the city walls and the survival of the aqueduct provide weak signal of the urban border. However, the prevailing significance of the borderscape is underlined by the developments in northern bank of the Tiber: at the same time with abovementioned changes, a new stretch of defensive structure appeared in the *Trastevere Ostiense* around the extended suburban area beyond the river, limiting the *Trastevere* complex in north.

The defensive wall was detected in the aforementioned non-intrusive geophysical survey, but in the lack of excavations, it is known only to a very limited extend (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 163–165; figure 10): the wall was 3–5 metres wide with square external towers facing towards north. The circuit run approximately in east–west direction in the area north of the warehouses but took a clear turn to south by the westernmost building. The western and eastern ends of the walls are unknown: in west, they may have run until the Portus to Ostia canal, although our evidence stretch only until the westernmost building; in east, the walls may have extended until the Tiber, although the evidence is equally thin. If the defensive wall indeed reached both the canal and the river, it would have thereby enclosed the entire built area north of the

Tiber, including the *Fiume Morto* region. In addition, a series of substantial walls, running parallel and perpendicular to the fortifications, were detected in the proximity of the defences, but these probably did not have military function and may predate the defensive wall.

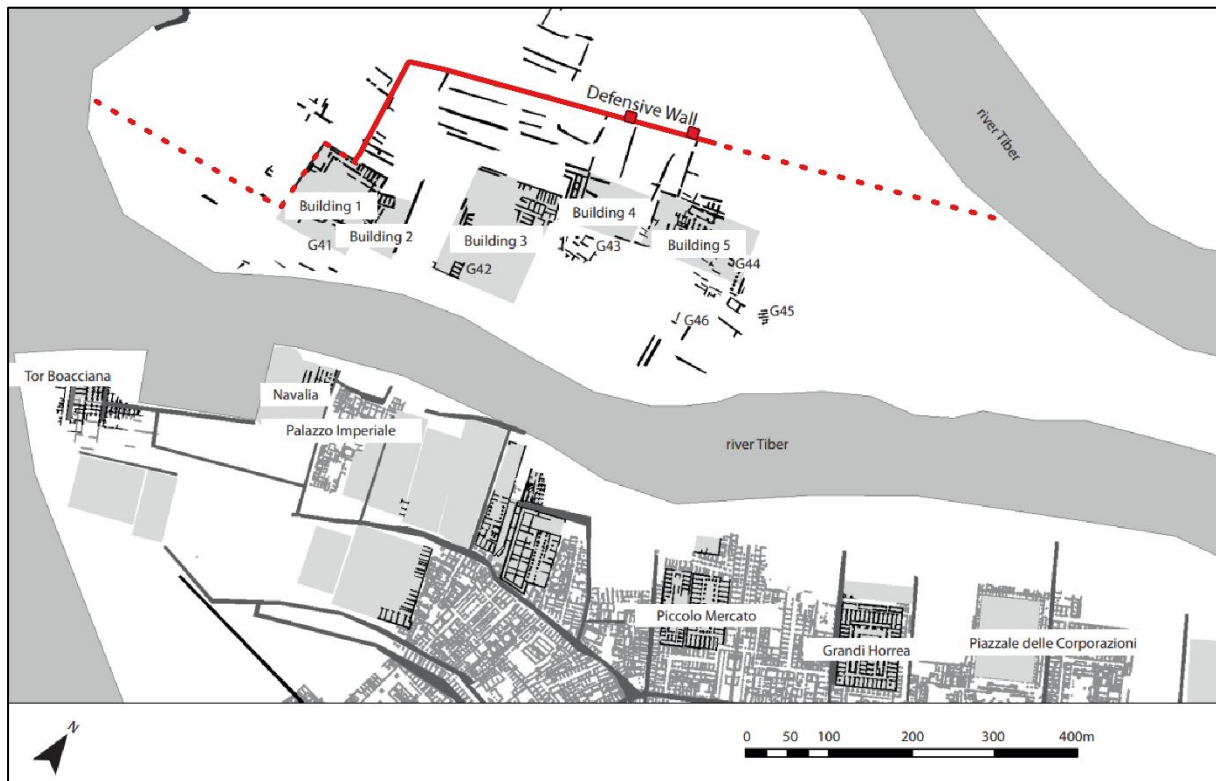


Figure 10: Map of the archaeological features detected in the *Trastevere Ostiense* in the geophysical survey as well as the known ancient structures south of the Tiber. The fluvial situation is that of ancient times. The base map by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020b: fig. 6.6.) with features of the defensive wall in the *Trastevere Ostiense* marked in red by author with QGIS software: the known parts of the wall (solid line), the speculative line of the walls (dash line) and towers (square).

The defensive wall of *Trastevere Ostiense* is very notable change in the borderscape of Ostia. However, the chronology of the structures is very much uncertain in the absence of any large-scale excavations. As mentioned before, the principal buildings of *Trastevere* date perhaps to the 1<sup>st</sup> or the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 162–163). The defensive wall is a more difficult case: according to the surveyors (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 163) the most prominent clue for the dating of the walls lies in the point where the wall circuit meets the westernmost warehouse. The surveyors argue that the defensive wall was most likely built at some point after the construction of the warehouse, and the standing walls of the building were incorporated into the wall circuit. Thus, the walls should postdate the 1<sup>st</sup>–2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Although the possibility for earlier dating cannot be excluded, the surveyors have proposed that the defensive wall would rather date to Late Antiquity than to the period shortly after the construction of the warehouses. This is suggested based on the lack of obvious historical

context for the construction as well as on the typological similarities between the walls of the *Trastevere* and the fortifications of Portus dated to ca. 480 CE (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 164–165).

The argument for suitable historical context for the construction is compelling: during the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries CE, and as we have seen, the late Republican walls south of the Tiber fell out of their original use. Then towards Late Antiquity fortified cities appear in the Empire, and also the walls of Ostia are restored. Thus, purely from the defensive point of view, the later dating would make sense. Perhaps the birth of the new section of the wall circuit was realised at the same time with the renovations that appear in the defensive structures south of the Tiber in the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE: perhaps the whole borderscape was reinforced once again by this time, at least in a defensive sense. However, as the surveyors note (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 163), the problem of chronology can be settled conclusively only with further excavation data.

It would be tempting to look at the city walls both south and north of the river as a topographical entity. Just by examining a map with all the wall structures (e.g. figure 11), the city walls seem to have formed, more or less, a continuous circuit around city centre and the *Trastevere Ostiense*, aided by the river and the canal. Adversely, Keay *et al.* (2020b: 163) have ruled out that the northern wall section could have been a direct continuation of the late Republican walls, and structurally speaking, the northern wall as well as its towers' forms and locations seem to differ from their southern counterpart. To my mind, however, these structural dissimilarities can be explained with the chronological differences as the Roman construction trends and techniques evolved over time: the defensive wall in the *Trastevere Ostiense* was built in the fashion of its own time without trying to achieve similar appearance to the southern walls, which would have been at that point very much old-fashioned.

Although the chronology is uncertain and the structural style of the northern walls differ clearly from their southern counterpart, spatially and topographically speaking, I find that the wall section of the *Trastevere Ostiense* and the late Republican walls have a lot in common, and they formed the core of the late antique borderscape of Ostia. If this holds true, first time since the late Republic, the borderscape of Ostia was extended substantially. If we assume that borderscape indeed was moved to follow the line of the new defensive wall, by definition, the suburban areas north of the Tiber became urban and part of the city centre. This applies both to the warehouse district in the *Trastevere* opposite to the old centre as well as to the buildings known from the *Fiume Morto* region. Some of the structures were left outside the defensive wall and could be considered new small suburban area north of the *Trastevere*. This

means that the city centre of Ostia grew significantly. Even more, the river that for a long time used to be the northern border of the urban space now had come to be a part of the centre, glueing together the two parts of the city on the opposite banks.

The new defensive wall to the north of the city as well as the restoration of the walls south of the centre could hint a trend towards a more confined city in this period. This, on other hand, may have been linked to – or have caused – the weakening of the suburban areas. In general, the suburbs of Italy declined especially in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> centuries CE along with the appearance of the new fortifications (Emmerson 2020: 51–54). This trend appears also in Ostia: no new tombs were built in the suburbs after mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century, and the necropoleis began to be pillaged by the 4<sup>th</sup> (Meiggs 1973: 466). The large suburban villa of the Flavian period outside the *Porta Marina* gate was destroyed in the last decades of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, and the area of the villa was first abandoned and later followed only by rustic structures (Martin *et al.* 2003: 266–268). However, this did not mean entire abandonment of the suburban areas: for instance, the *Porta Marina* suburbs did endure through the 4<sup>th</sup> century (Emmerson 2020: 51–52). Even if the suburban areas remained in use, these changes hint of a certain decline in the suburbs of Ostia starting from the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, shifting the focus towards the more confined city centre. This is also evinced by the fact that some of the functions of the suburban areas were moved inside the city centre, such as the abovementioned change in the waste management.

In general, the refortification of the city as well as the weakening of the suburbs can be linked to a crisis that the society and economy of Ostia faced, causing demographic impoverishment as well as decline and abandonment of the built environment also in the city centre. Pavolini (2016: 391–392) has demonstrated that this crisis took place in mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, and it may have been caused by the weak government in the capital at that time, leading to the negligence of the port city. Therefore, the changes that we can witness in the borderscape and in the suburban areas are related to city- or even empire-wide turbulences. In this crisis, the city was secured by a new extended borderscape which, however, was no more a similar traditional Roman urban border that was founded in the late Republic. Instead, it may have been ‘a rescue mission’ by the urban society striving to maintain the declining city.

Nevertheless, it is unclear how long did this expanded borderscape of Late Antiquity (figure 11) exist. As mentioned, the renovations of the late Republican walls were only temporary, and after the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century the evidence of such repairs end. The traditional features of the borderscape, such as the *pomerium* and the hygienic border, seem to have

blurred. The lifespan of the defensive wall in the *Trastevere Ostiense* is also very much uncertain: it is possible that the walls may have been short-lived and were neglected in the 4<sup>th</sup> century in the manner of the fortification south of the river. It would be likely that the urban areas on both banks of the Tiber had, in the end, followed similar historical trajectories.

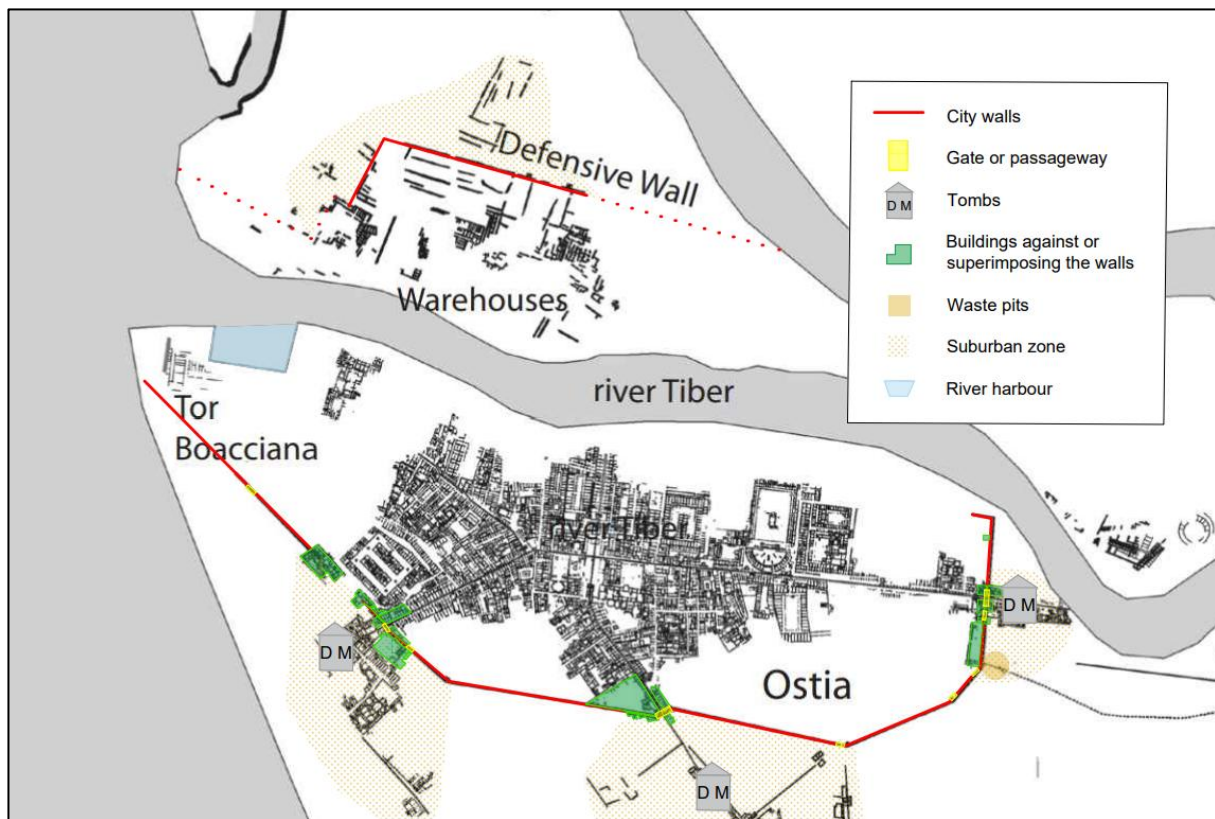


Figure 11: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software. The buildings against or superimposing the walls are located following the maps by H el ene Glogowski (2023: especially fig. II.1.2; II. 2.1; II.3.1).

Certainly, without fortification walls Ostia would have been an easy target for any attack. By the crisis of 5<sup>th</sup> century CE, the walls seem to have been obsolete and “could offer no serious defence” (Meiggs 1973: 97). Historically, however, Ostia seems not to have been of interest for external enemies anymore. For instance, the city was ignored both by Goths and Vandals that sacked Rome and Portus in 410 and 455 CE (Meiggs 1973: 97–98). Therefore, the wall circuit was not alone in its weakening as also the city centre continued its decline after the crisis of the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century (Meiggs 1973: 147). It seems that not only the significance of the wall circuit had come to pass, but rather the decline run through the city in its entirety. Even if the shrunken urban society of Ostia remained among the ruinous city until the 9<sup>th</sup> century (Meiggs 1973: 100), it seems that the time of ‘Roman’ Ostia was on its final stretch by the 5<sup>th</sup> century.

### 3 Movement across the boundaries: another biography of Ostia's borderscape

Besides being preserved in the archaeological record and in the written sources, a case of pictorial depiction of the city walls of Roman Ostia can be found in one of the several baths of the ancient city. Near the *Porta Romana* gate, in the *frigidarium* of the *Terme dei Cisiarii*, “the baths of carriage drivers”, we can still today witness a black-and-white floor mosaic which represents the two city wall circuits and, in between them, carriages, merchants and mythological creatures (figure 12). In the centre of the room is a stylised depiction of rectangular city walls with four gates and four towers in the corners, and the whole room is framed by a circuit of another wall. Elsewhere in Ostia similar mosaics with city walls were also found in the *Terme del Nuotatore*, in so-called Palazzo Imperiale, and in the baths of *Fiume Morto* (Stevens 2017: 72–74; Pellegrino *et al.* 1995: 394–395, especially fig. 2).<sup>33</sup>

Stöger (2011: 211–212) points out that in the mosaic of the *Terme dei Cisiarii* the gates in the inner wall are depicted in detail: three of the gates have narrow doorways next to each other



Figure 12: Mosaic in the *frigidarium* of the *Terme dei Cisiarii* in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. Picture by author.

<sup>33</sup> The theme of city walls is also attested in mosaics elsewhere, for instance in the *impluvium* of the House of Livia in Prima Porta and in the *vestibulum* of the *Domus M. Caesi Blandi* in Pompeii (Stevens 2017: 72–74).

and the fourth one has one single wider gateway. This may represent the situation of the *castrum* walls, whilst the larger walls framing the mosaic might be the late Republican wall circuit. This interpretation is, however, ambiguous as the two wall circuits never existed simultaneously. The walls of *castrum* were already incorporated in later buildings by the time the late Republican walls were put in place. Perhaps, this is rather a depiction of a perceived city: a representation of the Ostian mindset which recognised the two phases of urbanity.

Thereby, the mosaic of the *Terme dei Cisiarii* indicates the importance of the city walls and its gates to the inhabitants of Ostia. On the other hand, it underlines the fact that also movement was an integral part of this perception of the city – at least for the guild of carriage drivers who may have owned the baths (Pavolini 2006: 55–56). The figures in the mosaic can be symbolic (or maybe even semi-realistic) representations of the traffic and other movement that took place within the urban space. Both wheeled traffic, such as carts and chariots pulled by horses and donkeys, as well as pedestrian movement are attested in the mosaic, and such can be envisioned to have been the situation on the streets of ancient Ostia. The mythological creatures, moreover, could be seen representing the fact that, in addition to physical movement, also ideologies, beliefs and other non-physical phenomena moved across the urban boundaries and within them.

Movement and actions that took place to control this flow of movement were self-evidently taking place in the ancient times. Archaeological material and written sources together enable a spatial analysis of movement, revealing the designs and practises of movement as well as its impact on the city (Newsome 2011: 6). However, this is only indirect data, so called proxy evidence, which represents only residues of movement behaviour (Newsome 2011: 9).

Thereby, interpretation and analogies are necessary in many cases: it is easy to prove the existence of a city gate and its features, but less so when it comes to the people who walked through the gate or guarded it, not to mention what people actually thought about them. Nevertheless, to thoroughly understand the borderscape we have to look into the social behaviour of movement that shaped and was shaped by the urban boundary.

The ancient movement can be understood by examining many features of the built environment that have survived in the archaeological record. When it comes to the urban boundaries the essential factor is access: the different hierarchies of accessibility are encoded in the urban space, and they reflect the cultural ideals and practises of the society (Newsome 2011: 5–6). In other words, the access of movement was controlled according to the societal

needs, and the rates of the accessibility can be understood by measuring how effectively movement flew through the built space. Thus, to perceive the accessibility of Ostia's borderscape, we should ask the following: how could one access the city? What kind of restrictions were put in place for the access and why? How did they affect the accessibility?

### **3.1 Movement across the late Republican borderscape**

In chapter 2.1 we saw that the late Republican borderscape of Ostia, with the new city walls and the river as its core and other associated urban boundaries amplifying it, seems to have been well-defined, making a clear distinction between the urban centre and what was left outside. However, as any boundary, neither was this borderscape unbreachable: there were multiple "holes" that allowed movement to access through the border. This movement drew the urban and the extramural spaces together, thus undermining the definitive nature of the border. Even at the cost of a leaking border, this kind of movement was vital for the city life as the urban community could not function without outside produces and influences.

The late Republican city walls of Ostia – being in a sense an antithesis for uncontrolled movement – contained multiple gateways that allowed the traffic and other movement flow from and into the city. As discussed above, there were three principal gates, the *Porta Romana*, the *Porta Laurentina* and the *Porta Marina*, which were assuredly founded simultaneously with the city walls. These were the most obvious passageways for movement across the city's late Republican borderscape. Yet, it is important to take into account also, once again, the river: although the Tiber was by that time the northern limit of the urban space, it was also an important thoroughfare for riverine movement entering the river harbour of Ostia. Therefore, although the river functioned as the northern border of the city, it was also unquestionably the largest "hole" in the borderscape.

The concentration of movement to these primary places was a result of urban planning. The town plan and the street grid were the most powerful determinants of Roman urban movement (Laurence *et al.* 2011: 138). This holds true also in Ostia where the focal locations of movement across the borderscape – the gates – were most likely determined by the existing arterial thoroughfares of the urban layout: the main streets of the city were already established before the city walls, and the gates were thereby located to the places where the streets pierced the defensive circuit. This urban street grid, in turn, was integrated into the predetermined road system in the surrounding area (Stöger 2011: 204; Meiggs 1973: 120–121). In this sense the features of the borderscape are not only affecting the urban movement

but they were also shaped by movement itself. As described in chapter 2.1, the places of movement may have been ritually verified when ploughing the *sulcus primigenius* by leaving the places for gates unploughed, allowing the ritually unclean to cross the sacred border.



Figure 13: Remaining structures of the *Porta Romana* gate in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. The original late Republican structures of gate are below current street level, and they have been excavated in the southern side of the gate (fenced area). Later gate structures with marble decorations date to the reign of emperor Domitian. From south-west, towards the necropolis outside the gate. Picture by author.

Perhaps the most focal entrance to the city was the *Porta Romana* (figure 13): it was the gate in the eastern side of the centre in the place where the road from Rome, *Via Ostiensis*, ended and became the major street of the city, *decumanus*. At the other end of the *decumanus*, in the south-western side of the city, was the gate of the *Porta Marina* from which one could exit the city to the seaside. The third major gate, the *Porta Laurentina*, was in the southern side of the city at the end of the other major street, *cardo*. After the gate, the street turned into the road *Via Laurentina* that provided the route towards the town of Laurentum south of Ostia.

The original late Republican structures of the main gates are clearly below the street level of the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE Ostia that is nowadays visible in the archaeological park. This is due to the fact that the street level was raised many times, especially during emperor Domitian's reign in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE, simultaneously with the abovementioned reconstructions of some of the gate features (Meiggs 1973: 64–65). As described in chapter 2.1, the main gates were

excavated during the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, and as result, some of the late Republican structures of the gates are visible today in the park (see e.g. figures 7 & 13).

By examining the known earliest building phase of the gates, described by Calza *et al.* (1953: 84–88), we can establish that all these three major gateways were structurally quite similar. Each of the gates were single-portalled, that is, having only one opening for the movement (van Tilburg 2022: 61). According to a typology of Roman gates proposed by van Tilburg (2022: app. 2) the gates represented an inner court-gate type. In this gate type, the gate has open courtyard with closed off areas at the front and in the rear. The courtyard of the *Porta Romana* gate (figure 14) consisted of two rooms, while the other two had only a single room. The gates were of similar concrete structures as the walls themselves but reinforced with large blocks of tuff stone. The gates were flanked by square towers that formed small forecourts in front of the gates. It has been suggested that the towers would have been at least two-storied and higher than the gates and the wall sections themselves, allowing the guards and soldiers to defend them from above (*Giornale di Scavo* 1924: 106–107).

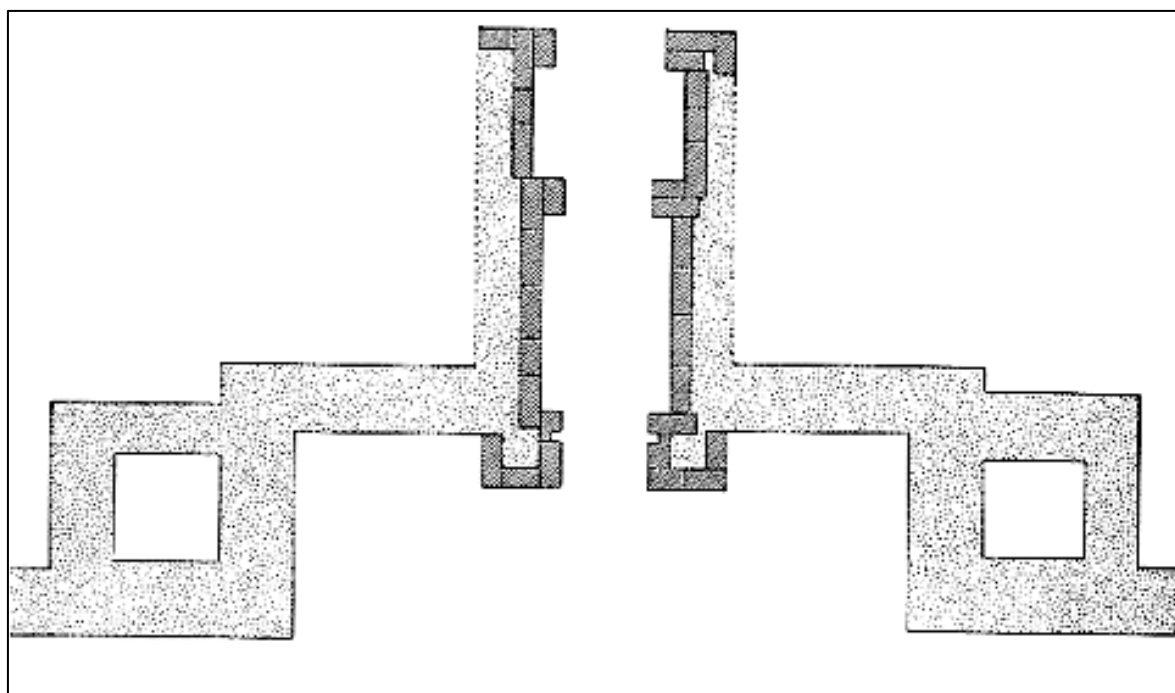


Figure 14: The ground plan of the *Porta Romana* gate. The top of the picture is pointing towards west. The features in darker grey represent the late Republican foundation structures of the gate itself, while the light grey area on the sides are the wall structures and the flanking towers. Drawing by Guido Calza (Calza *et al.* 1953: fig. 25 – *Porta Romana della cinta urbana*).

The major gates had closing mechanisms, which enabled to control movement: portcullises were used to close the gate when necessary (van Tilburg 2022: 62). Vertical slots made for portcullises were set in either side of the passage, and they are still visible in the gate

structures in each of the three major gates (Glogowski 2023: 252–253; see figure 15 for those of the *Porta Laurentina*).<sup>34</sup> The portcullises could be lowered in the slots when the gate was to be closed, especially during an attack, but also for example during the nighttime. In the *Porta Laurentina*, in addition to the slots, there was also a place for a locking bar (Calza *et al.* 1953: 86). Besides these features, nothing archaeological is left of the closing mechanisms, so they were most likely made of perishable or reusable material, such as wood or metal.



Figure 15: Structures in the south-western side of the *Porta Laurentina* gate in Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica. Features of the closing mechanism, the vertical slots for portcullises. The structures are partially restored in the modern times (Glogowski 2023: 159). From south-east. Picture by author.

In addition to the main gates, there were also smaller passageways in the wall circuit, albeit most of them do not date to the late Republican period but were opened later. In fact, it was typical for Roman cities to have originally only three gateways: the fewer number of the gates made the defence easier (van Tilburg 2022: 129–130), although the number of the gates was more likely determined by the topography of the roads, as discussed above. However, there was one additional opening built already during the initial construction of the late Republican

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<sup>34</sup> Similar slots for portcullises are found for example in the *Porta di Ercolano* gate in Pompeii, dating to the 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE or CE (van Tilburg 2022: 109–113).

wall circuit: that is a narrow postern gate in the eastern side of the city walls, south of the *Porta Romana* (Glogowski 2023: 175–176; Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008: 89–92).<sup>35</sup> This kind of posterns (lat. *posterula*), which were small side entrances, were typically used for military purposes, such as to surprise a besieging foe from behind. They may have had also other purposes for small-scale secondary movement (van Tilburg 2022: 139).

The structural features of the main gates, together with the postern, underline the original military purpose of the wall circuit. Indeed, merely the fact that the major gates had only narrow single-portalled openings, similar to other gates of Republican Roman cities, indicate the priority of defence over traffic (van Tilburg 2022: 49–50). The strong towers enhanced the defensive abilities as did the forecourts that were bordered by them. The inner courtyard could have been used to trap enemies by dropping the portcullis after the invaders had entered the gate (van Tilburg 2022: 139–140; Glogowski 2023: 255–256). This military engineering made the defence easy, but on the other hand restricted the later developments of movement through the gates. It is crucial to underline that, as the gates allowed movement – a necessary feature for the urban functions –, they were therefore also the most vulnerable points in the fortification (van Tilburg 2022: 129). Furthermore, the gates were also ritually vulnerable as the *sulcus primigenius* was not ploughed to the locations of passage (Stevens 2017: 66).

The narrow gateways in well-fortified city walls of a well-defined borderscape strengthen the vision of clearly distinct urban space of late Republican Ostia. This fits also the historical background of the borders with the politico-military incentives. However, it is unclear whether the military function of the walls and its gates was ever used in practise, and the only historically known attack on Ostia was that of Sextus Pompeius as a part of the civil wars in 39 BCE (Meiggs 1973: 39). Although the military effectiveness of the walls is doubted, as described above, perhaps the fortifications were a successful deterrent. The era of threats was, nonetheless, coming to an end as the civil wars ceased in the following decade.

Merely from the point of view of fortifications, it would be easy to assume that the movement across the borderscape was limited and well-secured. But the full picture is not that simple. Although the defensive aspect of the late Republican gates holds strong, we should not close our eyes to other perspectives of access. Even in the time of the civil wars, the city was not under constant military threat, and manifold ordinary movement across the borderscape must

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<sup>35</sup> The opening of the postern was detected already during the excavations by Calza (*Giornale di Scavo* 1922: 138–140), but it was identified as a postern only recently (Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008).

have taken place. To understand the accessibility of the borderscape beyond defences, we will now look into different factors that generated movement across the borderscape and how the access of this movement may have been controlled in the day-to-day life.

First of all, we can assume that the movement across the borderscape of such an important city was extensive. Although no calculations are made regarding Ostia's traffic volumes, those of Pompeii can give us an idea of the busy nature of the movement flowing through the city gates. Poehler (2016: 198–200) has presented speculative calculations on the rate of visitors entering the gates of Pompeii, experimenting with varying numbers between 500 and 6000 daily visitors, but resulting in the most reasonable estimate of around 2000. The numbers of Pompeii and Ostia are certainly not directly comparable as the cities differed considerably, but applying this speculative rate of 2000 visitors to Ostia would suggest that over 600 people visiting the city would have entered each of the three main gates daily. Further, from the archaeological perspective, the volume of the wheeled traffic can sometimes be indicated by heavily worn cornerstones of the gates (van Tilburg 2022: 147). In Ostia, the narrow main gates were vulnerable places for such damage: such deterioration was detected at least in the late Republican tuff structures of the *Porta Romana* (*Giornale di Scavo* 1910: 292; *Giornale di Scavo* 1911: 10), providing indirect indication of heavy traffic there.

Naturally, the main gates were places for arrival or residential and long-distance traffic. As mentioned, the *Porta Romana* was the most important entrance to the city. With a distance of ca. 25 kilometres from capital, the journey between Ostia and Rome required a horseback or carriage ride, which was affordable only for the wealthy few (Meiggs 1973: 71). *Via Ostiensis* and its extension within Ostia were indeed paved with volcanic stones (Laurence 2020: 140) – still largely visible today in the park – which enabled flowing wheeled traffic. Similar residential traffic must have taken place also in the southern side of the city. The area outside the *Porta Laurentina* stretching outside the gate was occupied by suburban villas, many of which were founded by the Roman elite already starting from the late Republic (Meiggs 1973: 69). Most famously a coastal villa of the Roman writer Pliny the Younger was in the Laurentine territory south of Ostia, and if he ever visited the city, he perhaps would have entered through the *Porta Laurentina*. It has been assumed that the gate of the *Porta Laurentina* was the primary exit towards the areas south of the city in the late Republic, while the discovered structures of the *Porta Marina* suggest that the traffic was not as constant at the western gate (*Giornale di Scavo* 1924: 109).

The most ordinary movement was, however, produced by the everyday life of Ostia's residents. The people who had to work outside the city walls left the city centre daily to meet their responsibilities. The duties that some of the Ostians had to undertake in the neighbouring countryside are way too numerous to reiterate here, but mostly the occupation had to do with the natural produce. For instance, the growing of vegetable in the fields east of Ostia was taken care by the residents of the city (Meiggs 1973: 265–266). Another example worth mentioning is the actively practised fishing that took place both in the seaside as well as in the river (Meiggs 1973: 267–268).<sup>36</sup> This movement has left very little traces for the posterity, but we can imagine that this 'commuter traffic' kept the borderscape busy on day-to-day basis, and it is unlikely that this kind of movement was too much controlled or supervised.

Another obvious practise that generated movement was trade, which was perhaps controlled with the features of the borderscape. As described in chapter 2.1, it is unclear whether Ostia had a customs border such as that of Rome. In fact, van Tilburg (2022: 183–185) points out that the idea that the movement through the city gates was controlled via taxes and tolls collected by a gatekeeper is a post-Roman phenomenon: instead, tolls were generally levied at stations located along major roads, although occasionally the tax collecting is associated also with city gates. In contrast with this view, Stevens (2017: 69–72) presumes that the taxes on imported goods were levied at the gates, and that this was "common knowledge" for Romans.

Whatever was the range of the fiscal control, the agricultural produce and other raw goods, first and foremost grain, must have been arriving in a steady phase to a city with thousands of inhabitants.<sup>37</sup> However, a majority of the produce arriving to the city must have had its destination at the capital and was only temporarily stored in Ostia. On its way to Rome, the grain found storage in large warehouses, the *horrea*, near the river (Meiggs 1973: 279–280). Perhaps this close trade relation with Rome could have undermined the necessity for customs in Ostia – perhaps taxes were not charged until the products arrived in the capital.

If a tax border nevertheless existed in Ostia, the obvious location for controlling the customs would have been at the city gates, as it functioned in Rome. However, the absence of any structures suitable for a tax collector at the gates indicates that the levying of the toll was not

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<sup>36</sup> Fishing in the seaside of Ostia is notably mentioned by Suetonius in his anecdotal story that was used by grammarians and orators as a premise of a rhetorical exercise (Suet. *Gram. et rhet.* 25). Another indirect description is by Minucius Felix, in whose apologetic story taking place in the seashore of Ostia the protagonists witness small boats – most likely fishing vessels – that were drawn ashore (Min. Fel. *Oct.* 3).

<sup>37</sup> Exemplary calculations for the volume of trade traffic of a Roman city gate are proposed by van Tilburg (2022: 143).

an integral part of the gates themselves, but it is not entirely ruled out that there could have been a separate station or such. As most of the arriving goods came to Ostia via seafaring traffic, probably taxation was also conducted in the riverside port facilities. Glogowski (2023: 281–282) supports this theory, underlining the absence of archaeological evidence from the gates. In similar vein, Meiggs (1973: 163) has speculated that the walls around Trajanic basin and its warehouses at neighbouring Portus could have had the purpose of controlling customs and cargoes, but this is very much uncertain. If indeed Portus had customs executed in their harbour facilities, it would make sense that also Ostia did so as well – perhaps the buildings of the *navalia* in the eastern side of the river harbour (Martin *et al.* 2003: 271–273) could have hosted this fiscal function. Considering the constant flow of trade goods to and through the city, the taxation would have been a very significant form for controlling movement.

On top of the residential and commercial traffic, important factor that generated movement across the borderscape were the cemeteries outside the city. As described in chapter 2.1, there were multiple sites for necropoleis and tombs outside the main gates of Ostia as burials were not allowed inside the city centre. The total number of the tombs is hard to assess, as for example the necropoleis outside the *Porta Romana* stretched over 10 kilometres along the *Via Ostiensis* (Meiggs 1973: 455). However, visiting the cemeteries must have prompted busy traffic across the urban boundaries, drawing movement to all directions from the city.

The funerary culture was an important aspect of the everyday Roman life. After the traditional funerary rituals, the dead person was carried outside the city to the deceased's final resting place (Mustakallio 2020: 411–413). More importantly, there were commemorative rituals following the actual funeral, which took place in regular intervals and included, for example, funerary meals in the necropoleis. Already nine days after the funeral, a commemorative dinner, *cena novendialis* was held by the tomb (Mustakallio 2020: 417). Furthermore, there were annual public festivals, such as *Parentalia*, which were primarily dedicated to the commemoration of the dead, but also personal commemorative days were held by individual families (Mustakallio 2020: 418). These rituals created regular movement from the city to the surrounding necropoleis. Especially during the major festivals one can imagine even congestions of people exiting the gates of the city to visit the cemeteries.

Furthermore, in addition to the movement across the borderscape, the urban boundary zone itself attracted movement, as the border was associated with certain types of activities. An essential aspect was religious movement: city gates could have hosted niches for altars, and

they were often dedicated to gods, which could be indicated in the names of the gates (van Tilburg 2022: 197–198). This is speculative in the case of Ostia as only few structures of the gates remain, and the ancient names of the gates are not known. Unexpectedly, all the gates in Pompeii (and perhaps in Paestum) were dedicated to Minerva, instead of Janus, the deity of gateways (van Tilburg 2022: 198–202). This is possible also in Ostia, where a statue of winged Minerva was found nearby the *Porta Romana* gate, although its dating and association with the gate is uncertain (Pavolini 2006: 53).

In addition to religious practises, and quite naturally as places of access and frequent movement, the gates were also locations of welcome and farewell. For the same reason they attracted also unwanted activities, such as pickpocketing and begging (van Tilburg 2022: 190, 193–194). Interestingly, the city walls were also places associated with prostitution (Laurence 2007: 71–77). The gates are also sometimes interpreted as places for rites of passage (van Tilburg 2022: 202–204), but in my opinion this remains highly interpretative. In general, these activities leave few – if any – material evidence, but we can assume this kind of behaviour drew movement also to the gates of Ostia.

A lot of this movement, produced by these discussed factors, could have been pedestrian, but we can assume that plenty of it took also a form of wheeled traffic. Only little archaeological evidence of ancient vehicles has survived (Poehler 2017: 124), but their movement is attested in the wheel ruts that were created in the stone pavement of the streets by the pressure of the passing vehicles (Newsome 2011: 9–14). These ruts have been carefully analysed in Pompeii where they proved to be invaluable for reconstructing the traffic system of the city, also indicating that the city gates were intensively used by vehicles (Poehler 2017; van Tilburg 2022: 142; see Tsujimura 1991). The late Republican evidence of wheel ruts in Ostia is less clear as the street level was raised many times, and the pavement today visible postdates this.

The accessibility of the movement and its control was already touched upon when discussing the commercial movement and the tax border, but both the pedestrian and wheeled traffic could have been controlled in other ways too. First of all, the measures of the gate openings can provide clues of the passing traffic and its accessibility. The axle widths of Roman vehicles were not standardised and are proven to have varied (Poehler 2017: 130; Kaiser 2011: 174). The distances of the wheel rut pairs in Pompeii (Poehler 2017: table 5.1) indicate that the Roman cart gauge widths may have ranged between ca. 1,2–1,7 metres, and therefore

the total width of vehicles could be up to 2 metres.<sup>38</sup> As the main gates of Ostia in the late Republic were designed narrow, for example the *Porta Romana* gate being only 4,10 metres wide at the base (Glogowski 2023: fig. I.2.4), probably only one wheeled vehicle could safely enter the city gate at the time. Thereby, the oncoming traffic had to stop by the gate to wait for other vehicles to pass before entering the city. In Pompeii the forecourts and other widenings by the gateways were used for this kind of stopping (van Tilburg 2022: 143–144), and perhaps similarly the forecourts of the Ostia's main gates provided a place for vehicles to halt.

Besides the tax border and the oncoming movement, the wheeled traffic in urban environment was regulated also by the Roman law and by the imperial authority (Newsome 2011: 14).

There are no such preserved local laws from Ostia, and it is difficult to establish if any restrictions were put in place (Stöger 2011: 210), but the evidence from other cities can be analogous. For example, in the capital the *Lex Iulia Municipalis*, issued by Julius Caesar in 45 BCE, forbade heavy wagons entering the city during certain hours of day, with some exceptions (Newsome 2011: 14–16; Kaiser 2011: 174–175). Later on, decrees from the Imperial period that forbade private wheeled or horseback traffic, allowing only movement by foot or on a portable chair in the intramural area (Stevens 2017: 2–3; Kaiser 2011: 187).

These regulations were applied to Rome, but there is evidence also from smaller cities comparable to Ostia, such as from the town of Heraclea<sup>39</sup>, where the traffic was regulated in a similar fashion (Newsome 2011: 14). Newsome (2011: 19–20) has noted that the regulations often concerned the traffic namely entering the city, rather than within the city itself, and thus they impacted specifically the movement that took place across a borderscape of a city.

These traffic regulations may have been supervised by *vigiles*, urban guards, that could have blocked the forbidden traffic from entering the city, although there is very little evidence of such (van Tilburg 2022: 144). It is likely that no identity checks took place in Roman urban borders, but there are hints that guards could have monitored the physical appearance of the people arriving in attempt to keep undesirable people, such as vagrants, out of the city (Glogowski 2023: 283–284). The second floor of the main gates or the flanking towers could have served as places for this function. Additionally, the barracks of the *vigiles*, the *Caserma dei Vigili*, was located quite near the *Porta Romana* gate (Pavolini 2006: 61–62), which

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<sup>38</sup> For example, a four-wheeled Roman wagon discovered at Villa Arriana in Stabiae had an axle width of 1,96 metres (Poehler 2017: 127–131).

<sup>39</sup> This is known from an inscribed bronze tablet known as *Tabula Heracleensis*, which probably has the same content as the *Lex Iulia Municipalis* but intended for the local community of Heraclea (Kaiser 2011: 174–175).

would have made it relatively easy for the guards to arrive to the gate to supervise the traffic. It is not ruled out that there could have been an actual gatekeeper, working in a lesser lodge building by the gate, such as those observed in Pompeii and Rome (van Tilburg 2022: 180). In fact, it has been suggested that either a building inside the walls between the *Porta Romana* and the *Porta Secundaria* or another building outside the *Porta Secundaria* could have been gate guards' lodges, but these remain speculative (Glogowski 2023: 331, 336–337). Nevertheless, in general, the evidence on gatekeepers in Roman times is very thin.

There seems to be many hints about the controlling of the movement across the urban border in relation to trade, traffic and social control, but many of these remain speculative. Another question regarding the control and restrictions of traffic is whether gates were controlled during different hours of the day. According to van Tilburg (2022: 182–183) the available evidence is contradictory: on one hand, some literary sources mention that the Roman city gates were closed during the night, but on the other, legal texts, such as mentioned urban legislation by Caesar, indicate that certain wagon traffic was allowed only during nighttime. We can imagine that the gates could have been easily closed by night, but if it was truly practical or necessary is another thing. Conclusively, Glogowski (2023: 285) has stated that regardless of certain control of the gates, there was likely almost total freedom of movement.

In addition to this manifold movement by land, it is crucial to emphasize that movement across the urban boundaries took place also along the river Tiber. As already outlined above, the river was the northern part of city's borderscape. Similar situation with a river running through the city can be observed also in the case of the city of Rome where the very same river was an integral part of the urban fabric shaping and transforming the urban life around it (Malmberg 2015: 187). We can assume that Ostia had a comparable situation where the river and its traffic actively co-created the spatial configurations of the city.

Rome had imported grain from outside mainland Italy already starting from the early 5<sup>th</sup> century BCE, making the Tiber a considerable route for the transportation of the imports from very early on (Meiggs 1973: 18–19). In the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century BCE Rome began to import grain in bulk from abroad, which led to the construction of larger port facilities in Rome in response to increasing traffic (Malmberg 2015: 199–201). Although these developments predate the time of late Republic dealt upon here, it indicates that the volume of the river traffic – undoubtedly coming through Ostia to Rome as we discuss grain supply – had become considerable already in very early phase. Besides the trade and grain supply, Ostia was also

Rome's naval base with its main fleet stationed at the port city at least from the 3<sup>rd</sup> century BCE onwards, until the fleet was located to Misenum and Ravenna in the early Imperial period (Meiggs 1973: 24–27). However, some warships were stationed in Ostia also after the relocation of the fleet (Meiggs 1973: 304). There was, therefore, substantial movement taking place along the river related to trade and the fleet of the capital from early on.

The Tiber was navigable most of the year, although a sand barrier tended to form into the mouth of the river, which made it impossible for larger ships to enter the river during the summertime when the water level was at its lowest (Malmberg 2015: 189). The largest cargo ships were often unloaded by Ostia where the goods were transferred to smaller vessels. As discussed above, the river harbour of Ostia was functional from very early on, and it may have included trade and tax border functions in its facilities. Additionally, a traffic of smaller ships and boats that did not stop at Ostia must have flown by the city to Rome and vice versa. Ships often had to be towed via towpaths by the river towards Rome due to the current of the river, but when returning from Rome to Ostia the vessels could benefit from the current (Malmberg 2015: 191). These towpaths were enhanced by the mid-1<sup>st</sup> century BCE in response to a food crisis (Malmberg 2015: 199–201). These actions most likely strengthened the connection between Ostia and Rome, and the towpaths added a terrestrial aspect to the riverine traffic. It is unclear whether this movement was controlled beyond the possible taxation. For sure the watch towers by the river and the stationed fleet would keep the undesirable ships from arriving or attacking the city.

There was also movement across the river from the urban area south of the Tiber to the region of the *Isola Sacra*, with ferries being used for the crossing. In the late Republican period, that is before there was any urbanity in the *Trastevere Ostiense*, the ferries were used in the first place by the people with agricultural occupations in the *Isola Sacra* region. This ferry traffic is attested in the inscriptions found in Ostia: there are four recorded guilds of ferrymen that provided a passage across the river with small rowing boats as well as with heavier boats that could carry also cargo (Meiggs 1973: 297). The surprisingly large number of guilds suggest considerable volume of traffic also across the river.

In the late Republican phase, the urban space of Ostia seems to have been limited with a distinctive borderscape, but simultaneously it was pierced by a high volume of multi-faceted traffic. Regardless of their military-oriented design, the restriction for the access of military forces must have been rare. Instead, the main gates of the city had active wheeled traffic

related to long-distance and commercial movement, but also pedestrian movement of residents leaving the city for their daily occupations and visiting the nearby cemeteries, to mention but a few. In addition, the Tiber was occupied by traffic of both cargo ships and the vessels of Roman navy as well as smaller boats used for quotidian purposes, such as fishing and ferry traffic to the other side of the river. By recognising all this traffic, the apparently well-defined borderscape was shaken by the movement that seems to have been very much regular and quite little regulated. As the gateways for access were quite few (figure 16), we can imagine a considerable volume for each of the passageways.

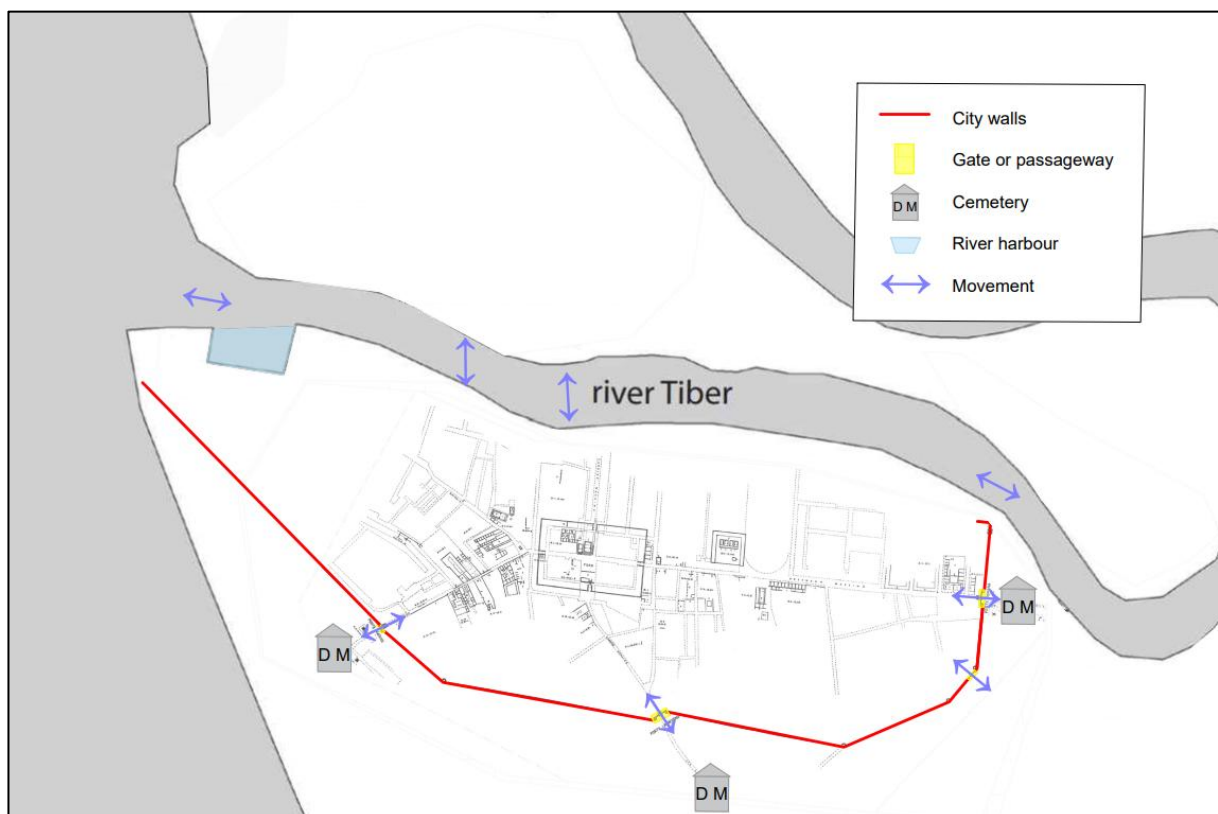


Figure 16: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape and the movement across it in the late Republican period. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features that do not belong to the late Republican phase are covered over, and the map of Republican Ostia by Guido Calza (Calza *et al.* 1953) is cropped and set over the centre of the city. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software.

### 3.2 Expanding movement and contact to Portus

As we have already seen in chapter 2.2, the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE were the period of Ostia's blossoming with considerable urban development. At the same time, the late Republican city walls started to lose their original military purpose, and the borderscape assumed a more symbolic character. Naturally, also the gates, the passageways and the

movement through the borderscape saw change in this era. This period also witnessed the emergence of suburban areas outside the city walls, which generated increasing movement across the borderscape and thus prompted new passages of movement to be established.

With many new buildings being constructed upon and abutting the fortification structures, the main gates lost their defensive function, and they began to act more as representational places of entrance – a part of the urban façade, as we have seen above. Simultaneously, this would have allowed prioritising of traffic over military intentions, facilitating the access through the gates. This was a typical trend in the early Imperial Roman cities of Italy: instead of actual fortifications or gates with defensive function, symbolic markers of borders, such as freestanding gateway arches, appear, creating a monumental display for the entrance (Stevens 2017: 92–96; Emmerson 2020: 32). For instance, some of the city gates of the Servian Wall in Rome were transformed into monumental arches as they were stripped of their defensive duties (van Tilburg 2022: 124). Also, in other urban hubs where new city walls and gates were still built during the early Principate, the gates had a purpose of smooth traffic flow and monumental façade instead of a military nature (van Tilburg 2022: 65–66).

The development is clearly visible in the evidence from Ostia. Even after losing its military purpose, the *Porta Romana* was restored during the reign of Domitian with an addition of marble decorations, such as pillars with Corinthian capitals, the above-analysed inscriptions mentioning Cicero, and, perhaps, a winged statue of Minerva (Glogowski: 2023: 154–157; Meiggs 1973: 66–67). However, the gate retained its original narrow dimensions or became even slightly narrower (Glogowski 2023: fig. I.2.4; Calza *et al.* 1953: 84–85), which did not ease the traffic flow. This may explain why multiple new passageways were opened to this side of the city during the discussed period, as we shall see soon.

In the other end of the *decumanus* the story was a bit different: in mid-1<sup>st</sup> century CE the original *Porta Marina* gate was destroyed and replaced by a gateway arch (Emmerson 2020: 32).<sup>40</sup> Only the foundations of this arch had survived for the excavators (*Giornale di Scavo* 1924: 111). This was unlike the typical freestanding arches of Roman Italy which were usually situated further outside the cities (Stevens 2017: 92). Replacing the old gate structures, the *decumanus* was enlarged with several metres (Glogowski 2023: 157–158), with the opening of the gateway arch being as much as 5,60 metres wide (*Giornale di Scavo* 1924:

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<sup>40</sup> Glogowski (2023: 58) has proposed caution with and further investigation of the existence of the arch as the evidence for it is relatively feeble.

111). This facilitated the access for the vehicles considerably and could have allowed even two lanes of traffic to pass through the gate at the same time. In similar fashion, at the *Porta Laurentina* the original gate structures were erased and partially integrated into the nearby sanctuary of Magna Mater (Calza *et al.* 1953: 86), but the street was probably not widened apart from an additional sidewalk (Glogowski 2023: 422, 428). The gate was abutted by residential and commercial structures before the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 159).

With destruction of the original main gate features, the military function of the gates was gone. Rather than trying to hinder people from entering the city, the gateways of the new urban façade were now intended to facilitate access of the people and impress those arriving to the city centre. As I argue above, the borderscape probably remained in its late Republican place, but its purpose changes. In the same vein, the locations of the original main gates remained as the places where the movement across the borderscape took place: however, the gates were now welcoming and, perhaps, even pursuing to attract incoming visitors.

Simultaneously with the development of a new urban façade, the street level of Ostia was raised. The new pavement of volcanic stones, still partially visible in the archaeological park today, presents evidence of traffic from this period: especially in the eastern part of the *decumanus*, but also in some other smaller streets, wheel ruts are attested (Stöger 2011: 210). This clearly indicates that wheeled traffic was allowed to enter the city. This argument is also supported by the widening of the opening at the *Porta Marina* gate.

The traffic must have increased as the city grew larger and busier and expanded to the extramural areas. The long-distance traffic by land seems to have concentrated earlier to the east and south sides of the city. However, in the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> century CE a new major road was created to the seaside west of the urban area. This new route, *Via Severiana*, run from the mouth of the Tiber to south towards the city of Terracina (Stöger 2011: 206; Meiggs 1973: 81). This must have increased the movement volumes of the *Porta Marina* gate and allowed passage of long-distance traffic also through the west side of the city. On the contrary, the fact that the *Porta Romana* and the *Porta Laurentina* were not widened at this point would suggest that the large-scale traffic did not increase in these sides of the city.

The flow of traffic across the borderscape, now facilitated by renovated main gateways and raised street level, did not anymore find its way straight to the non-urban or rural landscape. Instead, the people exiting the city entered the newly born suburbs whose appearance we saw in the chapter 2.2. As the suburban areas emerged in the fringes of the city, they generated

more multi-faceted movement across the boundaries of the urban centre. This must have been true especially when it comes to the residential traffic: the Ostians who worked in the many operations of the new suburban areas crossed the boundary en masse in day-to-day basis. Especially the industry of the city could have found its logical place in the suburbs. This rationale is due to the fact that the workshop and other *loci* of industry created smells, noises and fire-hazard which could have been of remarkable nuisance in the city centre (van Tilburg 2022: 148). However, for example, the known *fullonicae*, that is the fulleries where textiles were processed, which are considered to have created a certain multisensory nuisance, were still situated in the city centre in Ostia, although mostly out of sight (Flohr 2017: 39–41, 47–51). In addition to workplaces in the suburbs, as we have seen above, in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE also residential buildings began to appear there, which must have created traffic by the people dwelling in the suburban areas visiting the city centre.

Even with the appearance of the suburban functions to the extramural areas, the earlier “unhygienic” activities of this zone seem to have coexisted with the new suburbs. As we have seen, the tombs were preserved among the new suburban areas, which highlights the diverse nature of both the suburbs themselves and the movement towards them. The cemeteries of Ostia, with new monumental tombs appearing, must have been still visited by flocks of people from the city centre in similar fashion as described above. Another factor outside the hygienic boundaries of the city, the waste pits, were located among the suburban areas at least in the eastern and the south-eastern extramural zones. The transportation of the garbage from the city centre to this region must have similarly required regular traffic across the borderscape.

Movement created by the ritual behaviour is also attested when discussing the shrines that were located outside the city walls. The suburban shrines – and also occasionally larger sanctuaries – beyond the Roman city gates were a long-lasting phenomenon that began already before the actual suburbs were constructed and lasted until Late Antiquity (Emmerson 2020: 197–198). Emmerson (2020: 197) has stressed that the religious spaces both inside and outside the city walls were closely integrated in the urban religious life, and they would bind the two zones together. In Ostia, the first shrines beyond the urban boundary appear as early as in the Augustan period, as the abovementioned temple of Bona Dea was founded in the *Porta Marina* suburbs (Emmerson 2020: 27). Also, the very same suburban area included also the *Foro di Porta Marina*, a large sanctuary square just outside the gate (Glogowski 2023: 362–365) and a synagogue dating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Karivieri 2020: 380–382; Emmerson 2020: 31). Even if the religious life still concentrated in the intramural area, we can imagine

everyday movement generated by worshippers exiting the city gate to visit their favourite extramural shrine. Interestingly, this seems to focus primarily to the south-western suburbs. Contrarily, the people from the suburbs and the nearby hinterland might have similarly entered the city for the major temples in the urban centre.

As the suburbs spread beyond the borderscape, increasing the traffic between the urban and the suburban, new places of movement were necessary. In many Roman cities the narrow single-portalled gateways designed for defensive purposes, such as those of Ostia, were expanded to double- or three-portalled gateways to facilitate movement and, typically, to separate the pedestrian traffic from the heavier one (van Tilburg 2022: 51).<sup>41</sup> This kind of development is not attested in Ostia, apart from the widening of the street at the *Porta Marina*. Instead of increasing the number of portals in the major gates, new smaller passages were opened to the wall circuit during the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. These gateways were later additions to the late Republican walls (Glogowski 2023: 160). Next, the minor gateways will be described in clockwise order starting from the eastern side of the city (see figure 4).

Archaeologically best known of these new gateways is the *Porta Secundaria* which is located just south of the *Porta Romana*. It opens to *Via dei Sepolchri*, a road that runs through the necropolis east of the city in parallel with the major road to Rome, *Via Ostiensis*. The gate was first believed to be the main gateway towards Rome, but in the further studies it is proved to be a later addition to the circuit (Glogowski 2023: 161–162). The gate has two phases, alike the *Porta Romana*, but the dating of the phases remains as a matter of debate, although the latest research proposes that the gate was opened during the late 1<sup>st</sup> or the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 162–163). In the second phase with marble decorations the gate may have served as a part of the urban façade program, similarly to the *Porta Romana*.

Glogowski (2023: 163–164) has suggested that the creation of the *Porta Secundaria* is related to the increasing amount of traffic, which could not be managed solely by the *Porta Romana* gate in the eastern side of the city. This must hold true as the major gate was not widened as for example the *Porta Marina*. Further, Glogowski opens the debate considering the function of the gate: there are contradiction in the evidence on whether wheeled traffic did or did not run through this gate, but there is a possibility that the gate was used exclusively by pedestrian traffic. This is interesting especially in relation to the necropolis lying outside the

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<sup>41</sup> Notable examples of double- or three-portalled gates are the *Porta Marina* and the *Porta di Ercolano* in Pompeii and, perhaps, the *Porta Trigemina* in Rome (van Tilburg 2022: 53–54, 60, 110–111).

gate: if the *Porta Romana* was indeed utilized by the wheeled traffic, perhaps the secondary gate was used by the people that visited the necropolis on foot.

South of this gate, also the postern gate, that was already built during the initial construction phase of the wall circuit, was enlarged from its original width multiple times during the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the early 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE. This indicates that the original defensive postern was then transformed to accommodate everyday traffic (Glogowski 2023: 175–176). As the postern leads to the eastern side of the city, it could have been widened to ease the traffic towards the necropoleis. Yet, perhaps, more notably the postern gate may have operated as a “trash door”, for the aforementioned waste pits were located just outside the gate. Thus, the gate could have had a dual function: both the traffic going to the cemeteries and to the waste pits.

Next, east of the round tower in the second angle of the wall circuit, just south of the postern gate, lay a passageway which was located to the place where a secondary street pierced the wall circuit. Relatively little is known about this passage, but originally it was a mere opening, later restored with travertine and brick, and eventually blocked up, although the dating of these developments is unknown (Glogowski 2023: 173–174). The opening may be related to similar function as those of the later phases of the postern, that is facilitating movement to the waste pits and to the necropoleis east of the city.

Another new minor gate in the south-eastern side of the city was the *Porta di Via del Sabazeo*. The street of *Via del Sabazeo*, which run inside the city from the *decumanus* towards the gate, must have stimulated the creation of the gate, as it was one of the most accessible streets in the city during the Imperial times (Stöger 2011: 215–219). The gateway is dated to the reign of Augustus or Tiberius, by which time it was a mere opening in the walls (Glogowski 2023: 166; Martin *et al.* 2003: 265). The monumentalisation of the gate appears to have taken place only by the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 167–168), perhaps in the aftermath of the creation of the urban façade with other refurbished gates. Opening towards the suburbs beyond the *Porta Laurentina*, the gate would have facilitated the movement to this part of the extramural zone, perhaps easing the traffic pressure of the Laurentine gate. However, its width of only ca. 2 metres (Glogowski 2023: fig. I.2.7) would suggest only pedestrian traffic.

The lack of further minor gates in the southern side of the wall circuit is notable. Especially in the section of the fortifications west of the *Porta Laurentina* the absence of openings is considerable, although this sector of the city is yet studied very little. Finally, in the south-eastern side of the *Porta Marina* gate lay another passageway. This small opening was

probably created in relation to the water tower outside the wall circuit, allowing movement to the suburbs from *Via Caupona di Alexander*, a street running parallel to the walls inside the city (Glogowski 2023: 174; Bukowiecki *et al.* 2008: 159).

Yet another minor gate, the *Porta di Via degli Aurighi*, was located in the western side of the city, north of the *Porta Marina*. Its building trajectory resembles that of the *Porta di Via del Sabazeo* as the gate was first only a mere opening in the wall and was restored later, with its original phase dating to the early Imperial period, and the restoration, in which the width of the gate was actually reduced, to the turn of the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 170–171; Heinzelmann 2020: 443). The creation of this gate may have been related to the increasing importance of the seaside and its suburbs as well as to the eventual appearance of the *Via Severiana* running by the shoreline, binding it to the enlargement of the *Porta Marina*. The width of the gate (2,80 metres, later 2,50 metres) could indicate also wheeled traffic.

These new gates and passageways of the borderscape opened new locations of movement to and from the suburbs. Many of the new openings were, however, relatively small and could perhaps accommodate only a certain level or type of traffic. These may have enabled safe pedestrian movement, which the major gates that hosted wheeled traffic could not provide.<sup>42</sup> Similar development can be seen also in Pompeii where the pedestrian movement was emphasized at the gates after the appearance of extramural buildings (van Tilburg 2022: 147). In parallel, when other Roman city gates were enlarged into double- or three-portalled form, the additional smaller openings of the gates were typically reserved for pedestrians (van Tilburg 2022: 52). As these expanded gates did not exist in Ostia, one would assume that there were some other passageways across the walls dedicated solely to pedestrians.

Even when the new gateways enhanced movement across the urban border, all the gates remained, nevertheless, relatively narrow. These bottlenecks of movement and the other means of control related to the urban traffic discussed above may have reduced the wheeled traffic entering the city gates. Indeed, Emmerson (2020: 49) has proposed that many travellers avoided entering the cities due to these numerous limitations, and they settled for the suburbs. Thereby, substantial development of the suburban areas was implemented to facilitate the interaction with their associates who were unwilling to enter the centre. For instance, shops

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<sup>42</sup> The sidewalk at the *Porta Laurentina* (Glogowski 2023: 422) and the extension of the portico at the *Porta Marina* (Glogowski 2023: 367) may have accommodated pedestrian traffic also at the main gates by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, but this is difficult to assess as very little is known of these structures.

were located there to accommodate the passing and stopping traffic, as we can see for example outside the *Porta Romana* and the *Porta Laurentina* (Emmerson 2020: 125–127). Interesting detail hinting this function are also rings that were used for parking of animals, which are discovered in walls of the buildings in the Laurentine suburbs (Glogowski 2023: 407–408). Therefore, the suburbs enabled smooth interaction without necessity to enter the city: the long-distance traffic stopped already before it reached the official border of the city, making the suburban areas places that also managed the arriving movement.

The city centre may have been also evaded by the bypass roads. Such route, used since the early Imperial period, was discovered in the east side of Ostia, running along the city walls from the *Porta Romana* gate to the smaller gate of *Porta di Via del Sabazeo*, allowing the traffic to pass the city centre on its way towards the seaside of area of Laurentum (Heinzelmann 2020: 444). Such extramural ring roads are attested also in other Roman cities, for example in Pompeii (van Tilburg 2022: 147–148). This road may have begun from *Via di Hermogene* which was built connecting *Via Ostiensis* and *Via dei Sepolchri* (Glogowski 2023: 346), facilitating the movement among the suburban area beyond the *Porta Romana*.

Concurrently with these developments of the borderscape and the suburbs beyond it, also substantial changes took place in the riverine side of the city during the first centuries CE. The foundation of Portus, a new imperial harbour north of Ostia, by emperor Claudius in the mid-1st century CE, and the further addition of another harbour basin there by emperor Trajan in the early 2nd century CE, irreversibly changed the dynamics of the river traffic along the Tiber. The major transports began to concentrate in Portus as the new harbours allowed large ships to enter there directly. In many cases the cargo continued its way to Rome via the new *fosse* that connected Portus to the Tiber, thus entirely bypassing Ostia. Meiggs (1973: 85–86, 89) has proposed that smaller trading vessels would have still arrived in the river harbour of Ostia, probably providing commodities primarily to the needs of Ostian population, but the larger ships should have naturally preferred to dock in Portus. Also, the Roman fleet was reinstated from Ostia to Misenum by this time (Meiggs 1973: 24–27).

Thereby, the riverine movement did not occur anymore in such a large scale and so much by means of traffic between Ostia and Rome. Rather, we should investigate the nautical traffic that increasingly progressed between Ostia and Portus. Intriguingly, during the non-intrusive survey and related geoarchaeological studies in the *Isola Sacra* region – which provided also the ground-breaking findings in the *Trastevere Ostiense* – a canal running through the *Isola*

was discovered. This “Portus to Ostia canal” connected Portus from so-called *Fossa Traiana* south of the imperial harbour to the section of the Tiber running by Ostia (Salomon *et al.* 2020: 123–124; see map in appendix 2). The canal was built between the late 1<sup>st</sup> and the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE, and it enabled direct connection between the two ports.

The Portus to Ostia canal is major evidence of movement taking place between these two cities. The canal served for navigation, although no harbour-functions were detected along its banks. It was also created for the flood-relief of the river (Salomon *et al.* 2020: 139). The evidence from the surveys as well as from the two shipwrecks that were discovered in relation to the canal indicate that the canal could have been navigated by small or medium size vessels (Salomon *et al.* 2020: 139–140, 145). This navigable route must have accommodated both traffic from Ostia to Portus and vice versa, but as Ostia was more residential in its nature, the older city may have primarily provided work force for Portus. The canal would have been a smooth way for the workers to make their way to the imperial harbour.

The Portus to Ostia canal demonstrates increasing emphasis on the northwards traffic from Ostia to Portus. Indeed, Keay *et al.* (2020b: 147) have underlined the importance of the area of the *Isola Sacra* as the vital linkage between Ostia and Portus. The birth of Portus may have also encouraged the Ostians to expand their suburbs beyond the river: as we have seen previously, this chronologically coincides with the appearance of the suburban area in the *Trastevere Ostiense* and in the *Fiume Morto* region in southern edge of the *Isola*. It is inevitable to connect these new suburbs in the *Isola Sacra* to the developments in Portus.

The *Isola Sacra* area was largely developed already starting from the 1st century CE, but the first major step was the building a road, *Via Flavia*, between Ostia and the new imperial harbour (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 149–151). *Via Flavia* run through the entire *Isola* in direct line, and it entered Ostia via a bridge that crossed the Tiber near the mouth of the river, probably by the modern bridge of Ponte della Scafa or by the tower of *Tor Boacciana* (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 151; Meiggs 1973: 160–161). The road was paved, and the ruts in the stones indicate wheeled traffic (Meiggs 1973: *ibid.*). Additionally, flanking *Via Flavia*, there was a remarkable cemetery, the *Necropoli di Porto*, which has buried individuals both from Portus and Ostia (Keay *et al.* 2020b: 159). Therefore, in addition to nautical traffic by the canal, we can imagine also manifold land traffic from Ostia to Portus and to the necropolis.

Accompanying the bridge that allowed movement by land to the *Trastevere Ostiense* as well as towards Portus, the abovementioned ferries also must have continued their functioning.

Even though the large-scale trade ships and navy began to disappear in the Imperial period, on the contrary, there seems to have been increasing traffic of smaller vessel both across the Tiber and towards Portus. It is difficult to say whether the actual total volume of the riverine traffic changed notably but certainly its nature did.

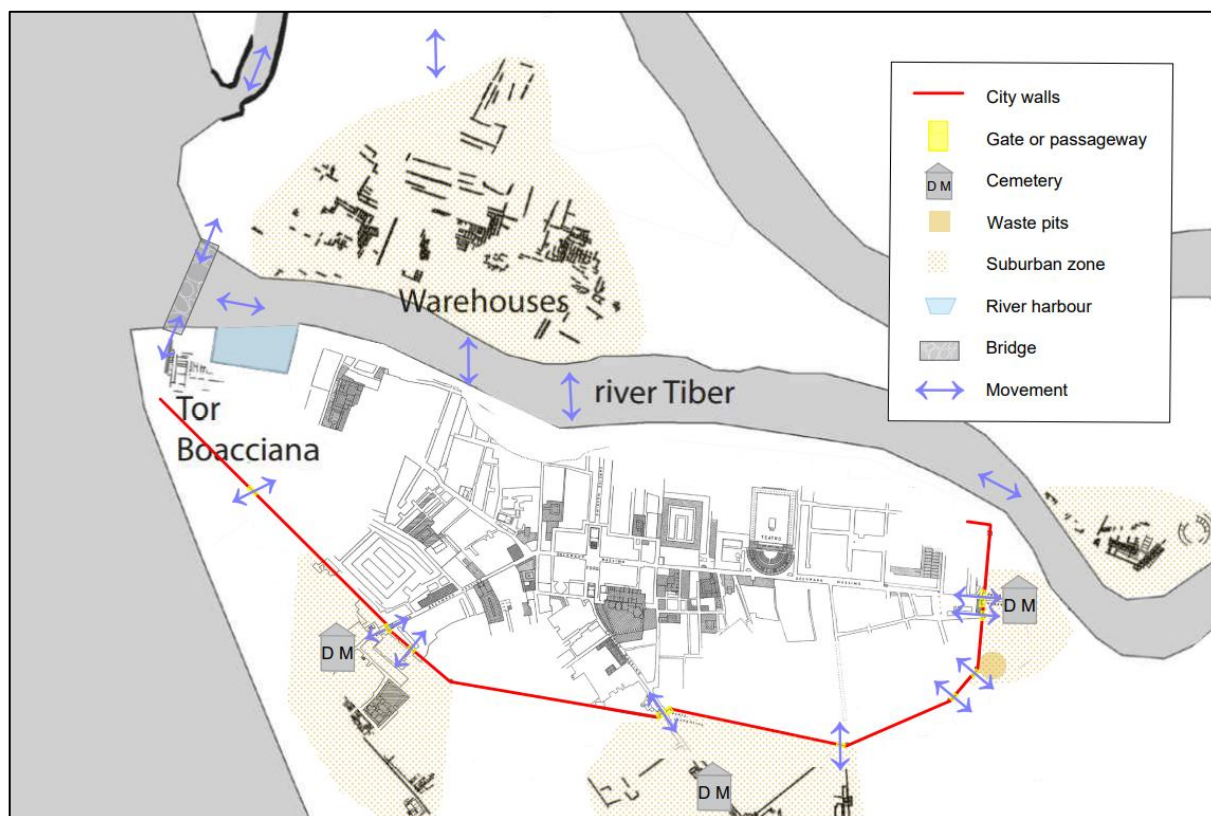


Figure 17: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape and the movement across it in the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig. 7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features that do not belong to the early or high Imperial phase are covered over, and the map of Antonine Ostia by Guido Calza (Calza *et al.* 1953) is cropped and set over the centre of the city. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software.

In the 1<sup>st</sup> and the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE the movement across the borderscape of Ostia had increased reasonably (figure 17). The major city gates were now part of the beautified urban façade without defensive restrictions. The new suburban areas both in the extramural and beyond-river areas generated new passageways for movement, such as new smaller gates and a bridge across the river. Glogowski (2023: 230) has suggested that this simultaneous (re)construction of main gates and smaller passageways may have been a part of a single project to develop the city walls. In the meantime, the foundation of Portus boosted the northward movement but also changes the riverine traffic as the large vessel no more docked in Ostia. The features of the borderscape, both in the area of the city walls and by the river, were increasingly facilitating access for the traffic, binding the city centre and the suburban zones together.

### 3.3 Diminishing movement?

As we have seen, when the story of Ostia entered Late Antiquity, a certain decline in the borderscape, in the suburbs and in the city Ostia in general can be witnessed. The military aspects arose once again, starting from the political turmoil of the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE and continuing throughout the 4<sup>th</sup> century. The heyday of urban development in Ostia was over at the latest when the urban crisis shook the city in the middle of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century. The changes in the urban dynamics affected also the nature and the volumes of movement.

As discussed in chapter 2.3, there were some temporary repairs in the wall circuit, perhaps related to the menacing military developments witnessed in the Empire. Interestingly, the known renovations were focused especially to the minor gates: the *Porta di Via del Sabazeo* and was restored in the end of the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, receiving a threshold that allowed a wooden closing mechanism (Glogowski 2023: 167–168). This was, however, only a short-lived change as the street level was soon after raised, which destroyed these renewed military functions of the gateway. Similarly, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century, the *Porta di Via degli Aurighi* was redesigned with defensive functions, such as a locking mechanism, although it was as well rendered unusable by additional walls soon after (Glogowski 2023: 172–173). These construction endeavours may have increased the security<sup>43</sup> but also affected the level of access through the city gates, although, as mentioned above, these minor gates may have only accommodated lighter movement, such as pedestrian traffic.

There seems to have been a trend towards a more confined city, as we have seen above, and, consequently, this may have affected the extramural activity as the access became more difficult. There seems to have been some degree of decline also in the suburbs as the movement between them and the city centre took a toll. The ring road running outside the eastern side of the city walls seems to have had its last phase of usage in the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (Heinzelmann 2020: 444). The suburban areas, however endured at least to the 4<sup>th</sup> century, which may be due to the unsuccessful renovations of the city walls: as the city remained “open”, the suburbs could survive with a close connection to the centre.

Even if the city walls were reinforced, which could have weakened the access of movement, there are some indications that the traffic was also favoured. Just inside the *Porta Romana*

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<sup>43</sup> Glogowski (2023: 229) has noted that, if these restorations at the gates were related to the defence of the city, it is strange that the postern – originally a gate with military functions – was not restored similarly at the time.

gate a new large open space with a *nymphaeum* fountain, so-called *Piazzale della Vittoria*, was constructed during the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE (Glogowski 2023: 347). This probably was used as a place for people and vehicles entering and leaving the city to stop and rest (Pavolini 2006: 52). The fact that this *piazzale* was constructed by destroying earlier buildings (Meiggs 1973: 146–147) suggests that the gate and its movement prevailed as an important factor for the city. It is, however, also notable that the plaza was constructed inside the city walls, not outside – perhaps, again, hinting of the weakening of the suburban areas.

If the suburbs south of the Tiber were trembling, the *Trastevere Ostiense* faced even more notable changes. As discussed above, the new defensive wall was built in Late Antiquity, perhaps simultaneously with renovations of the city walls south of the river, moving the borderscape considerably northwards. In absence of evidence of any earlier fortifications, we can assume that the access from the *Isola Sacra* region to the *Trastevere* would have been without limitations beforehand, and the defensive wall restricted the movement considerably. The walls enclosed the earlier northern suburban areas, making them a part of a new enlarged city centre. Therefore, the Tiber was now dividing the city centre in two, and the movement taking place along and across the river now took place within the urban space and not across the borderscape. In this conception, only the places where the river pierced the borderscape in west and east were actual places for riverine movement across the urban border.

No gates or other openings for movement are detected in the defensive wall of the *Trastevere*. This may be due to limited studies so far. However, they must have existed: *Portus* and the *Necropoli di Porto* north of the city attracted significant movement towards themselves, and the road *Via Flavia*, starting next to the northern part of the city, provided perfect means for the traffic. As we have seen, the defensive wall of the *Trastevere Ostiense* was probably structurally similar to the fortifications of *Portus*, and analogies could be found there, but such structural comparison is beyond scope of this work. Nevertheless, as we are short of any evidence for the places of movement, all this remains a matter of speculation.

Even if we see some considerable changes in the fringes of the cityscape – perhaps some decline, perhaps some turning more inwards the centre – much of the everyday life of *Ostia* seems to have prevailed through Late Antiquity (see. e.g. Gering 2013: *passim*). We can still imagine plethora of traffic related to the residential, commercial and other quotidian forms of movement discussed beforehand. Yet, as *Portus* gained more harbour functions, the nature of *Ostia* became more residential starting from the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE and remained such until its

decline. This leads to ponder over the leisure activities of the Ostians that could have triggered movement from inside the city across the borderscape. As the extramural amphitheatre and a circus remain unfound at or nearby Ostia (Meiggs 1973: 425–428), the suburban public baths and villas provide the most obvious record for this phenomenon. For sure, this kind of recreational activities must have taken place since the Republican times in Ostia, but the evidence of such leisure is more present in the late antique materials.

Although the recreational spaces and buildings are easily traced in the archaeological record, the movement related to these are less so. However, there is less tangible evidence: the Roman street life and its “urban wanderers” were a popular topic of Roman authors and poets of the Imperial period (Stöger 2011: 199–200). In context of Ostia, famous story by a Christian writer Minucius Felix, who lived during the turn of the 2<sup>nd</sup> and the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, has situated his apologetic discussions to the beach of Ostia (Min. Fel. *Oct.* 1–4). He depicts a pair of conversing fellows from Rome choosing the seaside as a place for recreation and philosophical discussion. It is hardly a coincidence that the seashore of Ostia was chosen as the location, and this highlights the importance of, not only the city, but also its seaside.

Speaking of Christianity, the new eastern religion made a breakthrough also in Ostia by this time: Christianity was well-rooted to the society by the mid-3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, and the city had its own bishop in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE (Karivieri 2020: 371–372; Meiggs 1973: 390–391). The new dominant religion affected also the borderscape of the city. The shrines and niches that were typical to Roman city gates – perhaps also in Ostia – were erased in Christianised cities (van Tilburg 2022: 200). Most likely the urban borderscape was also stripped from its magico-religious functions, with the sacred boundary of the *pomerium* passing into oblivion.

The worship relocated to new holy places: the earliest Christian churches in the Roman cities were typically built in the suburbs outside the walls. The first monumental church buildings appear in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, and they were often laid by the major thoroughfares beyond the city gates (Emmerson 2020: 225). Interestingly, in Ostia the first Christian basilica, constructed by emperor Constantine I himself in the early 4<sup>th</sup> century CE, was located inside the city walls, just next to the minor gate *Porta di Via del Sabazeo* (Martin *et al.* 2003: 263). Perhaps the suburbs of Ostia had by this time declined so much that they were not found suitable for a holy place. This meant that the Christian community of the city did not have to leave the city centre to visit the church, limiting the religious movement across the borderscape. However, on top of ordinary masses and other rituals, many of the early

churches – mostly martyrial basilicas – attracted movement from the local community but also from further as the holy tombs drew pilgrimages (Emmerson 2020: 227), thus perhaps creating a new form of movement towards the city.

There was also a decline in the riverine traffic. In the late 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE, the connections between Rome and the Tiber valley had diminished, which is demonstrated by considerable reductions in the river port facilities in Rome and their eventual abandonment in the following centuries (Malmberg 2015: 196–197). The remaining large-scale maritime traffic must have concentrated into Portus, making the nautical movement near Ostia restricted to small vessels operating via the river and the Portus to Ostia canal.

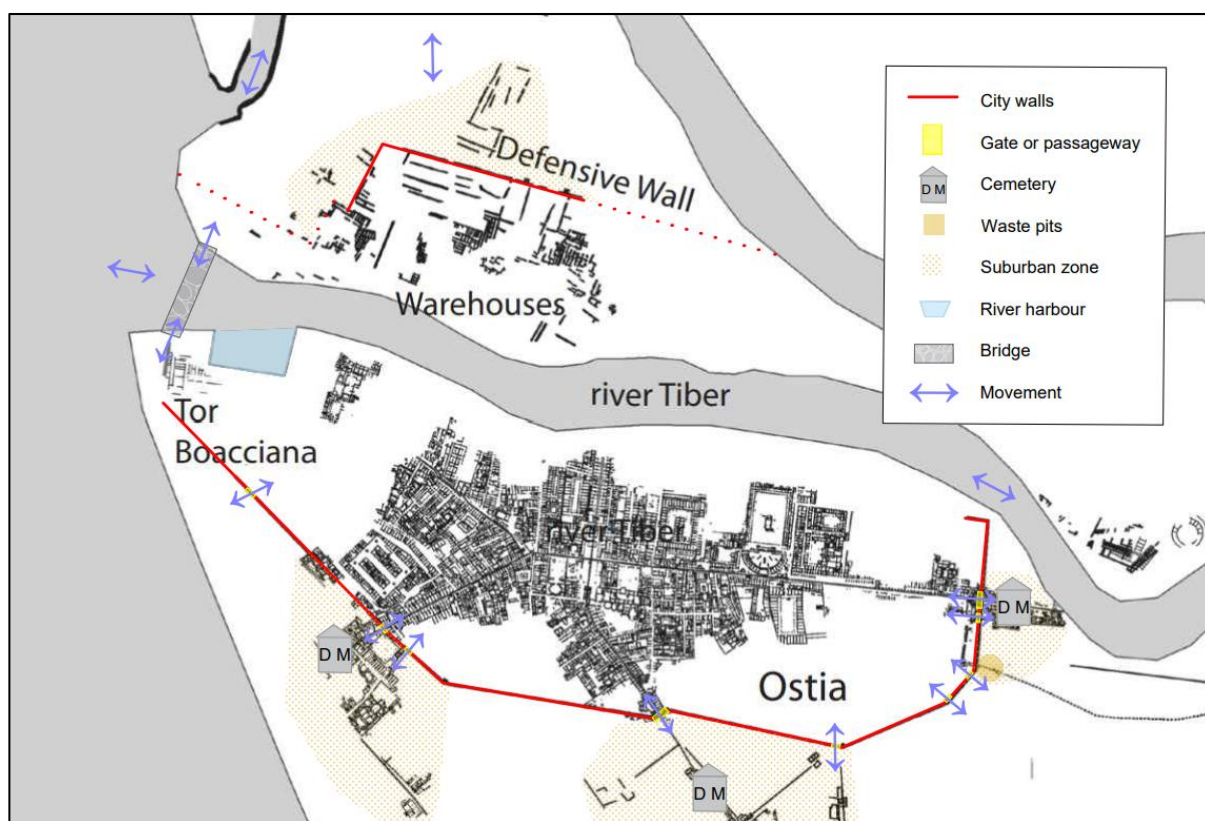


Figure 18: Map of Ostia with the features of the borderscape and the movement across it in the 3<sup>rd</sup> and the 4<sup>th</sup> century CE. Base map is cropped from a drawing by Kristian Strutt (Keay *et al.* 2020c, fig.7.1) that depicts known archaeological features of Ostia. The features of the borderscape as well as the map key are drawn by author with AutoCAD 2026 software.

The movement across the borderscape of Ostia in Late Antiquity (figure 18) did decline to a certain extent as the suburbs grew weaker and the life began to concentrate again to the city centre. The urban boundary being newly fortified, especially with the defensive wall of the *Trastevere Ostiense* but also by the closing mechanisms appearing in the southern gates, the access became more delimited. It is difficult to ascertain how much these restrictions affected the volumes of movement, but the tendencies seem to have been towards more confined.

## 4 A perceived city: shaping the urban identity of Ostia

In ancient sources Ostia has been described, for instance, as ‘*civitas amoenissima*’, ‘the most beautiful city’ (Min. Fel. *Oct.* 2), mediating us a glimpse into how the city was seen by the ancient writers. Similarly, the two biographical stories of Ostia’s borderscape – from the perspectives of urban boundaries and movement across these boundaries – provide an insight into the nature of the city in different phases of its history, enabling us to create our own certain perceptions. However, in what follows next, I do not wish to present my own perception of Ostia but rather, by using the above-presented evidence, bring us closer to how the ancient Ostians may have perceived their own city.

It would be easy to assume that a Roman city was a separate and closed unit in distinction from the surrounding countryside. The development of the urban and the suburban spaces as well as the borderscape in their middle ground, however, indicate that the urban boundaries were not duly fixed: the border changed constantly and was permeated by the urban development. Furthermore, there were always holes and fluctuation in the boundaries, making the urban space of the city centre and the less-urban spaces of the suburbs interconnected. This leads to ponder over the urban identity: was there a clear distinction between urban, suburban and non-urban identities? Can we, in fact, trace a biography of the urban identity of Ostia by following the analysed development of the urban space and its boundaries?

### 4.1 In search of Roman ‘urban identity’

Before rushing into the case of Ostia, we should first define what we are discussing. ‘Urban identity’ is not a notion or a phrase that is attested in ancient Roman textual evidence, but rather a modern analytical concept that can be used to examine how the Romans perceived themselves in relation to the urban phenomena. In fact, the word ‘identity’ did not exist in the ancient times in the same meaning as we understand it today: the term is a construct of the early modern era. Nevertheless, it is accepted by scholars that the ancient people had a notion of selfhood that can be paralleled with the concept of identity (Roig Lanzillotta 2022: 14–18). In fact, the questions of civic and local identities have recently become an important topic in the study of ancient towns (Bruun 2015: 348).

Indeed, the Romans had a shared cultural identity. This is sometimes encapsulated into the Latin word *Romanitas* – that is ‘the Roman-ness’ or ‘the Roman way’. This is, however, rather late and rare term as the word appears primarily in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century CE Christian writer

Tertullian (Papadopoulos 2021: 18–19; Tert. *Pall.* 4.1). This does not mean that the idea of shared Roman identity did not exist before. The cultural identity of the Romans cannot be directly paralleled with the notions of modern national identities: instead, the Roman identity is described to have based on inclusion to a political and religious community with shared values and customs. Although the Romans are typically seen as an inclusive society, this identity, rooted in these fundamental social codes and institutions, was essentially threatened by the cultural changes brought by outsiders (Huskinson 2000: 12). The Roman cultural identity can be seen as a hypernym under which the subtypes of Roman identity, such as the discussed urban identity, can be placed.

Accepting that the concept of identity can be applied to the Romans and that there was a certain cultural identity that served as a foundation for the many aspects of the society, we can now turn to the other side of the coin of ‘urban identity’: the idea of urbanism in the Roman culture. We should not assume that the modern connotations of ‘urban’ and ‘urbanism’ can be applied to the antiquity, and one must be careful not to mingle modern implications to this discussion. However, merely the fact that the Latin word *urbs*, ‘city’, is the linguistic root of the urban-related expressions, let alone the archaeological concentrations of ancient life in hubs like Ostia, appropriate that an exploration of urbanity in the Roman context is valid.

As I briefly noted in the introduction chapter, the Romans did have an expression for urban life – *urbanitas*. The concept of *urbanitas* is not, however, directly synonymous with the urbanism or urbanity as we understand them today. Many scholars of Roman history and archaeology use this term quite freely as a synonym for urban culture without understanding its actual further implications. In his essay, Maréchaux (2015: *passim*) argues, basing primarily on the literary works of Cicero and Quintilian, that *urbanitas* was primarily a social and moral distinction, rather than a vague equivalent of the urban culture. *Urbanitas* constituted, to mention but a few, of civic and polite manners, good taste, as well as refined and witty eloquence, all of which were related to the cultural sphere of the capital city.

Curiously, Maréchaux (2015: 29–30) claims that *urbanitas* was paradoxically against the actual real-life urbanism: these traditional and conservative Roman traits embedded in the idea of *urbanitas* were undermined by the urbanism itself, as the urban expansion brought external – rustic or even ‘barbaric’ – influences on the cities. These threatened the established Roman value system of *urbanitas*. This state of affairs fits into the picture of the Roman cultural identity, which, as we have seen, was essentially vulnerable for such cultural changes.

Thus, by the definition of Maréchaux (2015), the ideals of *urbanitas* did not include the whole social stratification of a city but only those who could implement and did not pose a threat to its values. Indeed, this concept of urbanity was fundamentally a concept of the elite and by the elite, that shun the cultural change brought by foreign, rustic and low-class lifestyles.

Spatially speaking, this concept of *urbanitas* did not thus entail directly the whole urban population nor the total urban space. Nevertheless, the same elite that defined *urbanitas* wielded also the power to define the urban development and the built environment, and thereby the majority of our archaeological evidence is inherently a product of this value system. In fact, Maréchaux (2015: 30–32) notes that Vitruvius used the principles of *urbanitas* – namely the virtues of civility, unity and equilibrium – in practise in his architectural ideas of proportions, symmetry and beauty, thus pursuing to reconcile with the physical features of urbanism that did not sit well with the ideals of *urbanitas*. Therefore, we can assume that an urban space that is constructed according to Vitruvian dogmas ultimately reflected the elite standards of *urbanitas*.

Even if the built environment was largely an elite product, it was, as we have seen, susceptible to the cultural changes that could erode its foundations. We could consider that the movement that pierced the urban space and its borders, setting it to a constant state of flux and not being necessarily restricted to any social class, could have undermined the spaces of elite *urbanitas*. The inclusion of factors of movement to this discussion could challenge the idealistic cityscape envisioned with the values of *urbanitas* and thus may allow us to involve also the demographic groups beyond the elite to this discussion. This inclusion is of paramount importance if we desire to understand a Roman city in totality.

It is also debatable how long the ideals of *urbanitas* lasted. The conception provided by Maréchaux relies largely on the late Republican and the early Imperial Roman authors, and the ideals most likely changed in the later Imperial times. Therefore, as we move towards Late Antiquity it may be pointless to strive to find a Roman city defined by *urbanitas*. The cosmopolitan nature of the Roman Empire, with a plethora of foreign influences, most likely undermined the ideals of *urbanitas* and eventually overcame its value system.

Conclusively, we can assume that a certain ‘urban identity’ can be observed from a Roman society. The ideals of *urbanitas*, guided by the Roman cultural identity, are in the core of this issue, providing a certain social and mental framework that can be decoded also from the archaeological material – following the spatial theories presented in chapter 1.3. This may be

unsatisfactory in an endeavour to understand a city as a whole, as these conceptions were very much elite. However, the inclusion of the factors that disoriented these static ideals, such as movement and the development over time, may help us attain a more comprehensive picture.

If the elite ideals of *urbanitas* shaped the concept of the urban and the urban identity, and these values were reflected in the urban development, we may assume that the shape of the city would be a mirror of these phenomena. Undoubtedly, the urban borderscape was an integral part of this mindset. As described already in the beginning of chapter 2, the features of a borderscape, first and foremost city walls, were very much part of the Roman historical and mythical tradition as well as the Vitruvian ideals, and thereafter they must have played an essential role in the Roman visionary cityscape.

In fact, in the Roman imagery the city walls and gates are often depicted representing the whole city. This *pars pro toto* symbolism is seen in literary instances, but also, for example, in pictorial depictions, such as *Tabula Peutingeriana* maps and ancient land survey book *Corpus Agrimensores* (van Tilburg 2022: 163–164, footnote 511; Stevens 2017: 75). Often-quoted is also the Torlonia marble relief depicting the urban landscape with notable prominence of the city walls (Stevens 2017: 75–76). The abovementioned mosaic found in the *Terme di Cisiarii* in Ostia could also be counted into this category. This evidence indicates that the backbone of the urban were the fortifications that bordered it – they were a symbol for the city. This mindset of well-defined urban space with strong boundaries also belong to the exclusive values of *urbanitas* that did not appreciate external influences.

Also, the way how the Romans perceived their urban life in relation to outsiders was highly linked to the borderscape. Typically, when discussing ‘urban’, the obvious antonym is ‘rural’, the countryside. However, this kind of strict dichotomy is not applicable to the ancient Roman context as the society was highly reliable of agriculture and rural functions were performed also in the urban environment. Additionally, as we have seen, the extramural ‘suburban’ zones, combining functions of the urban and the rural, were typically founded starting from the early Imperial period. On the contrary, the Romans had words *intramuranus* and *extramuranus* that were used to describe phenomena and people inside and outside the city walls (Stevens 2017: 62), indicating the actual Roman mindset of these issues.

Thereby, the features of a borderscape, above all city walls, were fundamental in the Roman perception of the urban. The application of values of *urbanitas* underline the exclusive nature of the urban border. However, Stevens (2017: 65), contrarily, has highlighted the boundaries

also as a structure of inclusion: the city walls and other borders created a collective identity as citizens of a particular town for those who lived within them.

#### 4.2 The borderscape and the urban identity in Ostia

The topic of urban identity in Ostia has only recently appeared in the sphere of Ostian studies. Having recognised the absence of such previous research, Bruun (2015) has discussed the ‘civic identity’ in Ostia, especially by looking into epigraphic dedications. Bruun (2015: 349–350) has pointed out that there is no documentary evidence that would directly unveil the identity of the ancient Ostians, but, still, he has also underlined that interpretative investigation of the surviving material can eventually reveal such information. The ‘civic identity’ touched upon by Bruun is not necessarily directly equivalent to the urban identity discussed here, but these phenomena very much operate in close relation with each other.

The identity of Ostia must have born already right after the original colony was founded. However, it is debatable if we should speak of ‘urban’ identity in the *castrum* phase and later in the Republican period: after its foundation Ostia was regarded as one of the maritime colonies of the coast, not being spatially larger than an average military camp (Coarelli 2021: 26). The *castrum* had its defensive walls, but other factors that could be considered actually urban were more or less absent. The colony was founded by Rome and for the needs of Rome: as described above, Ostia played a crucial role in supplying grain for the capital and securing the coastal entrance to the Tiber. The Republican Ostia seems to have been, first and foremost, depended on and subordinate to Rome, probably sharing largely the identity of the capital. Sometimes it has been claimed that Ostia was even a suburb or a neighbourhood of Rome, but this is not accepted by most scholars, and even if it was true this would not preclude that a sentiment of community could not have existed in Ostia (Bruun 2015: 351).<sup>44</sup>

Towards the end of the Republic the situation changed. The city grew notably and founded the above-analysed border. In the late Republican period, the urban borderscape seems to have been clearly defined, and the movement across the border was restricted to the few gates and to the river. The urban space was distinctly confined according to the Roman urban ideals of the time: the city walls and the *pomerium* enclosed the sanctified area of the city centre, and this border was strictly not be violated. The factors that did not belong to the urban space,

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<sup>44</sup> On the contrary, Meiggs (1973: 14) has underlined that Ostia developed its own characteristic and social patterns from early on, for example very distinctive early cults.

such as tombs, were definitely separated to the area outside the borderscape. The cityscape was unambiguously structured following the paradigms of the Roman urbanism.

In the light of this evidence, it would be tempting to claim that by the end of the Republic Ostia had attained a clear and separate urban identity in accordance with the Roman standards of *urbanitas*. In fact, Meiggs (1973: 36) has seen connection between the creation of the borderscape and the urban identity:

They [walls] set a limit to expansion, marked the transformation of a naval base to a trading town, and encouraged Ostia to develop a new urban personality. The physical recognition by the new walls of a developed town may have been accompanied by constitutional changes.

Indeed, in addition to the new spatial definition of the cityscape, also a new constitution of Ostia was formulated in the late Republican period, redefining the structure of the city government.<sup>45</sup> This is most likely linked to the historical developments pointed out by Stevens (2017: 85–86): after the Social Wars in the early 1<sup>st</sup> century BCE, the cities of Italy south of the river Po received full Roman citizenships. In many cities urban redevelopments, such as construction of fortifications, can be interpreted as a display of this new legal status. In similar vein, Glogowski (2023: 271) has noted the connection between the establishment of the city walls in Ostia and the institutional changes in the city.

If Ostia indeed received a new constitution coincidentally with the creation of the borderscape, the shaping urban identity would have been thus reinforced also legislatively, or, reversely, the new constitution could have been an incentive for the creation of urban identity. Whatsoever, Ostia celebrated the new constitution and the urban identity by providing it very much a concrete form when the urban borderscape was founded. The obtaining of a more distinct urban identity, with notable changes in the constitution and in the urban layout, probably also made Ostia less dependent on Rome. Ostia had already had the status of *colonia*, that is with a full citizenship, but perhaps this marked a new level of independency: what had been a military colony and harbour of the capital, was now a more independent city.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>45</sup> Perhaps also the *Fasti Ostienses*, the annual list of local magistrates and important events, was began at the same time, the earliest surviving date of the calendar being from 49 BCE (Bruun 2015: 353–354). This may have similarly related to the building of the urban identity.

<sup>46</sup> It remains unclear whether Rome truly wanted to provide independency for Ostia. There could have been also other motives: Stevens (2017: 227) has suggested the establishment of the late Republican walls may have been Rome's action to ensure secured grain supply.

If we adopt the idea that Ostia attained a status of an actual city in the late Republican period, this could be considered as a refoundation of the colony. As we have seen before, the city walls were an essential element in a foundation of a Roman city, and the creation of the late Republican city walls would have suited the idea of an urban rebirth. In similar fashion, the new Augustan colonies received city walls after acquiring the new urban status (Stevens 2017: 139). Furthermore, we have evidence from other Roman cities that the ritual of *sulcus primigenius* – the ploughing rite performed before establishment of the fortifications, perhaps also in Ostia – served as a propagandistic tool to celebrate a symbolic (re)foundation of a settlement (Stevens 2017: 16–21). Correspondingly, the extension of the *pomerium*, that most likely accompanied the construction of the new walls, probably had similar ideological purpose (Stevens 2017: 37).<sup>47</sup> If this did happen also in Ostia, the city would have been thus refounded with appropriate rituals that enforced and legitimised the new urban form, status and mindset. In fact, these kind of religious rituals were a key element in the creation and maintaining of the common identity in the Roman culture (Bruun 2015: 354).

Even if the military aspects seem dominant in the incentives to build the city walls, the closer examination of development of local identity in this historical context highlights the political, symbolic and ideological aspects. The new status and organisation of Ostia in the late Republic produced a new urban identity that was then expressed through the foundation of a borderscape that both materially, socially and ritually redefined the city and its space. Further, this expression of urban identity mirrored the Roman cultural identity and the elite *urbanitas* with ideals of political unity and separation from the otherness. This traditional Roman value system seems to have supported the ideal of a ‘closed’ city where the urban space was separated with distinctive boundaries from everything that was considered non-urban. The well-defined urban borderscape of Ostia seems to be a prime example of this.

Undoubtedly, a certain eliteness was a characteristic of these developments in the built environment of Ostia: as we have seen as our primary example, the city walls were built by Cicero and Clodius – men of an aristocratic rank. In similar fashion, the large urban development of the city was most likely controlled by the high-class citizens and local authorities, and, later on, by the imperial authority. For instance, the subsequent restoration of the *Porta Romana* gate in the Flavian period was orchestrated by the local magistrates of

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<sup>47</sup> An extension of the *pomerium* is also linked to the *census*, the reviewing of the male citizen body. This may have been a symbolic act that can be interpreted as a ‘re-establishment’ of the citizen body along with the ‘refoundation’ of a city (Stevens 2017: 38–39).

Ostia (Zevi & Manzini 2008: 195). Therefore, we can assume that the elite standards of *urbanitas* were dominating also the urban space of Ostia.

However, when Ostia entered the Imperial times, this urban identity, building on the ideal of a closed city, changed drastically. The city walls were stripped from their military functions and were largely reused or build upon. Suburban areas were founded all-around the city centre, also on the other side of the river. The suburbs increased the volume of movement, and the city walls were pierced by new gateways. The ‘urban’ was not as distinctly defined by strong boundaries as earlier, and the built environment spread beyond the city centre. This is linked to empire-wide developments where the ideals of a closed city were abandoned during the early Imperial times. Emmerson (2020: 51) has encapsulated this impeccably:

In the past, fortification walls had enclosed settlements within clearly defined limits while proclaiming their strength and (often illusory) independence. The changes that culminated under Augustus – encouraged a new concept of cities that spread outwards, unfettered by fortifications, reaching towards each other, drawing peninsula together into a single urban network.

Also in Ostia, this probably marked an adoption of a new urban identity based on the idea of an open city. This would have demonstrated a departure from the rigid value system of *urbanitas* – and therefore also a departure from the traditional ways of the capital. In addition to the new ideal of an open city, the abandonment of the old fortifications would thus have been also a symbolic gesture of power and independency. This was related to the ideology of the Principate as Emmerson (2020: 50) has suggested in the case of Rome: a powerful city that was secured by the imperial peace did not need city walls to defend itself. In this sense, perhaps Ostia wanted to underline its strength as an independent city.

As the ideal of an open city and the expressions of status and power through urban symbolism became dominant in the early Imperial period, the borderscape of Ostia changed accordingly into less a concrete form: to replace the military driven urban boundary, the borderscape was designed into an urban façade: for example, the *Porta Romana* gate was monumentalised (figure 19), and the *Porta Marina* gate was replaced by a gateway arch. Later on, some of the minor gates were also beautified. The monumentality and decorations of the urban borders were the tool to emphasize city’s importance, power and wealth. In this respect, the gates functioned similarly to triumphal arches, although their purpose was to honour the whole city instead of a single triumphant person (van Tilburg 2022: 167–169). Emmerson (2020: 164)

has noted that also the suburban areas functioned as a part of this façade for those who did not enter the city, as the monumental tombs were built along the roads exiting the city.

Even if the borderscape remained in its original course, the urban boundaries had become increasingly symbolic and ideological. With the ideals of an open city and symbolic urban borders, the exclusive value system of *urbanitas* was probably at least partially discarded. As

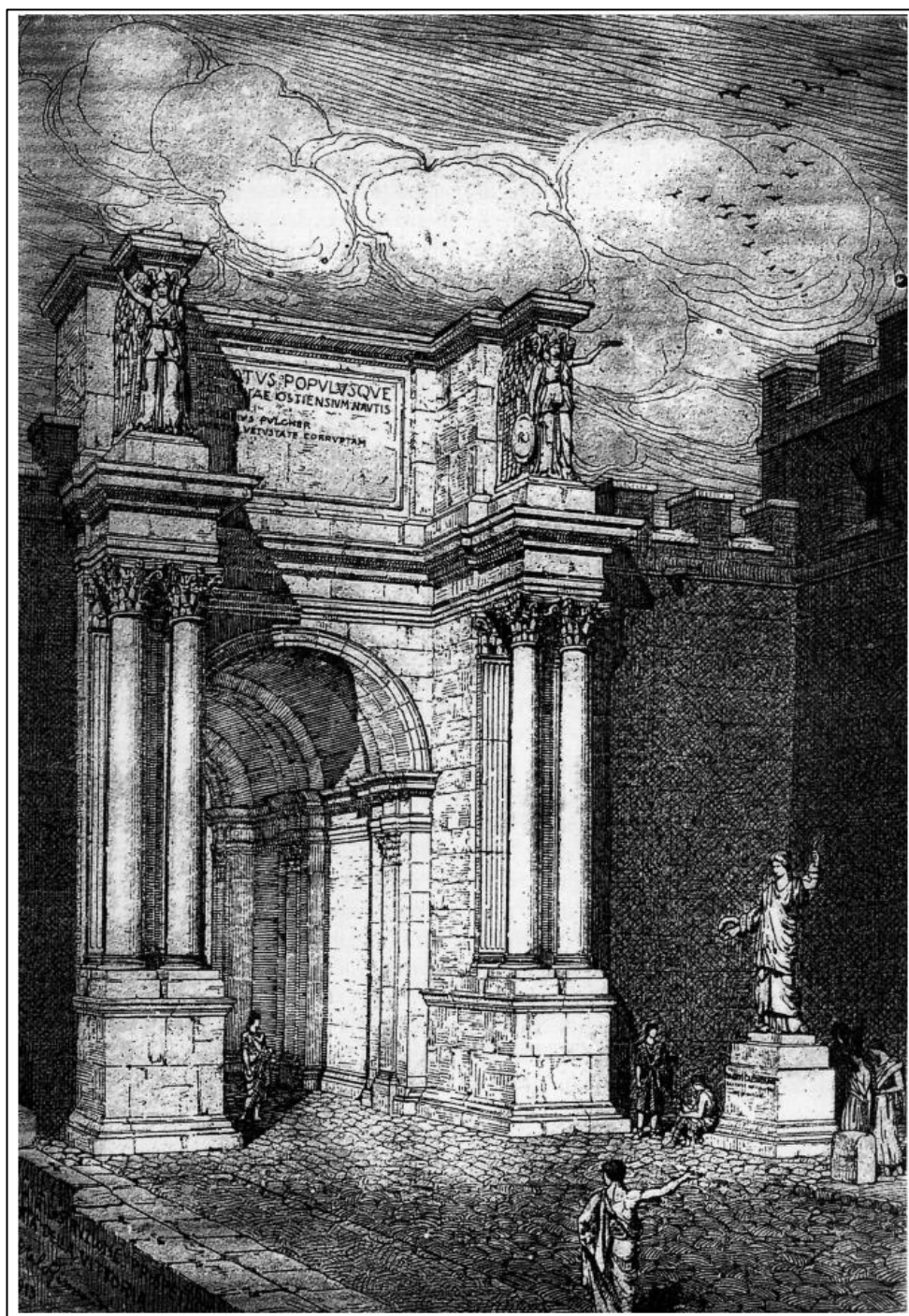


Figure 19: An imaginative reconstruction of the *Porta Romana* gate after its restoration and monumentalisation in the late 1<sup>st</sup> century CE. Drawing by Italo Gismondi (Zevi & Manzini 2008: fig. 5).

noted above, these early Imperial urban programs were probably rather executed by local elites than those of the capital, and the local authorities may have wanted to disregard the traditional values that would recall the dominance of the capital. However, although the symbolic urban boundary must have had an important place in this ideological program of the elite, it is unlikely that the city's border was such an evident thing for the average Ostians. I would argue that the fact that the urban borderscape was permeated by a plethora of new buildings and pierced by an increasing amount of traffic by the 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE indicates that the border had very little purpose in the daily life of ordinary inhabitants of the city.

Indeed, as mentioned above, Emmerson (2020: 125) claims that one may not have recognised having exited the city centre as the built environment continued in similar fashion both inside and outside of the gates. Along the same vein, Glogowski (2023: 386, 432) has questioned the existence of urban boundaries especially at the *Porta Marina* district but also speculatively at the *Porta Laurentina*. In this regard, Glogowski has hypothesized the existence of *continentia aedificia*. Indeed, in Roman legal texts which were applied to the urban administration there was distinguishment between the urban constructed area inside the city walls and outside of them.<sup>48</sup> The suburban area under urban administration was called *continentia aedificia*, the area of continuous building that was extended beyond the city walls, and this kind of situation was in place at least in Imperial Rome but perhaps also in smaller cities (Emmerson 2020: 5). Thus, the city walls did not function administratively as an urban boundary, but the area what was considered legally 'urban' extended as far as the built environment of the city.

In the case of Ostia, the arguments regarding *continentia aedificia* remain based on the archaeological material, and no textual evidence supporting this is discovered. Therefore, it is difficult to conclude anything on this matter. Instead of this administrative conception of *continentia aedificia*, I would like to underscore rather the impact of the structure of the urban space for the quotidian activities of the Ostians. As the urban-like environment spread beyond the borderscape without such obvious interval, it is likely that the average citizens could have regarded the city centre and the suburbs as a single totality. Therefore, the urban identity of Ostia in the first two centuries CE is hard to establish: on one hand, there was an elite program celebrating the city centre by highlighting it with the status-building at the urban

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<sup>48</sup> The concept of *continentia aedificia* can be also found in Roman art and literature, such as authors Pliny the Younger and Varro (Emmerson 2020: 6–7).

boundaries. On the other hand, it is unclear whether this signified much to the urban population as the boundaries remained symbolic and the cityscape, in general, open.

The situation does not become any simpler when we move on towards later times. When approaching Late Antiquity, the external threats changed both the urban form and self-representation in the Roman cities. Emmerson (2020: 52–53) has proposed that a new ideal of “closed city” emerged, following the suit of Rome and its new Aurelian Wall. Hence, it would be easy to suggest that there was a return to the Republican ideals of enclosed city. The reality was, however, in many ways different and more complex.

Ostia can be seen as a counterexample of the Roman trend of late ‘closed’ cities, as the suburbs survived long into late antique times (Emmerson 2020: 52–53). Furthermore, the fact that the urban space south the river was not truly refortified, regardless of some temporary renovations, supports this view. However, the appearance of the defensive wall in the *Trastevere Ostiense* proves that there were endeavours to enclose the urban centre once again, but this development never seems to have reached its total limits. The late Republican walls were only partially and temporarily restored, and it is unclear how long did the walls north of the Tiber survive. The possible ‘rescue mission’ for the city in the time of a crisis, by striving to become a closed city, appears to have failed.

In addition, the symbolic and ideological aspects of the urban border seem to have begun to vanish by this time. The urban façade was not reinforced anymore, and the original hygienic and religious borders lost their purposes. Even if the border expanded and somewhat retained its dignity in this period, there was very little ‘Roman’ in these boundaries. The crisis and the decline in the city drew down the urban boundaries with them. The urban identity is therefore hard to be interpreted from the borderscape of the late period as the situation in the border was quite obscured and under constant change. It would be easy to claim that the urban identity declined in accordance with the city itself. It is, however, notable that urban society in Ostia prevailed for many centuries to come, and the citizens must have shared a common identity.

## 5 Conclusions

Procopius, a Byzantine historian of the early 6<sup>th</sup> century CE provides a short description of Ostia on the brink of the medieval times (Procop. *Goth.* I.26.9):

[ - ] on the left at the point where the other part of the Tiber empties into the sea is situated the city of Ostia, lying beyond the place where the river-bank ends, a place of great consequence in olden times, but now entirely without walls.<sup>49</sup>

Hence, by the time of Justinian I, whose generals fought the Ostrogoths in Italy in the histories of Procopius, Ostia is represented as a city without any fortification. The decline of the city walls and associated borderscape we saw in the biographies had come to a conclusion.

Ostia, as well as its ancient city walls and other urban boundaries, were abandoned and largely buried underneath earth and debris soon after this. The available construction material was reused for building programs outside the city and beyond (Meiggs 1973: 102–104). As we have seen, quite little survives of the ancient magnificence of the urban borderscape. Yet, the archaeological material accompanied by historical evidence and analogies from other Roman cities has enabled us to catch a glimpse of this ancient urbanity and its boundaries. Consequently, these spatial indicators have allowed a contribution to the discussion of Roman *urbanitas* and the development of Ostia's urban identity. In absence of exhaustive amounts of evidence, this has required imaginative interpretation and speculation. This is conducted without any attempts to provide a history of certainties – but rather a history of possibilities.

The biography of Ostia's borderscape – from the genesis at the construction of the late Republican walls to the eventual decline and demise of the urban boundary in Late Antiquity – seems to have had somewhat tripartite development. First, in the late Republic the new borderscape consisted of well-defined urban boundaries which enclosed the urban centre according to the model of closed urbanity and thus by following the traditional Roman ideals of *urbanitas*. In the second phase, from the beginning of the Imperial times, this borderscape was rearranged, with a partial abandonment of these definite and inviolable urban boundaries, paving the way for the ideal of an open city that defied the old customary Roman values of urban life. Towards Late Antiquity, in the third stage of this development, Ostia seems to have attempted to readopt the concept of closed urbanity in response to the times of crisis. However, the decline of the city probably prevented this development from coming to its full

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<sup>49</sup> ἐν ἀριστερᾷ δὲ πρὸς τῇ ἐτέρᾳ τοῦ Τιβέριδος ἐς τὴν θάλασσαν ἐκβολῇ ἡ πόλις Ὀστία κεῖται, τῆς τοῦ ποταμοῦ ἡτόνος ἐκτός, λόγου μὲν πολλοῦ τὸ παλαιὸν ἀξία, νῦν ὅδὲ ἀτείχιστος παντάπασι οὔσα.

fruition. Ostia never became a well-fortified late antique city like many other Roman urban hubs did. On the other hand, the late antique value system, largely impacted by the rise of Christianity, would not have allowed a return to the model of the late Republican style closed city: this hypothetical refortified Ostia would have probably eventually resembled more a medieval city than a Roman one. Anyhow, this was never realised at the site of ancient Ostia, and the medieval Ostia found its place later elsewhere.

It would be easy to present this kind of tripartite closed–open–closed pattern for the development of the urban space and the urban identity. This is certainly an oversimplified way of observing the city’s trajectory but may present a certain framework which can be reinforced with further details and nuances that even out this rigid simplification. Whatever the situation actually was, we can conclude that the urban space was always pursued to be developed according to the ideals of the time, and this was reflected upon the urban identity of each period of the city’s history. These may have been primarily elite’s ideological programs and models, and it is unclear how much they actually affected the perception of other social classes of Ostia. Unfortunately, even the material record highlights the upper-class perspectives, leaving the flocks of ordinary citizens of Ostia largely in obscurity.

However, as we operate on the speculative level of these interpretations and ‘possible histories’, my observations can become obsolete sooner than I can imagine. The future fieldworks in the southern suburbs of the city as well as the treasures that remain unearthed in the *Trastevere Ostiense* can revolutionise our understanding of the dynamics of the urban boundaries and the areas beyond them. Even when writing this in the summer 2025 I saw via social media that the excavations outside the *Porta Marina* were once again proceeded. This underlines the nearly limitless possibilities provided by Ostia – especially in the fringes of the city that remain quite little studied and still largely unexcavated.

For further research it would be interesting to compare the situation of the borderscape in Ostia with other comparable cities of Roman Italy – and why not beyond. The speculation over the development of urban identity in correspondence with the urban space and the urban borderscape could be executed also in other contexts, which could reveal the veracity and accuracy of this research design. Additionally, the role of natural boundaries, especially the rivers and other bodies of water, in the definition of the urban spaces and landscapes would be a fascinating topic to discuss, as well as to understand whether these natural boundaries had a role also in the perception of the city in the mindset of the ancient Romans.

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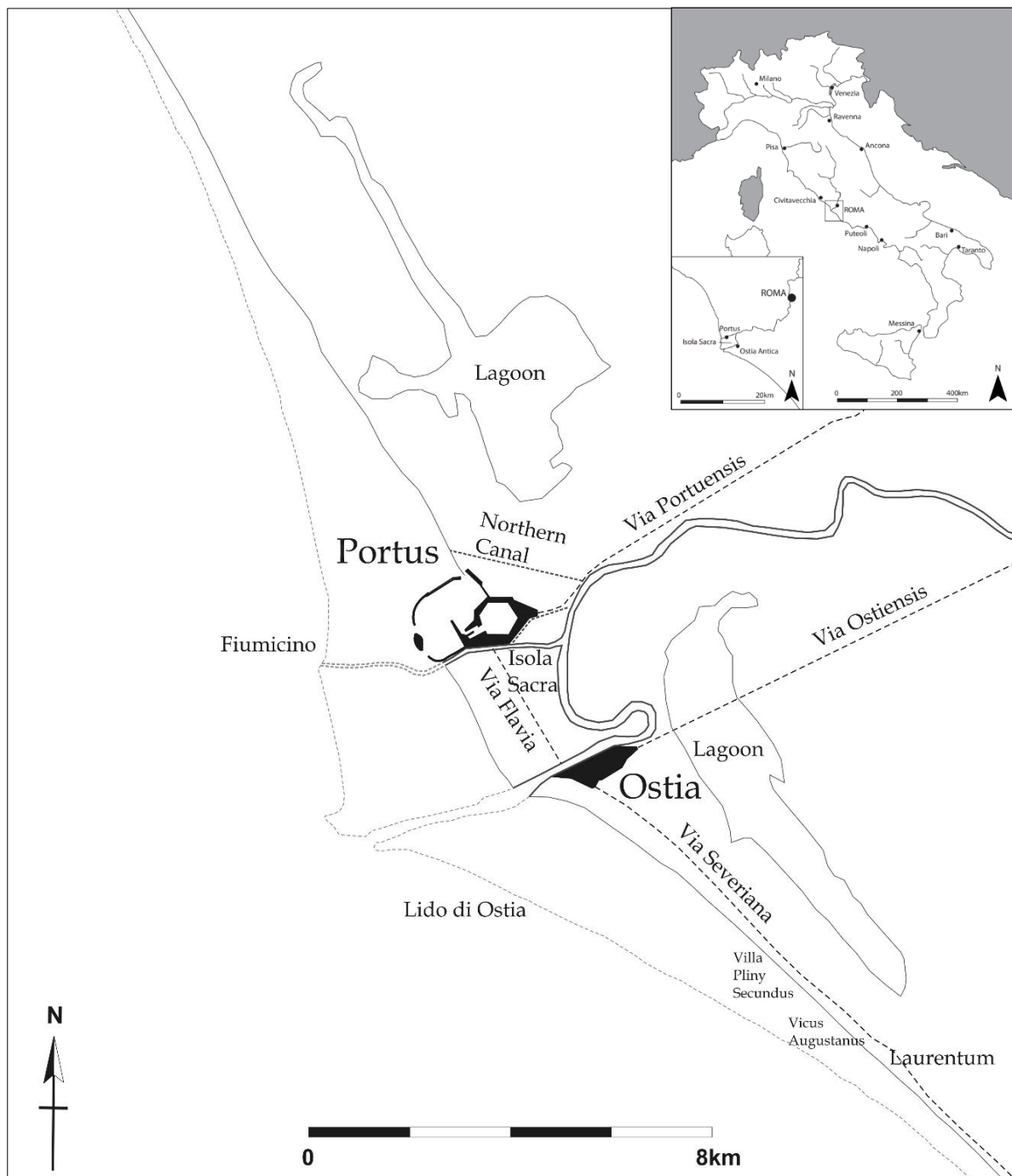
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## Appendices

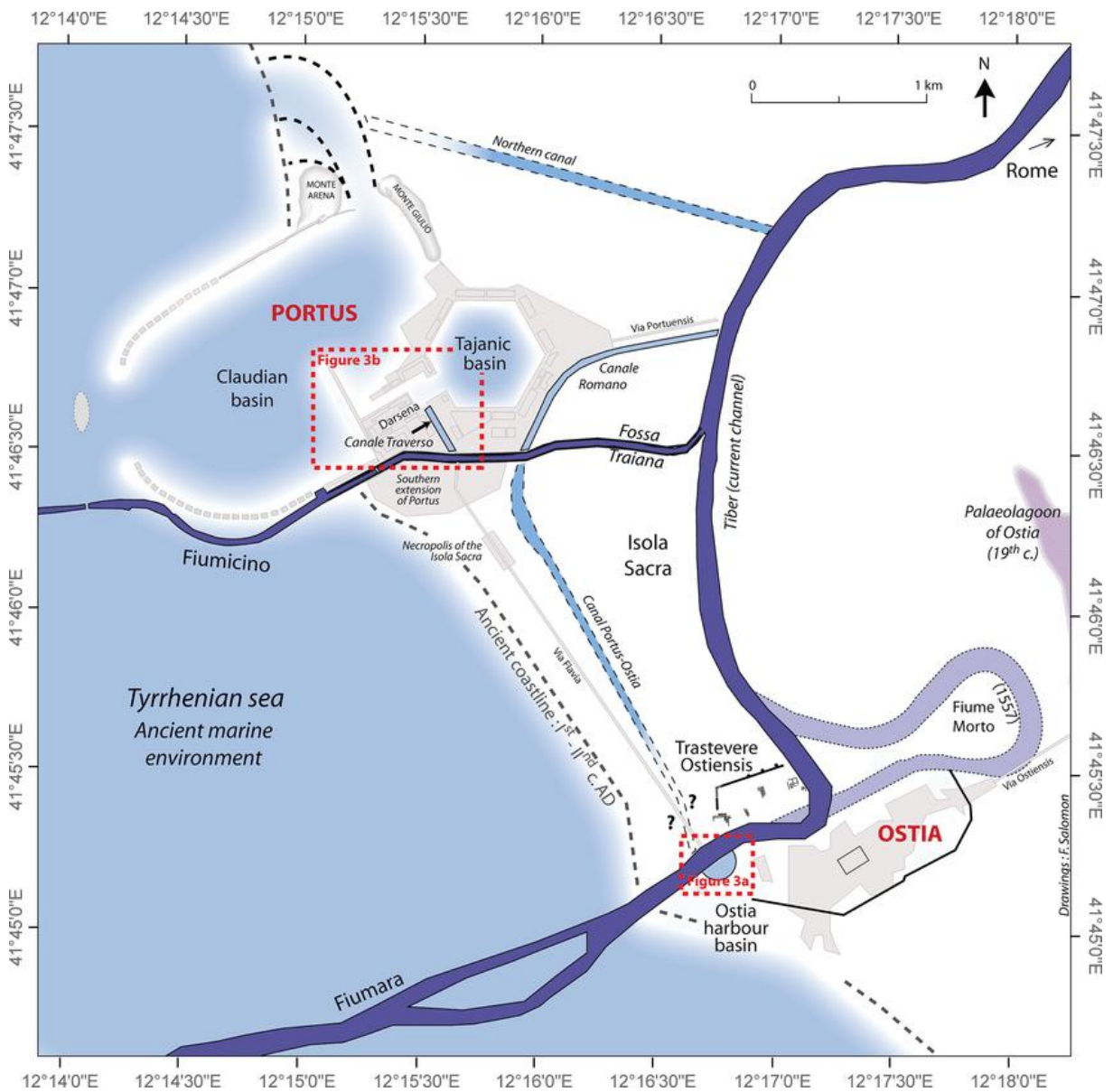
### Appendix 1: Map of Ostia, Portus and the surrounding territory

Map of Ostia, Portus and the surrounding territory with the main roads indicated with bold dash lines. The thinner dash lines indicate the modern coastal situation. Map by Paola Germoni *et al.* (Germoni *et al.* 2018: fig. 1). In the top right corner, a location map of Ostia and Portus in Italy. Drawing by P. Copeland (Keay *et al.* 2020a: fig 1.1).



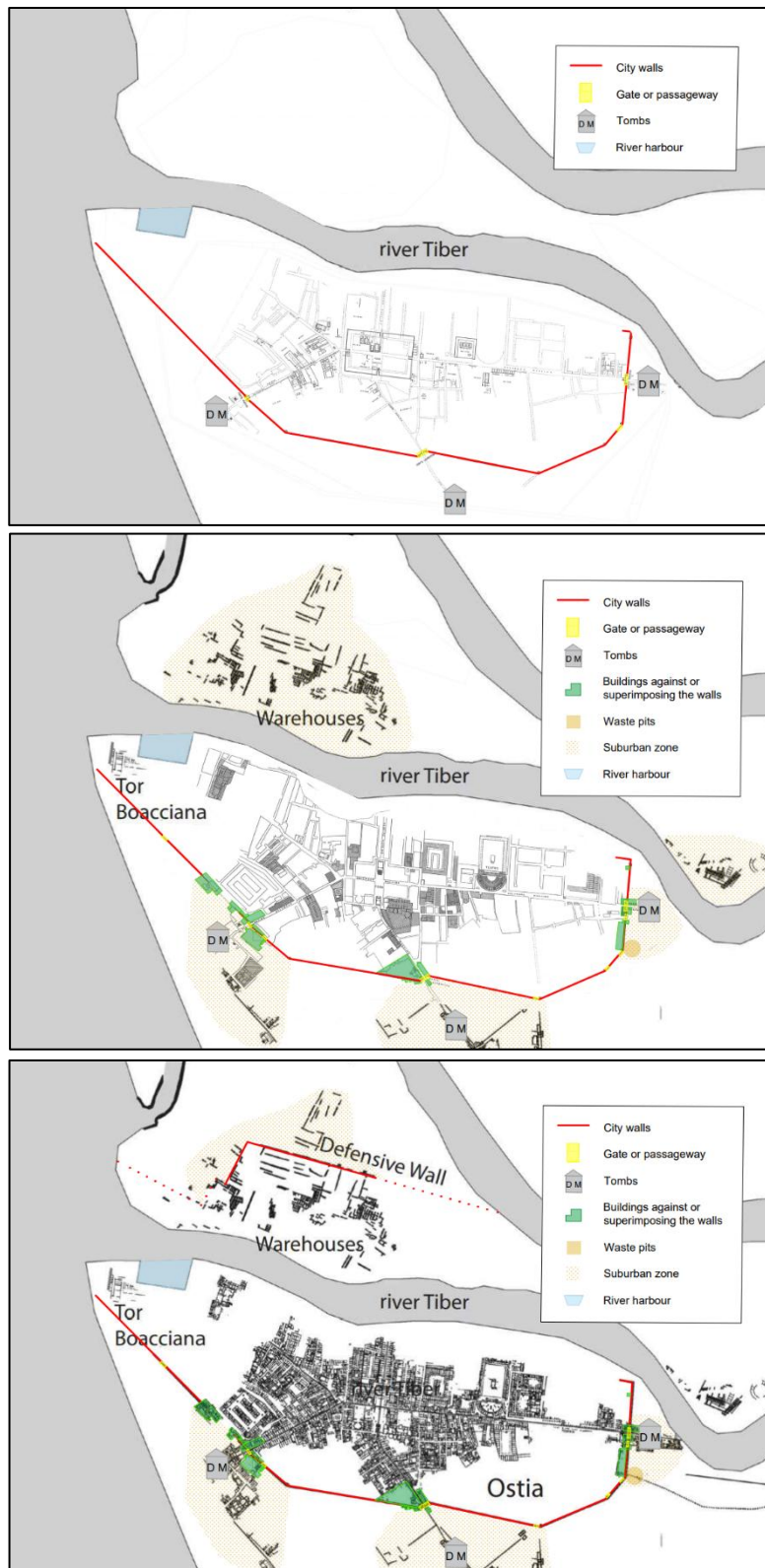
## Appendix 2: Map of Ostia and Portus

Map of the port cities of Ostia and Portus in 2<sup>nd</sup> century CE and their relationship to the Tiber and to the man-made canals. Map by Ferreol Salomon *et al.* (Salomon *et al.* 2016: fig. 2).



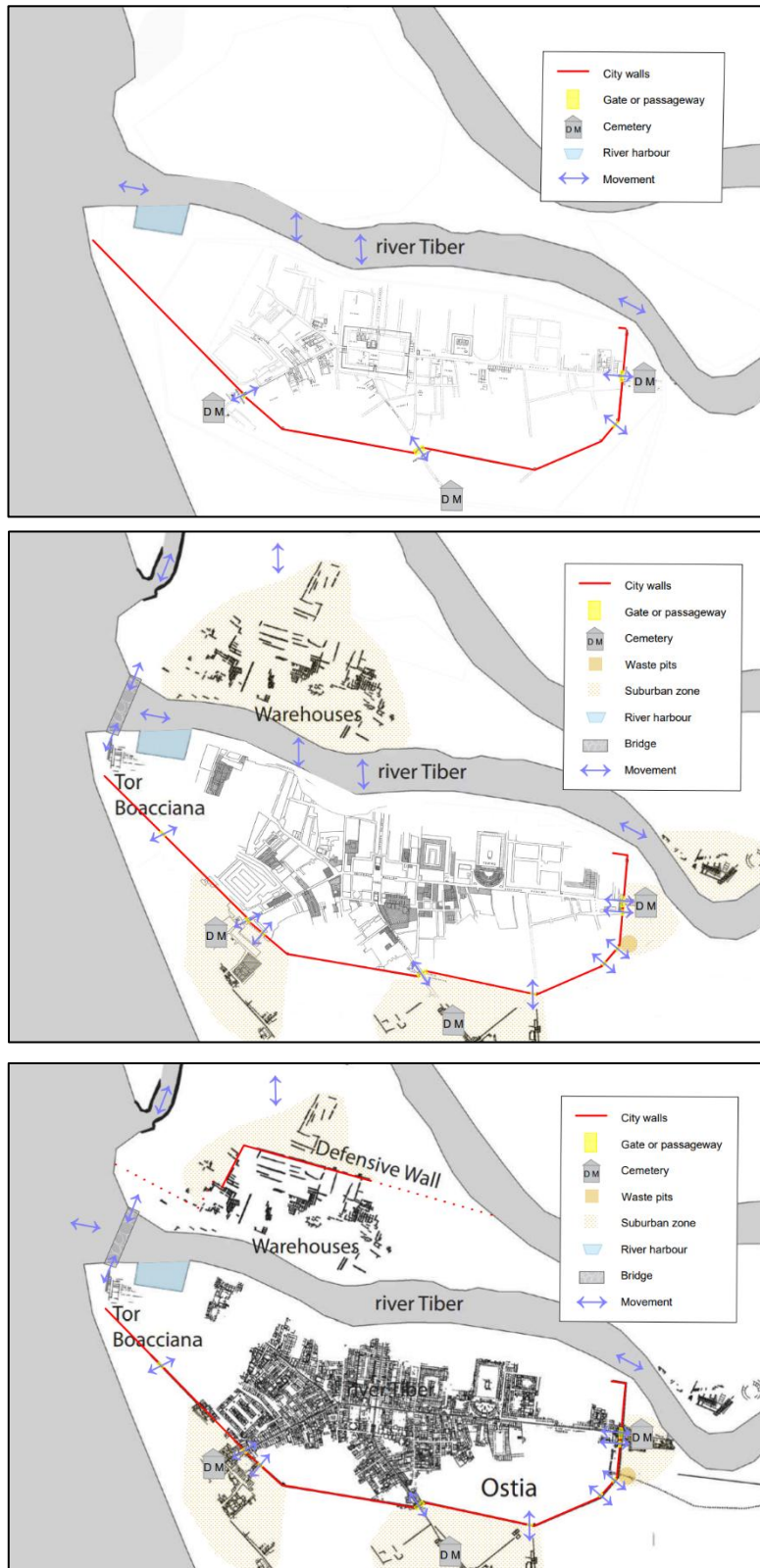
### Appendix 3: Maps of the urban boundaries in Ostia

Compilation of the maps presenting the biographical development of Ostia's urban borders from chapter 2 (figures 6, 8 & 11). From top to bottom: the late Republican, the early-high Imperial, and Late Antiquity.



## Appendix 4: Maps of the movement across the urban boundaries in Ostia

Compilation of the maps presenting the biographical development of movement across urban borders in Ostia from chapter 3 (figures 16, 17 & 18). From top to bottom: the late Republican, the early-high Imperial, and Late Antiquity.



## Appendix 5: Finnish abstract

Suomenkielinen tiivistelmä: ”*Muros et portas Cicero fecit. Rajat ja liike antiikin roomalaisen Ostian rajavyöhykkeellä*”

Tutkielmassa tarkastelen antiikin roomalaisen Ostian kaupungin rajavyöhykkeen tilallisia ja liikkeeseen liittyviä ilmiöitä. Roomalaiset perustivat Ostian 300-luvulla eaa. koloniaksi paikkaan, jossa Tiber-joki laskee Tyrrhenanmereen. Ostiasta kehittyi yksi roomalaisen Italian tärkeimpiä kaupunkeja toimien Rooman kaupungin satamana, jonka läpi kulki erityisesti viljaa pääkaupungin ruokkimiseksi. Kaupunki kukoisti 100-luvulla jaa., jolloin kaupungissa on arvioitu olleen peräti 40 000 asukasta. Näihin aikoihin kaupunki laajeni myös Tiber-joen pohjoispuolelle, niin kutsutulle *Trastevere Ostiense* alueelle. Keskiajan alkupuolella tultaessa roomalainen Ostia hylättiin. Nykyisin antiikin kaupunkia on kaivettu esiin, ja se on vierailtavissa *Parco Archeologico di Ostia Antica* arkeologisessa puistossa.

Ostian alkuperäinen kolonia muodostui varhaisessa vaiheessa vain pienehköstä muurin ympäröivästä asutuksesta, niin kutsusta *castrumista*. Seuraavina vuosikymmeninä kaupunki kasvoi muuriensa ulkopuolelle, ja Rooman tasavallan ajan lopulla pääkaupunki myönsi Ostialle uudet kaupunginmuurit. Nämä niin kutsutut ”myöhäisasavaltalaiset kaupunginmuurit” ovat tämän tutkielman lähtökohta. Näiden muurien rakentamisen myötä kaupungille muodostui uusi rajavyöhyke (eng. *borderscape*), joka pysyi pitkälti kyseisen muurin määrittämällä linjalla aina myöhäisantiikkiin asti. Myöhemmin uusi osuus puolustusmuuria rakennettiin suojaamaan *Trastevere Ostiensea*, mikä siirsi rajavyöhykettä pohjoisemmaksi.

Ostian rajavyöhykettä tarkastelemalla tarkoituksena on selvittää, miten Ostian kaupunki määritettiin ja miellettiin antiikin aikana. Arkeologisen materiaalin avulla tarkastellaan fyysisiä tiloja, joiden perusteella on mahdollista tehdä päätelmiä roomalaisten sosiaalisista ja mentaalisista ilmiöistä. Tiivistettynä kaksi tutkimuskysymystäni ovat seuraavat: (1) Mitkä rajat määrittivät Ostian kaupunkitilaa ja minkälaista liikettä näihin rajoihin liittyi? (2) Mitä voidaan tulkita Ostian kaupunki-identiteetistä perustuen tilallisiin rakenteisiin ja liikkeeseen, joita käsiteltiin ensimmäisessä kysymyksessä?

Menetelmällisesti katsoen analysoin rajavyöhykettä arkeologisen materiaalin perusteella, yhdistelemällä kaiken saatavilla olevan tiedon arkistolähteistä, kenttätöiden julkaisuista ja tutkimuskirjallisuudesta. Ostian kaupunginmuureja ja rajavyöhykkeen muita ilmiöitä on tutkittu arkeologisesti erityisesti 1900-luvun alussa, jolloin myöhäisasavallan ajan muurit

kaivettiin systemaattisesti. Hyödynnän näiden tutkimusten kaivauspäiväkirjoja sekä tuoreempaa tutkimusta, erityisesti Hélène Glogowskin väitöskirjaa, joka tarkastelee myöhäistasavallan kaupunginmuureja ja niihin suoraan yhteydessä olleita muita rakenteita rakennusarkeologisesti. Ostian ilmiöt kontekstualisoidaan roomalaisen kaupunkiarkeologian ja -kulttuurin tutkimuksen avulla. Havaittuja ilmiötä esitellään tekstin ohella myös karttoina, joihin tiivistyvät olennaisimmat havainnot.

Näkökulmani kaupungin rajavyöhykkeen kehitykseen on biografinen, eli pyrin selvittämään rajan kehityksen elinkaaren syntymästä sen hylkäämiseen. Biografinen katsaus toteutetaan sekä rajojen että niihin liittyneen liikkeen perspektiiveistä. Tarkastelu on jaettu kolmeen biografiseen aikatasoon: myöhäistasavallan aika, varhainen keisariaika ja myöhäisantiikin aika. Aikatasot perustuvat Rooman historian periodeihin, mutta kullekin ajanjaksolle on havaittavissa omia biografisia tyyppi- tai piirteitä myös Ostian rajavyöhykkeen osalta.

Jotta arkeologisesta aineistosta havaittujen tilojen pohjalta on mahdollista tavoittaa sosiaalisia ja mentaalisia ilmiöitä, tutkimuksessa hyödynnetään tilan ja liikkeen teorioita. Teoriapohjan taustalla on ennen muuta tutkimuksen kentällä 1900-luvun lopulla tapahtunut 'tilallinen käänne' (eng. *spatial turn*), jonka myötä ihmistieteellisessä tutkimuksessa pinnalle ovat nousseet tilalliset ilmiöt. Taustalla vaikuttavat erityisesti ranskalaisten filosofien Henri Lefebvren ja Michel Foucault'n teoriat. Perustavanlaatuisena ajatuksena näissä teorioissa on, että tila ja tilassa tapahtuva liike ovat ihmisen 'tuottamia', ja siten tilojen analyysillä on mahdollista tavoittaa tilojen 'tuottajien' sosiaalisia ja mentaalisia аспекteja. Toisaalta tilojen tuottaminen edustaa myös sosiaalista vallankäyttöä. Toisin sanoen arkeologisesti tunnettujen tilojen pohjalta on mahdollista tutkia tiloja synnyttäneitä roomalaisen kulttuurin ja yhteisön ilmiöitä. Samaa voidaan soveltaa myös tilassa tapahtuneeseen liikkeeseen.

Ostia myöhäistasavaltalaiset kaupunginmuurit on ajoitettu piirtokirjoitusten perusteella vuosiin 63–58 eaa. Muurit muodostivat massiivisen fyysisen rajan kaupungin länsi-, etelä- ja itäpuolille sulkien sisäänsä 69 hehtaarin alueen. Rakenne edusti jyrkää roomalaista muurimassarakentamista, ja siihen lukeutui itse muuriseinämien lisäksi lukuisia torneja sekä portteja, joista kolme suurinta oli varustettu reunustornein. Muurien tyyppi- tai piirteet osoittavat, että ne oli selvästikin tarkoitettu alun perin puolustustarkoitukseen, mikä selittyy historiallisesti tasavallan ajan lopun levottomalla ympäristöllä.

Muurin ohella rajavyöhyke koostui tasavallan ajan lopulla myös luonnollisista, uskonnollisista, hygieenisistä ja taloudellisista rajoista. Kaupunkitila rajautui luonnollisesti

pohjoisessa Tiber-jokeen. Todennäköisesti pyhät rajat *pomerium* ja *sulcus primigenius* seurasivat kaupunginmuurin linjaa asettaen rituaalisia rajoituksia muurien sisäpuoliselle toiminnalle. Näistä olennaisimpana hautaaminen oli kielletty pyhän rajan sisäpuolelle, joten käänteisesti myös hautausmaiden sijainnit indikoivat kaupunkitilan rajojen sijaintia. Ostian nekropoliitit sijaitsivatkin roomalaisten standardien mukaisesti kaupunginmuurien ulkopuolella. Ilmeisestikin myös jätekuopat sijoitettiin muurien ulkopuolelle, mikä osoittaa, että rajavyöhykkeeseen lukeutui myös hygieeninen raja. On mahdollista, että lisäksi kaupungin taloudelliset rajat, lähinnä tulliraja, saattoivat sijaita kaupunginmuurien linjalla tai jokisatamassa. Kaupungin rajavyöhyke kulki siis juuri kaupunginmuurin ja Tiber-joen linjoilla. Myöhäistasavallan ajalla nämä rajat olivat varsin selväpiirteiset.

Keisariajan alkupuolella, kahdella ensimmäisellä vuosisadalla jaa., kaupunginmuurit menettivät puolustuksellisen merkityksensä rauhan ajan, *Pax Romanan*, myötä. Tämän takia muureja purettiin tai uudelleen käytettiin uusiin tarkoituksiin, muun muassa uusien rakennusten perustuksina. Esimerkiksi muurien yhteyteen rakennettiin suuri vesitorni sekä siitä muuria pitkin kaupungin toiselle puolelle kulkenut akvedukti. Kuitenkin samaan aikaan osa kaupunginmuurien porteista rakennettiin uudelleen ja monumentalisoitiin. Kaupungin raja vaikuttaakin saaneen enemmän symbolisen roolin, ehkäpä erityisesti eräänlaisena 'urbanina julkisivuna'. Tämä osoittaa, että vaikka rajavyöhyke menetti alkuperäisiä tarkoituksiaan, se kuitenkin pysyi todennäköisesti samalla linjalla kuin aikaisemmin.

Samalla kun keisariajan alussa rajavyöhyke koki muutoksia, alkoi kaupungin rajojen ulkopuolelle kehittyä suburbaaneja alueita. Erityisesti kaupungin eteläpuolelle muurien toiselle puolen kehittyi esikaupunkialueita, joiden tyyppiin liittyenä oli ennen muuta niiden sijoittuminen aiempien hautausmaiden yhteyteen. Myös Tiber-joen pohjoispuolelta, ennen muuta niin kutsutun *Trastevere Ostiensen* alueelta, on havaittu tuoreissa tutkimuksissa uusi esikaupunkialue, jonka myötä Ostia levittäytyi myös joen toiselle puolelle.

Kohti myöhäisantiikkia tultaessa Rooman valtakunta muuttui jälleen levottomaksi, ja useisiin kaupunkeihin rakennettiin jälleen puolustusvarustuksia. Myös Ostiassa myöhäistasavallan muureja vahvistettiin paikoin, mutta nämä korjaukset jäivät vain väliaikaisiksi.

Huomattavampaa oli *Trastevere Ostiensen* alueen pohjoisreunalle rakennettu uusi osuus kaupunginmuuria, jonka myötä kaupungin rajavyöhyke siirtyi kerta heitolla selvästi pohjoisempaan. Tällöin niin *Trasteveren* esikaupunkialue kuin kaupungin pohjoisrajana aiemmin toiminut Tiber-joki sulkeutuivat osaksi kaupunkikeskusta. Rajavyöhykkeen

puolustuksellinen vahvistaminen liittyi todennäköisesti Ostiassa 200-luvun jaa. puolivälissä tapahtuneeseen kriisiin, johon pyrittiin vastaamaan vahvistamalla kaupunkia. Ilmeisestikään tämä ei auttanut, vaan kaupunki taantui vähitellen myöhäisantiikin myötä, niin ettei kaupungilla tietävästi ollut enää lainkaan muureja 500-luvun jaa. alussa.

Kaupungin rajavyöhykkeen läpi kulkeneen liikkeen biografia seuraa samankaltaista kaavaa kuin edellä kuvattu rajan tilallinen kehitys. Kun myöhäistasavallan ajalla kaupunki oli tarkoin rajattu ja suojattu puolustusmuurein, liike keskittyi vain muutamille porteille ja joelle.

Kaupunginmuuriin kuului kolme pääporttia, jotka olivat kapeahkoja tornien reunustamia kulkuväyliä, ja ne oli suunniteltu ennemmin puolustamista kuin liikennettä varten. Lisäksi muurin itäosassa oli pieni sivuportti. Vaikka liikkeelle oli vain rajattuja väyliä, oli liikenteen määrä todennäköisesti suurta: liikettä synnyttivät niin pitkänmatkan matkustajat, paikallinen työväestö, kauppiat kuin hautausmailla vierailevatkin, muutamia mainitakseni. Myös jokea pitkin kulki suuria määrä liikennettä, sillä sekä pääkaupungin viljakuljetukset kuin laivastokin hyödynsi Ostian satamaa. Lisäksi paikallista jokiliikennettä edustivat esimerkiksi lautat.

Keisariajalle tultaessa rajavyöhykkeen yli kulkenut liikennemäärä kasvoi selvästi ja liikkeen kulkua helpotettiin. Vanhat pääportit purettiin isolta osin, niin että kulku niiden läpi kävi sukkelammin. Kaupunginmuuriin myös avattiin lukuisia uusia pienempiä kulkuportteja, jotka mahdollistivat liikenteen jakautumisen useammalle väylälle. Uudet portit olivat kuitenkin pienehköjä, joten ne saattoivat olla tarkoitettu lähinnä jalankulkijoille. Liikennemäärä lisäsi erityisesti uudet esikaupunkialueet niin kaupungin eteläpuolella kuin joentakaisesti *Trastevere Ostienses*, jotka vetivät puoleensa liikettä kaupunkikeskuksesta. Samaan aikaan Ostian ohi kulkeneen jokiliikenteen luonne muuttui: kaupungin pohjoispuolelle perustettiin uusi keisarillinen satama Portus, jonne ohjattiin kaikki suurikokoinen laivaliikenne. Vaikka Ostian sataman merkitys väheni, korostui yhä enemmän Ostian ja Portuksen välinen liikenne, jota varten esimerkiksi rakennettiin satamien väliin jääneen *Isola Sacran* läpi kulkenut kanaali.

Myöhäisantiikissa Ostian ja sen esikaupunkialueiden vähitellen taantuessa myös liikenne rajavyöhykkeen yli väheni. Toiminta vaikuttaa vähitellen keskittyneen jälleen kaupunkikeskukseen. *Trastevere Ostiensen* alueen pohjoispuolelle rakennetun muurin myötä Tiber-joki jäi kaupunkitilan sisään, joten joen yli tai sitä pitkin kulkenut liikenne ei enää liittynyt niinkään kaupungin rajoihin. Rajallisten tutkimuksien takia myöskään *Trasteveren* muurin porteista tai alueen liikenteestä ei ole juurikaan tietoa.

Ostian rajavyöhykkeen ja siihen liittyneen liikkeen biografiat tarjoavat historiallisen kuvauksen kaupungin kehityksestä, mutta ne eivät suoraan vastaa kysymyksiin kaupungin käsittämisestä ja kaupunki-identiteetistä. Tätä varten siirrytään tulkitsemaan edellä esitetystä aineistosta sosiaalisia ja mentaalisia aspekkeja. Roomalaisilla tosiaankin oli tietty itsekäsitys: tietty kulttuurinen identiteetti, joka ohjasi yhteisön toimintoja, ja tämän kulttuurisen identiteetin osana oli kaupunki-identiteetti. Roomalaisten auktorien pohjalta tunnemme roomalaisen ihanteen kaupunkilaisuudesta, joka tiivistyi ilmaukseen *urbanitas*. Tämä ilmaus tarkoitti tiettyjä pääkaupungin piiriin liittyneitä ihanteellisia sosiaalisia piirteitä. *Urbanitas* olikin ennen muuta eliitin näkemys kaupunkilaisuudesta, mutta koska kaupunkitilan rakennettu ympäristö oli paljolti juuri eliitin sanelemaa, voidaan fyysisestä kaupungista tavoittaa tämän ajattelumallin jäämiä. Toisin sanoen arkeologisesti tunnetusta kaupungista, kuten Ostiasta, voidaan tavoittaa kaupunkitilaa muovanneiden ihmisten itsekäsitystä ja ihanteita. Liikkeen ja liikenteen sisällyttäminen tähän tarkasteluun mahdollistaa kuitenkin myös muiden sosiaaliluokkien integroimisen mukaan tähän analyysiin.

Ostiassa luultavimmin syntyi varsinainen kaupunki-identiteetti vasta tasavallan ajan lopulla. Tällöin – mahdollisesti samanaikaisesti – kaupunki sai uuden perustuslain sekä edellä käsitellyn kaupunginmuurin. Ostia siis paljolti määriteltiin uudelleen niin hallinnollisesti kuin fyysisestikin. Raja myös saatettiin legitimoida uskonnollisin menoin määrittelemällä kaupungin pyhät rajat. Tämän myötä kaupunki vahvisti omaa identiteettiään, erityisesti suhteessa emäkaupunkiin Roomaan, jonka vallan alla Ostia oli ollut perustamisestaan asti. Uusi identiteetti korostikin kaupungin itsenäisyyttä, vaikkakin se seurasi yhä pääkaupungin ihanteita, *urbanitasta*. Tämä näkyi kaupungin selväpiirteisenä rajaamisena ns. 'suljetuksi' kaupungiksi, joka rajautui niin fyysisesti kuin ideologisestikin ympäristöstään.

Keisariajan alkupuolella tämä suljetun kaupungin ideaali vaikuttaa rikkoutuneen. Uudet esikaupunkialueet ja lisääntynyt liike kaupungin rajojen yli eivät enää suosineet aiempaa ajatusmallia, vaan tilalle syntyi uusi ihanne 'avoimesta' kaupungista. On jopa spekuloitu, että Ostiassa olisi ollut niin kutsuttu *continentia aedificia* eli hallinnollisesti kaupunginmuurien ulkopuolelle jatkunut urbaani alue. Kuten mainittua, kaupungin rajoja kuitenkin yhä ylläpidettiin, esimerkiksi kaupungin pääportteja monumentalisoimalla. Tämä saattoi kuitenkin olla osa kaupungin eliitin symbolista ja ideologista projektia, jolla haluttiin vahvistaa paikallista arvovaltaa ja itsenäisyyttä. Onkin epäselvää, kuinka paljon nämä rajat todellisuudessa vaikuttivat kaupungin tavallisten ihmisten elämään.

Myöhäisantiikissa tilanne muuttui epäselvemmäksi. Toisaalta kaupunginmuureja korjattiin ja *Trastevere Ostienseen* rakennettiin uusi muuri, mikä viittaisi paluuseen 'suljetun' kaupungin ihanteeseen, joka oli nähtävissä esimerkiksi Roomassa. Toisaalta kuitenkin rajavyöhykkeen muiden piirteiden, esimerkiksi uskonnollisten rajojen, hämärtyminen indikoi, että sekä kaupungin että sen rajojen taantuminen johti myös kaupunki-identiteetin heikkenemiseen. On epäselvää, missä määrin Ostian kohdalla voidaankaan enää tässä vaiheessa puhua 'roomalaisesta' kaupunki-identiteetistä.

Ostian kaupungin rajojen ja niiden liikkeen analyysi tarjoaa viitteitä kaupunkitilan ja -identiteetin kehityskulusta. Tässä kaaressa on havaittavissa jonkinlainen kehitys suljetun kaupungin ihanteesta ensin avoimeen ja sitten takaisin suljettuun kaupunkiin, mutta tällainen esitys on liian kaavamainen vastatakseen todellisuutta. Kaupungin rajavyöhykettä kuitenkin kehitettiin kaupungin eliitin kulloisenkin ihanteen ja ideologisen mallin mukaisesti, mikä synnytti kaupungille tietyn identiteetin kunakin aikana. Tämä ei kuitenkaan aina vastannut koko kaupungin todellisuutta, ja muiden sosiaaliluokkien ihmiset saattoivat kokea kaupungin aivan toisin kuin eliitin ideaalimallia seuraavat. Tulevaisuudessa olisi mielenkiintoista verrata Ostian kaupungin rajavyöhykettä muihin vastaaviin roomalaisiin kaupunkeihin. Myös kaupungin luonnollisten rajojen, erityisesti vesistöjen, roolin tutkiminen kaupunkia määrittävinä tekijöinä olisi kiintoisa tutkimusaihe.