**The urbanization of the North-Western provinces of the Roman Empire :
a juridical and functional approach to town life in Roman Gaul,
Germania inferior and Britain**
Pellegrino, F.

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Author: Pellegrino, F.
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CHAPTER 1: OBJECT AND AIMS

Introduction

This work is a study of the settlement systems of the north-western provinces (more specifically, Gaul Narbonensis, the Western Alps - i.e. the provinces of Alpes Graiae, Alpes Cottiae, and Alpes Maritimae - the Three Gauls, Germania Inferior, and Britannia) when the Roman Empire - in this area - was at its peak (late 2nd century AD) (Figure 1).
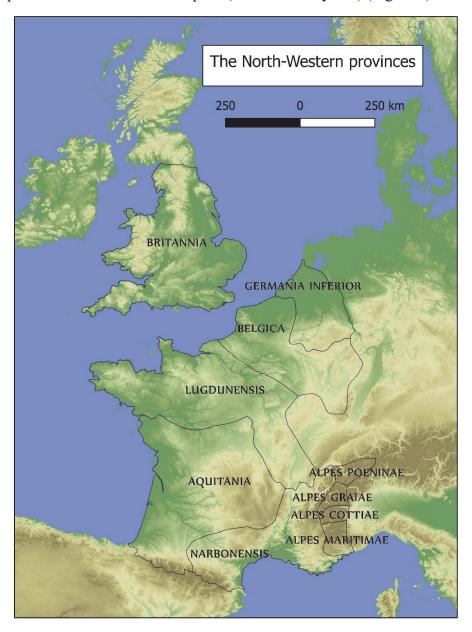

Figure 1: The north-western provinces of the Roman Empire: Gaul Narbonensis, the Western Alps - i.e. the provinces of Alpes Graiae, Alpes Cottiae, and Alpes Maritimae - the Three Gauls, Germania Inferior, and Britannia.

Before confronting the data we need to define what constitutes the core and the nodes of settlement systems: the cities. Firstly, we will briefly review the terminology employed in ancient times to define cities. After having discussed the semantic problematics and

complexities that prevent us from making use of the ancient terminology in this work, we will look at the most recent contributions coming from fields as such geography and sociology. Finally, we will illustrate the three-fold (juridical, morphological, and functional) definition of 'urbanism' that we will be working with throughout this work.

1.1 Ancient cities: ancient definitions

The ambiguities that we can detect within the ancient sources hint at the difficulty of defining such a complex object as a city. The remarkable complexity of the reality is reflected in the elusive vocabulary the ancients employed when discussing the cities of their time, their level of urbanism, 'urban' typology or status. Generally speaking (we will look more closely at the issue later in this chapter), we can say that 'a city is a relatively large, dense and permanent settlement of socially heterogeneous individuals'.[7] It should be acknowledged that the word 'city' as intended in the previous paragraph cannot be exactly translated into Latin. Romans, like us, did not seem to have had a clear definition of what a city was. We know that they employed various words (e.g. *urbs*, *oppidum*, *vicus,* etc.) organized in a hierarchical order of an essentially, but not exclusively, juridical nature.[8] Tarpin believes that in the ancient world agglomerations had never been classified into different categories because that culture lacked our epistemological framework.[9] However, Leveau quite rightly observed that ancient scholars might well have attempted such an academic exercise, although they would probably have experienced the same difficulties. Typologies and categories were not, he argues, concepts that were alien to the ancients. Aristotle, in his Politics, presented the first classification of political regimes. He was also the first intellectual to classify animals into genera and species, according to their anatomy and genres in his Isagoge, successfully distinguishing whales and dolphins from fishes.[10]

The ancient Greek traveller and geographer Pausanias, who wrote in the 2nd century AD, did not bequeath us a definition of what he thought a city was. However, his outraged reaction to the claim of the little town of Panopeus in Phokis, northern Greece, with 'no government buildings, no theatre, no *agora*, no water conducted to a fountain, and […] the people live in hovels like mountain cabins on the edge of a ravine' to be called a 'city' is very telling.[11] We can deduce that the ancients made a distinction between simple agglomerations of people and cities (for which, what mattered the most was independence). Only under certain circumstances - the presence of a specific level of architecture, social organization and amenities - are we confronted with a city. In this regard, Aristotle appears to be of the same opinion when he says

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[7] Wirth 1938: 1.

[8] Gros and Torelli 2010. In this list, the word '*civitas*' does not appear because it does not describe a physical city (urban area), but rather a *constitutio populi.* It is the *constitutio* that made the town a *civitas*, as we will discuss in greater detail later on.

[9] '*Le classement des habitats par typologies matérielles appartient épistémologiquement à notre époque et non à l'Antiquité et […] ces typologies ne reléteront jamais la perception des Anciens*' (Tarpin 2002a: 2).

[10] Leveau 2012. Aristotle, in his Politics 1291b24, wrote that Chios was an example of mercantile city, as well as Aegina (8.40.2).

[11] Pausanias, Description of Greece 10.4.1, meaning if lacking those urban elements, such a settlement would have been nothing more than a place where many people lived close to each other.

that the main things that contribute to the success of cities are their defences, their suitability for political activity, and their beauty.[12]

It is, therefore, a difficult task to grasp the essence of the array of settlements which are mentioned in ancient sources or inscriptions and to establish equivalences between them that can be valid for wide-ranging time spans. Unfortunately, much as Marc Bloch regretted, *'au grand désespoir des historiens, les hommes n'ont pas coutume, chaque fois qu'ils changent de mœurs, de changer de vocabulaire'*.[13] Nonetheless, we will try to briefly outline the main terminologies Romans employed when referring to settlements:[14]

- *Urbs:* according to Isidorus of Seville (7th century AD), the term *'urbs'* denotes the actual buildings within a city. He writes that the Latin world *'urbs'* derives from 'circle' (*orbis*) referring either to the circular shape of the walls or to the 'plow-handle' (*urbus*) that was used to plan their circuit.[15]

- *Oppidum:* Isidorus explains that the etymology of this word is uncertain. He thought it could derive from the 'opposing' of its walls (*oppositio*) or the hoarding of wealth or the mutual support against the enemies (*ops*). It appears clear from his account that the *oppida* are pertinent to the first stage of the ancient urbanization process as he recounts that it is where our naked, defenceless ancestors sought protection from beasts. The Latin word *'oppidum'* was as a general term for 'settlement', and thus it also designated the earliest cities in Italy, but could also refer to the cities of the enemies, Latin colonies (and perhaps Roman), *municipia*, part of a prefecture.[16] In Roman times this term did not have a 'barbarian' undertone - which is something it has acquired only in modern times. On the other hand, it was frequently used to designate the central place of a community, even of a certain amplitude, in Italy and abroad.[17] In ancient times the words *'urbs'* and *'oppidum'* could practically be used as synonyms.[18] This is not to imply that these communities had particular political and social institution or organizations, but rather that these communities were perceived as entities. Livy recalls that the Transalpine Celts intended to establish an *oppidum* (*oppidum condere*) in Northern Italy in the 2nd century BC. This suggests that an *oppidum* i. had the attribute of a physical town (or better, settlement), ii. it could be the political centre of a certain entity, which explains why, after the capitulation of the *oppida* in Northern Italy, the whole tribe's territory was incorporated into the Roman

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[12] Politics 1330a34ff.

[13] Bloch 1993: 57.

[14] The word '*conciliabula*' has also been excluded since a review of the term has concluded that it does not refer to a specific area, but rather to the act of coming together (see Jacques 1991; and Tarpin 2006: 40-41).

[15] Isidorus, *Etymologiae* 15, De aedificiis et agris. For a good commentary see Barney *et al.* 2006: 305.

[16] Tarpin 1999; Tarpin 2002a: 27-30; and 80; Tarpin 2002a: 23-31. Further complications stem from the fact that most probably a single definition of the word 'oppidum' never existed. If we look at Caesar's use of this word we find hints suggesting that there was no philological coherence.

[17] Tarpin 2002a.

[18] See Thes. Ling. Lat. 9.2.755. In some texts the words *oppidum* and *urbs* are interchangeable (see Festus p. 476.L = 526 Th. = 351 M.). The existence of both might be explained by the fact that *urbs* does not have an Indo-European origin (Tarpin 2002a: 72 n. 91; and Prosdocimi 1978: 54). In the writings of Titus Livius, the great majority of his mentions of urbs refer to Rome (Tarpin 2002a: 73 n. 92).

possessions.[19] As we will see in the chapter dedicated to the Iron Age, modern protohistorians and historians have wrongly been using the Latin word *'oppida'* to inappropriately indicate more or less any upland site (even when no archaeological record has ever been found within the enclosure), while completely disregarding large, lowland agglomerations with an undeniably very dense occupation (e.g. Acy-Romance and Levroux in Gaul). This has created confusions which have had a deleterious effect on the study of this subject.

- *Vicus*: it is often believed to be the lowest rank of the ancient settlement hierarchy (below *colonia*, *municipium*, and *civitas* capitals). Like the word *'oppidum'*, this word has been transposed in modern archaeology's jargon, and it has been used to indicate any agglomeration that was not self-governing. The first scholar who questioned this practice was Wightman, who expressed her reservations about adopting a Latin word to describe a phenomenon that appeared to have an indigenous character.[20] However, there is a much more fundamental issue with using this word to label all agglomerations dating to Roman times and known archaeologically, and that is that we are still unable to grasp the meaning(s) this word held in ancient times.[21]

The two main literary sources of information regarding the *vicus* are Sextus Pompeius Festus, a grammarian who lived during the late 2nd century AD, and Isidorus, whom we have previously mentioned. Festus, in the long, incomplete and textually corrupted passage which refers to the *vici,* envisages three different connotations: 1. Rural territories not controlled by *villae*. Some of these were united in a commonwealth (*rempublicam*) where the administration of justice (*ius*) could be ensured [i.e. they had a law court]. Others were mere marketplaces where *nundinae* were held and where annual magistrates (*magistri vici*) were elected. 2. Types of buildings which can be found in *oppida* and which are separated by roads and grouped in regions (i.e. districts or wards of a town). 3. Narrow passages to the side of a building which led to a dwelling's entrance whose inhabitants are not called *vicani*, unlike those who live in the first two categories of *vici* (e.g. the *vicus Octavius* in *Velitrae* mentioned by Suetonius).[22]

Festus' first definition of *vici* has led scholars to call *vicus* any settlement that presumably had limited self-government. This practice appeared to be supported by epigraphic evidence (above all by the presence of inscriptions that attested the existence of *magistri vici*). However, the nature of this magistracy is still highly debated. Evidence suggests that the *magistri vici* were not local magistrates elected by a local community, but rather private individuals (commonly freedmen) who represented the interests of their *patronus* in areas that were under his control.[23] Similarly, the *'curatores vici',* responsible for patrolling a donation and for exercising oversight over games and spectacles mentioned in an

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[19] Peyre 1979.

[20] Wightman 1976.

[21] Dondin-Payre 2007.

[22] Suetonius, Aug. 1, 1; Tarpin 2002a: the three definitions that Festus gives do not follow a chronological order: the reference to the urban is the oldest one attested so far.

[23] Christol 2003: 136.

inscription from the *civitas* of the Treveri, might too have been acting on behalf of private parties.[24]

The other main ancient text that helps us to shed some light on this subject is a passage taken from Isidore's *Etymologiae*, where he explains the differences between *oppida*, *vici*, *pagi* and *castella*: *'Vici et castella et pagi hi sunt qui nulla dignitate civitatis ornantur, sed vulgari hominum conventu incoluntur, et propter parvitatem sui maioribus civitatibus adtribuuntur […]'*.[25] This text supports the idea that the *vicus* was a not self-governing agglomeration but had to rely on the *civitas* capital for administrative and juridical functions. Therefore, they were actually 'secondary agglomerations' in the sense that French scholars writing about this topic from the late 1980s onwards intended, that is secondary to the *civitas* capital where the all political and juridical decisions were made.[26] However, we should not forget that Isidorus lived in the 7th century and his account portrays a situation that may have drastically changed from that of the 2nd century AD.

Given the polysemy, the uncertainties and complexities this word entails, in this work only in the presence of an inscription will we be speaking of *vici*.[27] Michel Tarpin and Capogrossi, who wrote two monographs on the subject, both reached the conclusion that there is no substantial evidence that *vici*, even though some of them had Celtic names, had a pre-Roman origin.[28] On the contrary, evidence suggests they are likely to be Roman creations instrumental to formalizing possession rights on newly conquered territories.[29]

- *Forum*: settlement established by Roman authorities in newly conquered territories to facilitate commerce and social life.[30] In Gaul, it belongs to the generation of roadside settlements that date to the 1st century BC.[31] It is not self-governing; at least not until it is granted, for example, the status of *colonia*.[32]

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[24] Dondin-Payre 1999; Dondin-Payre 2007.

[25] '*Vici* and *castella* and *pagi* are those, which not adorned with any rank of *civitas*, but are inhabited by a common gathering of people, and because of their small size are "attributed" to larger *civitates*' (Isidorus Hispalensis, Orig., XV. 2.11).

[26] Mangin *et al.* 1986: 18.

[27] For the same reason, we will not talk of military *vici*, but rather of extramural settlements. Only those *vici* whose status is attested by an inscription will be called such.

[28] Tarpin 2002a; Capogrossi Colognesi 2002. This topic will be discussed further in chapter 2.

[29] Tarpin 2002a: 245. The old paradigm that has been deployed systematically for an extremely long time (see for example Kornemann 1905; and 1942; La Regina 1970 and 1971; Gabba 1979; and Buonocore 1993) according to which the countryside was organized around the *pagus* (territorial district), the *vicus* (sizeable rural settlement) and a sanctuary, has been recently re-evaluated and strongly criticized. Moreover, the idea that this territorial organization had a pre-Roman origin has been undermined too (see the works of Tarpin 2002a; Tarpin 2009; Capogrossi Colognesi 2002; 2002b, among others).

[30] Tarpin 2009: 137.

[31] Leveau 2012: 167. For example Forum Domitii (which has a toponymic name), which agrees with the evolution that we see in Italy.

[32] The inscriptions of magistrates found there belong therefore to magistrates who had been holding the office in the *colonia,* as attests Siculus Flaccus, 160.4-7 (see Tarpin 2002a: 76 n. 109).

As we have just seen, the Romans used different words to refer to cities, and the ambiguities and intangibility of the ancient vocabulary prevent us from relying on it in this work.

1.2 The object of research

This work focuses on the settlements and settlement systems of the north-western provinces.[33] In this section, a comprehensive overview of the basic parameters that have defined the scope of our research will be given. The modern word 'city' is, *per se*, particularly imprecise, and its meaning and content changes depending on time, place and context.[34] Some scholars go so far as to say that it belongs to the realm of representation (*''impensé'*) and thus it does not consist of material realities.[35] While I do not agree with this postmodernist assumption, it is difficult to pinpoint these material realities. In its broadest definition, the city is the most complex form of human organization that can be found. Within the array of human 'settlements', by which we mean any permanently inhabited area whatever its size (it could be a farm, an isolated house, a hamlet, a village), the city is a specific type of 'settlement', the type of settlement that, if we were to outline a hierarchical pyramid, would sit at its top.

Although progress has been achieved in the study of cities, it is still difficult to give a thorough definition of 'city'. Every discipline and branch of knowledge offers its own contribution.[36] For historians, jurists and political scientists the city is a political organization of societies (*polis* or *cité*) that may have various juridical forms of land occupation and social status.[37] Economists insist on the role of the city as a producer of wealth and as a stimulator of the economies of other agglomerations and of the economies of urbanization (profits tied to the use of public buildings).[38] According to demography, a city is a permanent population in a defined space, and it is a context that heavily influences individual biographies and behaviours of the population. From the point of view of sociology, the city is a social organization that favours innovation, thanks to the interactions that promote creativity and stimulate inventions that might lead to a growing complexity of social division of labour.[39]

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[33] Here, we will focus on the ascertained settlements that were occupied in the late 2nd century AD. This means that all the 'supposed' ones (for example those whose existence has been put forward on the basis of literary or archaeological evidence, but no substantial archaeological evidence has been found), as well as those that were abandoned by the early 2nd century AD are omitted.

[34] Maunier 1910; Garmy 2012a; Johnson 1972: 1-2.

[35] Galinié 2000.

[36] For a discussion see Pumain *et al.* 2006.

[37] See Gordon Childe's 1950 article titled 'The Urban Revolution' for an early analysis of the consequences of urbanization and the socio-economic changes that it stimulated, such as increase in population, social division of labour, providing tax-raising power to a 'ruling class' and monumental public building among others (Childe 1950).

[38] Fujita and Thisse 2002.

[39] Bettencourt 2013. Not all scholars have seen 'urbanization', defined as an increase in the proportion of a country's population living in urban centres, as always a step towards progress and development. Some, for example Louis Wirth, an American sociologist and member of the Chicago school, gave his own, pessimistic, definition, arguing how urban life can cause phenomena such as segmentalization and segregation (Wirth 1938: 4). The geographer Kevin Lynch, on the other hand, seemed to have a more optimistic view and emphasized the

All these definitions are valid. However, how does a city, an 'urban' space differ from a 'rural' settlement like a village? It could be on the basis of i. administrative jurisdiction, ii. morphology and size (e.g. concentration of population, buildings, zonation), iii. functions fulfilled (e.g. presence of manufacture and tertiary service and a substantial percentage of inhabitants involved in the secondary and tertiary sectors).

Here we will use a context-dependent definition of city, and we will define as 'urban' only the administrative centres of their respective regions (here referred to as 'self-governing cities') and those secondary settlements that will fall into the category of 'town-like' places. The former are more easily identifiable because their 'urban' status - as transmitted to us through literary and epigraphic sources - was *juridically defined* and hence less open to interpretation than the latter. However, if we were to look only at the 'official cities' within these provinces - as other scholars have previously done (see the work of Bekker-Nielsen)[40] - we would have only a partial view of the nature and dynamics of the settlement systems that must be understood. In fact, we would leave out of the picture all those central places which in so many ways (e.g. size, morphology, and socio-economic complexity) fulfilled 'urban' functions. In order to identify this latter, more ambiguous, category of sites, we need to look at all the physical criteria we have introduced above. They are indeed compelling and quantifiable, and they should not be addressed separately. We should regard them as a whole as they are equally fundamental and important. We now turn to discuss these three aspects in more detail.

1.2.1 A juridical definition

The duality between *urbs-rus*, cities and territories, self-governing centres and all the rest of the agglomerations reflects important socio-economic structures of the Roman world, such as its fiscal and administrative system. For this reason, when studying the settlement system of any province of the Roman Empire, this aspect cannot be overlooked. As we will soon see, however, this approach may not apply equally to all regions. Given these premises, we will distinguish two types of agglomerations: those that enjoy local autonomy and are the headquarters of civic and political institutions (and whose 'urban' status is not in doubt), and those that lay within the territory of the autonomous group and are politically dependent on them, some of which, we will see, might have performed some functions (as evidenced by buildings) that might be called urban.[41] The former will be referred to as 'self-governing cities', while for the latter we will use the English translation of the French expression of *'agglomérations secondaires'*. During the conference held in Tours in 1975, the habit of referring to any settlement that was not self-governing as *'vicus'* was criticized for the first time.[42] In 1980, when the first volume of the *Histoire de la France urbaine* was published, the

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importance of the city as the place where the community displays its culture and its power, an issue that will become essential, for example, when we discuss self-governing cities (Lynch 1960).

[40] Bekker-Nielsen 1989.

[41] For a list of the self-governing cities of the north-western Empire on the basis of Ptolemy's lists and epigraphic grounds, see Appendix A.

[42] Already in ancient times the word *'vicus'* had different meanings (it could indicate a rural agglomeration or, for example, a neighbourhood). Ancient literary and epigraphic evidence regarding the *'vici'* in the Roman west has

importance of the *'agglomeration secondaire'* was finally acknowledged and the word became commonly used.[43] The expression 'secondary agglomeration' clearly emphasizes the importance of the legal status (rather than the archaeological evidence), but it also has an exceptionally broad meaning.[44] In fact, it indicates all types of agglomerations that are subordinated, on an administrative level, to the *civitas* capital. Thus, while it has the benefit of preventing us from being bogged down in a terminological morass, it does not make scholarly communication any easier (which is why we also have to take into account other parameters, such as central-place functions).[45] In fact, this expression covers a very broad range of settlements, excluding only those in which agriculture and farming were by far the major employer, such as rural villages and hamlets. It is inclusive of everything that can be placed between a rural settlement (e.g. a farm or a villa) and a self-governing city.[46]

In Britain, the analysis of this category of settlements was pioneered by Todd, who referred to them as 'small towns'. He immediately recognized the considerable diversity amongst the sites hitherto included in this umbrella term 'small towns', which would nonetheless enter the jargon of archaeologists, reappearing with great power in the 1990s.[47] In his paper, he suggested we look at specific criteria for assessing a settlement's 'urban' status (i.e. size, planning and buildings, relationship with the countryside, etc.).[48] Unlike the much more neutral expression 'secondary agglomeration', the concept of 'small towns' places the emphasis on the highest ranks of settlements, and, as Burnham rightly observed during the first conference specifically devoted to this subject (whose proceedings were published in a volume edited by Rodwell and

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been comprehensively collected and discussed in Tarpin's monograph (Tarpin 2002a). This has effectively replaced all previous work on the subject.

[43] During this conference Mangin confessed a certain discomfort with using the ancient word *'vicus'* to indicate settlements which were not proved (e.g. through epigraphy) as being such. Instead, he preferred to use a word coined by Roland Martin at a conference in 1971 (but published in 1977): 'secondary agglomeration' (Martin 1977). The expression used by Martin was intended to indicate those sites in Burgundy, which were not self-governing but he regarded as having an 'urban' character (Alesia, Entrains, Les Bolards-Nuits-Saint-Georges and Mâlain). The authors wrote: *'Que ce soit à partir des inscriptions antiques, ou des textes d'historiens du Haut Moyen Age, voire de fouilles, apparaît clairement l'existence de localités secondaires qui n'ont cessé de dépendre du chef-lieu de la cité, même si, un temps ou de façon partielle, elles ont attiré à elles des signes du pouvoir urbain'* (Mangin *et al.* 1986: 7-8). For a detailed and comprehensive literary review of this subject see Baret 2013.

[44] To make the matter worse, there is evidence that suggest *vici* could be *civitas* capitals, e.g. in the case of Agendicum (Sens) - where an enigmatic inscription referring to an *'aedil of the vikani agied(incenses?)'* was found - and Petuaria (Brough-on-Humber), named in an inscription *'vicus Petuariensis'*. In this work we will adopt the idea that secondary agglomerations could not have their own *'territorium'*. This idea was strongly supported by Schulten, who wrote that there could be no internal divisions within the *'territorium urbis'* and the inhabitants of a *vicus* could not administer any land (because that would have belonged to the *civitas*) (s.v. *finis*, Diz. Epigr., 3, 1962: 92, col. 2). This view has been criticized by Leveau, who worries that historians *'avaient du mal à admettre une complexité de l'organisation du territoire qui relevait du pragmatisme romain, en particulier l'existence de délimitations internes à la cité selon une hiérarchie reconnue par l'administration et attestée par la documentation épigraphique en Orient'* (Leveau 1993a; Leveau 1993b: 296-298).

[45] The term *'agglomeration secondaire'* is inclusive of burgs, villages, hamlets and so on (Tarpin 2006).

[46] Petit *et al.* eds 1994.

[47] Burnham 1995. See also Burnham and Wacher 1995 'The "small towns" of Roman Britain'; Brown ed. 1995 'Roman small towns in eastern England and beyond' and most recently in Rust 2006 'Architecture, economics, and identity in Romano-British "small towns"'.

[48] Todd 1970.

Rowley), 'lurking behind all these contributions, however, lay an unresolved issue concerning the initial criteria for inclusion of a "small town"'.[49] Nevertheless, some of its papers were to find echoes in future research, most notably the one by Rivet which dealt with classification. From a methodological point of view, most of the studies that followed focused largely on creating a typology based on the morphology of these settlements, in particular on the presence or absence of particular 'urban' elements (e.g. street grid or traces of deliberate planning, the development of a central core, zonation, type of buildings, defences, and so on). Several attempts to sub-divide 'small towns' were made, but despite the name this category of settlements was given, these typologies often included sites that were nothing like 'towns' and were instead rural settlements and villages.[50]

1.2.2 Morphology and size

When we attempt to analyse the planning and buildings in a city, the so-called townscape, we encounter two main obstacles. First of all, the large number of buildings and the variety of their components impede its easy description; secondly, the large number of forces that influence that morphology complicate its explanation.[51] The two most obvious morphological components of a city are the street plan and the buildings. When we look at a plan of a Roman town in the Western provinces, the street plan is generally the most notable feature one can observe.[52] Archaeological evidence shows two general models of street creation: bottom-up grids (created as people build and use the city) and which tend to be unstructured; or top-down grids (consciously planned, often in an orthogonal pattern), which tend to be more structured

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[49] Rodwell and Rowley 1995; Burnham 1995: 8.

[50] See, for example, the threefold typology by Burnham 1993: i. Upper-order settlements: covering all the sites traditionally identified as newly elevated cities or as minor towns with developed economic functions. They can all be shown to share in some or all the following features: 1) an urban internal street network, 2) urban core defences, 3) distinctive zones in the plan, 4) a broad range of building types, 5) a broad range of workshop industries, 6) large organized cemetery (e.g. Water Newton, Alchester, Ilchester). ii. Middle-order settlements: they tend to be characterized by distinctive official or religious buildings, strong-points defences or large-scale industrial activities. They sometimes are associated with features already identified in upper-order settlements (e.g. street network) but lower down the scale, they tend to be associated with ribbon developments, increasing agricultural emphasis and the absence of any degree of zoning in the plan. They include spas and religious centres (Springhead and Friford), specialist extractive or manufacturing sites (Charterhouse - lead; Brampton - pottery and metalworking and Middlewich - salt and iron); roadside settlements with imposed official/military functions. iii. Lower-order settlements characterized by the absence of defences, specialized functions, and buildings of any degree of sophistication; similar to rural villages.

[51] Johnson 1972: 25.

[52] Following Morrison 2015, throughout this work 'the term "Roman" serves to identify material that was used in Britain during the time of Roman administration, not material that was Roman in origin' (Morrison 2015: 18, also see Freeman 1993: 444; Cooper 1996: 86). For this reason the more generic and neutral adjective 'Roman' will be favoured over the expressions 'Gallo-Roman' or 'Romano-British' which, even though they are still very popular in the secondary literature, put too much unnecessary emphasis on a (disputable) ethnic and geographical background. In Gaul, the cities of Trier, Avanches, Cologne, Autun, Orange, Arles, Lutèce, Amiens, and Corseul all had, at their core, an orthogonal grid. This grid is lacking in Vienne, Vaison, Nîmes and Tolosa. The grid's *insulae* can be square-shaped (Trier, Autun and Cologne) or rectangular (Fréjus, Corseul, Avanches, Arles).

as in several Roman cities which are founded *ex-novo*;[53] most cities have a combination of both, exhibiting a top-down grid on the large scale (main streets), but bottom-up micro-grids, often peripheral to the core of the city, created by the owners or developers.[54]

The street plan of a Roman city may reflect the careful planning that preceded the development of the city, but also local piecemeal development and changing fashions in what was thought to be an appropriate layout.[55] Once laid down, the street plan can be remarkably persistent and extremely inflexible, partly because of the fixed capital tied up in the streets and in the buildings which face them and partly because of the complicated patterns of landownership which tend to arise.[56]

Secondary elements of the townscape are buildings. They are usually more susceptible to gradual alteration over time, being more influenced by temporary fashion trends and at times serving as unique architectural statements showcasing the owner's taste. Only a few remarkable buildings, cherished for their architectural merit or their religious connotation, are likely to survive for a longer period and might, in the long term, even acquire a completely different function (for example, in Late Antiquity, it is very common for some buildings to be repurposed). Both the street plan and buildings are an integral part of the design of the settlement pattern, and they tend to change at different speeds.

Alongside the physical characteristics of a city and the elements of its 'townscape', its size (used as a proxy for the population that inhabited the town) is also an object of interest in urban studies. In fact, it is fair to assume that the total number of inhabitants of a settlement (or the city size which we use as a proxy) has some implications for the importance of a city, since this figure provides a rough indication of the size of the labour force and the nature of the

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[53] For example, at Corseul the street grid was clearly planned in advance by the authority - as observed after excavations were carried out on the site known as 'Salle des Fêtes' (Kerébel 2004). There, the ditches that were meant to be running on the side of a *cardo* were already dug around AD 10-20, although the actual works on the street will start only under the reign of Nero, and the first houses will be built right afterwards (Fichet de Clairefontaine and Le Potier 1987: 89-91). A similar policy can be envisaged on the site of Monterfil II, where the space that will be devoted to the future *decumanus* was limited earlier by two ditches (Kerébel 2001: 26-28). A similar urbanistic expedient seems to have been used in the cities of Autun (Chardron-Picault et Pernot 1999: 19); Paris (Robin 1996: 244); Amiens, Reims and Metz (Coquelet 2001: 11); Jublains (Monteil 2012: 35).

[54] Very often the peripheral quarters ignore the orientation of the general plan (Arles, Fréjus, and Aix); it is not always clear whether they are contemporary or succeed the installation of the orthogonal street plan.

[55] Dominique Pouille, in his monograph dedicated to ancient Rennes, states that the orientation of the ancient lines traced in the *paleosol* and in the rocky sub-layer during the earliest stage of the parcelling of the town seem to have persisted over time as the succeeding archaeological remains seem to maintain the same orientation (Pouille 2008: 291 and 302). The way in which ancient cities have been laid out can indicate the degree of influence of the administrative authorities in charge of overseeing the works, who were often members of the elite. With regards to this last observation, the early town of Silchester shows that the personal interests of the elite were maintained within the nucleus around which the city grew (*Insula* IX) (Fulford and Timby 2000).

[56] Johnson 1972: 23. It is not unusual for the Roman street grid to endure until later times. However, in Late Antiquity we can also see deliberate blocking and gated access; see for example Ostia (Gering 2013).

specialized services which a city has to offer. This is the reason why in this work city sizes will be exploited to unravel changes and continuities in the evolution of cities.[57]

However, to allow demography alone to differentiate between city and non-city might be unwise. I here quote a significant passage from Louis Wirth's 1938 article 'Urbanism as a Way of Life':

> The characterization of a community as urban on the basis of size alone is obviously arbitrary. It is difficult to defend the present census definition which designates a community of 2.500 and above as urban and all others as rural. The situation would be the same if the criterion were 4.000, 8.000, 10.000, 25.000, or 100.000 population, for although in the latter case we might feel that we were more nearly dealing with an urban aggregate than would be the case in communities of lesser size, no definition of urbanism can hope to be completely satisfying as long as numbers are regarded as the sole criterion. Moreover, it is not difficult to demonstrate that communities of less than the arbitrarily set number of inhabitants lying within the range of influence of metropolitan centres have greater claim to recognition as urban communities than do larger ones leading a more isolated existence in a predominantly rural area.[58]

Thus, this approach is obviously context dependent. Historians have adopted different thresholds to divide urban from rural settlements. For example, Bairoch set the bar at 3000-5000 inhabitants, De Vries at 10,000 inhabitants, and De Ligt, basing his observation on the extent of the built-up area, set the limit at 20 ha.[59] However, very pragmatically, De Ligt acknowledges that 'the use of this label [rural] does not in any way imply that the "small towns" of Roman Italy performed no "urban" functions for the populations of their urban areas' and - he admits – 'a purely quantitative concept of "town" can only provide us with a very partial glimpse of a complex settlement hierarchy.'[60]

It should be stressed that any of these cut-off points are always strictly context dependent. Size cannot be used as the sole parameter for establishing whether a place was 'urban' (or performing 'urban' functions). In the north-western provinces, it is not uncommon to find administrative centres (e.g. several self-governing cities in Narbonensis, including Antibes,

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[57] Further aspects of the urban population that could be relevant for understanding a city are the varying demographic structure of the population, measured in term of age and sex, and the rate at which population totals are changing. However, the more interesting demographic characteristics of urban dwellers are those which distinguish them from rural populations, which of course vary from country to country and era to era. Urban areas are often centres of in-migration, and large cities have often provided the greatest attraction for migrants. As a result, cities, on the basis of their demand for labour and the nature of society and technology, are often a significant attraction for migrants. This notion was observed and described by Edward Hassinger in 1957 (Hassinger 1957). He stated that the city is the inhabited area where the main economic interests of the population lie and therefore is subjected to a centripetal force while, on the other hand, villages are subjected to a centrifugal force. Data such as these are nowadays collected in most census enumerations. However, in regard to ancient cities, inscriptions and high quality archaeological evidence such as burials would be crucial. These very interesting and promising studies, however, lie beyond the scope of this research and therefore might not be the object of analyses here.

[58] Wirth 1938: 4.

[59] Bairoch 1989; De Vries 1984; De Ligt 2012.

[60] De Ligt 2012: 201-202. It should be noted that also in this case the choice of setting the limit at 20 ha was merely practical and that - in early modern Italy - there are no reliable lists of 'small towns'.

Apt, Carpentras, Lodève, and Riez) that measure less than 10 ha, and we can also find secondary agglomerations inhabited by *c.* 500-1000 (*c.* 10-20 ha) which are known to have performed several of the 'urban' functions described below.

1.2.3 A functional definition

Until now we have looked at how the city is shaped and who/how many people inhabit it. Now, we want to address a third and last element which is essential: 'what is a city's function?', 'what is its *raison d'être*?'[61] The predominance of an array of social and economic activities (like manufacturing, services and trade), not solely related to the rural sphere and which demand a concentration of people within a relatively small area, is rightly believed to be an essential urban feature. However, this parameter alone would exclude the case of agro-towns (such as those of Southern Italy) and also a great number of Greek *poleis*, where most inhabitants were farmers and yet all the extra roles (such as the political and administrative ones) were present.

We can divide 'urban' functions into two main classes: central functions which provide services and activities to the population of the city and to its area of influence (e.g. administrative and commercial functions), and specialized functions which usually owe their existence to specific natural resources, favourable sites or historically and culturally important sites (such as mining, industrial, religious or thermal functions) whose market radius can be wider and more discontinuous.[62] The *'portefeuille d'activités'* of a city, that is the ensemble of economic activities undertaken in a city, allows us to look at the strength of its economy and its sustainability. For example, very specialized cities are usually considered more fragile compared to those which rely on a more diversified economic base, those whose *'portefeuille'* is more heterogeneous. In fact, specialized cities often exist for a limited time: until the resource, the network of suppliers and customers or the local *savoir-faire* that is passed on through collective apprenticeship training is disrupted. Therefore, while specialized cities can experience extraordinary and rapid development, they can also suffer a similarly sudden and rapid decline that may ultimately lead to oblivion if their principal activity is threatened. On the other hand, multifunctional cities, often considerably larger, are more capable of surviving economic transitions and of managing their risks in changing economic cycles.[63]

Here we will briefly list some of the most recurrent functions commonly ascribed to cities:

- Commercial/redistributive function: the prominent role played by trade in the development of cities was already recognized by Max Weber, who wrote that 'the city is a marketplace.'[64]

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[61] The idea that a city performs one or more functions goes back to the 19th century, when the notion of 'urban function' was initially elaborated by geographers. This expression, however, was made popular by Aurousseau, who in the 1920s observed how the function of a city was not only an essential attribute but also deeply influenced its internal organization. We earlier mentioned the demographic contrasts between rural and urban areas (Aurousseau 1921). However, rural and urban areas also differ in terms of function, although these differences are not always easy to point out.

[62] Harris and Ullman 1945.

[63] Pumain *et al.* 2006.

[64] Weber 1921.

The exchange of goods and services is the cornerstone of a city's economy and lies at the basis of every town, whether ancient or modern. Therefore, it is not surprising that it highly influences the shape of the townscape (buildings that are intended for such activities are always numerous and very sensitive to the intensity and orientation of the urban circulation) and the location of the settlement itself (which often lies on transport routes, on the boundaries between major natural regions or at the centre of their own local spheres of influence). Some of these establishments can also be present in smaller settlements (e.g. butchery or a small workshops). To investigate the extent of commercial activity performed by ancient agglomerations is not an easy task.[65] While productive and manufacturing activities might leave some traces on the ground - e.g. features (kilns, hearths) or slags (metallic or ceramic materials, bones etc.), retail spaces (that is 'buildings or rooms where goods were sold, made and/or prepared for sale and sold') are more difficult to identify.[66] We know that as a general rule, *tabernae*, were located at the front of a strip building, and they were in strict association with workshops and warehouses (though there was *no shortage of exceptions, and* we should not forget that non-permanent sale points - e.g. temporary market stalls - might have been very common in ancient settlements). Even though often archaeologists cannot go beyond 'assuming' the presence of sale points, the archaeological evidence gained so far has allowed us to grasp the importance of commerce within settlements. Evidence points to the existence of specified quarters and commercial districts completely dedicated to this activity (both within the core of a settlement or on its periphery), as well as the presence of warehouses (*horrea*) that stored goods ready to be dispatched for long-distance travel.[67]

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[65] The Romans recorded most of their day-to-day transactions by incising the wax covering of wooden tablets. This medium was highly perishable, and we have almost no written records of such transactions after two millennia. We therefore are dependent on four kinds of evidence: 1) casual remarks about the economy in works of literature that have been preserved for other reasons; 2) proclamations or directives important enough to be chiselled into stone; 3) archaeological evidence; 4) *papyri* from Egypt (Temin 2006). Also lead seals for contracts as found in Delos.

[66] MacMahon 2003: 9-10; the author draws to attention to the fact that commercial activities could be performed in both temporary markets (e.g. fairs) and in permanent shops. Also see Lavan 2012 on temporary market stalls.

[67] Commercial districts are known to have had a huge role (and to have covered a huge area) in provincial capitals (Lyon, Cologne and London), but also in other *civitas* capitals and secondary agglomerations. For example in Corseul, which is known through aerial photography to have been an overall low-density inhabited city, with spaces left empty and large houses appearing to stand isolated in courtyards. The main evidence for denser occupation comes from groups of shops ranged along the main roads. The boutiques and the workshops of this commercial district (Monterfil) were initially built in wood and clay. They were later re-built at the same time at the end of the 1st century AD - beginning of the 2nd century AD with the façade having a common *porticus* which opened on the main street that ran east-west (Kérébel and Fichet de Clairfontaine 1988). Warehouses are another archaeological feature that can demonstrate the importance of commerce other than shops within a certain economy. One well-documented example of a warehouse (especially if we compare it with others) is the one excavated in Rezé, set on the estuary of the Loire in the territory of the Pictones. In its first phase (around mid-1st century AD) the settlement was constructed in perishable materials. Around the end of the 1st century AD and the beginning of the 2nd century AD the entire area was completely rebuilt (given the amplitude of the project, it is assumed that it was the municipality which embarked on this major programme, and not private citizens). The high representation of *amphorae* Dressel 20 (commonly used to stock oil) and of shards belonging to *amphorae* used to serve and sell wine hints at this kind of traffic. However, we should not disregard completely the idea that

- Industrial function: by industry, we mean every economic activity that transforms primary material into manufactured good. The first large-scale production cluster of pottery in the north-western provinces was centred in Lyon, the capital of the Three Gauls. The industry flourished between 20-15 BC and Augustan-Tiberian time. The earliest imitations of black and red-slipped pottery date back to 50-40 BC. Thus, they pre-date the Italian *sigillata*'s peak in imports, and the two seem to have co-existed for some time. Most scholars believe that the first workshops established in Lyon and perhaps in Vienne were branch workshops of those in Arezzo.[68] In the peripheral areas of most capital cities (e.g. Cologne and Trier) there are clear signs of abundant industrial production as there are in many other agglomerations, like the ones in Rhenania which for this reason are called *'Industrieanlagen'* and whose industries (metallurgical, tableware industries or quarries) were important for their economy.[69]

- Specialized function: specialized-function cities are dominated by one activity such as thermal, mining, manufacturing, harbour cities etc. In order to avoid misunderstandings, we should start by saying that, at least when applied to Roman archaeology, the notion of 'specialized agglomeration' should not be taken too literally. In fact, while it is undeniable that some ancient agglomerations may have been renowned for one specific activity that dominated the economy, such as mining in the region of Argentomagus ('*Silver* Market') or the exploitation of thermal water in agglomerations such as Vicus Aquensis (Aix-les-Bains) Aquae Calidae (Vichy), Aquae Neri (Néris-les-Bains), or Aquae Sulis (Bath), we should always keep in mind that other types of activities were certainly conducted.[70]

- Communication function:[71] different social theories are based on the assumption that an increase of social and spatial proximity results in increased social interactions, which in turn increase the probability of spurring innovations. The city is by definition the place where social

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wine produced locally was being traded, too. Presses have been found nearby, at Piriac-sur-Mer and at Parville (Monteil 2012: 296; Hervé-Monteil *et al.* 2011)

[68] Out of the fourteen fragments of moulds which have been discovered in La Muette, two show a distribution of major chemical elements which suggest a provenance from Arezzo. In addition, the major-element distribution of thirteen stamps found in La Muette also indicates the same provenance (Widemann *et al.* 1975). Finally the names (Lasfargues and Vertet 1976) of many masters and slaves of the pottery workshops of Arezzo are found among the signatures of pots unearthed in La Muette (Widemann *et al.* 1975: 45). Woolf points to the complexity and uncertainties that still surround these productions. He underlines the difficulties in establishing the relationship between these new local branches and their Italian counterparts. He also believes that after the experience of Lyon-La Muette these 'branch workshops' stopped working; all the subsequent production of *sigillata* in Gaul, he concludes, will mostly rely on the work of local potters (Woolf 1992: 195).

Only typological and chemical analysis combined allows us to distinguish between the imported goods produced in Italy and local production (Lasfargues and Vertet 1976). With regards to the production of the *Rhône* Valley, it is hard to discriminate between the products produced in Lyon and those manufactured in the middle *Rhône* Valley and Vienne given that similar calcareous clay can be found at all sites (Dangréaux and Desbat 1997).

[69] Hellenkemper 1980; Gilles 1994.

[70] Finley (3rd edtion) 1999: 22.

[71] The crucial role of cities in fostering intergroup and cross-cultural communication became the object of study during the last century, when multiple theories started to be developed (e.g. 'A Communication Theory of urban growth' by Meier, published in 1962 and based on the theory of information previously elaborated by Shannon, Weaver and Brillouin in the 1950s; the works of Melvin Webber etc.); Meier 1962; Shannon and Warren 1949; Brillouin 1956; Webber 1968**.**

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interactions are maximized, hence the importance of the role of the cities in the diffusion of information and ideas. Until the advent of modern technologies, proximity was a fundamental condition for the transmission of information, which was usually conveyed by face-to-face interactions. Besides, these sorts of interactions are still fundamental for yielding specific *savoirs* and *savoir-faire* that the economists call 'tacit knowledge'.[72]

This phenomenon is well depicted in Blaise Pichon's article *'Formes et rythmes de la romanisation dans l'ouest de la Gaule Belgique'*. The author states that the *'goût romain'* first reached the largest cities, which often are *civitas* capitals. The first tangible changes seem to appear already in the Augustan period. Later it timidly appears at other sites (as the presence of baths in Saint-Laurent-Blangy or the wall paintings with figurative motives in Arras and Ribemont-sur-Ancre attest). In the countryside the changes are less noticeable. However, he thinks that it would be wrong to interpret the slow diffusion of Roman practices as evidence of 'cultural resistance' because the imperial power was not carrying out any policy of Romanization that might inspire resistance, at least not in a cultural sense.

1.2.4 A three-fold definition

As we have already mentioned, cities are complex and always multifunctional. Certainly, the identification of specialized functions of certain cities can be achieved only by comparing their *'portefeuille d'activités'* with that of other cities, and this exercise can be useful if it is able to reveal important geo-diversities. However, typological analysis should not be taken to an extreme. Pierre Garmy has rightly observed how archaeologists, undoubtedly because of a *déformation professionnelle*, tend to look at the cities as if they were looking at pottery shards: they try to classify them, trying to make them fit into categories and sub-categories, forgetting that they are by nature complex systems.[73] Thus, 'urban' settlements are often categorized into manufacturing, commercial, administrative, religious cities and so on, without any real analysis of their occupational structure.[74] Such a method does not allow for the fact that most towns have many functions and that the most obvious function is not necessarily the most important.

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[72] Also see Bettencourt 2013. The multicultural environment of large cities, along with the increasingly complex division of labour and opportunities for training, education and apprenticeship they offer, and the competitiveness among them, reinforce their status as places *par excellence* for the creation and adoption of innovations (Pumain *et al*. 2006). The geographer Torsten Hägerstrand in the 1950s formalized the spatial distribution of the innovations within cities and concluded that they display a hierarchical diffusion, showing how often innovations are initially accepted in the largest cities, which usually have better infrastructures, more qualified and receptive inhabitants, a higher number of entrepreneurs and more capital at their disposal. They later spread to smaller settlements (Hägerstrand 1953).

[73] Garmy 2012b: 194.

[74] An example regarding Roman Britain is Burnham and Wacher's (1990) division into 'potential city', 'minor town', 'specialized site', 'religious site', 'industrial site', 'fortified site' and 'unfortified site'. Mangin and Tassaux (1992), in a monograph about the secondary settlements of Aquitania, distinguished four different categories of settlements: i. true cities or semi-urban agglomerations: they display traces of secondary and tertiary functions and (monumental) public and private buildings; ii. burgs and *burgades*: they do not display any sign of monumentalization; however, they may have a specialized function or display traces of diverse activities. iii. Agglomerations with a predominant religious function (sanctuaries, complex sanctuaries, and thermal stations); iv. road stations and rural agglomerations.

In reality, the shops of a mining town may make it a more important centre of retail trade than of extractive industry.[75]

However, the questions that we should be asking are not whether a place was a city, but rather 'what was happening there?', 'who lived in those agglomerations?', 'how did these settlements function?', and 'what was their relationship with the rest of the settlement system?'.[76] For this reason, when looking at the settlement system of the north-western provinces, it is also important to look at those 'town-like' places that performed at least some urban functions as towns, although they were not self-governing.[77] In order to effectively do so, it is important not to conceive settlements as mere transit areas. Instead, we should see them as places where different activities were performed and multiple functions concentrated (defence, religion, administration, economics etc.) - the political function being non-mandatory. Here we will focus our attention on those town-like secondary settlements which performed different urban functions and where a substantial percentage of inhabitants were involved in the secondary and tertiary sectors. This means that highly specialized sites deprived of services and urban equipment (e.g. mining cities or villages of potters) have been excluded when they resembled dormitory cities that housed the families of those who were employed in the main local industry.[78] The presence of workshops (secondary sector) becomes therefore fundamental. As mentioned above, they are easier to identify archaeologically than are commercial activities are (trade), although it remains at times hard to characterize them and evaluate their scale. Traces of production of domestic pottery are commonly found, but how extensively these goods were distributed is harder to appraise. Metalwork appears to be less widely distributed, although it is not rare (refuse of smelted metal ore or debris are often found on room floors). Other production activities are less often attested, for example, glass, bone, salt and textile industry, or other activities indirectly related to the primary sector (e.g. food processing).

One of the greatest challenges of this research is to take into account all the settlements that fit any of the threefold definitions presented above. After having examined the transition between the Iron Age and Roman times (chapter 2), we will look at how the territory within these provinces was annexed to the Roman Empire (chapter 3). This will give us the opportunity to touch on aspects such as the political integration and administration of these provinces. Then, acknowledging the duality between *urbs* and *rus*, we will - at first - focus on the self-governing cities only (chapter 4), where the political and administrative functions concentrated. We will do so from a macro-scale perspective, but in order to grasp their additional functions (including those of all the secondary agglomerations that depended on them) as central places, we need to look at them in relation to their own surroundings (hinterland) and in relation to each other. This can be done effectively only by looking at them as part of their own regional settlement

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[75] Johnson 1972:73.

[76] These fundamental points were very wisely brought up by Millett in the 1990s but are still valid to this day (Millett 1995).

[77] Thus, the scope of the research will go beyond that of previous scholars, such as that of Bekker-Nielsen (1989), who looked at the distribution of self-governing cities only.

[78] These types of settlements are usually considered as anomalies in the urban hierarchy because of their large numbers of inhabitants and the surprising absence of any additional function that ideally would correspond to their rank.

system (chapters 5 and 6). At the end of each of these last two chapters, we will present our principal findings; in doing so we will engage in an interdisciplinary discussion about the development of urbanism in these provinces and what the distribution of settlements and vertical relationships (i.e. hierarchy) can tell us about the economy, politics, and socio-cultural development of these provinces.