The extended metropolis: *Urbs, suburbium* and population

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The relationship between Rome and its surrounding territory has long been a focus of study and debate. This paper aims to add to the discussion in two specific ways: first, it attempts to diminish the pervasive dichotomy between metropolis and hinterland; second, it uses survey data to quantify the population of the Early Imperial *suburbium*.

Ancient historians and archaeologists have increasingly emphasized the interdependence of town and country, stressing the dangers of drawing lines around social and economic phenomena and of polarizing studies between urban and rural.[1] In the specific case of Rome, both *Urbs* and hinterland are particularly well researched, though scholars usually focus on either one or the other; studies which encompass both have had a tendency to view the countryside from the urban perspective, in particular using the model of the 'consumer city'. As a result, there is a risk of adopting different approaches to closely related issues: Rome's *suburbium* was both "città e non città",[2] an ambiguous area, part city and part countryside, which cannot be adequately studied from only an urban or a rural perspective.

This paper explores the nexus of social, political and economic flows with the aim of assessing the interaction and integration of metropolis and *suburbium*. The focus is the Early Imperial period (*c.*27 B.C.–A.D. 100) though other relevant material is included.[3] It aims to consider the rural population not simply as *rustici* but as a sizeable and integral part of the population of Rome itself. Considering metropolis and *suburbium* as a single unit has important implications for the study not only of rural areas, but also for the city itself, as well as for Roman Italy in general.

Urbs and *suburbium*

Older studies of Roman urbanism often divided town from country. At Rome itself, the Aurelian Wall has long served as a physical and psychological boundary.[4] But ancient town and country were united politically through the concept of the *civitas*;[5] the walls, customs barriers, *pomeria*, and other urban boundaries were all permeable.[6] Imperial Rome was surrounded by suburbs, making it difficult to identify where the city ended and countryside began (Dion. Hal. 4.13.4). The suburbs appear to have extended for 5 or even 10 km.[7] The sardonic observation that Nero's Golden House was so large that it reached almost to Veii should be understood as much against the background of the city's sprawling nature and the intense competition for space as a sign of Nero's excesses.[8] The suburbs were characterized by *horti*, burial grounds, rubbish dumps, quarries, clay pits, sites of manufacturing, punishment and religion, horticulture and storage;[9]

1 E.g., Rich and Wallace-Hadrill 1991. Geographers of the modern world have also focused on the interface between urban and rural: Tacoli 1998. The present paper borrows its title from a collection edited by Ginsburg *et al.* 1991.

2 Marazzi 2001, 725.

3 The mythical connections between Rome and Latium, propagated in particular during the Early Imperial period, are also relevant: Cornell 1995.

4 This division seems to reflect a conceptual divide: scholars such as Ashby and Lugli published extensively on both *Urbs* and *suburbium* but never in an integrated fashion. Lanciani 1898 is an exception.

5 Jones 1964, 712.

6 On the *pomerium*, Beard *et al.* 1998, 93-96; Panciera 1999; Spera 1999.

7 Quilici 1974b.

8 Suet., *Nero* 39.

9 For summaries see Morley 1996 and Patterson 2000. For balance between these demands, Purcell 1987, 33.