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THE HERILAND HANDBOOK

**TRAINING THE
NEXT GENERATION
OF HERITAGE AND LANDSCAPE
PROFESSIONALS**

Edited by Gert-Jan Burgers and Niels van Manen



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Cultural Heritage
and the Planning
of European Landscapes

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4.11. Mobility and cultural heritage

Multi-scalar and diachronic explorations on Roman street spaces



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Keywords:

STREET SPACES

CULTURAL MOVEMENT

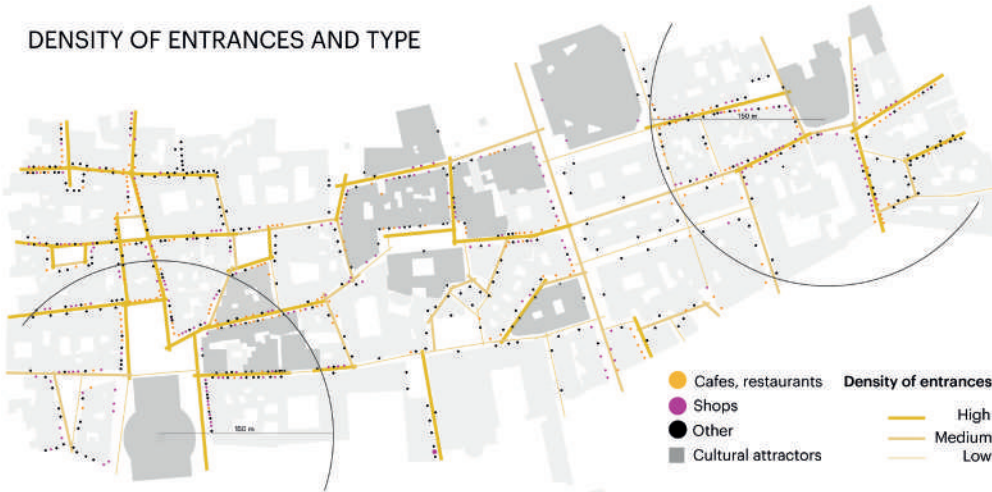
MULTIPLE URBAN SCALES



THE CASE

Sophia's research investigated the relationship between mobility and cultural heritage, focusing on three street spaces in Rome, Italy. It explored whether and how the built environment and particular street spaces have agency in both the valorization of urban areas as cultural spaces and in enabling cultural movement. To assess specifically how the built environment contributes to enabling cultural movement, on the one hand, and to adding value to cultural spaces, on the other, this study identified and described interrelations between spatial attributes, cultural attractors and movement. The spatial element selected to frame this study is the street space, as a "container" of mobility and heritage sites, while the territory of Rome became the operational ground of this study (Giudici, 2014). Sophia's study was carried out under the umbrella of the Heriland theme of *shifting demographics*, but it also has clear links with the *spatial turn*.

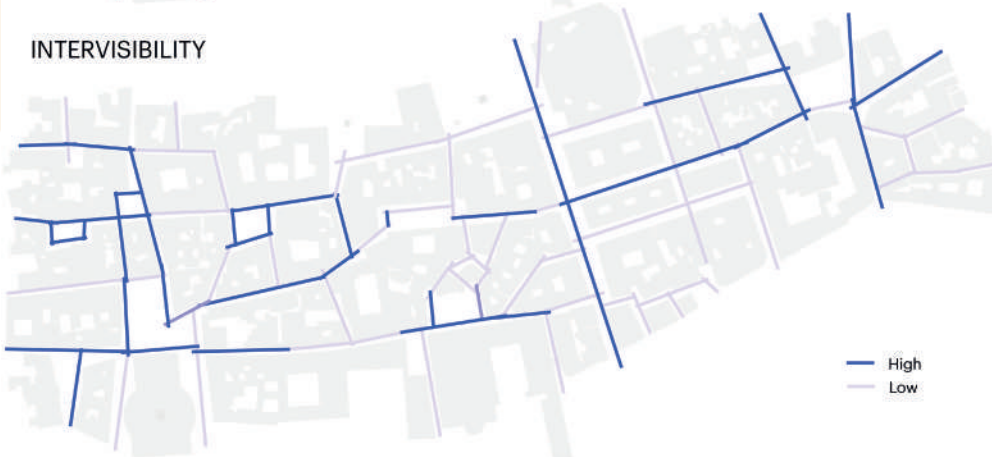
DENSITY OF ENTRANCES AND TYPE



CONSTITUTEDNESS



INTERVISIBILITY



TOPOLOGICAL DEPTH

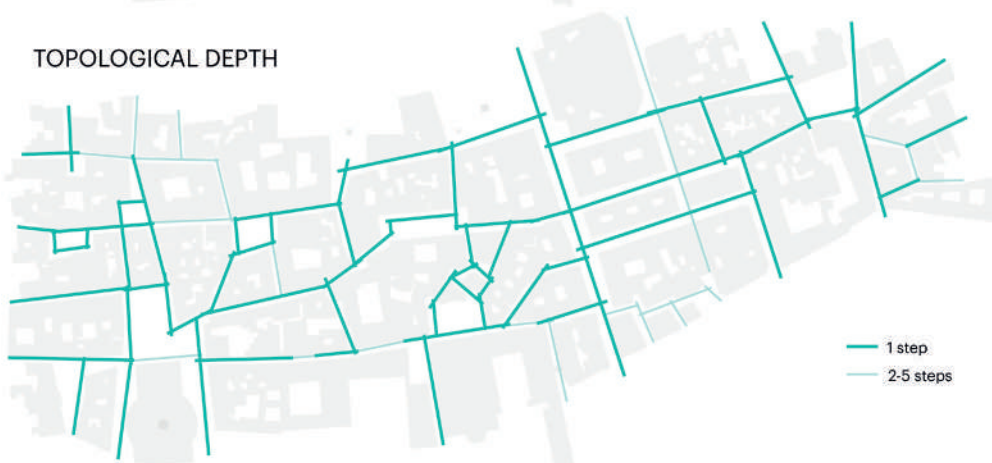


Fig. 4.11.1. Microspatial parameters in the Trevi – Pantheon routes (Arbara et al., 2023).

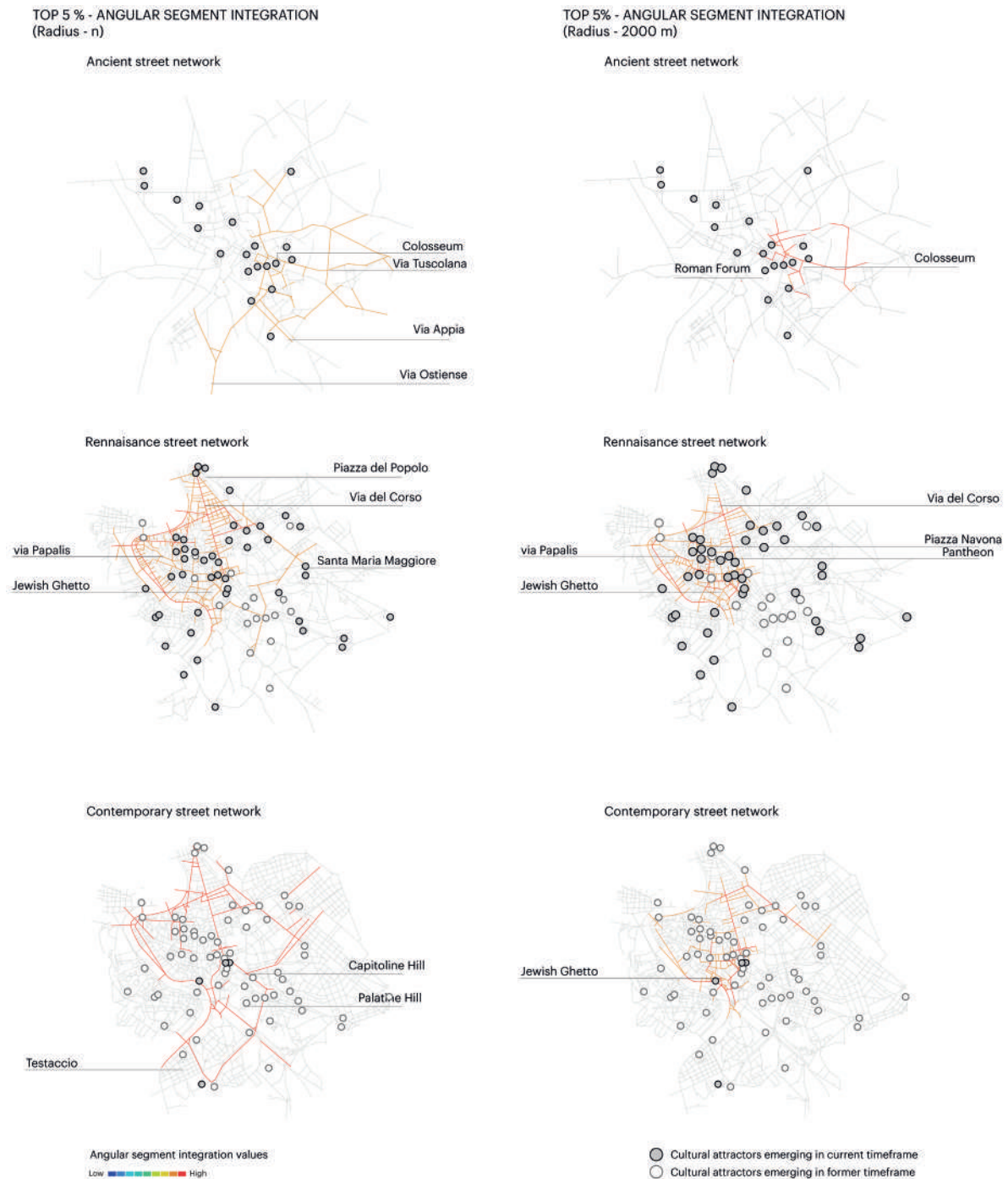


Fig. 4.11.2. 5% of the most integrated street network (angular segment integration $R - N$, $R - 2000$) and the position of today's cultural heritage attractions in the historic urban area of Rome for three timeframes (Arbara et al., 2023).

PREMISES

Sophia began by exploring the premise that cultural heritage sites, being both enablers and “results” of mobility have agency in the shaping of the built environment (here, the street space). Testing this premise, the following questions were asked: (a) how does mobility relate to today's cultural heritage spaces (be it a small-scale artefact, an architectural site or a larger urban or natural landscape); and (b) how has the urban space (here, the street space) been affected by this reciprocity?

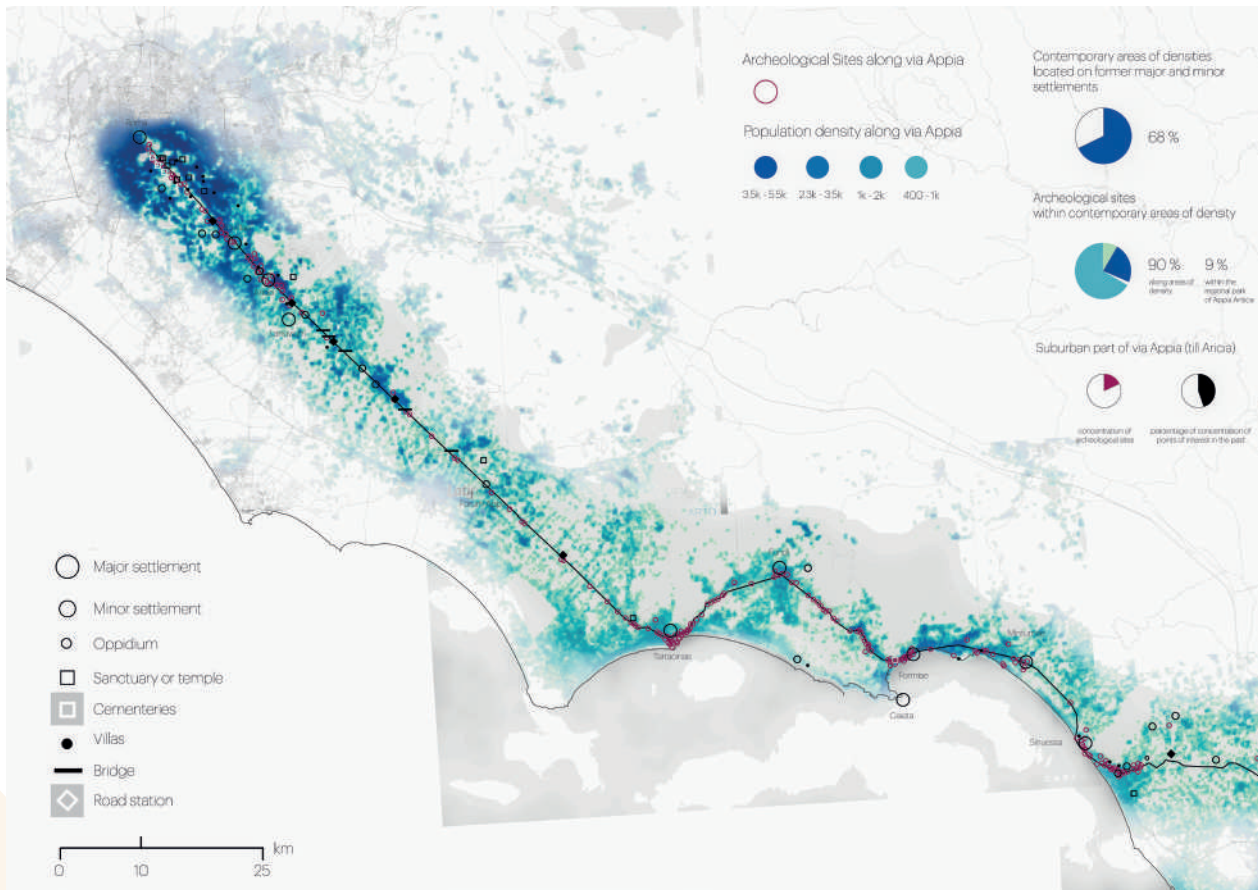


Fig. 4.11.3. The first segment of the Via Appia: cultural routes design methodology of past and present urbanisation patterns.

To address these questions, this project took an approach spanning both temporal and spatial scales. In the contemporary scene, cultural heritage sites serve as pedestrian movement attractors, especially in historic urban areas. These sizeable fluxes of visitors – notably in historic urban areas – have drawn the attention of various disciplines, such as tourism studies, economics, sociology and urban planning, which tried to assess, monitor and develop policies and models that would mitigate the negative externalities of visitor flows. While the morphological aspect of historic urban areas is quite consolidated, the emergence of specific routes within the city is altering the urban landscape, enabling culture-led pedestrian movement flows. These alterations are not necessarily reflected in drastic changes in the urban morphology of a historic area, but changes in microspatial attributes such as density, type of use and signage, do impact the intensity and type of movement within historic areas, creating high-flux environments whose imprint is spatially visible.

Aside from investigating the link between heritage sites and mobility at a single street level, the second scale of analysis focused on larger networks of streets. Lastly, the third part of Sophia’s project focused on exploring how mobility serves as a cultural enabler at the scale of larger territories. At this level, the analysis focused on the role of mobility in the emergence of cultural routes.

THEORY

Aiming to bridge the gap between heritage-related questions and urban space, the theoretical framework of Sophia’s work was built at the intersections of urbanization theory, critical heritage discourse and research branches sparked by the mobilities turn (Jensen, 2010, 2013; Sheller and Urry, 2006). While scholars

and practitioners argue for shared objectives and shared problems between cities and heritage disciplines (Bandarin and van Oers, 2014), at the same time, as the notion of heritage has been shifting, the means for studying and understanding the phenomena of contemporary urbanization have also been subject to change. This change has been driven primarily by the tendency to question the urban age thesis and challenge on one hand the empirical methods measuring and defining urban population and on the other the theoretical assumptions underlying the definitions of “urban”. Consequently, the socio-spatial dimensions of urbanization have recently been reframed into polymorphic, variable, and dynamic dimensions with the aim of understanding urbanization not as a universal form but as a historical process which needs to be understood at a variety of scales and time spans (Brenner, 2019).

This spatial approach opened up and emphasized trajectories prioritizing movement and connections, instead of location (Batty, 2013). Within that frame, cultural spaces are perceived as elements ranging from artefacts to historic urban areas and the hinterland as intertwined and reciprocally informed systems of planetary processes. Along with the question of scale, since cultural processes play out over historical time, the question of time became equally important to understand the interplay between movement and culture in space. Therefore, aside from a focus on the interconnected contemporary scene (Graham and Marvin, 2001; Massey, 1991), diachronic approaches become an important framework, due to the dynamic nature of even the most traditional cultures (Greenblatt, 2009).

METHODS

Sophia’s project approached the research questions with mixed methods, primarily investigating three case studies in Rome: (a) the routes connecting the Trevi fountain to the Pantheon; (b) the historic urban area of Rome within the Aurelian walls and its cultural artefacts; and (c) the Via Appia as a cultural route. All three case studies followed a predominantly spatial approach. However, given the different scales and temporal frames, the methods differed from case to case and were not comparable, ranging from qualitative mapping (Corner, 2011; Amoroso, 2010) to space syntax theory and methods (Hillier and Hanson, 1986; Hillier *et al.*, 1993), and micro-macro spatial analysis (van Nes and López, 2010). The Trevi-Pantheon routes were analysed by examining micro-spatial parameters. The historic urban area of Rome, the second subject of inquiry, was approached through the lens of spatial configuration. The case of Via Appia, at the territorial scale, was explored through exploratory mapping techniques aiming to build upon a culture routes design (Elder, 2020).

FINDINGS

The outcomes of this research project can best be broken down by case study. First, the analysis of the Trevi-Pantheon case highlighted the fact that in historic urban areas, even minimal spatial interventions such as pedestrianization of a street, may multiply microspatial parameters and movement. Also, factors such as proximity to important heritage sites, density of land uses and adequate signage were also linked to high movement patterns.

Spatial configurative analysis on the historic urban area of Rome and the application of natural movement theory revealed possible correlations between spatial configuration and cultural attractors. In addition, adapting natural movement theory to cultural attractions offered a systematic framework through which to analyse the position of popular heritage attractors in historic urban areas and to bridge the gap between heritage-related studies and urban design and planning. When studying cultural attractors and their position in an urban setting, a diachronic spatial analysis was key, as it revealed the link between spa-

tial configuration and attraction in cases that these were still active parts of the city and still retained their former uses (Arbara *et al.*, 2023).

In the third case, the analysis of past movement patterns and cultural exchange along the Via Appia indicated the formation of a future cultural landscape for two main reasons. On one hand, the rhythm and speed of movement reciprocally informed the emergence of points of interest and the spatial organization of the settlements bypassing the road. On the other, studying the users-travellers who would move through the consular roads carrying and exchanging goods, information, and services provided additional insights into the creation of cultural processes through movement in long historical processes.

As a final outcome, this thesis proposed new trajectories for the research and design of historic urban landscapes, highlighting the reciprocities between mobility, cultural heritage, and urban space. By challenging established notions of culture and focusing instead “*on routes rather than roots*” (Cresswell, 2006) through the territory of Rome, a territory traditionally interpreted by its monuments, new notions have emerged.