



Newsome, D. J. (2008) "Reordering the *spatium Urbis* of Augustan Rome. Review of Haselberger 2007, *Urbem Adornare: Rome's Urban Metamorphosis Under Augustus*". *Rosetta* **4**: 21-26.

http://rosetta.bham.ac.uk/Issue_04/Newsome.htm

Reordering the *spatium Urbis* of Augustan Rome

Lothar Haselberger, *Urbem Adornare: Die Stadt Rom Und Ihre Gestaltumwandlung Unter Augustus / Rome's Urban Metamorphosis Under Augustus*. Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 64, 2007. Pp. 288, figs. 4. \$79 hardback. ISBN 13:978-1-887829-64-9 (Hbk). (German text with English translation by Alexander Thein).

Reviewed by David J. Newsome

University of Birmingham

At first glance, Lothar Haselberger's *Urbem Adornare: Rome's Urban Metamorphosis Under Augustus* might seem like a routine addition to the ever-growing literature on the architectural evolution of the city of Rome under its first Emperor.¹ However, this is not only a case of repackaging the long-since known details of the abundant building projects. Instead, the intention is to understand more clearly how Augustus transformed 'the city'; not in the familiar terms of transforming it from a city of brick to one of marble (Suet *Aug.* 28.3) but in the less familiar terms of the conceptual and municipal expansion and reorganisation of urban space. The focus is 'the de facto relinquishing of the old *Urbs* in favour of the novel, open metropolis' (8), in particular the Campus Martius. It is a study of the metamorphosis of *the city*; rather than the architectural metamorphoses *within* the city, as is the traditional fodder of such period-overviews of Rome's most vigorously studied epoch.²

'The city' itself has received less attention than those projects that defined it. This may be a legacy of the approach of Augustus' own Vitruvius, whose 'components' approach to architecture continues to be the dominant paradigm in urban analyses. Much of the avoidance of this subject can also be traced to Augustus' own self-representation. The *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* presented a substantial list of changes implemented by Augustus, but its focus was on individual projects (248). 'Rome' is conspicuous by its absence. Augustus' own avoidance betrays his reticence towards such change in the wake of Caesar's unpopular plans to straighten the Tiber and extend Rome (*de urbe augenda*, 48). Almost reflecting this avoidance, scholarship on the Augustan city has traditionally focused on architectural structures, rather than on the effects of those structures in the wider concept, definition and

¹ Coarelli 1985; Zanker 1990; Favro 1996; Haselberger and Humphrey 2006.

² The *Urbs* are defined in the present volume as the area within the 11km Servian Wall (18-22). However, Rome's urban definition was never so clear. The issues of how to define Rome's urban boundaries are well covered by Patterson 2000: 85-103 and Goodman 2007.

experience of urban space. Haselberger's work is a step toward the oft-neglected aspect: the space of the city as focus, rather than context.

The work is based on the chronological and spatial relationships between building projects, the nature of those projects, and the recording of Augustus' own role in the construction and dedication process. The evidence is structured around the three key verbs from the *Res Gestae*: *feci* (built), *refeci* (repaired/renovated) and *perfecei* (completed). This is the obvious starting point for finding such information and references are consistently presented after relevant building entries (in the form of 'RG x'). However, Haselberger imparts caution. The *Res Gestae* is not simply a list of changes but an instrument for reinforcing ideology (32-6).³ For example, Augustus recorded himself as the builder (*feci*) of the Temple of Iuppiter Ferentius; on the Capitol and on land, by tradition, consecrated by Romulus (RG 19). Livy, in contrast, stated that Augustus' hand in this project was only in rebuilding and renovation (*refecit*; Livy 4.20.7). The scale of rebuilding and, above all, the social memory attached to particular sites, in this case 'the first of all the sanctuaries of Rome' (Livy 1.10.7) contributed to Augustus' claim for *feci* and Livy's subsequent rejection of such misappropriation of Rome's history.⁴ Rather than simply indexing each construction with its relevant mention in the *Res Gestae*, Haselberger demonstrates an ideology of representation that is intrinsically linked to Augustus' evolving scheme for the *Urbs* and his metamorphosis of the city. According to Haselberger, Augustus pursued a 'double strategy' (140); reinforcing the old *Urbs* and the new dynastic position within it, whilst persistent and extensive changes in the extra-urban Campus Martius redefined the balance of the city.

Haselberger demonstrates how the development of the Campus Martius 'complicated' (128) and 'dissolved' (160) the definition of and distinction between *Urbs* and sub-*Urbs*; a steady process since the second century B.C., but accelerated from the 20s. Rome was clearly no longer a city defined by its walls and the *Regiones Quattuor* of Servius Tullius. In 7 B.C. Augustus' regional reforms reorganized the administration of the urban area and it is these measures, more than any other Augustan contribution to the city, that Haselberger considers 'revolutionary' (192). The division of Rome into 14 *Regiones*, irregularly sized and somewhat arbitrarily based on prominent topographical features, gave no precedence to the old *Urbs* or their walls. *Regiones* 2, 3, 6, 12 and 13 included what would previously have been both

³ For a more detailed treatment of ideological representation in the *Res Gestae*, see Ridley 2003.

⁴ See also Bonneford 1987. On Augustus' attempts to foster a unified identity through religious rebuilding, see Orlin 2007.

‘urban’ and ‘suburban’ spaces. Haselberger considers this a redefinition of ‘Rome’ (202-4); systematically uniting the inhabited sprawl and giving ‘administrative polity’ (194) to those areas previously outside the *Urbs*. Imbuing these familiar historical points with a sense of administrative consequence is important.

However, the second stated repercussion of the regional reforms – the influence on the ‘lived experience’ within the city (22) – is not developed in the present work. There is much scope for this. The Servian Wall had a psychological as well as physical presence – leading to a unified social identity amongst those it encircled; a cohesion that was previously impeded by the topographic fragmentation between the seven hills and their valleys. The Servian Wall generated Rome’s *place*. Such a thing cannot be said of the Augustan reforms some four centuries later, by which time the very definition of Rome, as Haselberger himself shows, had slipped into uncertainty. Yet there is the danger of supposing that such uncertainty was a concern in the ancient city and not simply an exaggeration or invention in later scholarship. Whilst the *pomerium* retained enough significance for its extension to be noteworthy, it was not a measure of the ancient city. The line of the *pomerium* did not expand with growth of the city, and so the *urbis principium* and the Servian Wall were, like the ‘*Urbs*’ and ‘*Rome*’ under Augustus, not analogous with one another. Servius Tullius’ circuit of walls physically and conceptually changed what was *post moerium*, but judicially this was not the case. The definition of the inaugurated *pomerium* and the *ager publicus* remained the same, despite the settlement’s expansion and its redefined sense of place. What this shows is that the evolution of the city of Rome was never as rigidly formalised as its judicial boundaries might imply. The question that remains to be resolved, then, is how much weight we ought to give to such boundaries (physical, ritual or legal) when discussing the lived experience of the Augustan city.

The new definition of the city and its neighbourhoods created new civic identities and localised associations throughout the city. However, the significance of these changes (or how best to identify and interpret them) is not approached in detail in this work, despite being an important question for understanding Haselberger’s broader concern with the metamorphosis of ‘the city’. Is the lack of ‘ado or ceremony’ (192) associated with this ‘silent revolution’ simply a matter of Augustus downplaying his transformation of Rome (248), or is it that the measures were of administrative significance but of little importance for everyday life in the city? Did one living on the west bank of the Tiber not feel that they belonged to ‘Rome’ until

it was officially sanctioned as *Region XIV*? Was there any lived difference depending on whether one's property was on the west or the east side of the Via Flaminia, which divided *Regiones VII* and *IX*? Augustus' reforms might better be read more as defining long-term processes in the city that had rendered the traditional distinction, experientially at least, irrelevant.⁵ The *Regiones Quattuordecim* still offer a unique opportunity to examine the experience and legislation of urban space; in pre-Augustan Rome, through the reforms, and into latter centuries, such as their recording in the fourth century *Regionary Catalogue*. The arbitrary nature of many of the regional boundaries, if they can be identified, is a useful and hitherto neglected means of approaching the conceptual definition of different places within continuous urban space, as well as the reproduction of localised identities within the expansive metropolis.

The work makes no secret that it is a companion piece to, or the fulfilment of, the project's *Mapping Augustan Rome* volume.⁶ It is not necessary to have read the *Mapping* volume to understand the present work, although some overlap would be beneficial. Too often the work assumes that the reader will have immediate access to the *Mapping* volume for images. Since the present discussion is based on the spatial relationships between projects, having only four figures is insufficient. Only one of these (fig. 4, a 1:10000 scale map of the Campus Martius and *fora*) is particularly relevant. Instead, the reader is directed to the *Mapping* volume as a matter of routine, e.g. 'it may be useful to have a map of the city at hand now for consultation' (70). For those closely familiar with the topography of the city of Rome, the absence of detailed maps will not be a problem, but it is nevertheless a frustrating omission and one that presupposes existing knowledge to a degree that the text, to its credit, never does.

Another frustrating omission is the lack of an English translation of the footnotes. Haselberger states that the footnotes (324 of them) are intended to present 'more detailed consideration and explanation as well as more supporting evidence' (8). The more expansive footnotes will be lost to those who do not read German. Neither are the addenda translated, which present the most up-to-date additions, corrections or revisions. It is regrettable then, that for all the lucidity with which the text is translated into English, it remains fundamentally incomplete and is only a partial statement of the author's substantial research.

⁵ The most recent treatments of such issues are Wallace-Hadrill 2003 and Lott 2004.

⁶ Haselberger *et al* 2002.

However, it would be misrepresenting the overall assessment of this work to end with such negatives. These do not detract from its usefulness in the study of the city of Rome under Augustus. Haselberger's work is an important contribution to a reassuringly active field of study; useful as much for the questions it raises as for the detailed evidence it presents. 'What has gained some clarity at this point is that there remains considerable potential for the further investigation of Augustan Rome as a 'city'' (270).

Bibliography

Bonneford, M. 1987. Transferts de fonctions et mutations idéologique: Le Capitole et le forum d'Auguste, *L'Urbs : Espace urbain et histoire. I^{er} siècle avant J.C. – III^{er} siècle après J.C.* Roma, 251-78.

Coarelli, F. 1985. *Il Foro Romano II: periodo repubblicano e augusteo*. Roma: Edizioni Quasar.

Favro, D. 1996. *The Urban Image of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Goodman, P.J. 2007. *The Roman City and Its Periphery*. London: Routledge.

Haselberger, L. and Humphrey, J. 2006 (eds.) *Imaging Ancient Rome: Documentation – Visualization – Imagination*. Portsmouth, Rhode Island. Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 61.

Haselberger, L, Romano, D.G, and Dumser, E.A. 2002 (eds.) *Mapping Augustan Rome*. Portsmouth, Rhode Island: Journal of Roman Archaeology Supplementary Series 50.

Lott, J.B. 2004. *The Neighborhoods of Augustan Rome*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Orlin, E.M. 2007. Augustan Religion and the Reshaping of Roman Memory. *Arethusa* 40:1, 73-92.

Patterson, J.R. 2000. On the Margins of the City of Rome, V.M. Hope and E. Marshall (eds.) *Death and Disease in the Ancient City*, London, 85-103.

Ridley, R.T. 2003. *The emperor's retrospect. Augustus' Res Gestae in epigraphy, historiography and commentary*. Leuven: Peeters Publishing.

Wallace-Hadrill, A. 2003. The Streets of Rome as a Representation of Imperial Power in L. de Blois *et al.* (eds), *The Representation and Perception of Imperial Power*: 189-206. Amsterdam: Gieben.

Zanker, P. 1990. *The Power of Images in the Age of Augustus*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press