The Impact of Roman Roads on Landscape and Space: The Case of Republican Italy

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1 Roman Roads and Space Construction

Considering the impact of empire on Roman landscapes, most people would immediately think of the most prominent extra-urban Roman constructions that can still often be admired crossing the landscapes of Europe and are sometimes still in use: aqueducts and roads (the latter including the architecturally more prominent bridges).¹ “Roads” are mentioned, just after aqueducts and sanitation, in the famous list of all the things the Romans “have ever done for us” in scene 10 of Monty Python’s *Life of Brian*. Indeed not only in this film, but already in the ancient world, road construction was considered a specific character of Roman rule;² later, many other forms of Classical reception and the proverb, famous worldwide, that “all roads lead to Rome”, have contributed to the consolidation, also at a popular level, of the image of the Romans as a road-constructing power, modifying the landscapes of their conquered territories through this instrument of communication, movement and control.³

At the most basic level, roads affect the landscape because they change it: in this sense, they are a major object of study for landscape archaeology and archaeomorphology.⁴ It is true that Roman roads generally adapt to the

1 On aqueducts, see Kerschbaum in this volume.

2 Str. 5.3.8: “The Romans had the best foresight in those matters which the Greeks made but little account of, such as the construction of roads and aqueducts” (transl. by H.L. Jones). See R.J.A. Talbert, ‘Roads not featured: a Roman failure to communicate?’, in S.E. Alcock, J. Bodel and R.J.A. Talbert (eds.), *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World* (Malden and Oxford 2012), 235–254, here 238–239; A. Kolb, ‘Via ducta – Roman road building: an introduction to its significance, the sources and the state of research’, in A. Kolb (ed.), *Roman Roads. New Evidence – New Perspectives* (Berlin and Boston 2019), 3–21, here 8–9 for further ancient texts already presenting the roads “among Rome’s greatest achievements”.

3 E.g., H.E. Herzog, ‘Probleme des römischen Straßenwesens: Untersuchungen zu Geschichte und Recht’, in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *ANRW* 2.1 (Berlin and New York 1974), 593–648, here 593–594.

4 M. Matteazzi, ‘All the roads to Patavium: morphology, genesis and development of the Roman road network around Padua’, *Open Archaeology* 3 (2017), 83–100, here 83. See also R. Chevallier, *Les voies romaines* (Paris 1997), 292–298.

topographical characters of each territory – and thus use existing environmental elements such as ridges, passes and bottlenecks. Nonetheless, “itineraries do not only adapt their paths to the natural environment but, in some cases, they face it. For example, where *natura loci* is not optimal, Romans addressed it through the creation of artificial structures” such as embankments (*aggeres*) that impact the course of rivers and their regime.⁵ When dealing with Caius Gracchus’ road construction programme, Plutarch stresses intervention in the landscape, and the beauty deriving from the constructed order and symmetry:

For his roads were carried straight through the country without deviation, and had pavements of quarried stone, and substructures of tight-rammed masses of sand. Depressions were filled up, all intersecting torrents or ravines were bridged over, and both sides of the roads were of equal and corresponding height, so that the work had everywhere an even and beautiful appearance.⁶

Also Diodorus Siculus emphasises the construction works on the via Appia, stressing how they contributed to shaping the memory of his constructor: “And since he dug through elevated places and levelled with noteworthy fills the ravines and valleys, he expended the entire revenue of the state but left behind a deathless monument to himself, having been ambitious in the public interest.”⁷

But even once they have been built, roads exist physically as ‘markers’, conditioning the further development of the area and the further modifications of landscape. As formulated by Matteazzi, roads “are invariable elements in the landscape, often constituting proper ‘bearing structures’ and being used as starting points in building specific territorial morphologies.”⁸ One can take as example the *sententia Minuciorum*, which in 117 BCE defined the boundaries

5 Matteazzi 2017, op. cit. (n. 4), 88. See Str. 5.3.8, celebrating how the Romans “have so constructed also the roads which run throughout the country, by adding both cuts through hills and embankments across valleys, that their wagons can carry boat-loads.” (transl. by H.L. Jones). See also Chevallier 1997, op. cit. (n. 4), 127–154; P. Basso, *Strade romane: storia e archeologia* (Rome 2007), 40–50; 57–65.

6 Plu. CG. 7.1 (transl. by B. Perrin). On this passage, stressing how it resonates with motives and themes from the 2nd century CE and from Trajan’s propaganda, see R. Laurence, *The Roads of Roman Italy* (London and New York 1999), 49–51.

7 D.S. 20.36.2 (transl. by R.M. Geer). See Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 15.

8 Matteazzi 2017, op. cit. (n. 4), 83.

between the Genuates and the Viturii Langenses.⁹ Here, the via Postumia, realized thirty years earlier (in 148 BCE) in the same area, is deployed as a landscape marker to describe the exact course of the boundary, together with rivers and stone markers (*termini*). The Hyginus of the *de condicionibus agrorum*, when giving an abstract example of how to provide the description of a boundary's course, also includes roads as markers, next to hills, rivers, passes or feet and summits of mountains.¹⁰

Such impact becomes particularly evident when the construction of roads is planned in connection with bigger plans of transformation of the territory, such as centuriation and viridane assignments, as in the case of the via Flaminia (220 BCE), which was deeply connected to the distributions of lands in the ager Gallicus et Picenus following the *lex Flaminia de agro Gallico et Piceno viridim dividundo* of 232 BCE.¹¹ It is obvious that in these cases the roads would, as for the via Postumia in Liguria, be a prominent marker for the delimitation and division of land.

Yet there are further levels on which Roman roads 'impacted' on the landscape of the *imperium*. Following the spatial turn, humanities and social sciences have insisted on the social construction of space – against the previous idea of space as a 'container' – on its ways of being an instrument of power, as well as on the continuous interactions between the perception of space, the discourses on it, its modifications, etc.¹² In this sense, it is possible to

9 CIL 1² 584 = CIL V 7749. P. Tozzi, *La via Postumia* (Pavia 1999), 14, highlights that this inscription provides a demonstration "della importanza e della evidenza che la via aveva assunto nel quadro ambientale"; in a similar form also G. Cera, *La via Postumia da Genova a Cremona* (Rome 2000), 10. See also M. Crawford, 'Language and geography in the *sententia Minuciorum*', *Athenaeum* 91 (2003), 204–210.

10 Sic. Flacc. *grom.* 74,10–19, ed. Thulin 1913: [...] *nam invenimus saepe in publicis instrumentis significanter inscripta territoria ita ut ex colliculo qui appellatur ille, ad flumen illud, et per flumen illud ad rivum illum aut viam illam, et per viam illam ad infima montis illius, qui locus appellatur ille* [...].

11 F. Carlà-Uhink, *The "Birth" of Italy. The Institutionalization of Italy as a Region, 3rd–1st Century BCE* (Berlin and Boston 2017), 59–60. The *gromatici* explicitly suggest organising the centuriation also along already existing public roads, which thus influence the development of landscape beyond their construction: see Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 621–623; A. Palma, 'Le strade romane nelle dottrine giuridiche e gromatiche dell'età del principato', in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *ANRW* 2.14 (Berlin and New York 1982), 850–880, here 872.

12 E.g., S. Günzel, *Raum. Eine kulturwissenschaftliche Einführung* (Bielefeld 2017), in particular 75–80. For an application to the Roman Republic, see F. Carlà, 'Caput mundi: Rome as center in Roman representation and construction of space', *AncSoc* 47 (2017), 119–157, here 119–121; D.J. Gargola, *The Shape of the Roman Order. The Republic and Its*

investigate the forms in which Roman roads changed perception of space and thus altered the ways in which this was ‘used’ and further constructed, thus helping to define and build Roman power, on a macro- as well as on a micro-regional level.

Of course, it would be senseless to argue that these effects were primary aims considered when the decision to build a road was met, and its destination and its path were defined – roads were mostly built for military reasons, or more generally to allow quicker communication between distant areas, and also as a form of aristocratic self-representation.¹³ Only in individual cases – as we will see below – it is possible to argue that the decision to reach a particular town, thus impacting on its further development, was consciously taken; additionally, it has been repeatedly argued that each road was built following individual decisions, and there was no conscious idea of developing a “network”,¹⁴ meaning that some of the consequences that we will discuss in this chapter were impossible for ancient planners to foresee. Nonetheless, it was clear already to the inhabitants of the empire that the construction of roads had far-reaching consequences – Aelius Aristides, for instance, clearly identifies roads as vehicles of ‘civilization’ (and thus, in our vocabulary, as vehicles of ‘Romanization’, ‘cultural transfer’, ‘homologation’, ‘globalization’, etc.) in a passage of his speech *To Rome*:

Homer said, “Earth common of all,” and you have made it come true. You have measured and recorded the land of the entire civilized world; you have spanned the rivers with all kinds of bridges and hewn highways through the mountains and filled the barren stretches with posting stations; you have accustomed all areas to a settled and orderly way of life.¹⁵

Spaces (Chapel Hill 2017), 1–3. Specifically on paths and roads: J.E. Snead, C.L. Erickson and J.A. Darling, ‘Making human space: the archaeology of trails, paths, and roads’, in J.E. Snead, C.L. Erickson and J.A. Darling (eds.), *Landscapes of Movement. Trails, Paths, and Roads in Anthropological Perspective* (Philadelphia 2009), 1–19, here 14–16; on Roman roads see R.E. Witcher, ‘Roman roads: phenomenological perspectives on roads in the landscape’, in C. Forcey, J. Hawthorne and R.E. Witcher (eds.), *TRAC 97* (Oxford 1998), 60–70, here 60–62.

- 13 Also, private economic interests should not be underestimated as a reason for road construction: see Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 6, and more generally, Kolb in this volume.
- 14 Talbert 2012, op. cit. (n. 2), 247–248; C. Carreras and P. De Soto, ‘The Roman transport network. A precedent for the integration of the European mobility’, *Historical Methods* 463 (2013), 117–133, here 127.
- 15 Aristid. 26.101 (transl. by J.H. Oliver). See Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 9. Also Pliny the Younger (*Paneg.* 29) identifies road construction as an act bringing civilisation and progress, and praises Trajan for that.

Even when the original function of a road had eventually lost its relevance, it was still present in the landscape, conditioning its development and more generally the use of space: “Roads change over time with the transformation of the political, economic and environmental framework, as does the road networks of which they form a part. For this reason, road networks can be considered a dynamic structure that is continuously developing, where the traces of former phases remain almost fossilized within the most recent interventions, as in a palimpsest.”¹⁶

I will concentrate here on examples from Republican Italy in order to highlight different facets of this complex bundle of interactions with space and place revolving around Roman road construction and road use, and thus to contribute to the discussion on “the wider roles of Roman roads in the cultures and mindsets of the Empire’s peoples” and on “their place in the Roman physical, cultural and mental landscapes” – a topic towards which Richard Talbert has recently drawn the attention of the scholarly community, highlighting its relative neglect until now.¹⁷ This chapter will also deal exclusively with the Roman public roads, the *viae publicae*, built on public land and accessible to everybody, and more particularly with the so-called *Reichsstraßen*, understood by modern scholarship as sub-category of the *viae publicae*, built and administered by magistrates of the *res publica* and not, for example, by individual towns.¹⁸

I will focus in particular on the following points: (1) how Roman roads constructed connectivity and modified perceptions of distance; (2) which political, economic and cultural consequences they had on individual regions and centres, for instance how they shaped the hierarchy of settlements in a given area; (3) how they contributed to the expansion and diffusion of Roman institutions – and therefore ultimately shaped the political presence of Rome as hegemonic power within Italy; (4) how Roman roads contributed to define at a meta-level the perception and description of space, shaping centrality and defining different regions. I hope in this way to offer a broad and varied

16 Matteazzi 2017, op. cit. (n. 4), 84.

17 R.J.A. Talbert, ‘Roads in the Roman world: Strategy for the way forward’, in Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 22–34, here 22–23.

18 For a definition and for the difference between *Reichsstraße* and *via publica*, see C. Campedelli, *L’amministrazione municipale delle strade romane in Italia* (Bonn 2014), 5–6. See also, among many others, T. Pekáry, *Untersuchungen zu den römischen Reichsstraßen* (Bonn 1968), 6; G. Radke, ‘*Viae publicae Romanae*’, *RE Suppl.* 13 (1973), 1417–1686, here 1422–1423 for a list of characters of the *viae publicae* following Siculus Flaccus, and Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 605–614 and A. Kolb, ‘Le strade romane come mezzo di percezione dello spazio’, in M.G. Angeli Bertinelli and A. Donati (eds.), *Misurare il tempo, misurare lo spazio* (Faenza 2006), 313–329, here 314–316 on the different kinds of Roman roads.

overview of a set of different forms through which Roman roads shaped the landscape of empire, and to explain why “the systematic extension of the Roman road network [...] continues to enjoy unquestioned pride of place as the primary, physical manifestation of Roman power in Italy.”¹⁹

2 Connectivity and Distance

It is almost a tautology to say that roads increase the connectivity between different places, as this is the very aim of their construction; yet it is important to stress that this effect is a generalized one – the connectivity is then there for all to use, and it touches on other places than the two extreme *capita viarum*.²⁰ Roman public roads, once built, were free to access for anybody:²¹ “Generally speaking, anyone could use these roads without requiring prior authorization or the equivalent of a modern passport.”²² This is crucial in understanding how widespread the consequences of such connectivity were for substantial numbers of people, and therefore what great impact these roads had on the general mentality concerning roads and on perceptions of space.²³

As formulated by Ray Laurence, with a statement containing many different and important points, which will be differentiated and expanded upon over the next few pages:

The road was the fundamental element for the production of territorial space in the creation of a Roman Empire. The road caused places to become unified that were at distance, for example, Rimini and Rome [by the via Flaminia]. The road structured the Roman view of space that was linear and emphasised the connectivity between cities (places of local

19 R. Roth, ‘Beyond romanisation’, in G.D. Farney and G. Bradley (eds.), *The Peoples of Ancient Italy* (Berlin and Boston 2018), 295–317, here 301.

20 M. Fronda, *Between Rome and Carthage. Southern Italy during the Second Punic War* (Cambridge 2010), 318: “Roman roads, although built originally for military purposes, facilitated travel and communications between Rome and communities throughout Italy.”

21 Fest. 508.20 L: *Viae sunt et publicae, per [...] e omnibus licet, [...]*.

22 Talbert 2019, op. cit. (n. 17), 27. See also A. Palma, ‘Le strade romane nelle dottrine giuridiche e gromatiche dell’età del principato’, in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *ANRW* 2.14 (Berlin and New York 1982), 850–880, here 859. An exception were private roads, on which the owner could decide to forbid any passage, as attested by *CIL* 1² 1831.

23 On roads as “landscapes of movement”, see Snead, Erickson and Darling 2009, op. cit. (n. 12), 1–4.

government). Equally, the road altered the nature of space by connecting places that were divided by ranges of mountains and also by simply avoiding contact with former rivals to Rome such as Veii. In this sense, the road was a mechanism of Roman power that physically reshaped the landscape after Roman control had initially been asserted through military intervention. The ability to alter the nature of space and to produce a cultural form that emphasised the interconnection between cities created a new viewpoint of territory that was no longer fragmented or divided. The emphasis on Rome as the centre of the road system assured the city's cultural and political dominance over the places on the roads themselves.²⁴

The Roman perception of space was not as 'bidimensional' and 'cartographic' as ours: as Pietro Janni has shown, the Romans had a 'hodological' perception of space, of a linear kind, which saw the movement from a point A to a point B as a sequence of intermediate places that needed to be reached and passed.²⁵ In this sense, it becomes immediately clear that the construction of a new road that shortened or simply modified such a sequence could alter radically the way in which the inhabitants of a region positioned individual places in relation to each other, which shaped the (power) relationships between individual centres: "che la cartografia pratica dei Romani fosse fondata sulla rete stradale non è certo un caso [...]. La strada romana, costruita per durare eternamente, diventava un aspetto permanente del paesaggio, un punto stabile e sicurissimo di riferimento e orientamento."²⁶

A strong perception of the existing connectivity and of the "possibility of movement" was then provided through the practice of name-giving: in connection with each and every road and with the related infrastructure arose a huge number of toponyms that reified their presence as a constitutive component of landscape.²⁷ While Radke's theory that the mid-point of every Republican road was marked by a *forum* bearing the name of the constructor was disproved a long time ago,²⁸ names derived from Roman ordinal numbers and directly

24 Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 197.

25 P. Janni, *La mappa e il periplo. Cartografia antica e spazio odologico* (Rome 1984), in part. 79–90. See also C.R. Whitaker, *Rome and Its Frontiers: The Dynamics of Empire* (London and New York 2004), 63–82.

26 Janni 1984, op. cit. (n. 25), 61.

27 Basso 2007, op. cit. (n. 5), 75–77.

28 G. Radke, 'Namen und Daten. Beobachtungen zur Geschichte des römischen Straßenbaus', *MH* 24 (1967), 221–235, here 229–230; Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1465–1472; rightly

recalling the distance from Rome or from the next centres, for example, are still often recognizable in Italian toponyms:²⁹ Sesto Calende, for instance, derives its name from its being sixth miles from Somma Lombardo/*Summa* on the road that brought one from Milan to the Simplon Pass. The importance of such names in shaping the idea of connectivity and of connected space should not be underestimated – as name-giving is famously a crucial element in shaping discourses of power. As formulated by Whittaker, “the names of places they [the Roman roads] united, what has been called in modern colonial times ‘dispossession through naming’, illustrated the relations between centre and periphery, and that in turn enhanced the rhetoric of control.”³⁰

This connectivity and the implied power relations were manifested physically through the milestones, placed exclusively along the *viae publicae*.³¹ By expressing in a numeric form the distance from centres touched by the road, or reachable through the road network, they helped to identify specific towns as more important, or central, at a local, regional or supra-regional level.³² In the most notable case, of course, this happened when the milestones acknowledged the distance from Rome also in areas far away from the *Urbs* – a very common practice in northern and central Italy, attested already on the earliest milestones known;³³ this, according to Laurence, “created a distinctive geography in Italy that was structured according to the position of a person or place relative to the public road system.”³⁴ An example is provided by the milestone from Mesa bearing the names of the aediles *P. Claudio(s) Ap.f.* and *C. Fourio(s)*

disproved by, among others, T.P. Wiseman, ‘Roman republican road-building’, *PBSR* 38 (1970), 122–152, here 123–124; Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 602–604; Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 27–28.

29 M. Calzolari, ‘«Ad sextum miliarem» (Itin. Burdig., 564, 4). I toponimi derivati dalle distanze in miglia come fonte per la ricostruzione della rete stradale di età romana’, *AttiMemModena* 11 (1986), 27–56.

30 Whittaker 2004, op. cit. (n. 25), 78.

31 W. Eck, ‘Die Administration der italischen Straßen: das Beispiel der Via Appia’, in W. Eck, *Die Verwaltung des Römischen Reiches in der Hohen Kaiserzeit. Ausgewählte und erweiterte Beiträge* 1 (Basel and Berlin 1995), 295–313, here 297.

32 Milestones display significant local and regional variation concerning the way in which the distance was counted and represented, as already realized by G.J. Laing, ‘Roman milestones and the *capita viarum*’, *Transactions and Proceedings of the American Philological Association* 39 (1908) 15–34, here 34, even if his conclusions cannot be all shared today.

33 E.g., *CIL* XI 6642. For this practice during the Principate and in the provinces, see also A. Kolb, ‘Römische Meilensteine: Stand der Forschung und Probleme’, in R. Frei-Stolba (ed.), *Siedlung und Verkehr im römischen Reich* (Bern and Berlin 2004), 135–155, here 151–152.

34 Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 84. On the practice of counting the distance from Rome on Italian milestones see Laing 1908, op. cit. (n. 32), 15–24.

C. f., laid most probably around 255–253 BCE, that marks on the via Appia the distance of 53 miles from Rome and 10 from Forum Appii or – much more probably – from Terracina.³⁵

Milestones did not thus simply indicate “the relative importance of different places”,³⁶ but actively shaped it in the perception and in the understanding of the traveller/reader. The identification of the important centres nearby, the definition of the crossroads and therefore of the possibility of reaching, from a hodological perspective, different areas and towns, the definition of a distance and therefore also of a time of travel allowed the milestones to deeply shape the spatial perception of each traveller, reinforcing and ‘objectifying’ the effect of the road system itself. Shifting hierarchies, political change, or just different perceptions of the territory and its structure could lead to updating the stones³⁷ – as it also happened when further work on the roads led to a change in the distances.³⁸

Ancient authors stress how less tiring the trip is when milestones break down the distance by showing ‘intermediate aims’ – Quintilian compares this with the introduction of the partition of a speech, providing “clarity and charm”: “it also relieves the hearer by setting limits to particular parts, just as the fatigue of a journey is a good deal relieved by reading the distances on the milestones! It is also pleasant to know how much of our work has been done, while the knowledge of how much remains is an encouragement to set about the rest with a better heart.”³⁹ It is thus clear that the travellers were expected to pay attention to the milestones, to derive from them clear knowledge about the sequence and the distance of the individual towns, and thus to mentally structure the (Roman) space through which they were moving.⁴⁰

35 *AE* 2011, 221 = B. Díaz Ariño, *Miliarios romanos de época republicana* (Rome 2015), no. 5. See A. Buonopane, “Il più antico di tutti ora esistenti”: Mommsen, Barnabei e le vicende del miliario arcaico di Mesa (Latina); in P. Basso (ed.), *I miliari lungo le strade dell'impero* (Verona 2011), 35–46, here 41.

36 So Laing 1908, op. cit. (n. 32), 15, even if he argues that being mentioned on the milestones might also have depended on the amount of money that the single communities spent on building or maintaining the road (20–21).

37 R. Ghidotti, ‘Sull’ubicazione del miliario di Spurio Postumo Albino (*CIL* v 8045), *Epigraphica* 76 (2014), 495–502, here 501–502, argues for instance that *CIL* v 8042 (on which see below), originally marking a crossroads, was then displaced to mark a *mansio* when the crossing lost importance, and this led to the inscription of an additional numeral on the milestone.

38 M. Adamo, ‘The *lapis Pollae*: Date and contexts’, *PBSR* 84 (2016), 73–100, here 83.

39 Quint. *inst.* 4.5.22–23 (transl. by D.A. Russell). Cf. Rut. Nam. 2.7–8.

40 See Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 82–84; Kolb 2006, op. cit. (n. 18), 316 and España-Chamorro in this volume.

Plutarch stresses that Caius Gracchus wanted milestones to be placed at regular distance on his roads: “In addition to all this, he measured off every road by miles (the Roman mile falls a little short of eight furlongs) and planted stone pillars in the ground to mark the distances.”⁴¹ This should not be understood in the sense that Caius Gracchus was the first to ‘systematize’ and generalize the use of milestones;⁴² rather, it is meaningful of Plutarch’s – and of most Romans’ – perception of what makes a ‘good road’, and as such it is a component of the self-representation of the road constructors.⁴³ The very famous and much discussed *lapis Pollae*,⁴⁴ for example, insists on the fact that the honoured person built the road and equipped it with bridges, milestones and other inscriptions (*tabellarii*).⁴⁵

41 See also Plu. *CG* 7.2 (transl. by B. Perrin). Caius Gracchus’ programme of road building is mentioned also by App. *BC* 1.23.98.

42 So O. Hirschfeld, ‘Die römischen Meilensteine’, *Sitzungsberichte der königlich preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 9 (1907), 165–201, here 167, and in a milder form also Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 151.

43 On references to road construction in Republican *elogia*, see S.G. Bernard, C. Damon and C. Grey, ‘Rhetorics of land and power in the Polla inscription (*CIL* 1² 638)’, *Mnemosyne* 67 (2014), 953–985, here 972. See also Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 150–151.

44 *CIL* X 6950 = Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), no. 49. It is not crucial here to discuss the ‘genre’ of this composite inscription, that surely is not a normal milestone and yet is deeply connected to the construction of the road from Capua to Rhegium (see G. Susini, ‘Le lapis de Polla’, *MAWBL* 46 [1984], 101–110, here 103–104; V. Bracco, ‘Il *tabellarius* di Polla’, *Epigraphica* 47 [1985], 93–97): the text celebrates the construction of the road and contains distances calculated along it. Nor is it necessary to discuss here who is the honoured magistrate – once it is agreed, as almost all scholars do, that the inscription dates to the 2nd century BCE. In Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 82–89, I defended Mommsen’s identification of the honoured magistrate with P. Popillius Laenas (consul 132 BCE) – and I still am convinced that this is the most plausible identification, defended also by Franciosi 2002.

45 On the *tabellarii* and their difference from the *miliarii*, many theories have been expressed: see, for instance, Hirschfeld 1907, op. cit. (n. 42), 169–170; Susini 1984, op. cit. (n. 44), 110; A. Kolb, *Transport und Nachrichtentransfer im Römischen Reich* (Berlin 2000), 25–27; Bernard, Damon, Grey 2014, op. cit. (n. 43), 969–970. A summary of different theories is formulated by B. Salway, ‘Travel, *itineraria* and *tabellaria*’, in C. Adams and R. Laurence (eds.), *Travel and Geography in the Roman Empire* (London and New York 2001), 22–66, here 50–58, whose interpretation of the term as inscriptions bearing a ‘*tabella* of route-stations clearly displayed to public view’ (54) is the most convincing. See also B. Salway, ‘The perception and description of space in Roman itineraries’, in M. Rathmann (ed.), *Wahrnehmung und Erfassung geographischer Räume in der Antike* (Mainz 2007), 181–209, here 190–192.

3 Development and Hierarchy of Settlements

As mentioned, milestones could visualize and reify a hierarchy of settlements, defining which towns were ‘worthy’ of being mentioned – and thus of being identified as *capita viae*, relevant ‘nodes’ of the road network. A milestone from Verona and connected to the via Postumia, for example, identified, after the name of the road constructor, the consul of 148 BCE Sp. Postumius Albinus Magnus, the distance to Genua (122 miles), the final destination of the road conceived by Albinus, and to Cremona (27 miles), therefore identified as the ‘next’ relevant centre. At a later moment, another hand added above Postumius’ name the indication VIII – probably the distance from another local centre that did not need to be mentioned.⁴⁶ Not mentioned are the towns from which the distance is measured also on the Republican milestones placed by the consul Marcus Aemilius Lepidus, constructor of the via Aemilia (187 BCE):⁴⁷ they are the nearest bigger centres (Bononia on the first stone, Bononia and Mutina on the second one) and Rome, whose role as *caput viarum* and final ‘aim’ of the road system is implicit.

The fact that often distances were stated on the stone without explicitly saying from where they had been calculated, indeed, implies the expectation that the travellers would immediately understand what the reference point was – be it Rome, the *caput viae* or the nearest relevant settlement.⁴⁸ The inscription from Mesa mentioned above is a perfect example: we have a problem in understanding whether the ten miles were from Terracina or from Forum Appii – the ancient travellers did not. The indication of the distances on the milestones were thus embedded in broader structures of perception of space and of the hierarchy of settlements, and reinforcing mutually with other forms of hierarchization and structuration, such as the *nundinae*, other fairs, the presence of administrative centres, the juridical status of a community, public discourse, etc.

Yet it is the construction of the roads itself that can determine and influence the status, the political and the economic development, somehow the entire future of individual settlements. In the passage quoted above, Laurence highlighted that the Romans were very well aware of the effects that an important road, with all the traffic and the commerce it implied, could have on a town, and thus for example deliberately avoiding Veii, the *Urfeind* in Roman cultural

46 CIL V 8045 = Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), no. 21. According to Ghidotti 2014, op. cit. (n. 37), 501–502, this happened when the milestone was displaced to a *mansio* located at the ninth mile from Bedriacum. See also Cera 2000, op. cit. (n. 9), 9–10.

47 CIL XI 6642; 6645.

48 Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1450–1454, presents the different possible distances listed on milestones.

memory, when building the via Cassia;⁴⁹ in the same way, it has been argued that the via Appia intentionally avoided “any contact with the cities of Rome’s Latin allies.”⁵⁰ The relationship between Roman roads and the economic and administrative development of individual centres is, more generally, a perfect example of how pre-existing structures, topographical characters, individual decisions, all interact and contribute to shaping the landscape and determining the construction and perception of space. Of course, Roman roads followed on most occasions pre-existing paths that had been used (and in part also ‘constructed’) before their acquisition of hegemony in each individual territory. This applies to Etruscan roads as well as to Venetic and Celtic ones. This means that some centres were founded at – or already were – important crossroads, at the convergence of especially important itineraries. This is, for example, the case of Padua/Padova, “the heart of an important network of routes (both terrestrial and fluvial) communicating the South and the North-East of the Italian Peninsula since the Bronze Age.”⁵¹

For Gaul, Strabo explicitly refers to the topographic reasons that led Agrippa to choose Lugdunum as the central crossroads:

Lugdunum is in the centre of the country – an acropolis, as it were, not only because the rivers meet there, but also because it is near all parts of the country. And it was on this account, also, that Agrippa began at Lugdunum when he cut his roads – that which passes through the Cemmenus Mountains as far as the Santoni and Aquitania, and that which leads to the Rhenus, and, a third, that which leads to the ocean (the one that runs by the Bellovaci and the Ambiani); and, a fourth, that which leads to Narbonitis and the Massilian seaboard. And there is also, again, in the Poeninus itself (if you leave on your left Lugdunum and the country that lies above it), a bye-road which, after you cross the Rhodanus or Lake Lemenna, leads into the plains of the Helvetii; and thence there is a pass through the Jura Mountain over to the country of the Sequani and also to that of the Lingones; moreover, the thoroughfares through these countries branch off both ways – both towards the Rhenus and towards the ocean.⁵²

49 J.B. Ward Perkins, ‘Etruscan towns, Roman roads and medieval villages: the historical geography of southern Etruria’, *The Geographical Journal* 128 (1962), 389–404, here 398.

50 Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 13, referencing further literature.

51 Matteazzi 2017, op. cit. (n. 4), 89–90.

52 Str. 4.6.11 (transl. by H.L. Jones). See A. Buisson and A. Pelletier, ‘Les voies romaines autour de Lyon. Essai de synthèse’, *Caesarodunum* 18 (1983), 157–166.

Quite obviously, a new road would aim to reach and connect what already were bigger or more important towns – often with a special eye for Latin and Roman colonies.⁵³ On the other side, after its construction, the road would reinforce and perpetuate the centrality and importance of these centres, but also determine the success of smaller towns – or even the foundation and the very existence of new settlements.⁵⁴ This has often not been sufficiently highlighted, as Hitchner has pointed out – but it is important to remember that “many smaller towns, particularly in the western provinces, owed their origins to the construction and convergence of new roads.”⁵⁵ A significant example in Italy is Dertona/Tortona:⁵⁶ a Ligurian village, the settlement was on the route of the via Postumia, which, as we have already seen, since 148 BCE connected Genua to Cremona, Verona and Aquileia. This meant a significant growth of the town that was deducted as a Roman colony around 120 BCE. A few years later, in 115 BCE or in 109 BCE,⁵⁷ a branch of the via Aemilia Scauri connected Dertona through Aquae Statiellae to Vada Sabatia, thus increasing further the connectivity – and the centrality, and the importance – of the colony.⁵⁸

- 53 On the relationship between development of the road system and colonial foundations see, among others, F.T. Hinrichs, ‘Der römische Straßenbau zur Zeit der Gracchen’, *Historia* 16 (1967), 162–176, here 166; F. Coarelli, ‘Colonizzazione romana e viabilità’, *DArch*, s. 3.6 (1988), 35–48; Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 25; Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 52–53.
- 54 As already noted by Ward Perkins 1962, op. cit. (n. 49), 398 and Herzog 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 618. More generally, see Carreras and De Soto 2013, op. cit. (n. 14), 117.
- 55 R.B. Hitchner, ‘Roads, integration, connectivity, and economic performance in the Roman Empire’, in S.E. Alcock, J. Bodel and R.J.A. Talbert (eds.), *Highways, Byways, and Road Systems in the Pre-Modern World* (Malden and Oxford 2012), 222–234, here 225.
- 56 Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 73–74.
- 57 See E. Fentress, ‘Via Aurelia, via Aemilia’, *PBSR* 52 (1984), 72–76, here 75.
- 58 Str. 5.1.11. See Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 81–82. On the via Aemilia Scauri see now A. Buonopane and C. Gabrielli, ‘Miliari e viabilità dell’Etruria romana: un aggiornamento e alcune considerazioni’, in Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 375–403, in particular 394–396; on its branch leading to Dertona, see P.L. Dall’Aglia and I. Di Cocco, ‘La via Aemilia Scauri e gli itinerari medievali dei pellegrini’, in M. Pozzar (ed.), *Insedimenti e territorio. Viabilità in Liguria tra I e VII secolo d.C.* (Bordighera 2004), 49–69, here 52–56; on its relation to the via Postumia, see G. Sena Chiesa and M.P. Lavizzari Pedrazzini (eds.), *Tesori della Postumia. Archeologia e storia intorno a una grande strada romana alle radici dell’Europa* (Milan 1998), 261–262. According to the Tabula Peutingeriana, in Dertona a third road joined the via Postumia and the via Aemilia Scauri. Many scholars consider this the via Fulvia, based on the existence of a Forum Fulvi between Dertona and Ocelum, which would lead to Hasta/Asti, Turin and Ocelum, and would have been realised by M. Fulvius Flaccus, consul 125 BCE (see, among others, Hinrichs 1967, op. cit. [n.53], 169; G. Corradi, *Le strade romane dell’Italia occidentale* [Turin 1968], 36–41; Sena Chiesa and Lavizzari Pedrazzini 1998, op. cit. [58], 223–225; Chevallier 1997, op. cit. [n.4], 189; E. Banzi, *I miliari come fonte topografica e storica. L’esempio della XI regio [Transpadana] e delle Alpes Cottiae* [Rome 1999], 109). Even if other scholars, such as Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 139, have shown

4 Roads and Institutions

We return now to milestones – their presence represented a form of reification and of literal inscription in the landscape of Roman institutions and Roman elites – in short, of Roman institutions and Roman power, as “their purpose was thus not purely practical, but also to immortalise Roman rule on stone columns along the Empire’s main lines of communication. Ancient travellers were thus constantly confronted with Roman power, as well as the Empire’s capacity of organisation and public welfare.”⁵⁹ The names of the Republican magistrates given to the *viae publicae* they realised, following the principle stated by Siculus Flaccus,⁶⁰ and present on Republican milestones celebrating who built or renovated the road and its infrastructure, were an important means of aristocratic self-representation, and manifested to the local inhabitants the hegemonic power of Rome and its elite.⁶¹ Indeed, there is good reason to think that magistrates and members of the elite could sometime set milestones without doing any further construction works on the road.⁶²

Polybius stresses clearly that the measurement of distances and the placement of milestones (and thus the construction of roads) are indicative of the Roman presence in the territory – in his case, Southern Gaul: “this part of the road [from Narbo to the Rhone] having now been carefully measured by

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- that the name via Fulvia is at best an unfounded educated guess, the road did exist and was presumably used already in Republican times. Tozzi 1999, op. cit. (n. 9), 23–25 discusses the impact of the via Postumia on the development and the topography of the towns it crossed, including Dertona. See also Sena Chiesa and Lavizzari Pedrazzini 1998, op. cit. (n. 58), 429–432; Cera 2000, op. cit. (n. 9), 80–87 on the via Postumia and Dertona.
- 59 Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 12; the sentences apply there to imperial milestones bearing the emperors’ names, but it is valid also for Republican milestones, as it will be shown in this paragraph. See also Kolb 2006, op. cit. (n. 18), 317. On Late Antique milestones and their meaning as honorary monuments for the emperors, see C. Witschel, ‘Meilensteine als historische Quelle? Das Beispiel Aquileia’, *Chiron* 32 (2002), 325–393, here 367–369.
- 60 Sic. Flacc. *grom* 110,2–3, ed. Thulin 1913; *Nam sunt viae publicae [regales], quae publice muniuntur et auctorum nomina optinent*. Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1428, suggests that the roads received their names from the names of the magistrates inscribed on the milestones or from the name of the *fora*. This is not relevant here, as long as it is clear that already in antiquity these roads were called with the name of the Roman magistrate who built it (as in the case of the via Appia, the via Aemilia, etc.).
- 61 A comprehensive study of the 49 known Republican milestones has been provided by Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35). On their function for aristocratic self-representation, see in particular 46–47. See also Witcher 1998, op. cit. (n. 12), 66.
- 62 Adamo 2016, op. cit. (n. 38), 80. This idea was already partially introduced by Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 152. See also below, fn. 106. To the same conclusion, but for the Late Antique milestones in Venetia et Histria, comes also Witschel 2002, op. cit. (n. 59), 366–367.

the Romans and marked with milestones at every eighth stade.”⁶³ The *lapis Pollae* – independent of the name given to its genre, undoubtedly a text deeply connected to the road network, as it recalls the construction of the road from Rhegium to Capua and contains a set of distance from relevant centres – has been (rightly) interpreted as the product of the self-representation of a Roman magistrate “presenting himself as the ‘face’ of Roman hegemony in Southern Italy, and in the process revealing the complex processes of cooperation and domination, negotiation and concession that were fundamental to that hegemony in this period.”⁶⁴ The readers were, indeed, all travellers⁶⁵ – and many of them would have been locals (and members of the local elites), who accessed in this way messages from the hegemonic power.⁶⁶

Yet roads did not need inscriptions and milestones to be bearers of Roman institutions and Roman law, and thus instruments of implementation and enforcement of Roman power: “Roads are a principal means by which the state’s control over a territory can be expressed and maintained – after all, soldiers can move along roads just as easily as traders and merchants.”⁶⁷

As prominent markers on the territory, and as important means of communication, the roads became a crucial part of the exercise of power and hegemony – and contributed also in this sense to expand, materialise and reify Roman authority over Italy.⁶⁸

Michael Crawford has shown, for instance, that the Roman rural *tribus* – obviously a crucial instrument of organisation of Roman power, given their importance in structuring the life of the Roman citizens across the territory and subdividing them in voting units – were organised along the Roman roads, and numbered, at least since the second half of the 3rd century, according to their succession on those roads when moving from Rome.⁶⁹ This is, according

63 Plb. 3.39.8 (transl. by W.R. Paton).

64 Bernard, Damon and Grey 2014, op. cit. (n. 43), 954. For similar considerations on the via Appia, see Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 13.

65 Susini 1984, op. cit. (n. 44), 106: “L’inscription était destinée à être lue par le public du forum de Polla et par ceux qui passaient sur cette route”; see also 107.

66 See Bernard, Damon and Grey 2014, op. cit. (n. 43), 974–980.

67 Bernard, Damon and Grey 2014, op. cit. (n. 43), 980.

68 As seen already by J. Vogt, ‘Raumauffassung und Raumordnung in der römischen Politik’, in H. Berve (ed.), *Das neue Bild der Antike* II (Leipzig 1942), 100–132, here 108–109. See also W. Eck, ‘Straßen und ihre Denkmäler’, in R. Frei-Stolba (ed.), *Siedlung und Verkehr im römischen Reich* (Bern and Berlin 2004), 17–39, here 17–19.

69 M.H. Crawford, ‘Tribus, tessères et regions’, *CRAI* 146 (2002), 1125–1136, here 1130: “Il apparaît que l’ordre des tribus, du moins de celles dont l’ordre et la localisation sont raisonnablement sûrs, suit les grandes routes partant de Rome: en premier lieu la Via Ostiensis, avec les tribus Romilia, Voltinia et Voturia, et puis, en sens inverse de la course du soleil,

to Crawford's reconstruction, probably connected to military conscription, the *dilectus*, which seems to have been organised around the roads that facilitated the movement of the soldiers,⁷⁰ and "magistrates and the senate almost certainly used these roads to organize the movement of orders and messages to and from the center."⁷¹ Gargola has further noted that also the *prodigia* known to us through our sources tend to happen along roads or very near them, adding a further element of "direct intervention" of Roman power through the road system.⁷²

The importance of the roads in marking and shaping the space of Roman law becomes very visible in a series of measures that use the roads – or better the distances marked on them – to define spheres of validity and/or of action of magistrates or individual decisions. Since the oldest time, the first mile from Rome – as marked on the roads leaving the city – was an important boundary, regulating the limits of the specific jurisdiction of the *Urbs*.⁷³ Further sources speak of individual measures identifying the tenth or the fiftieth milestone from Rome as the limit of validity,⁷⁴ revealing the importance of roads in assessing and establishing legal structures. Specific laws, then, regulated the uses of roads and the rights – of circulation but not only – that were valid on them. Particularly famous is a provision from the agrarian law of 111 BCE: "Insofar as anyone [shall have] led animals onto public drove-roads and public roads for transit [or shall have driven (them there) for pasture he is] not [to be obliged to pay] anything to the people or to a publicanus [for that livestock, whatever of it] shall have been driven on the public [drove-roads] or public roads for pasture or for transit."⁷⁵

And yet, this is not all, as the construction of the *Reichsstraßen* was also always an act that brought upon the territory – and manifesting physically

la Via Appia, depuis la tribu Horatia jusqu'à la Falerna, la Via Latina, la Via Praenestina, la Via Valeria, la Via Salaria, la Via Flaminia et la Via Clodia." According to Crawford, this system would have been devised in 225 BCE and would have lasted until the enfranchisement of Italy after the Social War.

70 Crawford 2002, op. cit. (n. 69). See also Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 94–95.

71 Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 54.

72 Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 103. On the importance of *prodigia* in defining (sacral) space, see also Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 190–192.

73 E.g., M. Crawford, *Roman Statutes 1–11* (London 1996), 363, n. 24.24; 752, n. 50. See F. Carlà, 'Pomerium, fines and ager Romanus: understanding Rome's "first boundary"' *Latomus* 74 (2015), 599–630, here 619–620; Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 190.

74 E.g., Liv. 25.5.6; 27.37.9; 31.13.6. See Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 195–198.

75 Crawford 1996, op. cit. (n. 73), 116, n. 2.26. See D.W. Rathbone, 'Ager publicus in Italy', in J.-J. Aubert (ed.), *Tâches publiques et entreprise privée dans le monde romain* (Geneva 2003), 135–178, here 170.

there – the power and authority of the *res publica* and its magistrates, crossing the territories and touching upon the towns of independent allied communities.⁷⁶ It is not necessary here to reopen the long debate about who had the authority of building a *via publica* and in what capacity, as such discussion would lead too far and is not central to what we are discussing.⁷⁷ Crucial is acknowledging that such roads, anywhere they were built, implied the presence of Roman magistrates (whose name would then be reified and made further visible by the milestones and the name of the roads) and more generally of Roman law and Roman power.

The *viae publicae*, furthermore, were built with public money⁷⁸ – from Rome, in the case of the *Reichsstraßen* –, as Siculus Flaccus clearly states and a famous Roman inscription from the late 2nd or the first half of the 1st century BCE concerning maintenance works on the *via Caecilia* reveals.⁷⁹ The urban quaestor T. Vibius Temuudinus received on this occasion also the function of *curator viarum*, following a very little known *lex Visellia*, that seemingly regulated how Roman roads were funded and maintained, and took care of farming out the necessary operations.⁸⁰ Additionally, the *viae publicae* were built on public property, which implies that prior to the construction

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- 76 G. Paci, 'Il milliario repubblicano di Porchiano', in E. Catani and G. Paci (eds.), *La Salaria in età antica* (Macerata 2000), 343–352, here 347–348, in reference to a possible *via Statia* near Asculum. A milestone from Porchiano from the second half of the 2nd century BCE (*AE* 2000, 476) indeed marks the distance to Asculum, at that stage a *civitas foederata*, identified as a regional centre and touched upon by a road. This was constructed by Rome, with the intervention of the *praefectus* Cn. Statius. On the *praefecturae* in Republican Italy, see Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 200–202 and the bibliography referenced there.
- 77 See, among others, Hinrichs 1967, op. cit. (n. 53), 166–168; Radke 1967, op. cit. (n. 28), 221–226; Pekáry 1968, op. cit. (n. 18), 37–71; Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 125; Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1431–1438; Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 597–601; P.C. Ertman, *Curatores viarum: A Study of the Superintendents of Highways in Ancient Rome*, (PhD thesis, Buffalo 1976), 5–7; Eck 1995, op. cit. (n. 31), 297–298; M. Rathmann, *Untersuchungen zu den Reichsstraßen in den westlichen Provinzen des Imperium Romanum* (Mainz 2003), 44–46; Basso 2007, op. cit. (n. 5), 26–27; Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 213–214. See also Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 71–72 and the literature referenced there.
- 78 Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 144–147; Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1445–1446; Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 601–602; Ertman 1976, op. cit. (n. 77), 24–25.
- 79 *CIL* VI 31603. See M.P. Guidobaldi, *La romanizzazione dell'ager Praetutianus (secoli III–I a.C.)* (Naples 1995), 292–313; Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 40–41; M.P. Guidobaldi, 'La via Caecilia: riflessioni sulla cronologia e sul percorso di una via publica romana', in E. Catani and G. Paci (eds.), *La Salaria in età antica* (Macerata 2000), 277–291. Siculus Flaccus: see above, fn. 60.
- 80 A *curator viarum e lege Visellia* is attested also by *CIL* VI 1299 (68 BCE). See Pekáry 1968, op. cit. (n. 18), 102–104; Radke 1973, op. cit. (n. 18), 1472–1474; Herzig 1974, op. cit. (n. 3), 643–644; Ertman 1976, op. cit. (n. 77), 13–17; Rathmann 2003, op. cit. (n. 77), 47–49.

of the *Reichsstraßen*, the lands through which they would have run had to be declared *ager publicus*, through the *ius publicandi* available to magistrates with *imperium*.⁸¹ In this sense, the planning, the construction, and the existence of a Roman public road were acts literally expanding upon the landscape Roman legal institutions and Roman political power. The Roman hegemony was physically manifested by such construction works, and underlying these were juridical, administrative, and political structures that penetrated thus different parts of Italy – and later the provinces. Roman law, most crucially, regulated the planning and construction of the roads, starting with the XII Tables that had already defined the minimum width of a *via* – eight feet when straight, sixteen in the curves.⁸²

Roads were not only built – they needed maintenance: without regular repair they would not have fulfilled their function, nor would they have had any lasting impact on the territory.⁸³ This maintenance represents a further important facet of Roman intervention throughout Italy – as financial investment, as creation of juridical frameworks, as personal action of members of the Roman elite (for instance in cases of *euergetism*, through which notables personally paid for the maintenance of roads).⁸⁴ Already since the XII Tables it is foreseen that roads needed to be regularly marked and kept in a recognizable shape; the responsibility for that was attributed to local inhabitants, even if it is a matter of discussion as to whether this meant those whose possessions were limited by the road or the inhabitants of the town through which the road passed.⁸⁵ The first option seems more probable, as Cicero states that “if a road is impassable, a man may drive his beast by any way he likes”, thus over the fields of those who should have maintained it.⁸⁶ Municipal laws attest that the public life of individual towns was affected on the administrative level by the passage of roads as they had to take care of them.⁸⁷ The *Tabula Heraclensis* reveals, for example, that the aediles of each town, just as the aediles in Rome, were responsible for the cleaning and the maintenance of the

81 A. Palma, ‘Le strade romane nelle dottrine giuridiche e gromatiche dell’età del principato’, in H. Temporini and W. Haase (eds.), *ANRW* 2.14 (Berlin and New York 1982), 850–880, here 854; Rathmann 2003, op. cit. (n. 77), 6–8; concrete information is available only for the Principate, yet. See V. Ponte, *Régimen jurídico de las vías públicas en derecho romano* (Madrid 2007), 251–263.

82 XII tab. 7.6; Varr. *ling.* 7.15. See Ponte 2007, op. cit. (n. 81), 44–46.

83 Hitchner 2012, op. cit. (n. 55), 225.

84 See Campedelli 2014, op. cit. (n. 18), 82–96. See also Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 52–55.

85 XII tab. 7.7. See Pekáry 1968, op. cit. (n. 18), 37–38; Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 147; Crawford 1996, op. cit. (n. 63), 672–673; Campedelli 2014, op. cit. (n. 18), 19–22; Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), 38–39 and the literature referenced there.

86 Cic. *Caecin.* 54 (transl. by H.G. Hodge). See Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 54.

87 Campedelli 2014, op. cit. (n. 18), 22–28.

roads – and of checking that those who lived along the road took care of the part of road in front of their property.⁸⁸

Similar measures must have been taken also within the autonomous communities – allied with Rome – through which the roads were passing, as we cannot expect only the colonies and the *municipia* to have dealt with the maintenance of the public ways. The agrarian law of 111 BCE mentions a group of *viasei vicanei*,⁸⁹ whose identification is quite difficult – as is the discussion whether the land they occupied was public or their private property; Michael Crawford writes that comparisons with other texts “might suggest that what we have here are ‘road-people, lane-people’, in open country and urban areas on *ager publicus*. Their duties were presumably to match the obligations of proprietors fronting on roads”,⁹⁰ as those mentioned in the Table of Heraclea.

There is no need to discuss here further the identity of the *viasii*, or the laws concerning the roads and their maintenance, which are mostly known for the imperial time.⁹¹ The main point, the one relevant to our considerations in this chapter, should have become very clear by now: the construction of Roman roads, and particularly of the *viae publicae* and of the *Reichsstraßen*, brought with them an expansion of Roman law and legal structures, as well as of Roman political and hegemonic power. Such legal structures and power were carved into the landscape through the very existence of the roads, the infrastructure that needed care and maintenance, the inscriptions bearing evidence of the intervention of Roman magistrates, as well as by the very movement of members of the Roman elite along those roads and through the towns they crossed.

5 Shaping Regions – Roman Republican Roads and the Definition of Italy

Saying that Rome was the centre of the Roman world is very obvious – yet, this centrality was absolutely crucial to the Roman understanding of space,⁹² and the roads, which famously “led to Rome”, were an important facet in

88 Crawford 1996, op. cit. (n. 63), no. 24.24–61. See, among others, Ertman 1976, op. cit. (n. 77), 8–12; Campedelli 2014, op. cit. (n. 18), 28–37.

89 Crawford 1996, op. cit. (n. 63), no. 2.11–12.

90 Crawford 1996, op. cit. (n. 63), 160. See also Hinrichs 1967, op. cit. (n. 53), 175–176; Wiseman 1970, op. cit. (n. 28), 148–149; Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 73. See also Hinrichs 1967, op. cit. (n. 53), 171–172 and A. Franciosi, ‘La romanizzazione del Vallo di Diano in età graciana e l’elogio di Polla’, in G. Franciosi (ed.), *La romanizzazione della Campania antica I* (Napels 2002), 195–228, here 214–215, interpreting the reference, in the *lapis Pollae*, to lands given to agriculture as relating to the *viasii vicani* ‘installed’ along the road.

91 A summary is provided by Basso 2007, op. cit. (n. 5), 25.

92 Carlà 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), in particular 126–132.

structuring such centrality.⁹³ Around twenty roads departed radially from Rome in different directions, and many of them belong to the most ancient phase of Roman road construction.⁹⁴ Starting with the second half of the 3rd century, indeed, the Roman roads lost the previous character of radially, assumed a “long-distance character”⁹⁵ and stretched thus over the entire peninsula, as “tangible reminders to the Italics of Rome’s virtual stronghold”⁹⁶ on it. Yet even now, roads connected with each other, always guaranteeing the possibility of travelling to the *Urbs*.

The milestones, as we have seen, reinforced the sense of Rome as the point of departure or arrival of all journeys by showing the distance from this central point, long before this was monumentally marked in the Forum by the *milliarium aureum* built by Augustus in 20 BCE.⁹⁷ Gargola recently stressed that Roman roads were primarily used by members of the Roman elite: “The regular movement of magistrates and citizens to and from Rome was a prominent structural feature of its public life. Because of their military service, members of Rome’s elite would have seen much more of their world than other members of their society, and they would have experienced it largely in the form of journeys to and from the center.”⁹⁸ Also in this sense, the road system contributed to shaping also at a meta- and macro-level the space of the Roman state, highlighting the centrality – physical, geographical, political and symbolic – of Rome.⁹⁹

And yet, centrality and centricity, understood as principle structuring space, and through it the *Weltanschauung* of historical cultures, imply the existence of a hierarchy, and therefore of different ‘levels of centrality’. Indeed, if Rome is the one and only centre of the *imperium* – and this is indisputable – Roman space was nonetheless constructed, perceived and reproduced as a concentric system in which proximity to the centre assumed a character of value. In the most evident form, Italy was – as the region “surrounding Rome” – a regional centre, clearly distinct from the provinces.¹⁰⁰

93 E.g., Whittaker 2004, op. cit. (n. 25), 78

94 Chevallier 1997, op. cit. (n. 4), 174. See also Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), 67–70.

95 Ward Perkins 1962, op. cit. (n. 49), 398.

96 Fronda 2010, op. cit. (n. 20), 310–311. On this evolution, see, among others, Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), 70–74; Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 75–80, and the literature referenced there.

97 D.C. 54.8.4.

98 Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 51.

99 See also Kolb 2006, op. cit. (n. 18), 318–319.

100 Carlà 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), in particular 117–125.

This 'concentric system' was also reified on the landscape by the road system that made similar 'assets of centrality' visible on the territory. At the first and most evident level, this happened through the very presence of public roads. Still in the Principate, the road administration in Italy was different from that in the provinces and marked the specificity of the peninsula.¹⁰¹ While Roman roads began being built in the provinces already 'in parallel' to the expansion of the road system in Italy, the sheer quantity of roads defined and clearly characterised Italy as the 'connected place', with a much more capillary connectivity and therefore connection to Rome.¹⁰² Elsewhere I have argued that for over a century, between the second half of the 3rd and the end of the 2nd century BCE, public roads were basically built exclusively in Italy.¹⁰³

Even in Sicily, indeed, we know only one milestone, placed by the consul C. Aurelius Cotta in 252 or 248 BCE, during the First Punic War, on the road leading from Panormus to Agrigentum¹⁰⁴ – at a time in which the provincial system did not exist yet, and the legal and administrative status of what would become, a generation later, the first Roman province was anything but clear.¹⁰⁵ Recent work on the earliest roads in the provinces, such as the *via Egnatia* in Macedonia and the *Via Domitia* in Gaul, has stressed how these were probably pre-existing paths on which maybe no construction work at all took place, but that it is rather possible that "l'essentiel de l'action proconsulaire ait concerné la pose de milliaires."¹⁰⁶ The same applies to Aurelius Cotta's road in Sicily, a pre-existing path on which the milestone, after the Roman conquest of Agrigentum (262 BCE) and Panormus (254 BCE), assumed the clear role of a political statement: as Jonathan Prag has emphasised, the inscription has many common characters with trophies, as it "sta in un territorio che i Romani stanno conquistando, ricorda la distanza dalla prima città importante siciliana conquistata, e segna il percorso rafforzato dai Romani tra due città

101 Eck 1995, op. cit. (n. 31), 296. See also, more generally, W. Eck, *Die staatliche Organisation Italiens in der hohen Kaiserzeit* (Munich 1979), 25–87.

102 E.g., Gargola 2017, op. cit. (n. 12), 58.

103 Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 93. On a more local level, Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 22, argues that "the building of the *Via Flaminia* created a view of the region and defined it as a single territory", also highlighting how roads can define the shape of individual regions.

104 *ILLRP* 1277 = Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), no. 24. On this milestone, see J.R.W. Prag, 'Il miliario di Aurelius Cotta (*ILLRP* 1277): una lapide in contesto', in M.A. Vaggioli (ed.), *Guerra e pace in Sicilia nel Mediterraneo antico (VIII–III sec. a.C.). Arte, prassi e teoria della pace e della guerra* II (Pisa 2006), 733–744, including a discussion of the previous literature.

105 Carlà-Uhink 2017, op. cit. (n. 11), 90–91. See also Prag 2006, op. cit. (n. 104), 736–738.

106 F. Mottas, 'Du premier milliaire au dernier palimpseste: cinq siècles et demi de présence romaine en Grèce', in Kolb 2019, op. cit. (n. 2), 272–302, here 273–275.

importanti in Sicilia occidentale. Si configura, dunque, proprio come un simbolo del potere romano in Sicilia in questo momento – un simbolo rafforzato tramite l'uso della lingua latina, una lingua del tutto straniera in Sicilia a [sic!] questo periodo.”¹⁰⁷

Surely, these milestones were absolutely crucial in displaying, as we have seen above, Rome's presence and its power in these territories, and the now established and reified link to Rome – and the importance of this action, as well as of the simple ‘declaring’ a path as a Roman public road cannot be underestimated. Cicero famously refers to the via Egnatia as “our great military road through Macedonia as far as the Hellespont”, and complains that it is currently endangered by barbarians to attack his enemy Piso.¹⁰⁸ At the same time, although, it cannot be underestimated that roads, through their appearance and infrastructure, could draw attention not only to their connectivity, but also to their distance from the centre – as well as to the difference between Italy and the provinces.

This was true also within Italy – and it constituted a further means of structuring the Roman system of concentric centralities. Of course, I do not want to argue that this was done intentionally, with the precise aim of differentiating the infrastructure of the roads in Northern Italy from that in the central part of the peninsula. Nonetheless, some construction practices that were deployed near the centre shaped the perception of particular areas as ‘more embellished’ and thus ‘more important’ and therefore reified and reinforced the spatial structures at stake. The best example is offered by the realisation of the roads themselves: stone paving was for instance still during the Principate common within the urban centres, much more seldom in the countryside – “a esclusione delle campagne centro-italiche e in particolare tosco-laziali, ove i tracciati erano per lo più lastricati, forse per la vicinanza a Roma o per la disponibilità di approvvigionamento lapideo.”¹⁰⁹ The two possible explanations offered by Basso are not mutually exclusive – and even if the second had been the original main reason (which does not seem probable), such construction practice probably finally ended up marking and highlighting proximity to Rome, and influencing the paving of further roads in the area.

¹⁰⁷ Prag 2006, op. cit. (n. 104), 736.

¹⁰⁸ Cic. *prov.* 4: *Via illa nostra, quae per Macedoniam est usque ad Hellespontum militaris*, [...]. (transl. by R. Gardner). *Via militaris* is used here to indicate a public road, rhetorically and dramatically connected with the passage of armies as instruments of Roman control, but without any ‘technical’ meaning: see Rathmann 2003, op. cit. (n. 77), 24–25; M.A. Speidel, ‘Heer und Strassen – Militares viae’, in R. Frei-Stolba (ed.), *Siedlung und Verkehr im römischen Reich* (Bern and Berlin 2004), 333–344, here 333. See Díaz Ariño 2015, op. cit. (n. 35), 44–46.

¹⁰⁹ Basso 2007, op. cit. (n. 5), 32. See also Laurence 1999, op. cit. (n. 6), 8.

Proximity to Rome was again marked by the milestones – also here, local and regional differences allow to see the ‘concentric’ spatial structure that we have been discussing. Yet, it is a field that would require further studies and more attention. Already in 1908, Laing noted that the indication of the distance from Rome is very common in central and southern Italy, less so in northern Italy, and much more seldom in the provinces,¹¹⁰ while Calzolari stressed how toponyms derived from the distance from Rome exist only in central Italy:¹¹¹ these patterns confirm that the road system, its infrastructure and the practices connected to its use shaped a spatial system in which the centrality of Rome made itself clear in the areas surrounding it, which were thus characterised by better and faster connectivity to the centre. Central Italy had therefore more and more ‘embellished’ roads, on which the distance to Rome was stressed more frequently; Italy in general displayed – also through the road system – its special character and its difference from the provinces.

“All roads lead to Rome” – and by doing so, they deeply shaped and modified the landscapes they were crossing, the perception and definition of regions and territories, and the ways in which the Romans and the inhabitants of the *imperium* saw and understood the space they lived and moved in. In this way, they shaped, reinforced and reified Roman power – as “landscapes do not mirror society, they also help to create and perpetuate social relations.”¹¹²

110 Laing 1908, op. cit. (n. 32).

111 Calzolari 1986, op. cit. (n. 29), 36–37.

112 Witcher 1998, op. cit. (n. 12), 61.