

**Beyond Abandonment: Residential Transformations in Rome and its Region from the Imperial
Period to Late Antiquity**

by

Tyler Johnson

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Doctoral Committee:

Professor Nicola Terrenato, Chair
Associate Professor David Fredrick, University of Arkansas
Professor Emerita Elaine Gazda
Professor Lisa Nevett
Assistant Professor Alessandro Sebastiani, University at Buffalo
Professor Paolo Squatriti

Tyler Johnson

tylerdjo@umich.edu

ORCID iD: 0009-0001-5236-6253

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Dedication

To my friends and family who are always nearby, even when hundreds or thousands of miles away.

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Table of Contents

Dedication	ii
Acknowledgements	iii
List of Tables	viii
List of Figures	ix
Abstract	xv
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
Prologue – The Area I House at <i>Gabii</i>	1
Introduction	4
Scope and Structure	9
Chapter 2 Studying the Roman House and its Abandonment	12
Roman Household Archaeology – Origins and Current Debates	13
Late Roman Houses – Formal Qualities and Chronology	22
The Origins of Research on Late Roman Houses	28
Late Roman Houses and Social-Historical Interpretations	32
Late Roman Houses and Medieval Archaeology	35
The End of the Villa	37
The End of the Domus	43
The Last Decade of Research	49
Four Problems with the End of the Roman House	55
Chapter 3 A New Approach to Residential Abandonment in Rome	58
Rome – A Changing Picture	60

Selection of the Case Studies	74
Abandonment and Activities	78
Domestic Use Activities	83
Domestic Disuse Activities	87
Structure and Presentation of the Catalogue	92
Chronology and Data Structure	92
Compilation of the Catalogue	93
The Interactive Format	96
Household Abandonment and Qualitative Assessments	98
Chapter 4 The Abandonment of 46 Households in Rome	101
<i>Zone 1: Ager Ostiensis</i>	103
Introduction	103
Case Studies (sites no. 1-3)	104
Discussion	108
<i>Zone 2: ager Albanus</i>	109
Introduction	109
Case Studies (sites no. 4-6)	111
Discussion	116
Zone 3: Outer Limit	120
Introduction	120
Case Studies (sites no. 7-11)	121
Discussion	134
Zone 4: <i>Gabii</i> and Territory	136
Introduction	136
Case Studies (sites no. 12-18)	139

Discussion	146
Zone 5: The Southern Suburb	149
Introduction	149
Case Studies (sites no. 19-22)	152
Discussion	160
Zone 6: The Northern Suburb	163
Introduction	163
Case Studies (sites no. 23-29)	168
Discussion	175
Zone 7: Before the Walls	180
Introduction	180
Case Studies (sites no. 30-32)	183
Discussion	187
Zone 8: Between the Walls	188
Introduction	188
Case Studies (sites no. 33-44)	193
Discussion	206
Zone 9: The Ancient Urban Core	213
Introduction	213
Case Studies (sites no. 45-46)	216
Discussion	219
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions	221
Redefining Domestic Abandonment and Disuse	223
Five Pre-Abandonment Trajectories	235
Local and Global Factors of Abandonment	243

Local Factors – Typology, Chronology, and Topography	244
Global Factors – (De)population, Elites, and Economy	255
The End of the Roman House Beyond the Elite	261
The End of the Roman House – A Post-Mortem	272
Tables	274
Figures	281
Bibliography	372

List of Tables

Table 1: Schematic example of activity descriptions in the long-data format.....	274
Table 2: Schematic example of activity chronological reliability in the long-data format.	274
Table 3: All case studies.	275

List of Figures

Fig. 1: (a) Location of Gabii in relation to Rome. (b) Known extents of Gabii. (c) Plan of the Gabii Project excavations, 2009–2018 (Gabii Project).....	281
Fig. 2: Floorplan of the Area I House: (a) 1 st century BCE–1 st century CE. (c) 2 nd –3 rd century CE. (c) 3 rd century CE. (d) 3 rd –4 th century CE (Gabii Project).....	281
Fig. 3: Mau’s “ideal Roman house” (Mau 1902, 247).....	282
Fig. 4: A j-graph, which divides the rooms of a floorplan into “nodes” for spatial analysis (Anderson 2005, 149).	282
Fig. 5: Floorplan of the Triconch Palace in Butrint (Bowden and Mitchell 2007, 457).....	283
Fig. 6: Typical decorative elements of the late Roman house, including the apse, opus sectile pavement, and marble wall paneling. Site no. 40 – Palazzo Valentini Domus B (Napoli and Baldassari 2015, 96).....	283
Fig. 7: Reconstruction (left) and floorplan (right) of the villa at San Giovanni di Ruoti. The 5 th -century phase relies on narrow corridors, rather than open courtyards or peristyles, for circulation (Small and Buck 1994, 413; Munro 2010, 221).	284
Fig. 8: Floorplan of the villa at Piazza Armerina, featuring a massive peristyle and compartmentalized layout (Polci 2003, 83 after Ellis 1991).	284
Fig. 9: The Domus of Octavius Felix, Rome, a small residence featuring a compressed double-colonnaded portico, a miniature apsidal hall, and opus sectile flooring (Guidobaldi 1986, 222).	285
Fig. 10: Tamponatura of Room 52, site no. 4 – Villa ai Cavallacci (Cuccurullo 2020, 194).....	285
Fig. 11: Tamponatura of colonnade and mosaic with mixed tesserae at site no. 38 – Domus on via Cesare Battisti (Excavation Report – SITAR OI 226).....	286
Fig. 12: Tamponatura of stairway near Corridor T, site no. 20 – Villa at Casale Novelli (Ricciardi 2005, 201).	287
Fig. 13: Postholes cut into a mosaic floor at the villa at Piano della Civita southeast of Rome (Brouillard and Gadeyne 2016, 307).	288
Fig. 14: Reconstruction of the two domus solarate excavated at the Forum of Nerva (Santangeli Valenzani 2000, fig. 11).....	289

Fig. 15: Plan of the trilobed apsidal hall at the Villa of Aiano Torracchia di Chiusi. Ceramic and glass production occurred in different areas of the hall, while metalworking occurred in Room B (Munro 2010, 230).	290
Fig. 16: A “settlement development scheme” created by Dodd in order to track the trajectories or “site biographies” of two villas (Dodd 2019, 39).	291
Fig. 17: A cappuccina graves, Tomb 23 (left) and Tomb 34 (right) at site no. 13 – Tincu House (Gabii Project).....	292
Fig. 18: Site no. 2 – Dragoncello Site A – a cassone tomb reusing a basin (left); infant burial in a 3rd-4th-century African amphora (right) (Olcese et al 2017, 9).....	292
Fig. 19: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the main map.....	293
Fig. 20: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the Zone 2 map.	293
Fig. 21: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the catalogue entry for site no. 5.....	294
Fig. 22: Zones 1-9 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	295
Fig. 23: Zone 1 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	296
Fig. 24: The landscape surrounding Ostia (Marcelli 2019, 34).	297
Fig. 25: Known villas in Zone 2 (Marcelli 2019, 36).	298
Fig. 26: Site no. 1 – Villa of Palombara (adapted from Marcelli 2019, 37).	299
Fig. 27: The pavement with reused mosaic fragments (left) and the counter (right) in Room B of site no. 1 – Villa of Palombara (Buonaguro et al. 2012, 75).	299
Fig. 28: Site no. 2 – Dragoncello Site A (adapted from Olcese et al. 2021, 3).	300
Fig. 29: Site no. 3 – Dragoncello Site C (adapted from Fascitiello 2018, 7).....	300
Fig. 30: Fragments of an opus scutulatum floor surface reused in the foundations of a wall, site no. 3 – Dragoncello Site C (Fascitiello 2018, 9).....	301
Fig. 31: Zone 2 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	302
Fig. 32: Villas (circles and numbers) and sanctuaries (squares and letters) around the area of Lago Albano and Nemi (Chiarucci 2000, 180).....	303
Fig. 33: Site no. 4 – Villa ai Cavallacci (adapted from Cuccurullo 2015, 71).	304

Fig. 34: Southwest sector of site no. 4 – Villa ai Cavallacci (Cuccurullo 2020, 194).....	305
Fig. 35: Site no. 5 – Villa of S. Maria della Stella (adapted from Caserta 2006, 172).	305
Fig. 36: Site no. 6 – Villa of S. Maria a Nemi (adapted from Poulsen 2015, 169).....	306
Fig. 37: Zone 3, site no. 7 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).....	307
Fig. 38: Site no. 7 – Villa at Piano della Civita (adapted from Marzano 2005, 270).	308
Fig. 39: Site no. 7 (Villa at Piano della Civita) state plan (adapted from Brouillard et al 2012, 305).	309
Fig. 40: Zone 3, sites no. 8-9 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).....	310
Fig. 41: Site no. 8 – Villa at Formello (Palombara Sabina) (adapted from Mari 2013b, 90).	311
Fig. 42: Position of other villas on the western slopes of Monte Gennaro (Mari 2003, 365). ...	312
Fig. 43: Site no. 9 – Villa of the Vigne di San Pietro (adapted from Frischer et al. 2000, 257).	313
Fig. 44: Zone 3, sites no. 10-11 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	314
Fig. 45: Site no. 10 – Villa at Madonna dei Colori (adapted from Alvino 2003, 9).....	315
Fig. 46: Site no. 11 – Villa at Mola di Monte Gelato (adapted from Potter and King 1997, 21).	316
Fig. 47: Zone 4 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).....	317
Fig. 48: Position of sites no. 12-15 at Gabii in Zone 4 (map tiles by Google; geodata for Roman roads by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire and the Gabii Project).....	318
Fig. 49: Site no. 12 – Area A House (Gabii Project).	319
Fig. 50: Site no. 13 – Tincu House (Gabii Project).	320
Fig. 51: Site no. 14 – Area C House (Gabii Project).	321
Fig. 52: Site no. 15 – Area I House. Plan of site indicating location of mosaic floors (left) and agricultural basin (right) (Gabii Project).....	322
Fig. 53: Site no. 16 – UA2 Domus (adapted from Glisoni 2020, 2).....	323
Fig. 54: Site no. 17 – Villa at Colle La Noce (adapted from Recco 2011, 404).....	324

Fig. 55: Site no. 18 – Villa of Passolombardo (adapted from Rustici and Tondi 2010, 289).....	325
Fig. 56: Reconstruction of the 5th-century wine production facilities uncovered at site no. 18 – Villa of Passolombardo (Ricci 2005).....	326
Fig. 57: Zone 5 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	327
Fig. 58: Site no. 19 – Villa of the Quintilii (adapted from Paris et al. 2012, 10).	328
Fig. 59: Site no. 20 – Villa at Casale Novelli (adapted from Ricciardi 2005, 199).....	329
Fig. 60: Site no. 21 – Villa del Campo Barbarico (adapted from Rea 2004, 207, 210, 213).....	330
Fig. 61: “Barbarian” masonry blocking the road outside site no. 21 – Villa del Campo Barbarico (Rea 2003, 258).....	331
Fig. 62: Site no. 22 – Villa of Centocelle “ad duas Lauros” (adapted from Volpe 2007b, 46)..	332
Fig. 63: Zone 7 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	333
Fig. 64: Site no. 23 – Villa of Campetti a Veio (adapted from Fusco and Soriano 2018, 392)..	334
Fig. 65: Site no. 24 – Villa on via Barbarano Romano (adapted from Cerrito et al. 2006, 346).	335
Fig. 66: Site no. 25 – Villa at the Fosso della Crescenza (adapted from Sbarra 2009, 239).	336
Fig. 67: Position of 1959 excavations (A) and 2002-2003 excavations (B) at site no. 26 – Villa at the American Overseas School (Cerrito et al. 2006, 325).	337
Fig. 68: Portion of site no. 26 (Villa at the American Overseas School) excavated in 1959 (Ward-Perkins 1959, 134).	338
Fig. 69: Site no. 26 – Villa at the American Overseas School; approximate position of trenches A, B, and C, excavated in 2002-2003 (adapted from Cerrito et al. 2006, 327, 329, 331).	339
Fig. 70: Site no. 27 – Villa of Casalotti (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 7615).	340
Fig. 71: Site no. 28 – Villa dell’ Auditorium (adapted from D’Alessio and Di Giuseppe 2005, 178).	341
Fig. 72: Details of tombs around the perimeter of site no. 28 – Villa dell’ Auditorium (Di Santo 2006b, 305).	342
Fig. 73: Site no. 29 – Villa of Pollenza (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 4048).	343
Fig. 74: Supposed multi-familial housing units A, B, and C, site no. 23 – Villa of Campetti a Veio (Fusco and Soriano 2018, 394).	344

Fig. 75: Position of burials at site no. 28 – Villa dell’ Auditorium (Di Santo 2006b, 302).....	345
Fig. 76: Zone 7 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	346
Fig. 77: Site no. 30 – Villa at the Istituto Superiore Antincendi (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 1608).	347
Fig. 78: Site no. 31 – Villa at Piazza Epiro (adapted from Montella et al. 2008, 163).....	348
Fig. 79: Site no. 32 – Villa on via Apulia (adapted from Montella et al. 2008, 294).	349
Fig. 80: Zones 8-9 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire).	350
Fig. 81: Site no. 33 – Domus on via del Tritone (adapted from Saviane 2017, 108).	351
Fig. 82: Sites no. 34-36 – via del Tritone buildings A, D, F (adapted from Buonaguro 2017, 98).	352
Fig. 83: Site no. 37 – Domus on via Giolitti (adapted from Serlorenzi et al. 2016, 267).....	353
Fig. 84: Site no. 38 – Domus on via Cesare Battisti (adapted from Egidi 2011, 102).	354
Fig. 85: Sites no. 39-40 (Palazzo Valentini Domus A, B), residential area (adapted from Parsifal Cooperativa di Archeologia).....	355
Fig. 86: Sites no. 40 (Palazzo Valentini Domus B), thermal sector (Baldassarri 2017, 247).....	356
Fig. 87: Site no. 41 – S. Ambrogio della Massima (adapted from Agnoli et al. 2014, 306).	357
Fig. 88: Site no. 42 – Domus at Palazzo Spada, Area 1 (adapted from Rinaldoni and Savi Scarponi 1999, 6-7).....	358
Fig. 89: Site no. 42 – Domus at Palazzo Spada, Areas 1 and 2 (adapted from Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 23).	359
Fig. 90: Site no. 43 – S. Cecilia in Trastevere (adapted from Parmegiani and Pronti 2004).....	360
Fig. 91: Site no. 44 – Convento San Francesco a Ripa (adapted from Filippi et al. 2011, 152-153).	361
Fig. 92: Site no. 45 – Palatine East Domus (adapted from Peña et al. 2018, fig. 6).....	362
Fig. 93: Site no. 46 – Domus at Piazza Albania (adapted from Narducci and Buonaguro 2020, 59).	363
Fig. 94: Number of sites with domestic use activities by century.	364

Fig. 95: Number of sites with domestic disuse activities by century.....	365
Fig. 96: Number of sites with overlapping domestic use and disuse activities by century.	366
Fig. 97: Number of total occupied sites by century.	367
Fig. 98: Number of sites with intra-household burial by century.	368
Fig. 99: Number of sites beginning their pre-abandonment trajectories by century.	369
Fig. 100: Number of sites experiencing their final abandonment by century.....	370
Fig. 101: Pavement in mixed reused mosaic floor fragments in Room B of site no. 1 – Villa of Palombara (Buonaguro et al. 2012, 74).	371

Abstract

The disuse and abandonment of once luxurious houses followed by the widespread emergence of squalid living conditions is a recurring trope in catastrophic narratives about the fall of Rome. Several studies over the last three decades have highlighted archaeological evidence seemingly in support of this image, leading many to take the “end of the Roman house” as a given. These investigations, however, have been restricted to fragmentary and incomplete field data, and the ongoing emergence of more extensive evidence necessitates a reevaluation of previous understandings. My study responds to this by investigating the transformation of 46 recently documented residential buildings in the ancient city of Rome, its suburb, and broader regional setting from the 1st-7th century CE. Examining the data at a granular level, I frame these houses as dynamic and lived-in spaces rather than simple markers of continuity or discontinuity. In particular, I focus on the evidence for 16 activities preserved in their stratigraphic and architectural records, supporting a contextual analysis of each house’s use and disuse over time. In order to accomplish this close reading and convey its results, my dissertation includes an interactive catalogue designed with the game engine Unity3D. This takes the form of a digital map that supplies graphic summaries of the complex archaeological data at the heart of my analysis, enabling a more comprehensive assessment compared with the normal practice of reducing sites to dots on a map.

The recognition offered by this approach shows that domestic abandonment is frequently misunderstood. Rather than a symptom of chaos and decline, it is an outcome of long-term domestic processes. I argue that Roman houses, far from being ideal structures, were subject to

constant transformation and variable trajectories. To illustrate this, I identify five essential types of change that shaped residential buildings leading up to their abandonment, proposing this as a useful framework for future studies. Despite classicists' assumption that they were, I find that these transformations were not unique to Late Antiquity. Instead, I consider how the adaptable and resilient practices of non-elite Romans might have shaped the afterlife of residential buildings as early as the 1st century CE, prompting us to rethink the conventional narrative surrounding the end of the Roman house.

Chapter 1 Introduction

Prologue – The Area I House at *Gabii*

The practice of archaeology is deeply entwined with abandonment. When we excavate ancient buildings, their abandonment is the first thing we encounter. Sometimes, we find that the final transformations of a building have all but obliterated the evidence of its earlier life, forcing us to look beyond the noise of its abandonment to uncover the desired information. For ancient Roman houses, whose abandonment was usually a protracted process rather than a sudden event, this noise can introduce particular distortion. Yet the process of residential abandonment in Rome is one worth grappling with, and the circumstances leading to the death of a house can reveal as much as those of its foundation and life.

The Area I House, recently excavated about 20 kilometers east of Rome in *Gabii*, serves as a compelling illustration of the complex issues that household abandonment can raise. Setting is essential to this house's story (fig. 1; fig. 2). Established by the early Iron Age, *Gabii* grew to become, like its neighbor Rome, one of the primary urban centers of ancient *Latium*, making it a valuable source of information about the birth of cities in 1st-millennium-BCE Italy.¹ On the other hand, *Gabii* is equally remarkable for what it tells us about the death of ancient cities.² Unlike Rome, whose famous collapse in Late Antiquity never amounted to total abandonment, *Gabii* is traditionally assumed to have failed entirely by the imperial period. Yet recent evidence

¹ Becker et al. 2009.

² Woolf 2020.

from the city has served to challenge this view, owing in part to the unexpected survival of buildings like the Area I House.

While its early imperial phases are hard to decipher, the Area I House appears to have experienced particular prosperity in the 3rd century CE. Not only was this long after the supposed decline of *Gabii*, but it also bucked the general downward trend in domestic construction and renovation across the entire region during those years. This was, therefore, an ambitious household. When the building was first excavated in the summer of 2017, the aspirations of its inhabitants were most strikingly evoked by the well-laid floor mosaics installed around the *atrium*, elements of a decorative program that also included extensive marble wall revetment. In combination with a series of facilities for pressing wine, the investment represented by these decorative surfaces reveals how the inhabitants of Area I strove, despite the tumultuous social context of the 3rd century CE, to live up to the fine standards of suburban residences that wealthy Romans had come to expect.³ Underscoring the initial success of this project, the Area I House also appears to have been a trailblazer of sorts, adopting that quintessential form of domestic architecture which, in successive centuries, would come to define aristocratic homes across the empire: the marble-clad apsidal hall.

Whatever its successes in this period, the house appears to have taken a turn for the worse in the 4th century CE.⁴ At this point, its rich decorative ensemble began to fall into disrepair. Several doorways were walled up, interrupting the former architectural layout. Irregular and mixed secondhand materials were used to erect new features, while the very marble that might once have decorated the home was now dismantled and collected, perhaps for reprocessing into lime, an essential ingredient of concrete. The apsidal hall, a vanguard example of that new

³ Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 117.

⁴ See Samuels, Cohen, et al. (2021, 145-148) for an overview of the phasing of this building.

architectural trend just over the horizon, and the *atrium*, the symbolic heart of ancient Roman houses, were given over to industrial or agricultural activities, evidenced most strikingly by a series of basins constructed directly atop the mosaic floors. Traces of frequentation would persist for the next couple hundred years after 300 CE, but the house never regained its former privilege. At some point, a group of postholes was cut directly into one of the *opus signinum* surfaces, indicative of occupation forms in stark contrast with the classical Roman lifestyles the home once represented. By the 6th century, the property had been converted into a dump, marking the last vestiges of its frequentation.

It is ironic to consider that the Area I House, just as it thrived unexpectedly in the 3rd century (in *Gabii* of all places), fell onto hard times unexpectedly in the 4th century, a time associated with residential rebirth around Rome.⁵ But can the building's 4th-century phase accurately be called abandonment? Obviously, the structure continued to be utilized, but was it still a house? The answer greatly depends on what we think made it a house in the first place. Inasmuch as the building was positioned in a semi-abandoned urban center, it was not quite a *domus*, but not quite a villa, even if it mixed the traditional elements of both. Whatever its designation, it seems clear that besides supporting basic domestic rituals like sleeping and eating, the Area I House was designed to generate and broadcast wealth for the family that lived there. On one hand, the degradation of its decorative elements during the 4th century would have hindered its ostentation, seeming to suggest a period of hard times or disuse. On the other hand, the expansion of the building's productive capacities could be interpreted as a form of economic success for its owners. In light of this, was the loss of Area I's mosaics a sign of decline or, alternatively, part of a strategic pivot?

⁵ Guidobaldi 1999, 59; 2014, 156-158; Machado 2012a, 137; Machado 2018, 39-40.

This example shows how the death of a house is key to understanding its life, and *vice versa*. Nevertheless, abandonment is frequently overlooked by scholars of Roman domestic life, and without a comprehensive framework, it is challenging to decipher the implications of Area I's final phases. Meanwhile, the Area I House is far from the only example of residential abandonment around Rome posing complex and socially relevant archaeological questions. The growing number of these cases, combined with the increasing care with which they have been documented and published, demands a more critical approach.

Introduction

Household archaeology plays a foundational role in reconstructing the story of ancient Rome. As a counterpoint to public monumental architecture, the complex records produced by household excavations promise glimpses into the private lives of Romans, enriched by the personal touches and individuality preserved from one residence to another. At the same time, Roman houses are also imagined as social arenas for expressing an essentially Roman identity, venues for daily life rituals that, traversing the threshold between public and private, formed the cultural building blocks of an integrated, pan-Mediterranean society. Single houses can thus be thought to transcend the individuals who inhabited them, emerging as constituent pieces in a broader thematic vision of *the* Roman house, a quintessential model of architecture and design embodying the normative principles shared throughout a society. Precisely such an abstracted view of Roman houses and a “general picture of Roman attitudes and beliefs pertaining to [them]” has prevailed among most archaeologists and historians.⁶ At the heart of this model is the social function of Roman homes for families, individuals, and landowners seeking to

⁶ Berry 2016, 125.

cultivate and advertise their control over status and resources.⁷ Primarily relying on the analysis of floorplans and decoration cast through the lens of historical literary sources, scholars have envisioned Roman houses as symbolic entities rather than simply material ones, instruments for projecting the private power of their privileged occupants into the public world beyond their doors.⁸ This is, clearly, an ideological and elite-centered model of Roman houses, one that can exist independently of “any assumptions about their actual everyday use.”⁹

Recently, some household archaeologists have grown skeptical of this traditionalist outlook, preferring an approach that emphasizes material over textual evidence,¹⁰ peripheral over core contexts,¹¹ artifact assemblages over decoration and architecture,¹² analytical problem-solving over formal description,¹³ and that decenters the elite point of view (both ancient and modern) as the primary reference point.¹⁴ Outside of specialist debates, however, these critical contributions have had limited impact on the prevailing ideological, essentialist view of Roman houses. In the context of fieldwork and site reports, for example, traditional mental models of the Roman house continue to condition the way site chronologies are constructed and communicated. The more the architecture and decoration of a house appear to conform to the perceived expectations of a wealthy Roman residence, the more care archaeologists will dedicate to its documentation and interpretation. Conversely, deviation from the norm is read as a sign of decline, and Roman archaeologists are rarely very interested in considering the final phases of household buildings.

⁷ Thébert 1987; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; Clarke 1991; Hales 2003; Bowes 2010; Platts 2020.

⁸ Fredrick 1995, 266; Hales 2003, 40; Machado 2018, 56.

⁹ Berry 2016, 125.

¹⁰ Ault and Nevett 1999; Allison 2001; Nevett 2010, 20-21. See also the various contributions in Dardenay and Laubry 2020a.

¹¹ e.g., Perring 2002; Timár 2011.

¹² Allison 1999a, 72-73.

¹³ Anderson 2005; 2010; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021.

¹⁴ Roskams 2006; Bowes 2021b, 13-17; Marzano and Métraux 2018b, 16-18; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021, 219.

Beyond site-level treatments, traditionalist views also dominate broader narratives about how the Roman house, as a social and architectural model, evolved over time to serve as a vehicle for advancing the success of Rome itself before ultimately marking its downfall.¹⁵ Key waypoints in this story include the birth of Roman society in crude huts on the Palatine,¹⁶ the development of villas as an architectural form and instrument of Romanization across central Italy and beyond,¹⁷ the growing pains of Roman domestic architecture as it refactored key attributes of Greek design alongside Italic ones,¹⁸ the dialectic between provincial styles and imperial inspiration in locations like *Pompeii* and further afield,¹⁹ and, finally, during the 4th-5th century CE, the development of a distinctly late antique Roman house embodying new architectural and social principles.²⁰ This last development – characterized by the rising popularity of apsidal architecture, elaborate marble and aquatic decorations, deemphasis of the peristyle, and increasingly compartmentalized room layouts thought to be indicative of a more draconian, hierarchical society on the eve of Rome’s decline – usually bookends high-level narratives of Roman housing. For this dissertation, however, it serves as the point of departure. The question addressed in these pages is, whatever became of the Roman house? Does its story really have a tidy end congruent with narratives of the fall of Rome?

I am certainly not the first to ask these questions. Most scholars venturing into the territory have indeed spoken of an “end of the Roman house,” thought to have occurred sometime between its 4th-5th-century-CE swansong and the first attested examples of distinctly

¹⁵ See De Albentis (2008) for the formal evolution of Roman domestic architecture. See Hales (2003) on the role of houses in broadcasting and consolidating Roman power and *Romanitas* across the empire.

¹⁶ Coarelli 2007, 131-132.

¹⁷ Terrenato 2001, 5-6; Ellis 2000, 10; Reddé 2017; Marzano and Métraux 2018a, xxxi-xxxiii; 2018b, 2-4, 20

¹⁸ Graham 1966; Gros 2001, 30-44; Howe 2018, 111; Cortés and de Soto 2022. See also Anderson 2005, 145.

¹⁹ Thébert 1987, 326-329; Ellis 2000, 6, 17-18.

²⁰ See Bowes (2010, 20-33) for an overview of the formal qualities and history of research on late antique houses. Essential studies have been Guidobaldi 1986; Pavolini 1986; Thébert 1987; Van Ossel 1992; Baldini 2001; 2005; Balmelle 2001; Mulvin 2002; Polci 2003; Romizzi 2003; Sfameni 2006; Lavan et al. 2007.

medieval residential forms in the 8th century.²¹ Archaeologically, the end of the Roman house is associated with the discovery of irregular and spoliated masonry, hut-like timber constructions, makeshift industrial work areas, tombs, and paleo-Christian cultic structures inside residential buildings.²² These phenomena are often interpreted as post-abandonment activities that took place after a house had ceased being a house. Their appearance has been explained through various lenses,²³ from depopulation and social fragmentation,²⁴ to economic collapse,²⁵ to the social transformation of the elite,²⁶ to the ideological recycling of ancient topographies of power in a new cultural context.²⁷ Disagreement also surrounds the agents thought to be responsible for these new occupation forms (barbarians,²⁸ squatters,²⁹ and elites themselves³⁰ have been the primary hypotheses) and their possible motivations (access to raw materials,³¹ subsistence living,³² and work in service of the church or other powerful groups³³ are all possibilities). Interpretations within these thematic frameworks can differ significantly depending on the scale of the investigation (i.e., analysis at the site level³⁴ vs. landscape approaches³⁵) along with the affinities of individual authors toward competing narratives of historical continuity versus

²¹ Essential studies on the topic are Brogiolo 1994a; 1996b; Baldini 2003; Brogiolo et al. 2005; Chavarría 2007b; Castrorao Barba 2020; Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020b; Cavalieri and Sfamini 2022. Other seminal works on the end of the Roman house have been Ellis 1988; Percival 1992; Ripoll and Arce 2000; Francovich and Hodges 2003; Lewit 2003; 2005; Chavarría 2004; Bowes and Gutteridge 2005. See Santangeli Valenzani (2011) for special focus on the 8th century and beyond in Italy. See Chavarría (2004, 85) on competing interpretations.

²² For a summary of these phenomena see Chavarría 2004, 75-85; Lewit 2005, 251-255; Castrorao Barba 2012, 226; Dodd 2019, 31-32; Castrorao Barba 2020, 13.

²³ See, in general, the discussion by Sfamini (2006, 285-297; 2020, 15).

²⁴ Valenti 2007a.

²⁵ Percival 1976, 168-180.

²⁶ See Van Ossel and Ouzoulias (2000, 156-157) and Wickham (2001, 560) on elite militarization. For the Christianization of elites: Lewit 2003; 2005, 259-260; Bowes and Gutteridge 2005; Machado 2012b; Bowes 2018; Castiglia 2018b.

²⁷ Augenti 2003, 289. See also Machado 2012b.

²⁸ Webster 1969; Galetti 1994; Ripoll and Arce 2000, 68-69, 101-103; Rea 2003; Romizzi 2003, 75; Chavarría 2004, 74-75; Cavalieri and Giumlia-Mair 2009; Brogiolo 2011, 75-76; Fronza 2011; Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 66-67; Heeren 2017, 164-165; Bowes 2018, 457, footnote 51; Dodd 2019, 30-32; Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani 2020

²⁹ Ellis 1988, 572; Lewit 2005; Marzano 2007, 216; Worsham 2022.

³⁰ Lewit 2003; 2006; cf. Bowes and Gutteridge 2005.

³¹ Valenti 2007a, 209; Castrorao Barba 2017.

³² Vaccaro 2008, 243; Dodd 2019, 31.

³³ e.g., Chavarría 2007a; Munro 2012; Castiglia 2018b.

³⁴ e.g., Volpe 2007b; Giuliani 2014; Dodd 2019.

³⁵ e.g., Chirico 2009; Volpe 2014. See the commentary by Roymans and Derks (2011, 35-36) on a “landscapes of ruins.”

discontinuity.³⁶ Recently, the discourse has become siloed, with little active debate between different points of view.

Abandoned Roman houses also raise questions at a basic interpretive level. James Dodd, for example, recently proposed that the “lack of a standardized framework rooted in standardized terminology” prevents us from grasping the “transformational trajectories” of these buildings.³⁷ Dodd makes a convincing argument that the analytical toolset for interpreting the material evidence underlying high-level questions, which he calls low-range theory, has suffered a lack of critical evaluation and explicit definition. Much of the crucial language commonly used to frame final household phases – *discontinuity*, *abandonment*, *disuse*, *reuse* – has been under-theorized, frequently left up to implicit definition or treated as self-evident. Consequently, the concepts and terminology underpinning the end of the Roman house have not been subjected to the kind of rigorous reevaluation that the last decades have produced for earlier periods of Greek and Roman housing, especially in the work of Penelope Allison and Lisa Nevett.³⁸

The lack of a vibrant theorizing discourse on this topic stems partially from problems with the material evidence itself, and this has an indirect influence on the tone with which the end of the Roman house is presented in narratives. Archaeological traces pertaining to the final phases of domestic structures are notoriously ephemeral and stratigraphically complex,³⁹ a jarring contrast with the contexts on which most Romanists are trained. As a result, these phases have suffered from poor recording, rendering the critical examination of excavated contexts difficult. Most Roman archaeologists simply avoid this issue. Instead, the end of the Roman house is a story that has been written almost entirely by medievalists, most of whom have framed

³⁶ Bowes and Gutteridge 2005, 405-407; Castrorao Barba 2020, 27-28; Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020a, 1.

³⁷ Dodd 2019, 32.

³⁸ Allison 1998; 1999a; 2001; Ault and Nevett 1999; Nevett 2010.

³⁹ Munro 2010, 219; Munro 2012, 352-353.

the evidence within the downfall of a society. This break with the past is imagined as disastrous for those who experienced it, with classical lifestyles replaced by primitive ways of living and low or nonexistent levels of prosperity. So just as *the* Roman house is a barometer for Rome's successes,⁴⁰ the *end* of the Roman house is a harbinger of its demise. Bryan Ward-Perkins, for example, considers the "end of comfort" – which was partly due to the decline of aristocratic residences in Rome – an indication of the "end of civilization," a view that is shared by many scholars.⁴¹ The end of the Roman house is thus an unhappy one according to most accounts.

Scope and Structure

In this dissertation, I explain how recent evidence prompts us to challenge this *status quo*. The first step toward accomplishing this, as I show in chapter 2, is to move beyond traditionalist models of the Roman house and its death during Late Antiquity. Instead, I reposition the final phases of Roman houses within – not just after – their long trajectories of transformation. For this, I look to theoretical developments stemming from studies of Roman domestic space in earlier periods. Work in this area has demonstrated that, contrary to the way Roman houses are usually framed, architecture and decoration only tell part of the story. The careful analysis of stratigraphic evidence and materials supplies an additional layer of insight, often revealing a more flexible approach to daily life practices than the rigid spatial definitions of essentialist

⁴⁰ Bowes 2010, 19

⁴¹ Ward-Perkins (2006, 109) argues for a sharp decline in the sophistication of building techniques in the late Roman period, impacting the quality of life of communities: "Domestic housing in post-Roman Italy, whether in town or countryside, seems to have been almost exclusively of perishable materials. Houses, which in the Roman period had been primarily of stone and brick, disappeared, to be replaced by settlements constructed almost entirely of wood. Even the dwellings of the landed aristocracy became much more ephemeral, and far less comfortable: archaeologists, despite considerable efforts, have so far failed to find any continuity into the late- sixth and seventh centuries of the impressive rural and urban houses that had been a ubiquitous feature of the Roman period—with their solid walls, and marble and mosaic floors, and their refinements such as under-floor heating and piped water. At present it seems that in Italy only kings and bishops continued to live in such Roman-style comfort." See also the discussion of Carandini (1993) and Valenti (2007a).

models imply. This requires us to set assumptions aside when approaching household evidence and to take the full spectrum of data into account.

A particularly rich regional dataset for the long-term evolution of Roman housing up until its end is emerging around Rome itself. In chapter 3, I narrow in on this body of evidence, considering the end of the Roman house from a Rome-specific standpoint before introducing the 46 residential sites that are this dissertation's primary case studies. The close examination of these sites, selected for the exceptional quality of their evidence, offers a deeper perspective than the sweeping view of previous studies. I propose a methodology that tracks the presence of 16 activities in the stratigraphic and architectural record of each case study from the 1st-7th century CE, supporting a comprehensive assessment. I also explain in chapter 3 why my dissertation is accompanied by a graphical user interface designed with the game engine (Unity3D) in lieu of a traditional typeset catalogue. Rather than reducing sites to dots on a map or charts on a page, my catalogue presents an interactive, contextual, and information-rich view of household evidence, offering a unique solution to representing complex archaeological data.

Chapter 4 summarizes the evidence for each case study within its broader topographical context, providing thick descriptions of domestic transformation across the centuries and throughout the region of Rome. In the final chapter, I discuss the implications of my findings. In particular, my analysis challenges the conventional understanding of the end of the Roman house by showing that it was a gradual, diverse, and protracted change rather than a singular and terrible crisis. Key to this recognition is my finding that the seemingly non-elite (re)occupants of "abandoned" houses were not simply driven by brute necessity, but often appear to have been living more comfortably than expected. As a result, while the "post-built, subdivided, grave-

riddled”⁴² successors of the Roman house are frequently used to evoke the downfall of the late antique aristocracy, my findings suggest that there is more than one way to read their story.

⁴² Bowes and Gutteridge 2005, 405.

Chapter 2 Studying the Roman House and its Abandonment

The end of the Roman house has played a central role in recent narratives of Late Antiquity, but it is by no means a universally defined concept. In this chapter, I explore the origins and branches of this discourse, focusing first on the field of Roman household archaeology in general before narrowing in on its late antique manifestation. I will show that late antique households have occupied a marginal position in Roman household archaeology's theoretical reappraisal since the late 1980s while, somewhat contradictorily, their social-historical analysis has been heavily influenced by interpretive models developed for earlier periods. At the same time, domestic abandonment has attracted the attention of medieval archaeologists as evidence for social discontinuity following the end of the Roman period. Research on the late Roman house is thus caught between two scholarly traditions and must grapple with the issues of both. At the intersection of these two traditions lies the "end of the Roman house," a concept that warrants reevaluation in light of several critical issues to which this chapter draws attention.

Throughout this chapter, I make frequent reference to research on residential sites across the Mediterranean, noting, however, the tendency of most surveys of Roman housing to foreground the exceptional evidence from the Bay of Naples, and thus to situate their narratives primarily within the chronological context of the late republican to early imperial periods. Research into the houses of Late Antiquity has had a broader geographical range, spanning from cities in the eastern provinces and the Balkans (e.g., Athens, Butrint, Corinth, Sardis, Antioch, Ephesus, Constantinople) to those in North Africa (e.g., *Caesarea*, *Djémila*, Carthage, *Apollonia*,

Bulla Regia) to the western provinces (e.g., *Barcelona*, *Merida*, *Conímbriga*, *Bordeaux*) while also taking into account rural housing landscapes throughout.⁴³ While I draw occasional attention to examples from across the Mediterranean, especially when these have been the subject of particularly influential studies, this chapter focuses primarily on the evidence from Italy, and especially central to northern Italy, since the debates surrounding this subset of the material record are the most relevant to my own central concern, the city and region of Rome.

Roman Household Archaeology – Origins and Current Debates

The origins of current academic research into Roman households are firmly rooted in the 19th-century excavations of *Pompeii* and especially the work of Augustus Mau. Most famously remembered for establishing the Four Styles still used to classify Pompeian wall painting, Mau's contributions also foreshadowed the foundational elements of Roman household archaeology in other ways. The first of these is the primacy of *Pompeii* as a source for type sites in the analysis of Roman households. Mau's work was well received by his contemporaries and had a strong effect on the interpretation of the scantier, less well-preserved evidence emerging in Rome as well as in nearby *Ostia*.⁴⁴ This established an important precedent in Roman household archaeology where sites from across the Mediterranean were read against the evidence from *Pompeii*.⁴⁵ Another influential aspect of Mau's work was the way he interpreted the material record through the lens of ancient texts, particularly the commentary of Vitruvius. Using these sources to develop a vocabulary for describing the design of Pompeian residences, Mau constructed a vision of the "ideal Roman house," featuring a symmetrical layout of rooms –

⁴³ For a summary of the available evidence for urban housing across the late empire, see Baldini 2001, 117-322. For villas, see Chavarría and Lewit 2004. Uytterhoeven (2007a; 2007b) provides an overview of both. For an updated look, see the various contributions in Baldini and Sfameni 2018; 2021.

⁴⁴ Mundy 2018, 24-25, 31-34.

⁴⁵ De Albeniis 2008, 17.

which he provided with Latin names – anchored around a central *atrium* and peristyle garden (fig. 3).⁴⁶ Following Vitruvius’ commentary, Mau’s ideal Roman house was not only an architectural model, but also a social necessity for elite Roman men who needed to receive clients, managing their private affairs via the instrument of patronage and cultivating their public reputation.⁴⁷

Mau’s emphasis on the typological classification of Roman houses set the stage for the most influential debates through the middle part of the 20th century regarding the origin of Roman housing in the archaic period and the best way to categorize remains at *Pompeii* versus those in locations like *Ostia* along this developmental arc.⁴⁸ The well-known publications of John Percival and Alexander McKay in the 1970s represent the capstone of this approach.⁴⁹ Both authors emphasized the classification of different housing types across the empire according to regional groupings, categories of status (especially between imperial and private residences), and architectural typologies. They also focused almost exclusively on the layout and decoration of houses, reading these remains, like Mau, through the lens of the canonical literary sources on domestic Roman architecture.⁵⁰

While approaches to analyzing the Roman house thus remained fairly conservative throughout most of the 20th century, priorities shifted dramatically following the spatial turn in critical theory during the 1970s and -80s.⁵¹ During these decades, the ideas of Pierre Bourdieu, Michel Foucault, Henri Lefebvre, Michel de Certeau, and other theoreticians drew attention to

⁴⁶ Mau 1902, 247-248; Mundy 2018, 4, 6-7, 24; Allison 2001, 185; Anderson 2010, 183. See Anderson (2005, 144-145) for the legacy of the “ideal Roman house.”

⁴⁷ e.g., Mau 1902 249, 258.

⁴⁸ Calza 1916; 1933; Carrington 1933; Boëthius 1934; Harsh 1935; Maiuri 1942; Anderson 2005, 145; Mundy 2018, 31-38. See also De Albentis 2008, 14-15.

⁴⁹ Percival 1976; McKay 1977.

⁵⁰ See, for example, Percival (1976, 25-30) on the role of literary sources in interpreting villas and McKay (1977, 16-17, 37-38) for the use of written texts to interpret individual house case studies.

⁵¹ For general reflections on the spatial turn, see Crang and Thrift 2000; Warf and Arias 2009.

the socially constructed, symbolic nature of built space and how these factors affect social interaction and behavior in daily life situations.⁵² In this intellectual context, which also saw the rise of post-processualism and the encouragement of new approaches to archaeological evidence, scholars grew less concerned with the typological assessment of Roman houses and more interested in framing them as built spaces and “arenas for social interaction.”⁵³

The approach of Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, detailed first in a 1988 paper and reworked into his seminal 1994 book, is the definitive example of the social-historical perspectives which grew from this era of research.⁵⁴ Like Bourdieu’s famous exegesis of the Berber house, *The Kabyle House or the World Reversed*,⁵⁵ Wallace-Hadrill presented a structuralist view of Roman houses as social documents offering mirror-like reflections of the society that built them.⁵⁶ His thesis was that the decoration and layout of different spaces in Pompeian homes could be classified along discrete axes of differentiation, encoding rooms with varying levels of exclusivity and status and, in turn, structuring the social hierarchy of interactions that occurred inside them.⁵⁷ For Wallace-Hadrill, the Roman house was thus a powerhouse, designed to reinforce and signify the status of wealthy Roman homeowners.⁵⁸ Key evidence of this was the way Roman domestic architecture seemed primarily designed to accommodate the *salutatio* ritual behind which the elite, male patron of the house was assumed to have been the primary agent and beneficiary. “The ritual of the *salutatio*,” as John Clarke stated in the first chapter of

⁵² Foucault 1971; Lefebvre 1974; De Certeau 1984; Bourdieu 1989; 1990. For a look at recent approaches to Roman cities in light of the spatial turn, see Filippi 2022.

⁵³ Anderson 2010, 183. For the theoretical inspiration behind this way of viewing houses, see Lévi-Strauss 1963; Rapoport 1969.

⁵⁴ Wallace-Hadrill 1988; 1994.

⁵⁵ Bourdieu 1979, 133-153.

⁵⁶ Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 5-6.

⁵⁷ Wallace-Hadrill 1988, 10-14.

⁵⁸ Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 12; cf. Fredrick 1995, 266.

The Houses of Roman Italy, “secured the power and fortune of the *paterfamilias*...this ritual structured the *domus*.”⁵⁹

Following Wallace-Hadrill, several important studies in the 1990s and early 2000s analyzed Roman domestic space through similar social-historical themes like privacy, power, status, and identity, distancing themselves from the typological focus of previous research.⁶⁰ This new generation of work, however, did not represent a total break with the past, and even as scholars strove to introduce original themes and lines of questioning, the essential toolset for interpreting Roman houses was still based primarily on the visual analysis of floorplans and decoration through the lens of historic literary sources.⁶¹ As a result, even as the growing influence of post-processualism encouraged archaeologists to decenter elite, masculine, and colonial viewpoints in narratives about the past,⁶² the obvious biases present in the evidence most frequently examined by household specialists retained a lingering effect. For example, in her 2003 survey on Roman housing, Shelley Hales criticized the “simplistic and inflexible” nature of textually based paradigms and sought to show how houses across the Roman Empire revealed the “numerous rhetorical contradictions of *Romanitas*.”⁶³ Yet, basing her approach almost entirely on the canonical ancient texts, Hales ultimately advanced a traditionalist narrative wherein the private houses of Romans enabled wealthy families, from the core to the periphery of the empire, to “deliberately project” a Roman identity.⁶⁴ The conclusions of Hales are a clear

⁵⁹ Clarke 1991, 2; see also Dwyer 1991, 29.

⁶⁰ Laurence and Wallace-Hadrill 1997; Zanker 1998; Ellis 2000; Gros 2001; Hales 2003; Leach 2004.

⁶¹ Allison 2001, 185-188; Anderson 2005, 145; 2010, 183. See Allison (1999a) for the use of literary sources to identify and interpret artifacts.

⁶² Hodder 2020.

⁶³ Hales 2003, 4, 7-8.

⁶⁴ Hales 2003, 204-206; Nevett 2010, 97.

example of how reliance on a limited corpus of textual sources – the protagonists of whom are normative, male, elite Romans – can leave a strong mark on interpretive paradigms.⁶⁵

By the early 2000s, the growing concern surrounding these issues inspired deeper scrutiny of the standard methodologies used to study Roman houses. In the course of her work on *Pompeii*, Penelope Allison offered a particularly vigorous criticism of the social-historical approach.⁶⁶ Among other issues, she took aim at the use of conventional Latin names to identify different objects and spaces in excavated Roman residences.⁶⁷ This outdated vocabulary, she argued, was the product of tenuous readings (or “ransacking”)⁶⁸ of the ancient textual sources and pushed scholars toward the problematic assumption that the rooms of Roman houses represented fixed, single-purpose spaces. Allison found that a closer look at the material record revealed more dynamic room-use patterns than normally recognized, leading her to conclude that the standard Latin vocabulary exaggerated the extent to which archaeologists understood the activities that actually occurred inside them.⁶⁹ In response, she advocated for a more data-driven and archaeologically informed approach to understanding room use within Pompeian houses, focusing especially on stratigraphic analysis, formation processes, artifact distribution, and floor assemblages, all of which were mostly absent in previous studies.⁷⁰

Following the contributions of Allison and others, a complex research landscape has emerged in the last two decades.⁷¹ On one hand, the classical, text-based social-historical

⁶⁵ Platt 2002, 88; cf. Fredrick 1995; Nevett 2010, 94-95; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021.

⁶⁶ Allison’s criticism was originally formulated in her 1992 doctoral dissertation, *The Distribution of Pompeian House Contents and its Significance*, before being refined over a series of articles (see in particular: Allison 1998; 1999a; 2001; see also the introduction to her 1999 edited volume, *The Archaeology of Household Activities*) and eventually reformatted in her 2004 book *Pompeian Households: An Analysis of the Material Culture*.

⁶⁷ Allison 1999a.

⁶⁸ Allison 2001, 185; cf. Wallace-Hadrill 1994, 6.

⁶⁹ Allison 1999a; Allison 2001, 185-185. Leach (1997) and Riggsby (1997) propose similar criticisms of the standard room vocabulary.

⁷⁰ Allison 2001, 201-202; Allison 2004, 125, 153; Allison 2009, 14-15, 28.

⁷¹ Nevett (2010, 153-154) gives a summary of the major developments between 1990-2010. Dardenay and Laubry (2020b) provide an updated consideration and reflection on the interdisciplinary potential of Roman household archaeology.

approach to interpreting domestic architecture and decoration shows no signs of fading away entirely.⁷² On the other hand, the attempt of many scholars to move toward a more distinctly archaeological treatment of the evidence is making a significant impact. Lisa Nevett, who has primarily worked on the houses of Greece, has been influential in highlighting, like Allison, the need to study households from the standpoint of occupational history, not just as normative cultural artifacts.⁷³ She argues for a more dynamic view of ancient household occupation,⁷⁴ experimenting with quantitative analysis, comparative ethnography, and other approaches spanning critical theory and anthropological archaeology to highlight how patterns of daily life shaped the trajectory of residential buildings.⁷⁵ Her contributions coincide with those of other archaeologists of Greek houses who, rejecting the limitations of text-based frameworks, strive to insert the material archaeological record more firmly within their narratives.⁷⁶ Recently, the application of an anthropological approach toward the “dévitrivisation” (i.e., the decoupling from textual sources)⁷⁷ of Roman households has been explored in the edited volume *Anthropology of Roman Housing*, whose contributors seek to highlight the multidimensional, multifunctional nature of Roman domestic space as revealed by a wide range of excavation data.⁷⁸

⁷² Tuori et al. (2015), Berry (2016), and Platts (2020), for example, all rely heavily on a conventional application of literary texts to interpret the material record through familiar themes like privacy and power.

⁷³ For the contrast between occupancy and construction, see Allison 2001, 202.

⁷⁴ Nevett 2007, 10.

⁷⁵ Nevett 2007. Nevett (2010, 17-21) reflects on the relationship between the textual and material records and the role of comparative ethnoarchaeological approaches in revealing “how variable the organization and use of domestic space can be.”

⁷⁶ See, for example, Foxhall 2000; Lang 2005 (and other contributions in Ault and Nevett 2005); Trümper 2007; Margaritis 2014; Westgate 2015.

⁷⁷ Dardenay and Laubry 2020b, 10; cf. Guilhembet 2007, 101-102.

⁷⁸ See in particular the contributions of Andrews (2020), who takes a spatial analytical look at the multifunctionality of upper stories in *Herculeaneum*; Bouet (2020) on the rarely studied topic of latrines in households; Berg (2020), who argues that the distribution of female toiletry items defies conventional expectations; and Baills-Barré and Mélissa Tirel (2020), who draw upon data from the archaeology of burials to consider local household customs in Roman Gaul.

A parallel development has been the rising popularity of quantitative methodologies for classifying Roman domestic space – including space syntax, network analysis, and viewshed analysis – which promise to fill in the gaps left by the sometimes inconclusive material record.⁷⁹ Encouraged by a larger technological thrust among archaeologists in the use of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) for mapping excavation data, such methods use algorithms to statistically analyze the distribution, accessibility, and visibility of spatial layouts based on their floorplans (fig. 4). The findings of these approaches have raised important questions about the phenomenologically mediated elements of Roman houses along with the “functional uses” of domestic space and the “social relationships patterned by those spaces,” aspects which neither the material nor the textual record has been entirely adequate in elucidating.⁸⁰

Immersive 3D reconstructions are another avenue toward analyzing ancient households as multisensory, contextual environments. As visual aids, virtual reconstructions can bring previously unconsidered aspects of domestic structures into sharper focus, such as their topographical context, the effect of variable lighting conditions, or other environmental factors.⁸¹ When paired with modes of interaction with the virtual archaeological record such as first-person navigation, reconstructions can provide for a depth of phenomenological inquiry beyond that offered by impersonal algorithmic computations, even if they might not necessarily allow archaeologists to put themselves “in the shoes of the Romans.”⁸²

Other than new avenues for phenomenological considerations, 3D representation has also been useful for increasing the depth and transparency of published field data in household

⁷⁹ Grahame 2000; Ellis 2004; Anderson 2005; 2010; von Stackelberg 2009; Stöger 2011; Weilguni 2011; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021. On the inconclusive nature of household artifact assemblages, see Foxhall 2000; Nevett 2010, 96.

⁸⁰ Anderson 2005, 146.

⁸¹ Fredrick 2014; Gruber 2015; Dardenay and Laubry 2020b, 13-14; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021.

⁸² Fredrick 2014, 461-464; Fredrick and Vennarucci 2021, 219.

archaeology, especially given the rapid rise over the past decade of structure-from-motion photogrammetry to record architectural remains and stratigraphy combined with the increasing accessibility of game engine technology and online 3D platforms.⁸³ The *Gabii Project Reports* are a prime example of how 3D environments can transcend the limitations of traditional print publications by making it possible to share large quantities of field data in a way that users find intuitive, position the stratigraphic record at the center of the interpretive process, and facilitate a digitally embodied exploration of excavated contexts, balancing a positivist approach toward archaeological interpretation with the emic perspective of phenomenology. These accomplishments follow up in a substantial way on the calls of Allison and others who have advocated for greater emphasis on the material finds and stratigraphic record, as well as a less schematic view of the occupational history of Roman houses. In the next chapter, I consider how the lessons learned from these tech-driven accomplishments will inform my own attempt to highlight the stratigraphic record of excavated households.

To recap, research on ancient Roman houses is deeply rooted in a traditionalist perspective. Recent developments have offered a variety of promising alternatives, but have not completely dismantled ongoing biases, including the tendency to consider households from a strictly elite point of view and preference for lines of interpretation based primarily on evidence from the Bay of Naples. Turning now to the specific question of *late* Roman houses, it is first essential to note that, compared with earlier periods, evidence from Late Antiquity has played a minimal role in the debates discussed above. What are the reasons for this? A central part of the answer is that while houses from the late Roman period have attracted growing attention along with the steady expansion of late antique studies since the 1970s, their documentation is still

⁸³ See various contributions in Olson and Caraher 2015; Opitz and Johnson 2016.

scantier than for earlier periods.⁸⁴ This is partly because the often ephemeral, non-monumental quality of the evidence left behind by “late”⁸⁵ interventions can require particular expertise to excavate, record, and interpret. In addition, although frequently encountered on household excavations, the remnants of late antique or early medieval phases have historically been dismissed as unimportant modifications of a building’s “original” aspect.⁸⁶ Hence, late Roman houses have often been ignored or poorly documented when encountered by the Roman archaeologists most frequently responsible for excavating them.⁸⁷

For the best documented late antique houses, especially those preserving familiar monumental decorative elements such as floor mosaics, social-historical interpretations utilizing the literary-based model prevalent among Roman archaeologists have produced some insights. On the other hand, these approaches have had little to say regarding the nearly ubiquitous phenomenon of “post-abandonment” occupation phases noted across the Mediterranean,⁸⁸ a theme which has been taken up almost exclusively by medieval archaeologists and historians. Among this group, interest has revolved around the end of the Roman house as a waypoint in broader social, economic, and cultural changes leading into the early Middle Ages and extending to the 9th-10th century, well beyond the Roman period. Accordingly, the issues they raise primarily relate to social and economic systems at a *longue durée* level, but rarely consider individual residential buildings as *households* in the anthropological sense implied by recent work in Roman and Greek archaeology: “a lived space as well as an architectural structure.”⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Baldini 2001, 19; Sfameni 2004, 335; Bowden and Mitchell 2007, 456; Uytterhoeven 2007b, 25; Chirico 2009, 237.

⁸⁵ Which Dey (2021, 89), noting the previous tendency of archaeologists to neglect and destroy the physical evidence left behind by such evidence, calls “somewhere from the 4th century on.”

⁸⁶ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 127, footnote 7; De Franceschini 2005, 297-298; Dey 2021, 5-6.

⁸⁷ Ripoll and Arce 2000, 71; Lewit 2004, 10; Ellis 2007, 3; Bowes 2010, 35, 37-38; Dodd 2019, 31.

⁸⁸ Bowes (2010, 38-39) reflects on how the preference for studying monumental elite households has skewed perspectives of the available evidence. See also Baldini 2001, 15, 106-107; Sfameni 2020, 9.

⁸⁹ Nevett 2010, 5.

The theories, methods and priorities of Roman and medieval archaeologists thus differ significantly, and few scholars have managed to gravitate between the questions posed by both groups. Given this, as I will now explain, work on late Roman houses inherits an intellectual background that is multilayered and diverse, but also siloed.

Late Roman Houses – Formal Qualities and Chronology

I will first address the formal qualities usually thought to define late Roman houses and outline a general view of their chronological development. In both urban and rural contexts, archaeologists have tended to emphasize a handful of key characteristics that are conventionally associated with an *aulic* visual language in Late Antiquity.⁹⁰ First among these is the adoption of apsidal forms, considered the most distinctive element of late antique domestic architecture.⁹¹ So-called apsidal halls are thought to replace the *triclinium* as the default model for reception and dining areas; the most striking examples – such as those documented at the House of Bacchus at *Djémila*, the Palace of Theodoric at *Ravenna*, the villa at *Desenzano*, at *Piazza Armerina*, the Governor’s Palace at *Aphrodisias*, the *Domus delle Sette Sale*, and the Triconch Palace at *Butrint* – can include double or triple apses and even hexagonal or octagonal layouts (fig. 5).⁹² Accompanying these elaborate forms was a more grandiose taste in interior decoration, marked by polychrome mosaics and marble wall revetment along with the continued use of fresco and stucco, columnated entrances, coffered ceilings, sculptural ensembles, the frequent

⁹⁰ For “aulic” architecture in late antique palaces, houses, and early churches, see Bowes (2010, 23), who ties the use of this term to the work of Bianchi Bandinelli on the villa at *Piazza Armerina* (Bianchi Bandinelli 1971, 237-247). The definitive assessment of late antique domestic architecture remains Guidobaldi (1986, 205-219), who bases his observations on the evidence at Rome. Baldini (2001, 47-90) expands upon Guidobaldi’s description, citing numerous examples across the empire. See also the discussion of Polci (2003) and Santangeli Valenzani (2011, 15-18), the latter of whom focuses on the Italian evidence. For the presence of these elements in villas, see Romizzi 2003, 43-55.

⁹¹ Romizzi 2003, 74-75; Sfameni 2004, 339; Bowes 2010, 54-55.

⁹² The sites mentioned here are among the key examples of monumental elite late antique residential architecture (Volpe 2001a; Bowden and Mitchell 2007, 455, 465-466). For the apsidal hall in general, see Guidobaldi 1986, 206-209; Balmelle 2001, 171-172. Baldini (2001, 58-62) provides an extended overview of the apsidal form in domestic architecture, Romizzi (2003, 46-51) in villas, and Bowes (2010, 54-60) reviews the historiography surrounding its interpretation within an “aulic” tradition.

inclusion of fountains and other decorative aquatic features, and the expansion of bathing facilities (fig. 6).⁹³

Scholars have also defined the late Roman house in terms of its spatial arrangement and layout.⁹⁴ Frequently cited is the gradual abandonment first of the *atrium*, then of the peristyle, giving way in some cases to smaller, more compressed circulation spaces with only partial colonnades (fig. 7).⁹⁵ At the same time, the dimensions of the most monumental houses increased – especially in the case of rural villas, but also in that of urban *domus* in cities like *Ostia* or Rome, many of which overtook or fused together multiple neighboring properties – and high-status reception areas gravitating around an imposing peristyle could occupy a massive portion of the overall footprint.⁹⁶ In general, late Roman houses are also associated with a more articulated, compartmentalized layout and a more significant distinction between large, ostentatious rooms and smaller or utilitarian spaces (fig. 8).⁹⁷

As we will see, these new architectural and decorative forms are generally interpreted as signs of more hierarchical social relations and rigid status structures.⁹⁸ This coincides with the fact that the most notable examples of these forms are provided by imperial palaces and elite residences, even if evidence exists for their inclusion in smaller, seemingly non-elite houses as

⁹³ Guidobaldi 1986, Baldini 2001, 72-90; Romizzi 2003, 52-53, 54-55.

⁹⁴ Baldini 2001, 69-72; Romizzi 2003, 74; Bowes 2010, 39-54.

⁹⁵ This is based on the thesis proposed by Ellis (1988), who addresses both the physical abandonment of peristyle houses and the abandonment of the peristyle as an architectural form. Baldini (2001, 71-72, 112-114) analyzes the architectural disappearance of the peristyle across the Mediterranean, a theme recently reiterated by Guidobaldi et al. (2018, 7-8) in the context of Rome. Romizzi (2003, 75) discusses the disappearance of the peristyle in fortified villas.

⁹⁶ For villas: Sfameni 2004, 364. Romizzi (2003, 45-46; cf. Bowes 2010, 40-46) distinguishes between the imposing scale of peristyles and “reception” rooms and the more compressed scale of “residential” rooms (i.e., spaces for sleeping and dining). For the *domus*: Baldini 2001, 56. For the combination of multiple properties into single *domus*: Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 212. The *Domus* of Gaudentius is a well-known example in Rome (Spinola 2001). The *domus* on *via del Tritone* – treated as a case study in this dissertation (site no. 33; Zone 8) – is a more recent example (Saviane 2017).

⁹⁷ An idea introduced by Ellis (1988, 571-572, 574-575; 1991, 123) and Thébert (1987, 389-392). For more recent examples, see Polci 2003, 83-89; Romizzi 2003, 74; Sfameni 2004, 365-366; Machado 2018; cf. Bowes 2010, 39-54.

⁹⁸ Bowes 2010, 16, 32-33.

well (fig. 9).⁹⁹ This observation has sometimes been used to reinforce a “trickle-down” view of cultural transformation, in which the components of palatial architecture influenced the residences of the senatorial elite, which in turn defined the aspirations of less wealthy homeowners, and so on.¹⁰⁰

There is, however, another series of characteristics frequently encountered in late Roman houses that contrasts significantly with those just discussed. In line with broader trends in late antique building, construction techniques can often appear haphazard compared to earlier interventions and frequently utilize mixed, reused, or perishable materials.¹⁰¹ Spaces within a house are often divided by rough partition walls in techniques like drystone, and the practice of “plugging” doorways – which involves walling up or “*tamponatura*” – is also commonly noted, suggestive of the disuse of entire spaces within a house (fig. 10; fig. 11; fig. 12).¹⁰² The most significant cases of these “downgraded” houses can also include the insertion of burials in formerly residential areas and the transformation of residential spaces into utilitarian ones,

⁹⁹ An often-cited example of this is the *Domus* of Octavius Felix in Rome (Guidobaldi 1986, 223). Bowes (2010, 38-39) also cites the “modest but proudly decorated fourth-century apartments” of Ephesus along with examples from *Moreria* in Spain. Also see the discussion of Ellis (2006, 418-434), who cites numerous examples of middle-class houses in North Africa and the east.

¹⁰⁰ While Bowes (2010, 23) associates the “trickle-down” view with the ideas of Rostovtzeff and sees it repeated in the theories of Bianchi Bandinelli (1971), neither explicitly endorsed such a vision. Rostovtzeff (1979, 502-541, especially 538), in fact, argues for quite the opposite, that “primitive forms of life among the masses...triumphed over” those of the elite. This generally concurs with the “trickle-up” theory of Roman art that characterized research through most of the 20th century (Clarke 2003, 2, 15, 272-273). Meanwhile, Petersen (2015, 218-219) argues that Bianchi Bandinelli’s categories of *arte aulica* and *arte plebea* are designed to intentionally oppose a trickle-down view of cultural transmission, since they imply that two distinct artistic traditions existed simultaneously for the elite and lower classes (see Bianchi Bandinelli 1971, 23-38). In reality, the trickle-down theory has presented itself more as an implicit bias than as a direct inheritance of explicit historical models. In the earlier empire, many houses from *Pompeii*, for example, have been interpreted as kitschy emulations of aristocratic housing, such as the House of the Vetii or the House of Octavius Quartio (Clarke 1991, 24; see also Zanker 1998, 145-156). In Late Antiquity, the trickle-down theory can be traced at least back to early analyses of the villa at *Piazza Armerina* (e.g., Settis 1975, 903-922), as Bowes (2010, 26) rightly acknowledges. More recently, the idea has often been repeated more casually in general commentary. For example, Baldini (2001, 55, 70, 111-112) explains the gradual disappearance of the *atrium* in late antique houses and the increased distinction of the peristyle and reception rooms over other areas as a result of aristocratic emulation of palatial forms derived from eastern and Egyptian traditions. Ellis (2006, 422, 435), in his attempt to define a middle-class housing style in Late Antiquity, points to “decor that attempts to imitate that of richer housing” among the defining qualities. See Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 18; Machado 2012b, 111-112 for further commentary. In contrast, Romizzi (2003, 77-78) argues against the idea that aristocratic villas emulated palaces either in design or function. For a general overview of the comparison between palatial and private architecture, see Scagliarini Corlaita 2003.

¹⁰¹ Cagnana 1994, 42-43; Parenti 1994; Brogiolo 1996a, 109-110; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 137; Santangeli Valenzani 2000, 110; Lewit 2003, 262; Chavarria 2004, 80-81; Brogiolo and Chavarria 2008b, 198; Castrorao Barba 2012, 226.

¹⁰² Ellis 1988, 567-569; Baldini 2001, 71; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 137; Lewit 2005, 254; Marzano 2005, 250-251; 2007, 199, 231.

including with the erection of post-built structures (fig. 13), sometimes directly to the detriment of existing decorative features.¹⁰³

Although the chronological arc of these developments varies from region to region,¹⁰⁴ some general trends can be observed for Italy. The oft-debated “crisis of the 3rd century” is usually taken as a dividing point between the classical architectural model thought to be embodied at *Pompeii* and the aulic late antique style just discussed.¹⁰⁵ Archaeologists have described an overall downturn in new residential construction in both the city and the countryside during the 3rd century CE, while many existing structures appear to have suffered from physical degradation.¹⁰⁶ However, it has been shown that many sites displayed signs of decline already in the 2nd century,¹⁰⁷ even as numerous villas were apparently made over in this period with the provisioning of new bathing facilities, floor mosaics, and monumental tombs.¹⁰⁸ Whatever the origins of this downturn, scholars have generally pointed to a distinctive revival of residential building starting with the 4th century, encompassing both the foundation of new houses and, more frequently, the remodeling of old ones according to new tastes.¹⁰⁹ In rural areas, this coincided with an overall reduction in the total number of occupied villas, but an

¹⁰³ For burial: Percival 1976, 183-199; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 1993; 1995; Ripoll and Arce 2000, 88-94; Balmelle 2001, 118-122; Lewit 2003, 262-263; 2005; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003; Chavarría 2004, 81-83; Marzano 2007, 218-219; Castrorao Barba 2014; Dodd 2019, 35-36; 2021. For the conversion and accompanying destruction of residential or decorative areas: Ripoll and Arce 2000, 71-74; Lewit 2003, 260-261; 2005, 254; Marzano 2007, 219; Munro 2010; Dodd 2019, 34-35.

¹⁰⁴ Sfameni 2004, 359; Marzano 2007, 208-209. See Wickham (2003) for the importance of regional views in late antique studies.

¹⁰⁵ Marzano (2007, 199-222) offers a critical assessment of this crisis in terms of villas. See also Lewit 2004, xii-xviii, 1-7; Cameron 2003, 10; Liebeschuetz 2007; Christie 2016, 146-147.

¹⁰⁶ Castrorao Barba 2020 (119-146) provides a thorough overview. See also Romizzi 2003, 75.

¹⁰⁷ Lewit (2004, 27, 34, 172-175; cf. Marzano 2005) first raised awareness of this situation for the countryside in a 1991 study which was subsequently updated in 2004. The villa of *Settefinestre* (Carandini and Filippi 1985) and the *Villa dell'Auditorium* (site no. 28 in this study; see Carandini et al. 2006) are notable examples. For cities, *Gabii* is an emerging example of an early case of abandonment (Opitz et al. 2018; Banducci et al. 2021; Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021; Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021). *Lucca* is another urban center that experiences seeming signs of decline in the 2nd century CE (Castiglia 2016). See, for example, the case of the *domus* at *Palazzo Bocella* (Castiglia 2018c, 91).

¹⁰⁸ Bodet 1997; Marzano 2007, 207-208. In Rome, numerous examples of this can be found in the catalogue of De Franceschini (2005).

¹⁰⁹ Santangeli Valenzani 2000, 101-102; Sfamini 2004, 336-357; Machado 2012b, 111; Christie 2016, 146.

expansion in the size and ostentatiousness of those left standing.¹¹⁰ The most well-known archaeological examples, inevitably elite occupations, can thus embody outcomes that contradict overall trends but have nonetheless served as the foundation for conventional typologies and chronologies.

The developments of the 5th-6th century CE are even more multidirectional. Some urban and rural examples point to the continuation of longstanding traditions (i.e., symmetrical floorplans organized around open courtyards),¹¹¹ although the number of both new foundations and continued occupations declines even more dramatically.¹¹² Other developments, however, represent a clear departure from the past. In the countryside, new and remodeled villas show an increased reliance on corridors over courtyards for circulation spaces, the displacement of residential areas to the second floor, the appearance of fortified structures, and the construction of rooms or separate annexes for Christian rituals.¹¹³ Similarly, the gradual eschewal of the classical urban *domus* has also been associated with this period, evidenced most strongly by widespread abandonment, the conversion of some *domus* into churches, and the development of new elite residential types like episcopal palaces.¹¹⁴ In both rural and urban zones, the phenomenon of downgrading or post-abandonment occupation became increasingly common.¹¹⁵

Carla Sfameni points out that in most cases, it is difficult to determine whether villas founded in the 4th century CE continued to be occupied in the 5th century or later due to the poor stratigraphic documentation of these phases and a lack of datable pottery.¹¹⁶ This observation

¹¹⁰ Chirico 2009, 237; Castrorao Barba 2012, 226-229, 230; 2018b, 1; Christie 2016, 146-147.

¹¹¹ Castrorao Barba (2012, 230) cites the villas of *Palazzolo* in *Ravenna*, *Galeata* in *Forlì-Cesena*, *Cazzanello* near *Viterbo*, *Faragola*, *San Giovanni di Ruoti*, and *Quote San Francesco*. For urban *domus*, Brogiolo (2011, 65) gives the examples of the *Domus del Chirurgo* in *Rimini* and the *domus* on *via d'Azeglio* at *Ravenna*.

¹¹² Castrorao Barba 2014, 281-287; Christie 2016, 147.

¹¹³ Sfameni 2004, 349-359.

¹¹⁴ Machado 2012b, 111-112; Santangeli Valenzani 2012, 223-224; Christie 2016, 135-136. For episcopal residences, see Baldini 2005, 102-136. See also Uytterhoeven 2007b, 39-40.

¹¹⁵ Brogiolo 2011, 69-70; Castrorao Barba 2012, 229-230; Sfameni 2020, 13-14.

¹¹⁶ Sfameni 2004, 349.

applies equally to urban contexts. Moreover, historical and some archaeological evidence suggests that starting with the 5th century, the division between first and second floors became a more important aspect of Roman household design, with domestic activities like dining, sleeping, and the reception of guests occurring upstairs, and activities connected with labor, production, storage, and other utilitarian needs occurring downstairs.¹¹⁷ As a result, the apparent downgrading of many households based purely on evidence recovered from the ground floor might reflect an incomplete picture. Despite these various issues, scholars have consistently interpreted the absence of evidence for familiar Roman housing forms between the 5th-6th century as evidence for absence, generally placing the origins of the end of the Roman house precisely in this period. Very few examples of stone-built housing have been archaeologically documented from around 550 CE until the 8th-9th century, when, judging from the known examples in Italy, the *domus solarata* emerged as a primary model for urban elites (fig. 14).¹¹⁸ In addition to restricting residential spaces to the upper *piano nobile*, the design of *domus solarate* was also “volumetrically compact, isolated, marked by a presence within single spaces of different functions, both residential and utilitarian, and by the simplicity of building techniques and physical infrastructure.”¹¹⁹ The architectural and decorative tastes associated with the ideal Roman house are thus scarcely legible in these structures, seemingly confirming a societal shift toward a new type of model. Nevertheless, while the emergence of these new housing types in the 8th-9th century would appear to provide a convenient *terminus ante quem* for the end of the

¹¹⁷ The so-called *piano nobile*. Polci 2003, 89-105. Santangeli Valenzani (2004, 47-54; 2011, 89, 142) sheds light on the outcome of these developments in the 8th-10th century.

¹¹⁸ Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 75-89.

¹¹⁹ Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 89.

Roman house in Italy, it is essential to note the paucity of evidence for 5th-7th-century housing in Italy and the western provinces.¹²⁰

The Origins of Research on Late Roman Houses

It is now useful to consider the origins of the general view just presented, in particular the material and literary evidence upon which it was first based and the dominant historical models that informed it, since current research still remains invested in many of the themes raised by early studies. By the middle of the 20th century, the best examples of late antique domestic architecture known to archaeologists were imperial residences,¹²¹ including Diocletian's residence at Split,¹²² the Palace of Theodoric at *Ravenna*,¹²³ the Sacred Palace at Constantinople,¹²⁴ the complex of *Felix Romuliana* constructed by Galerius,¹²⁵ and various examples at Rome such as the Villa of Maxentius¹²⁶ and the Villa of Gordian.¹²⁷ Examples of non-imperial residences were mostly limited to a series of houses in southern Syria known since the 18th century along with those more recently uncovered during excavations at Antioch and Ephesus, in various locations across North Africa, and in the city of *Ostia*.¹²⁸ In Rome itself, the most famous example was the *Domus* of the Valerii on the Caelian.¹²⁹ Boosted especially by the 1950s excavation of the lavish villa at *Piazza Armerina*, early research on these structures

¹²⁰ Santangeli Valenzani 2003, 609; 2004, 43.

¹²¹ Bowes 2010, 20-21.

¹²² Duval 1956.

¹²³ Dyggve 1941.

¹²⁴ Brett 1947.

¹²⁵ For a history of excavations, see Bülow and Petković 2020.

¹²⁶ Pisani Sartorio and Calza 1976.

¹²⁷ De Franceschini 2005, 144-156.

¹²⁸ Becatti 1948; Stillwell 1961; Foss 1979; Bowes 2010, 21-22.

¹²⁹ Colini 1944.

emphasized the influence of palatial designs on both early churches and the homes of the senatorial elite.¹³⁰

Power – public, private, and divine – was thus a key theme of these foundational studies. This played well into contemporary historical models of an increasingly rigid, autocratic, hierarchical late antique society, a perception which was tied, in part, to the commentary of contemporary Roman authors on domestic life.¹³¹ It is therefore worth briefly considering how these texts have normally been interpreted.¹³² Starting in the 4th century CE, the letters of Symmachus are an important source. Symmachus’ conception of domestic life bears a strong resemblance to that of his aristocratic predecessors, illustrating the ongoing importance of traditional Roman ideas toward *otium/negotium* in structuring the dichotomy between urban and rural living and, like Sidonius in the 5th century, reflecting the survival of longstanding elite mentalities in Late Antiquity.¹³³ Yet Symmachus also reveals a concern with villas as an economic, not just symbolic, asset, and similar preoccupations are detected among subsequent authors as well.¹³⁴ Scholars have often interpreted these sentiments as signs of a supposedly “new hands-on approach to land management,”¹³⁵ in which wealthy Romans began to occupy their luxurious rural residences permanently, trading their participation in civic affairs for the strict control of rural economic assets. Late antique authors also commented on urban dwellings. Sometimes, the impression offered by contemporaries would seem to reflect earlier periods in Roman history. Ammianus’ description of the *salutatio* ritual, for example, paints an image of

¹³⁰ Dyggve 1941; L’Orange 1972, 70-85. For *Piazza Armerina*, see Dyggve 1956; Duval 1963; 1978; 1997; Lavin 1962, 6-10; Settis 1975; Bianchi Bandinelli 1971, 237-247; Carandini et al. 1982; cf. Bowes 2010, 22-26.

¹³¹ See, for example Rostovtzeff 1979, 527-531.

¹³² For a review of literary sources on late Roman housing and bibliography related to them, see Sfameni 2004, 347-349, 360-362; Uytterhoeven 2007b, 27. See also the critical discussion in Dark (2005) regarding literary descriptions of villas in the northern provinces.

¹³³ Sfameni 2004, 347-349.

¹³⁴ The work of Palladius, who “presuppose[s] direct management by the landowner,” provides further evidence for this claim (Sfameni 2004, 347).

¹³⁵ Bowes 2010, 25.

social patronage that scholars have long seen reflected in the houses of *Pompeii*.¹³⁶ On the other hand, the more exaggerated statements of Olympiodorus, who writes that the *domus* of Rome had come to resemble small cities rather than private residences, have often been read as a confirmation of the withdrawal of elite Romans from public life, fixating instead on self-advancement in the private sphere.¹³⁷ The writings of Libanius and Salvian, along with various examples of late Roman laws regulating landownership and patronage, have served as further evidence that private affairs were pursued along a more autocratic and domineering hierarchy of patronage and status compared to the past.¹³⁸ It comes as no surprise that these texts suffer from the same limitations as the writings of Vitruvius and other earlier authors, namely their elite-centric and highly ideological basis. Nonetheless, they have provided the primary context used to interpret late antique domestic architecture throughout the 20th century and into the present.

On the other hand, critical differences between current approaches and mid-20th-century understandings can be traced to the late 1970s, by which point the increasing pace of rural excavations had documented hundreds of villas with significant late antique phases, diversifying the corpus of evidence. These discoveries raised important questions about the chronology and historical transformations reflected in late antique housing, a matter handled by Percival in his 1976 study of villas.¹³⁹ Most historical narratives had previously maintained that barbarian invasions marked the downfall of Roman occupation in the countryside, with the destruction of villas being a key component.¹⁴⁰ Citing several recently excavated examples, Percival called this idea into question, arguing that most villas were subject to a “general dilapidation” rather than

¹³⁶ Amm. Marc. 28.4.10–12; Sfamini 2004, 348–349. See above, footnote 59.

¹³⁷ Olymp. Hist. 41; Ellis 1988, 569, 576; Scott 1997; Chavarría 2007a, 123.

¹³⁸ Bowes 2010, 61–62.

¹³⁹ Percival 1976.

¹⁴⁰ Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000, 133–134; Lewit 2001, 33; Dodd 2019, 31.

dramatic destruction.¹⁴¹ Percival was also among the first to extensively comment on the “downgrading,” or “reoccupation...at a lower, or at least a different, economic level” of many villas in the western provinces starting in the 4th century CE, well before “barbarians” first appeared in these territories.¹⁴² He interpreted these findings as signs of a topographical continuity in rural occupation but a severe break with the past in terms of cultural and economic systems.

Percival’s commentary represents the insertion of late Roman households into specifically archaeological investigations, not just historical ones, a trend that would continue throughout the 1980s. This was also a time when historians were revisiting and revising longstanding assumptions about Late Antiquity more generally. The most influential historians up until this point had echoed Edward Gibbon’s decline-and-fall narrative, disagreeing about its specific mechanisms and causes but remaining steeped in its pessimistic and teleological view.¹⁴³ The major exception was Henri Pirenne, who famously argued that the economic systems and social structure of the classical world persisted until at least the 7th century, when they were eventually disrupted by the Arab conquests.¹⁴⁴ Although widely controversial among contemporaries, the “Pirenne thesis” would inspire later 20th-century historians like Peter Brown, who advocated not only for a long-lasting Late Antiquity (from the 3rd-8th century) but also for one characterized by fascinating cultural transformations worthy of study, challenging the pessimistic stance of previous scholars.¹⁴⁵ The 1983 publication of Richard Hodges and David Whitehouse (*Mohammed, Charlemagne, and the Origins of Europe*), which sought to test the

¹⁴¹ Percival 1976, 169.

¹⁴² Percival 1976, 169.

¹⁴³ Bury (1923), Jones (1964), and Rostovtzeff (1979 from the 1926 original) are frequently cited examples. See below, footnote 170.

¹⁴⁴ Pirenne 1895.

¹⁴⁵ Brown 1971; Bowes 2006, 287-288.

Pirenne thesis against the material record, was an important catalyst in placing archaeology at the center of these debates and paving the way for new lines of investigation enabled by landscape approaches and field survey.¹⁴⁶ By the end of the 1980s, as houses and private life were gaining more appreciation in studies of the ancient world, a new interest in late Roman houses and a variety of pathways toward studying them began to emerge.

Late Roman Houses and Social-Historical Interpretations

Like for earlier houses, social-historical approaches have represented one of the most important lines of research into houses from Late Antiquity. Work in this area can be traced back to the influential contributions of Yvon Thébert and Simon Ellis.¹⁴⁷ Analyzing non-palatial residential contexts in two different areas of the empire, Thébert and Ellis both sought to place the material evidence in dialogue with the various social transformations that had been suggested by historians. Their conclusions echoed the themes of privacy, power, and status reflected by contemporaries like Wallace-Hadrill and other scholars concerned with the relationship between built space and social structures.

Thébert, examining several homes across North Africa, concluded that their late phases revealed an “increasingly hierarchical” and strictly class-segregated Roman society.¹⁴⁸ Based on this, he argued that the homes of late antique provincial elites were designed to help control their

¹⁴⁶ Hodges and Whitehouse 1983; Bowes 2006, 287-288. The publication of Hodges and Whitehouse revisited the Pirenne thesis in terms of quantitative data and newly developed processual methodologies (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983, 16-19). The authors argued that the material record largely validates Pirenne’s claims, which Wickham (2009, 447) calls “pre-archaeological,” but reframed the Islamic conquest and as a product of the Roman collapse, not a cause of it (Hodges and Whitehouse 1983, 169-176). Hodges had already offered an examination of the relationship between archaeology and economic history in his 1982 book, *Dark Age Economics: The Origins of Towns and Trade A.D. 500-1000*, a work which, as the title suggests, offered a systemic view of the origins of towns, commerce, and social complexity in northern Europe following the decline of the western Roman Empire. In his 2012 follow-up, *Dark Age Economics: A New Audit*, Hodges revisits these issues in light of new debates, admitting that his efforts in the 1980s were “highly positivistic” and acknowledging the current need to “fuse the comparative approaches of processual archaeology with the post-processual emphasis on agency and materiality” (Hodges 2012, 116).

¹⁴⁷ Thébert 1987; Ellis 1988; 1991.

¹⁴⁸ Thebert 1987, 389.

interactions with social subordinates, drawing on a language of ritual and power that “grew out of the same matrix” as imperial and religious ceremonies.¹⁴⁹ While this claim was hardly novel, Thébert’s innovation was his attention to the way these social factors influenced the evolution of houses over time. In the case of *Bulla Regia*, for example, he noted that four of the eight structures known at that point contained private baths, serving to “make the wealthy more independent of communal life” and paralleling the “increasing formalization of the social hierarchy.”¹⁵⁰ Thébert thus attempted to relate previous social-historical narratives to a diachronic analysis of the archaeological evidence in an original way.

Ellis, meanwhile, formulated his thesis during his work throughout the 1980s on houses from the Roman east and North Africa, including the Palace of the Dux at *Apollonia*.¹⁵¹ This culminated in his influential 1988 piece titled *The End of the Roman House*, in which he aimed to explain what he called the “disappearance of the peristyle house” in the eastern empire during the 6th century.¹⁵² Echoing Percival, Ellis dismissed the catastrophe narrative as an inadequate explanation for this. Instead, like Thébert, he turned to factors stemming from a more hierarchical, autocratically structured society in which provincial elites placed private affairs before civic participation.¹⁵³ Along with the emergence of the apsidal hall, he described the increasing compartmentalization of floorplans in many houses of the period as evidence for a more rigid differentiation of social classes during ceremonies of private reception.¹⁵⁴ Ellis pointed to the contrast between such examples and a number of urban residences that exhibited some of the same characteristics noted earlier by Percival in western villas, namely the

¹⁴⁹ Thébert 1987, 389.

¹⁵⁰ Thébert 1987, 380.

¹⁵¹ Ellis 1985.

¹⁵² Ellis 1988, 565.

¹⁵³ Ellis 1988, 575.

¹⁵⁴ Ellis 1988, 572-574.

subdivision of floorplans and single rooms into multiple units, particularly via the construction of crude partition walls in formerly decorative, high-status areas.¹⁵⁵ For Ellis, the spread of these “poor” building forms in previously wealthy homes was a result of “the concentration of wealth and power in the hands of a few aristocrats, and a change in the form of personal patronage.”¹⁵⁶ As the ranks of the powerful elite became more and more restricted, Ellis argued, peristyle houses grew ever fewer in number, replaced by improvised housing forms which reutilized older, abandoned structures.

Although their analyses were original and served to highlight previously unconsidered evidence, it is easy to see how Thébert and Ellis largely recycled the pessimistic claims of mid-20th-century historians. Throughout the 1990s and into the early 2000s, this same stance would be repeated by several studies that, analyzing a variety of late Roman houses from across the Mediterranean, inevitably cast their design in terms of an increasingly autocratic and self-interested aristocracy.¹⁵⁷ In her 2010 overview of late Roman housing, Kimberly Bowes attempted to make a sharp turn away from this “hierarchization model,” which had arisen as a clear *status quo*, arguing that it stemmed from an uncritical reading of the literary sources and not from direct analysis of the archaeological record.¹⁵⁸ Instead, in the vein of Allison, she called for a more material-centered, archaeologically informed view. Bowes’s own analysis focused almost exclusively on the decoration and architecture of well-known monumental residences, reflecting the difficulty of doing away with old biases baked into the preselected material record. Ultimately, Bowes settled on a view of late Roman houses as “machines for competition,”

¹⁵⁵ Ellis 1988, 567-569. Ellis also notes that this phenomenon could occur in public buildings.

¹⁵⁶ Ellis 1988, 573.

¹⁵⁷ Sodini 1995; Arce 1997; Brenk 1996; 1999; Hansen 1997; Scott 1997; Tione 1999; Baldini 2001; Polci 2003; Sfameni 2004.

¹⁵⁸ Bowes 2010, 31-33.

shifting focus away from top-down social hierarchies and toward the interactions shared between elites of similar social footing.¹⁵⁹

The most important contribution of Bowes was the attention she drew to the way most scholars had emphasized the *different* quality of late antique homes only to draw from them the same interpretations frequently encountered in Pompeian studies. Like their early imperial predecessors, late Roman houses are described as highly crafted and tightly controlled environments, reflecting the preoccupations of elite families who appear just as invested as their early imperial forerunners in broadcasting status and power in the private sphere. While these homes might therefore have scaled up their intensity as powerhouses, the degree to which this represented a fundamental departure from the past is questionable, since they still appeared beholden to familiar notions of patronage, status, and self-representation.

Late Roman Houses and Medieval Archaeology

As an alternative to the social-historical model, issues originating in medieval archaeology have produced a more variable toolset for approaching the transformation of late Roman houses, differentiated not only in scale and approach to the material and historical record, but also in theme. Whereas social-historical studies have emphasized examples of grandiose, palatially inspired residences across the Mediterranean, medievalists have focused on the abandonment and disuse of houses. Contributions in this area have focused both on villas, where primary issues have centered around changes in settlement dynamics and rural landscapes, and on urban residences, which have been the protagonists in accounts of changing medieval

¹⁵⁹ Bowes 2010, 95-98.

cityscapes.¹⁶⁰ In both contexts, key themes have been the fate of the Roman aristocracy,¹⁶¹ economic transformations,¹⁶² population and demography,¹⁶³ the foundation of churches,¹⁶⁴ and the symbolic inheritance of the Roman past.¹⁶⁵

Most research in this area has been conducted regionally, acknowledging the geographical variability of the material record.¹⁶⁶ While the transformation of late Roman housing is thus widely thought to produce different outcomes from one physical, cultural, or economic landscape to the next, certain interregional commonalities have been emphasized.¹⁶⁷ The widespread “downgrading” of formerly elite residences, encountered across all regions of the Roman west starting in Late Antiquity, is the most essential trend.¹⁶⁸ Due to the obvious and jarring contrast between these occupation forms and the “ideal” Roman houses of the earlier imperial period, most have been interpreted as post-abandonment phases, reoccupations of disused residential structures. Scholars have presented the pervasiveness of such evidence as proof of a society-wide abandonment of Roman lifestyles and mentalities, culminating in the end of the Roman house.

Narratives of the end of the Roman house have often rehashed the familiar debate between continuist and catastrophist views, despite the fact that these frameworks have been

¹⁶⁰ Key works addressing villas in the late antique and early medieval countryside are Brogiolo 1996b; Ripoll and Arce 2000; Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000; Francovich and Hodges 2003; Lewit 2004; Brogiolo et al. 2005; Christie 2004; Chavarría 2007b; Verreyke and Vermeulen 2009; Roymans and Derks 2011; Vaccaro 2011; Castrorao Barba 2018a. For *domus* and other urban residences: Ortalli 1992; Ward-Perkins 1997; Brogiolo and Ward-Perkins 1999; Baldini 2003; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004; Christie and Augenti 2012; Brogiolo 2018a. Contributions in Baldini and Sfameni (2018; 2021) handle both urban and rural housing.

¹⁶¹ Ripoll and Arce 2000; Van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000; Lewit 2003; 2005; Sfameni 2004; Valenti 2007a; Brogiolo and Chavarría 2008a; Wickham 2009.

¹⁶² Valenti 1994; 1996; Chavarría 2004; Costambeys 2009; Munro 2010; 2011; 2012; Vaccaro 2011; Castrorao Barba 2017.

¹⁶³ Pavolini 1993b; Lewit 2003; 2005; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004; Valenti 2007a; Verreyke & Vermeulen 2009.

¹⁶⁴ Ripoll and Arce 2000; Augenti 2003; Chavarría 2004; Castrorao Barba 2012; 2014; 2018b; 2020; Castiglia 2016; 2018b; Bowes 2018.

¹⁶⁵ Halsall 1995; Augenti 2003; Machado 2012a; 2012b.

¹⁶⁶ This is in line with a broader trend of regionally focused approaches in late antique studies, as explained by Cameron (2003, 8-13). Wickham (2002) addresses the importance of recognizing regional variability specifically in Italy.

¹⁶⁷ Dodd (2019, 32-33), for example, argues that while regional approaches have been productive, more value needs to be placed on cross-regional comparisons.

¹⁶⁸ Lewit 2003.

extensively criticized for reducing inherently complicated processes into oversimplified heuristics.¹⁶⁹ In recent decades, its most apparent manifestation has been the contrast between the pessimistic outlook often encountered among medieval archaeologists, stressing the role of crisis and collapse in shaping the late Roman world, and the optimistic outlook of late antique social historians, emphasizing currents of continuity intermixed with the vibrancy of emerging cultural, social, and spiritual transformations.¹⁷⁰ In the case of household archaeology, the seeming starkness of post-abandonment contexts and the scarcity of monumental housing from the 5th century CE forward have rarely inspired an optimistic outlook.¹⁷¹ Among the majority of the medieval archaeologists responsible for studying cases of household abandonment, the end of the Roman house has been framed as a disaster.

The End of the Villa

The most extensive treatments of the end of the Roman house have focused primarily on villas. This is due not only to their prevalence in the archaeological record compared to the fragmentary documentation for urban residences, but also to the central role villas have played in crucial debates about the medieval countryside since the early 1980s. The origins of this can be placed in Chris Wickham's reaction to the pessimistic view held by Italian historians like Giovanni Tabacco regarding the catastrophic role of the 6th-century-CE Lombard invasions.¹⁷² Wickham proposed an alternative view in which the 6th-8th-century Italian aristocracy was characterized by fusion and cohesion between Roman and Lombard populations.¹⁷³ This more

¹⁶⁹ Ortalli 1996, 18; Lewit 2001; Bowes and Gutteridge 2005, 405-406; Lewit 2006; Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020a, 1-2.

¹⁷⁰ Cameron 2003, 7-8, 17-18. Reflections on the continuist versus catastrophist debate in late antique and early medieval studies are numerous. See Kagan 1992; Giardina 1999; Lewit 2001; Wickham 2003; Ward-Perkins 2006; Hekster et al. 2007; Watts 2021.

¹⁷¹ Brogiolo 2011, 65.

¹⁷² Tabacco 1979; Wickham 1981. See Gasparri 2006.

¹⁷³ Wickham 1981, 64-72.

optimistic take would be well received among some documentary historians,¹⁷⁴ but was rebuffed by most medieval archaeologists whose reactions to Wickham's claims first brought the "end of the villa" into focus. Riccardo Francovich, in particular, was influential in arguing that the fragmentation of the Italian countryside had already occurred before the arrival of the Lombards, starting in the 5th-6th century with the move away from dispersed settlement forms towards agglomerated villages.¹⁷⁵ His ideas, first published in a 1989 volume and later elaborated in a series of publications over the next two decades, have been called the Tuscan model, reflecting his primary region of focus.¹⁷⁶ According to this model, the progressive failure of the Roman villa system between the 5th-6th century resulted in a depopulated countryside which, starting in the 7th century, gradually moved toward a new nucleated settlement system, laying the groundwork for the *incastellamento* of the 10th century. An important element of this model was the weak role of the aristocracy between the 5th-7th century, resulting in not just a depopulated countryside, but also a chaotic one.¹⁷⁷ In this context of a failing agrarian system, Francovich and others argued that abandoned villas became temporary places of refuge for rogue itinerants ("squatters")¹⁷⁸ and, due to the lack of economic structures necessary to support extraction activities and trade, were ransacked for reusable materials.¹⁷⁹

The Tuscan model raised essential questions about the impact of economic crises in shaping the fate of rural settlements during the early Middle Ages, as well as the applicability of this outlook in other regional contexts. In a 1992 article, Percival argued that while the villas of

¹⁷⁴ Costambeys 2009, 95-96.

¹⁷⁵ Costambeys 2009, 96.

¹⁷⁶ Francovich et al. 1989; Francovich and Hodges 2003; Valenti 2004; 2007a. For commentary on the "Tuscan model" as it pertains to villas: Chirico 2009, 240-241; Castiglia 2018c, 114-115; Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020a, 2-3.

¹⁷⁷ This contrasts with the optimistic view of Wickham and others in which weak social gradation resulted in a more equal distribution of resources than before (Wickham 2009, 407-463).

¹⁷⁸ A terminology also used by Ellis (1988, 572) in the case of cities. See Lewit 2001; 2003; Munro 2010, 237-238; 2012, 361-366; Dodd 2019.

¹⁷⁹ Valenti 2007a, 209.

Gaul experienced widespread abandonment by the end of Late Antiquity, many were subsequently transformed, first into burial grounds, then churches, and eventually villages.¹⁸⁰ This view contrasted with the idea of a total breakdown in the post-Roman countryside, signaling the need for further consideration. Shortly after, Gian Pietro Brogiolo's 1996 edited volume titled *La fine delle ville romane* would be influential in establishing the themes that would characterize much of future research on abandoned villas in Italy, including an emphasis on chronological and typological considerations as well as questions related to economic and settlement system transformations.¹⁸¹ The regionally focused studies in this volume further highlighted the variability of the evidence across the Italian peninsula, a view that was extended to encompass other western provinces in the 2005 follow-up, *Dopo la fine delle ville*.¹⁸² As the titles suggest, both volumes cemented the idea that, despite regional variability, the end of the villa was an archaeologically proven phenomenon occurring sometime in the 5th-6th century. With few exceptions,¹⁸³ contributions to these volumes tended to reinforce the pessimistic stance of Francovich and other scholars who saw the abandonment of villas as a reflection of the increasingly desperate situation for Roman aristocrats afflicted by a broad decline in levels of prosperity.¹⁸⁴

On the other hand, scholars in the early 2000s began examining the end of the villa as a product of multiple factors, not just economic collapse. Brogiolo and Alexandra Chavarría, working respectively on northern Italy and *Hispania*, largely agreed with the connection between the abandonment of villas and a crisis-stricken Roman aristocracy, but rather than envisioning a

¹⁸⁰ Percival 1992, 161-163; Castrorao Barba 2020, 15-16.

¹⁸¹ Brogiolo 1996b. See especially Ortalli 1996; Valenti 1996.

¹⁸² Brogiolo et al. 2005.

¹⁸³ Notably Lewit 2005.

¹⁸⁴ Francovich and Hodges 2003, 36-60; Valenti 2007a.

chaotic outcome, placed this development within the growing power of the ecclesiastical network and of barbarian elites, both of whom had a role in subsuming and transforming abandoned villas.¹⁸⁵ The conversion of some villas into churches or monasteries, noted by Percival in his 1976 study and more recently having been explored by Gisela Ripoll and Javier Arce's article in 2000, factored heavily into the views of Brogiolo and Chavarría.

Other perspectives framed the end of the villa within even broader social changes. In his empire-wide survey, Wickham, for example, argued that the villa system in the 5th-6th century underwent transformation rather than collapse, and he saw this rooted in the transfer of land management to networks of *castra* established during the Gothic War (535-554 CE), resulting in a militarized aristocracy.¹⁸⁶ According to this model, the villa's dual function as an instrument of land management and a symbolic locus of Roman aristocratic lifestyles, tied especially to the concept of *otium*, ceased to be relevant, leading to the slow loss of the monumental and decorative qualities that had characterized these settlements during the imperial period.¹⁸⁷ At the same time, Wickham claimed that the generation of economic surpluses no longer relied on the "complex and variable" profit-seeking model of the Roman period, but on the extraction of "stable, customary rents."¹⁸⁸ While he saw this arrangement as neither chaotic nor entirely egalitarian, he postulated that it did produce a more autonomous peasantry and, compared with the Roman era, reduced the gap between upper and lower classes that stemmed from unequal access to luxury goods and residential facilities.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁵ Brogiolo and Chavarría 2008b, 198-199, 202.

¹⁸⁶ Wickham 2005, 465-481.

¹⁸⁷ This view was also advanced by Van Ossel and Ouzoulias (2000) in the specific context of Gaul.

¹⁸⁸ Wickham 2009, 459.

¹⁸⁹ Wickham 2009, 407-463.

The theme of social and cultural transformation found its most controversial application in the ideas advanced by Tamara Lewit.¹⁹⁰ Reacting against the notion that squatters, precarious communities of a low social range, were responsible for post-abandonment phases, Lewit shifted the focus instead toward the ideological transformation of elite villa occupants resulting from their adoption of Christianity. She noted that similar patterns of post-abandonment occupation were widespread in late Roman cities, including the gradual encroachment of funerary space into residential zones. These changes, Lewit argued, could hardly call into question the presence of an urban elite, leading her to claim that “the parallel changes in villas should be explained in terms of the same political, socio-cultural, and conceptual changes, and not in terms of their abandonment, or their occupation by a poorer class.”¹⁹¹ “The Roman style of private residence had become ‘socially irrelevant,’” she went on to argue, since the expression of elite status no longer depended on social ostentation, but was more firmly expressed in the foundation of churches and other forms of ecclesiastical euergetism.¹⁹²

Unsurprisingly, given the pessimistic stance of most scholars studying the end of the villa, not to mention their preference for economic over cultural lines of questioning, Lewit’s views were met with extensive criticism. In a 2005 paper, Bowes and Adam Gutteridge accepted the premise that elite groups may have had a role in shaping what happened to abandoned villas, but took issue with Lewit’s dismissal of the apparent dissolution of material status markers between elites and non-elites, since this was a fundamental social aspect of the villa system.¹⁹³ Echoing the ideas of Francovich, Hodges, Brogiolo, and Marco Valenti, the authors made the counterclaim that post-abandonment villas represented a new form of “agglomerative”

¹⁹⁰ Lewit 2003; 2004; 2005; 2006.

¹⁹¹ Lewit 2003, 267.

¹⁹² Lewit 2003, 255-256, 268.

¹⁹³ Bowes and Gutteridge 2005, 406.

settlement, with mixed-status communities drawn to former villas not because they were still occupied by elite families, but because of their association with ecclesiastical establishments. Elsewhere, Lewit's thesis has been rejected entirely out of hand.¹⁹⁴

Despite the critical reception of her ideas, Lewit's work succeeded in raising several points that are now firmly inserted within the discourse, including uncertainty regarding the longstanding notions of a general decline beginning in the 3rd-century-CE countryside and progressively spreading across the empire, the subsequent effects of this on agrarian and settlement patterns, and the general notion of "squatter" occupation.¹⁹⁵ These themes, along with the others just discussed, reveal how the end of the villa has been primarily focused on the end of the villa *system*, its origins, and the broader social or economic consequences that resulted. This generalized view has left little space for attention to the end of villas as *households*, nor to close analysis of the outcomes unfolding within single structures.

One exception is the model presented by Chavarría who, in a series of studies throughout the early 2000s, sought to formalize the range of post-abandonment activities most frequently encountered in villas. Chavarría categorized such activities as either "productive" (the working of lime, metal, glass or other activities of an industrial or artisanal nature), "habitational" (the seasonal or permanent occupation of abandoned villas, often accompanied by poorly built subdividing walls, postholes for wooden structures, hearths, rough flooring surfaces, and refuse deposits), "funerary" (either isolated burials or the transformation of entire complexes into

¹⁹⁴ For example, Volpe 2005, 305-306; Sfameni 2020, 30, footnote 106. See Castrorao Barba (2020, 16-20, 26-28, 38-39) for further discussion of the debate surrounding Lewit's thesis and a general account of discontinuist reactions to optimistic takes on the end of the villa.

¹⁹⁵ These ideas were broadly addressed in Lewit 2004 (reworked from the 1991 original). For their impact, see, for example, Marzano (2007, 199-22), who echoes Lewit in rejecting the notion of an agrarian crisis impacting the villa system from the mid-imperial era forward as well as that of "squatter" occupation. Marzano (2007, 221) also points to the limits of Lewit's model, however; in particular, she draws attention to the fact that signs of structural decline impact some Italian villas as early as the 2nd century, an observation that cannot easily be interpreted within a framework of changing aristocratic preferences. See also Castrorao Barba (2020, 17, footnote 23) for the broader impact of Lewit's work.

necropolises), or “cultic” (the construction of churches or other facilities for Christian worship reusing the structures of the villa).¹⁹⁶ While she stated that these categories could overlap with one another, with multiple activity types occurring in single buildings, she also attempted to define some broad geographic trends in their distribution across her study area (*Hispania*), observing how, for example, productive activities were more common in villas positioned in coastal areas, while habitational activities were more frequently encountered inland.¹⁹⁷ Chavarría’s model thus balanced a systems-level economic and settlement view with closer attention to the situation *inside* abandoned villas, establishing a significant precedent.

The End of the Domus

The end of the *domus* has appeared more rarely than the end of the villa as an explicit topic of discussion, despite the primacy of research on urban centers in early medieval studies since the 1980s.¹⁹⁸ This is largely due to the fact that while the identification, recovery, and documentation of late antique and early medieval evidence is always challenging, these difficulties are amplified in urban contexts. Archaeologists must not only confront the dense stratigraphic palimpsest formed by the long-term continuous occupation of ancient cities, but also the logistical and time restraints of rescue digs undertaken alongside modern development projects.¹⁹⁹ As a result, the study of household abandonment has found a more suitable home in rural studies, where archaeological data for the end of the villa is more abundant and better published. The end of the *domus*, on the other hand, has largely been limited to the status of a sub-topic in wider considerations of “post-classical” Roman cities, where conventional narratives

¹⁹⁶ Chavarría 2004, 76-85.

¹⁹⁷ Chavarría 2004, 76, 81.

¹⁹⁸ For a history of the research on early medieval urbanism in general, see Ward-Perkins 1997; Brogiolo 2011.

¹⁹⁹ Baldini 2003, 181.

have emphasized the “destruction, de-structuration, and re-functionalization” of Roman-era infrastructure, monuments, and private dwellings, followed by the construction of new defensive systems and administrative centers built around military or ecclesiastical landmarks, the integration of industrial activities and burial into the urban landscape, and the use of perishable or spoliated materials in new constructions.²⁰⁰

The 1988 publication of Ellis, discussed above, can be counted as the first study to directly address the end of the *domus*. As I have explained, Ellis was chiefly interested in tracing the disappearance of the peristyle house, including in its characteristically “aulic” late antique manifestation, and he gauged this through evidence for the subdivision of elite residences into improvised housing forms in the 5th-6th century CE.²⁰¹ Ellis read these developments as a symptom of social crises brought about by growing wealth inequality.²⁰² Shortly after Ellis’s publication, an alternative hypothesis would be advanced by Jacopo Ortalli in his study of evidence from *Emilia-Romagna*. Citing examples from *Claterna*, *Forum Popili*, *Sarsina*, *Ravenna*, and *Ariminum*, Ortalli pushed the origins of the end of the *domus* back to the 3rd century CE and associated them with “sudden and traumatic” developments.²⁰³ Ortalli saw the abandonment of houses in these cities as a violent affair, marked by fires and other destruction events, some of which he placed in relation to the barbarian incursions leading up to Alaric’s sack of Rome in 410.²⁰⁴ In the wake of these events, Ortalli argued that due to the trends of impoverishment and ruralization already faced by northern Italian cities,²⁰⁵ previous occupants

²⁰⁰ Brogiolo 2011, 34; 2018a, 8-9.

²⁰¹ Ellis 1988, 567-569

²⁰² Ellis 1988, 573.

²⁰³ Ortalli 1992, 594.

²⁰⁴ Ortalli 1992, 597.

²⁰⁵ Ortalli 1992, 561-562.

could not or did not want to return, leaving their abandoned homes to fall into a state of ruin or, in some cases, to be readapted for new purposes.²⁰⁶

Ortalli's findings would be rehashed both for northern Italy and for other regions of the peninsula in Brogiolo's 1994 edited volume on 5th-8th-century residential construction.²⁰⁷ The contribution of Gisella Cantino Wataghin to this book sought to clarify the chronology of the end of the *domus*, arguing that houses from *Aosta* in particular revealed a trajectory of abandonment in the 3rd century CE, followed by the adaptation and transformation of the original structures using mixed or reused materials in the 4th-5th century, and finally by more radical transformations in the 6th century signified by new building techniques (especially in perishable materials) and the interruption of previous architectural layouts.²⁰⁸ In the same volume, Paola Galetti analyzed the presence of perishable construction techniques in abandoned households as an outcome of a growing barbarian presence in northern Italian cities.²⁰⁹ In general, studies in this volume were united by an at least implicit endorsement of the disaster model advanced by Ortalli and generally in line with the pessimistic stance of Brogiolo, Ward-Perkins, and other scholars.²¹⁰

The 1996 study of Robert Coates-Stephens, drawing primarily on legacy excavation data, attempted to compare the evidence at Rome with these recent findings. Coates-Stephens emphasized that, contrary to popular belief, a significant amount of evidence existed for early medieval housing in Rome, but that, like in the 5th-6th-century cases of northern Italy, these almost always amounted to the reuse of previous Roman buildings and not new construction.²¹¹

²⁰⁶ Ortalli 1992, 594-595. Ortalli cites the example of a ceramic workshop documented inside a *domus* excavated beneath *Palazzo Diotallevi* in *Rimini*.

²⁰⁷ Brogiolo 1994a.

²⁰⁸ Cantino Wataghin 1994, 92, 97.

²⁰⁹ Galetti 1994. See also Brogiolo 1994b, 10-11. Construction techniques represented a central theme in the volume (Brogiolo 1994a), along with an emphasis on building typologies and their relationship to socio-economic structures. See Cagnana 1994; Negro Ponzi 1994; Parenti 1994.

²¹⁰ See, for example, Brogiolo 1999, 103-108.

²¹¹ Coates-Stephens 1996, in particular 244-246.

Coates-Stephens focused chiefly on topographical issues, with the evidence for residential habitations potentially serving as a barometer of depopulation and other vicissitudes in post-classical Rome. This choice reflected the systems-level approach that, like in the case of villas, has since continued to characterize most research on the end of the *domus*. On the other hand, soon after the publication of Coates-Stephens's essay, new evidence for 8th-9th-century housing, including the *domus solarate* excavated by Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani in the Forum of Nerva (fig. 14),²¹² would direct some attention to what the end of the *domus* could reveal about changes in cultural practices at the household level.

Barbara Polci's 2003 article on the transformation of the *domus* in the early medieval period synthesized some of these discoveries, arguing that new developments such as the *piano nobile* pointed to the reaction of aristocrats seeking to maximize their standard of living in the context of increasingly ruralized and degraded cityscapes.²¹³ Soon after, two separate studies by Isabella Baldini and Santangeli Valenzani in 2007 raised doubts about some of the assumptions conditioning the way archaeologists interpret remains from early medieval cities as signs of a declining urban aristocracy.²¹⁴ Analyzing various laws and regulations specified in the *Codex Theodosianus* and other legal texts, both authors argued that the maintenance of public décor was a widely discussed issue in late antique and early medieval cities. In particular, Baldini maintained that while the reuse of secondhand materials in masonry constructions had previously been read as a symptom of urban decline, the salvaging of materials from disused structures was of the utmost importance for urbanistic strategies, and thus should hardly be imagined as a

²¹² See below, footnote 220.

²¹³ Polci 2003, 101. See also Brogiolo (2011, 75-76), who argues that the breakdown in sewage systems and other hydraulic infrastructure led to the accumulation of waste and refuse at the street level, necessitating the movement to the upper story of residential quarters.

²¹⁴ Baldini 2007; Santangeli Valenzani 2007.

haphazard or chaotic affair.²¹⁵ This perspective highlights how the concept of *spoliation*, traditionally considered in terms of public monuments and ideology, can be applied to a wider range of contexts and reflect a diversity of motivations.

In the meantime, two synthetic studies published in 2011 show that the fate of the Roman aristocracy has continued to serve as a fundamental inspiration for research into urban abandonment. The first, an extended article by Brogiolo on the origins of the medieval city, reiterates the view that the end of the *domus* occurred by the end of the 6th century, pointing to the inability (not unwillingness) of Roman aristocrats to maintain their previous standard of living in the face of declining urban infrastructure.²¹⁶ Brogiolo echoes Ellis in hypothesizing that formerly aristocratic homes were subdivided and reoccupied by the urban poor, farmers who flocked to cities in seek of refuge from a war-torn countryside, soldiers, or other groups of people. He also speculates that aristocratic houses might have fallen into the hands of barbarian occupiers as a result of the *tertia*, or tax levied on Roman property owners.²¹⁷ The second study is Santangeli Valenzani's book on residential building in the early medieval period.²¹⁸ Like Brogiolo and others, Santangeli Valenzani emphasizes the widespread abandonment of houses in the 5th century and the resulting leopard-spot pattern of urban occupation that followed (with the remaining population concentrated in key points of an otherwise desolate urban landscape) as the essential development marking the end of the *domus* and impoverishment of the Roman urban aristocracy.²¹⁹ On the other hand, Santangeli Valenzani emphasizes the persistence of status

²¹⁵ Baldini 2007, 225-226, 230-233.

²¹⁶ Brogiolo 2011, 75-76; cf. Polci 2003, 101. See above, footnote 213.

²¹⁷ See Gasparri (2006) and Halsall (2016) for a discussion of the *tertia* and the closely related theme of *hospitalitas* as it relates to Lombard and Ostrogothic legislation, respectively. Halsall (2016, 177-183) explains how considerable debate surrounds these issues and points to the uncertainty of whether literary evidence for the *tertia* relates to the transfer of land and property or a monetary levy.

²¹⁸ Santangeli Valenzani 2011.

²¹⁹ In particular, Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 11-19. For the "leopard-spot" occupation pattern of early medieval cities (or the *città ad isole* as it has been called by Brogiolo and others) see the summary of Wickham (1998, 159-160). For the situation in Rome, see Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 213-215; Dey 2021, 90-91.

indicators as the most useful way of categorizing new housing forms in the period, with the stone-built *domus solarate* of the type discovered at the Forum of Nerva on one end of the spectrum, and the hutlike constructions often documented in abandoned urban structures on the other end.²²⁰ He argues that these two building traditions evolved in isolation. Elite houses signify the rejection of classical ideals and the generation of new ones, while low-class houses represent a retreat back to the perishable construction techniques of Italian prehistory combined with the influence of foreign building traditions brought to Italy by barbarians.²²¹

The studies just discussed show how, like for villas, the scanty state of the evidence for urban housing in Italian cities has not impacted the certainty with which most scholars discuss the end of the *domus* as a definite and negative outcome of the 5th-7th century.²²² Much of the logic behind this conclusion lies not in direct analysis of evidence from this period, but in a conceptual contrast between the “ideal” *atrium*/peristyle *domus* and later housing forms. Moreover, while the majority of investigations into abandoned *domus* have, also like for villas, emphasized the regional variability of the evidence, uncertainty can surround the interpretation of these contexts even at the local level.²²³ In their study of late Roman *domus* in *Hispania*, for example, Arce, Chavarría, and Ripoll comment extensively on both the apparent downgrading of urban residences described in many cities as well as the spread of makeshift residential structures in formerly public areas, like theaters or *fora*.²²⁴ They comment on how these changes might have resulted from broader urbanistic transformations in early medieval *Hispania*, offering a

²²⁰ The most notable examples of *domus solarate* are documented from the 8th century forward in *Classe*, *Brescia*, and the Forum of Nerva in Rome (Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 78-89). The major exception to the lack of evidence for elite urban housing in the 5th-6th century are episcopal residences in cities like *Aquileia*, Milan, *Ravenna*, and *Parento-Poreč* (see Lewit 2003, 65-67; Baldini 2005, 102-136; Uytterhoeven 2007b, 39-40). For “huts” and other constructions in perishable materials, including in connection with barbarian populations, see Fronza 2011; Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 33-66.

²²¹ Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 19, 33-66, 75-89.

²²² For the lack of evidence in Rome, see Santangeli Valenzani 2000, 102-103. For Italy: Polci 2003, 93.

²²³ For regional trends, see Baldini 2003; Uytterhoeven 2007a.

²²⁴ Arce et al. 2007, 306.

range of possible interpretations – including several of the hypotheses that I have just discussed, such as the influx of rural refugees from the war-ravaged countryside, the effect of a barbarian presence, changing cultural preferences, and the ruralization of early medieval cities caused by the introduction of agricultural and animal husbandry activities within urban boundaries – but ultimately conclude that the evidence does not strongly point toward one or the other explanation.²²⁵ Thus, while the topic has invited some consideration, the end of the *domus* is still under-investigated and little-understood.

The Last Decade of Research

The last 10 years have witnessed the emergence of a few new directions in studying the end of the Roman house. While many of the themes already discussed continue to play a fundamental role,²²⁶ scholars have taken a more critical stance toward interpretation and called for the development of new research methodologies. These recent trends provide fundamental context for the approach I will outline in the following chapter, and they are therefore worth highlighting separately.

Broadly speaking, research on the late antique and early medieval city and countryside continues to yield interesting results. A recent volume edited by Pilar Diarte Blasco and Neil Christie shows how scholars, even as they continue to address familiar questions, are increasingly willing to view the situation through a variety of critical lenses rather than through the strict dichotomy of continuity versus discontinuity.²²⁷ It also reveals a growing appreciation for the wide range of archaeological methodologies available for studying the material record,

²²⁵ Arce et al. 2007, 324-326.

²²⁶ See the recent summaries of Brogiolo (2018b) for approaches in urbanism studies and Sfameni (2020; 2022) for studies of the late Roman house.

²²⁷ Diarte Blasco and Christie 2018.

from mortuary analysis to landscape approaches, and from the investigation of built space to the examination of small finds.²²⁸ A few of the volume's contributions also display the merits of a comparative approach to urban and rural contexts, moving toward a more integrated perspective than previous work.²²⁹

The publication of new discoveries and regional syntheses continue to add to the available body of evidence for late antique houses and offer new opportunities to refine previous views. The three volumes of conference proceedings published by the *Centro interuniversitario di studi sull'edilizia abitativa tardoantico nel mediterraneo* (CISEM), in addition to showing how the study of late Roman houses is coalescing into a discrete specialization, have been instrumental in broadcasting emerging evidence and highlighting the diversity of approaches currently being explored across the Mediterranean.²³⁰ Meanwhile, Angelo Castrorao Barba's recent publication on the transformation of villas across Italy, the full results of a study into which he had previously offered glimpses during a series of articles over the last decade, presents a statistical approach to broad trends in rural settlement continuity between the 3rd-8th century.²³¹ Acknowledging the regionally variable nature of the evidence, Castrorao Barba argues for a model that mixes "spatial continuity" (i.e., the ongoing occupation of villas) with "functional discontinuity" (i.e., a fundamental change in the character of villas in terms of settlement dynamics).²³² Marco Cavalieri's *La villa dopo la villa*, published over two volumes in 2020 and 2022, offers another thematic synthesis of the situation in central and northern Italy, focusing on recently discovered examples such as the villas at *Palazzo Pignano (Cremona)* and *Aiano*

²²⁸ For example, Chavarría 2018; Olmo-Enciso 2018; Raynaud 2018; Seaman 2018.

²²⁹ See in particular Christie 2018, xii-xiii; Goffredo and Volpe 2018; and Diarte-Blasco 2018.

²³⁰ Pensabene and Sfameni 2014; Baldini and Sfameni 2018; 2021.

²³¹ Castrorao Barba 2020.

²³² Castrorao Barba 2020, 292-295. See Castrorao Barba (2014) for a concise summary of this argument. The phrasing draws inspiration from Banaji 2001, 261.

Torraccia di Chiusi (San Gimignano).²³³ These perspectives are balanced with various regional overviews which incorporate both recent findings and older excavation data.²³⁴ Each of these recent studies exemplifies the importance of integrating emerging evidence into ongoing debates and the need to experiment with new approaches that reflect the increasing depth of the dataset. On the other hand, some contributions, such as Lucrezia Spera's chapter examining imperial villas in *Lazio*, display an ongoing preoccupation with the traditional notions of continuity and discontinuity, demonstrating the persistence of these terms of debate despite ongoing acknowledgement of their limitations.²³⁵

The topic of Christianity, long an important theme in research on late antique houses, is also being approached in new ways. From a social-historical perspective, a recent publication by Bowes attempts to update our understanding of the connection between villas and early Christianity from the 4th century CE onward, focusing on examples excavated in the last decades.²³⁶ Examining these villas alongside the available literary evidence, she draws attention to the still poorly understood connection between secular aristocratic property owners and the Christianization of private residences, which could include their conversion into churches. Bowes calls for an increased focus on the microhistories and chronologies of individual sites in order to better understand these developments.²³⁷ Another take on this topic is proposed by Gabriele Castiglia, whose work on early medieval *Etruria* mixes landscape and statistical approaches with the analysis of textual records to emphasize the fundamental connection

²³³ Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020b; Cavalieri and Sfameni 2022. See in particular Cavalieri and Peeters 2020; Sacchi and Casirani 2020.

²³⁴ See, for example, the contribution of De Cristofaro and Riccioni (2022).

²³⁵ Spera 2022.

²³⁶ Bowes 2018.

²³⁷ Bowes 2018, 459.

between private residences, early churches, and social structures in both urban and rural settings.²³⁸

The themes of labor, artisanal production, the need for raw materials, and spoliation represent yet another branch of recent research into the houses of Late Antiquity. Beth Munro has highlighted the differences between the various types of spoliation documented in abandoned villas, drawing a distinction between *reuse* (i.e., the secondary use of materials without major physical or chemical alterations to them) and *recycling* (i.e., the heating or melting down of materials to significantly alter their physical shape or composition).²³⁹ Emphasizing the wide array of recycling activities that have been documented in villas (including production related to lime, glass, metal, and other products),²⁴⁰ Munro proposes a specific approach for identifying and interpreting their archaeological remains. Echoing the findings of Santangeli Valenzani and Baldini, Munro argues that the spoliation of villas was a highly organized, tightly controlled undertaking.²⁴¹ Like Lewit, she reiterates the unlikelihood that such activities represent the work of “squatters,” pointing to the possibility that property owners themselves – either Roman aristocrats or ecclesiastical authorities to whom they had donated their holdings – were the agents behind recycling activities, salvaging reusable materials for building projects elsewhere.²⁴²

Archaeological evidence for recycling and spoliation activities in abandoned households has strongly benefited from new discoveries made by both rural excavations (e.g., the villa at *Aiano Torracchia di Chiusi*, mentioned above, where a multipurpose workshop for glass, metal,

²³⁸ Castiglia 2016; 2018a; 2018b; 2018c. See also Bertoldi et al. 2019.

²³⁹ Munro 2011, 76-79.

²⁴⁰ Munro 2012, 354-358.

²⁴¹ Munro 2012, 361-366. See Christie (2001) for a similar consideration focused on urban contexts. For the city of Rome: Kinney 2013; Spera 2015; Barker 2018. See also Dey 2021, 51, 269, footnote 31.

²⁴² Munro 2010, 237-238; 2012, 361-366. See also Munro 2016.

and ceramic production has been recently documented)²⁴³ and urban ones (e.g., the glass recycling facility recently published at a *domus* in *Aquileia*),²⁴⁴ making Munro's work a good example of the convergence between new theoretical directions and emerging data (fig. 15). Castrorao Barba's 2017 study of metalworking in villas broadly concurs with the impression painted by Munro, suggesting that the available evidence points to a widespread metal-recycling industry intended to support new construction projects, including churches.²⁴⁵ Even more recently, Rebecca Worsham argues that reuse and recycling have long been misread as symptoms of social decline.²⁴⁶ Based on a cross-cultural analysis of contexts in late Roman North Africa and the Aegean Bronze Age, she concludes that the concept of "reuse" imposes unnecessary and backwards-facing chronological restraints around archaeological evidence, ignoring the agency of the responsible actors.²⁴⁷

Worsham's commentary serves to highlight the changing intellectual landscape surrounding the end of the Roman house. Concepts like reuse, which were once offered as more flexible alternatives to worn-out notions such as "squatter occupation," can reveal their own limitations, underscoring the need for constant critical awareness of the terms and definitions used to discuss this topic. It is equally important, however, to offer concrete and useful alternatives to previous approaches, a task which recent research has not been consistently adequate in addressing. Munro's contributions are one exception, but her proposals have been met with criticism for their lack of general applicability.²⁴⁸ Thus, although the fragmentary state

²⁴³ Cavalieri and Giunlia-Mair 2009; Cavalieri and Peeters 2020.

²⁴⁴ Boschetti et al. 2016.

²⁴⁵ Castrorao Barba 2017, 420-422.

²⁴⁶ Worsham 2022, 141-147.

²⁴⁷ Worsham 2022, 156-159.

²⁴⁸ Brogiolo and Chavarría 2014, 233; Sfameni 2020, 15.

of the archaeological record pertaining to late Roman houses is widely noted, more effort is still necessary to develop approaches suitable to its limitations.

The work of James Dodd, mentioned in the introduction, is a good example of a recent study which is geared toward flexibility but also takes steps toward developing a more concrete methodology for analyzing the end of the Roman house. Dodd acknowledges the need to break post-abandonment occupation activities into “smaller, more manageable categories” and, following a modified version of Chavarría’s model, draws a distinction between villa transformations related to production, habitation, cultic activities, burial, and fortification.²⁴⁹ The originality of Dodd’s model lies in his attention to the fact that *abandonment* is a poorly defined phenomenon in the archaeological record despite factoring heavily into the interpretation of late Roman houses. Dodd’s solution to this is a “sliding scale” for classifying whether individual activities represent seasonal, episodic, near permanent, or permanent abandonment.²⁵⁰ By considering the spatial distribution of these different activities and paying more attention to their chronology, Dodd argues that a clearer image can emerge of individual “settlement trajectories” or “site biographies” (fig. 16).²⁵¹ While Dodd’s proposed methodology needs further investigation in order to determine its applicability at a broad scale, his emphasis on human activities as the primary driver of long-term site transformation helps us advance beyond the strict interlinking of architectural downgrading with impoverishment, both of which are thought to create the end of the Roman house. Meanwhile, his critical take on the temporal rhythms of site occupation draw attention to the overly simplistic way that abandonment has usually been identified.

²⁴⁹ Dodd 2019, 33-38.

²⁵⁰ Dodd 2019, 38-40.

²⁵¹ Dodd 2019, 40.

The last 10 years of research into late Roman houses have thus served to highlight and address new discoveries, move away from simplistic notions of continuity versus discontinuity, and apply a more critical approach to questions surrounding the end of the Roman house. Each of these issues will impact the remainder of this study in essential ways, and I aim to insert my conclusions primarily within the questions raised by these most recent contributions.

Four Problems with the End of the Roman House

In this chapter, I traced the lineage of the “end of the Roman house” in the last decades of research. Although widespread among scholars, this concept has come up short in offering robust frameworks for analyzing the causes and implications of domestic abandonment at the site level (known cases of which are constantly expanding), even as it continues to inject pessimistic biases into narratives of late Roman housing at the society level. These issues remain unresolved, despite the promising new directions arising in the last decade. In concluding this chapter, I therefore wish to summarize the main problems surrounding the end of the Roman house that I aim to address in the remainder of this dissertation, highlighting four particular issues.

1) *Definition*. The “end of the Roman house” offers no specific definition for *abandonment*, nor for basic related terms like *domestic*, *use*, *disuse*, or *reuse*, nor for the more value-laden language used to frame the issue like *continuity*, *prosperity*, or *downgrading*. These critical terms have been treated as self-evident, leading to superficial readings of the evidence.

2) *Framework*. Due to a previous lack of archaeological evidence for this topic, most narratives of the Roman house have focused on the conceptual divergence of post-abandonment phases and later medieval styles from the “ideal” Roman houses of earlier centuries. This contrasts with the way household specialists have deemphasized the abstract qualities of residential buildings, focusing more on lived experience. For example, the use of single rooms in

the *domus solarata* for both residential and utilitarian purposes is thought to be uniquely medieval,²⁵² but this overlooks the recent revelation that multifunctionality was a normal characteristic of domestic space in the Roman world.²⁵³ Current approaches thus lack a diachronic element for explaining long-term changes in housing practices, forcing scholars to rely on questionable assumptions about the “right” way to live in Roman houses.

3) *Evidence and bias.* Owing again to gaps in the archaeological record, the decoration and architecture of houses have been the primary evidence discussed. New data that is more comprehensive raises the need for a more holistic approach. Moreover, in emphasizing the monumental features (or lack thereof) of Roman and medieval housing, scholars have brought an almost exclusively elite perspective to the end of the Roman house. This is reinforced by the problematic notion that non-elite houses (and the people that lived in them) do not amount to a worthy area of study since their evidence is meager and at most represents merely an inadequate imitation of elite forms. As a result, residential abandonment and downgrading are assumed to be indicative of a crisis-stricken elite, but these phenomena are not considered for what they can tell us about the lives of non-elite people.²⁵⁴

4) *The urban-rural divide.* While the end of the villa and end of the *domus* have been analyzed through similar lenses, they have rarely been compared directly. Still, scholars working on both housing types frequently make passing reference to the other in order to justify interpretive claims, glossing over crucial differences. The lack of critical dialogue between the

²⁵² Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 89.

²⁵³ See above, footnote 69.

²⁵⁴ Commentary on non-elite housing in late Rome has been limited. Santangeli Valenzani (2011, 19) maintains that there was a “decided continuity of traditional occupation forms” for peasants in Late Antiquity. See also Ellis (2000, 87-80; 2006, 422-423) for urban housing, who points to examples of smaller, compressed houses lacking a peristyle in North Africa as a model for middle-class housing, and a series of shops in Sardis as examples of lower-class housing. Roskams (2006, in particular 498-507) calls for a methodological overhaul of approaches to studying the urban poor, offering a model based on the Marxist interpretive paradigm of modes of production.

urban and rural evidence runs the risk of encouraging circular argumentation, prompting us to reconsider how the end of the Roman house unfolded in diverse settings at a regional level.

With these reflections in mind, the next chapter proposes an approach for reassessing the end of the Roman house that, like the models of Dodd and Munro, emphasizes human activity in shaping the process of domestic abandonment. I will also establish the reasons why Rome, a city that has previously occupied a marginal position in the field of household archaeology, is a fruitful environment for an updated consideration of this topic.

Chapter 3 A New Approach to Residential Abandonment in Rome

Recent advances in the stratigraphic documentation of domestic contexts at the threshold of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages present opportunities for addressing some of the problems discussed in chapter 2, and a particularly promising source of new evidence is the city of Rome and its surrounding region. The choice to emphasize a narrow regional backdrop deserves careful consideration. As previously mentioned, late antique studies have moved toward a highly regionalized view in recent decades. This trend has produced some critical insights into the study of households, but not unified conclusions. This is partly due to the fact that, as suggested by Hendrik Dey, regional approaches are limited by the highly structural and processual outlook of most archaeologists.²⁵⁵ Even if scholars have foregrounded the recognition of regional variation, and even if many have consciously attempted to distance themselves from the heuristics of universalizing processes like “collapse,”²⁵⁶ the search for systems-level explanations is still the driving force behind most archaeological interpretation in late antique studies. It has been difficult to reconcile this tendency with acknowledgement of variation across different geographical contexts, not to speak of the possibility – particularly relevant to the study of domestic life and the physical remains of houses – that “human agents sometimes fail to act in predictable or strictly pragmatic ways.”²⁵⁷

It is easy to imagine Rome as a unique subsystem in the late antique and early medieval world, distinguished by its special status as the former imperial capital and seat of western

²⁵⁵ Dey 2015, 8.

²⁵⁶ cf. the work of Brogiolo, Ward-Perkins, Valenti, and others, who have endorsed the collapse narrative with few reservations.

²⁵⁷ Dey 2015, 9.

Christianity, the unusual continuity of its population levels during the 5th century, and its apocalyptic demographic collapse thereafter.²⁵⁸ Concerning the fate of its residential buildings, however, Rome is typically seen as a normal case of the “end of the Roman house,” hardly reflecting a unique scenario. The extent to which housing in Rome really reflected the same processes described for other late antique urban centers has, until now, been difficult to assess, owing to the historically chaotic and fragmented state of the archaeological records for excavations in the city.²⁵⁹ One priority of my research is to address this gap for future studies, providing a solid foundation for interregional comparisons. On the other hand, I also wish to move beyond a strictly structural understanding of ancient homes as the physical outcomes of regional or interregional processes. Greater attention to the stratigraphic record of individual sites can bring us back to a definition of households as groups of people whose daily life and choices had as much of a role in physically shaping their homes as did structural transformations occurring at the societal or regional level. Rome is especially ripe for experimenting with a new approach given that the most recent assessments of its late antique and early medieval housing have relied primarily on data recovered during the 1980s and -90s.²⁶⁰ An updated consideration thus takes a necessary step forward.

The first section of this chapter takes a close look at the study of residential buildings in late antique Rome, contextualizing the current debates surrounding them within the broader evolution of urban and suburban archaeology in the city. I then move to an overview of the

²⁵⁸ Guidobaldi et al. 2018, 3-4.

²⁵⁹ Studies have typically considered household evidence from Rome within the broader picture emerging for all of Italy (e.g., Santangeli Valenzani 2011). Occasionally, evidence from the urban center of Rome has been compared with other imperial capitals, such as Constantinople (e.g., Machado 2012a). However, research on the region of Roman has usually been limited in its engagement with evidence from elsewhere (e.g., De Franceschini 2005). Most often, Rome is amassed into larger groupings like “central Italy” (e.g., Marzano 2007; Castrorao Barba 2020; Sfameni 2022; see also other contributions in Cavalieri and Sacchi 2020b; Cavalieri and Sfameni 2022).

²⁶⁰ In particular, Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004.

specific sample of this body of evidence that I will investigate. Finally, I propose an original methodology for analyzing this data, responding to several of the issues I raised in chapter 2.

Rome – A Changing Picture

Throughout the steady expansion of Roman household studies since the late 19th century, evidence at Rome has been consistently downplayed in favor of the better-preserved, better-documented, and less fragmentary examples at *Pompeii*, *Ostia*, and various other extensively excavated centers across the Mediterranean.²⁶¹ While we can certainly never expect Rome to emerge as a laboratory for household studies on par with these exceptional locations, neither does the situation necessarily amount to the “melancholy scenario” or “almost complete lack of archaeological evidence” that scholars have previously described.²⁶² This is thanks to a growing attention to the recovery of household contexts across the modern city along with better methodologies for documenting them, improvements that have been particularly helpful for casting better light on the final phases of excavated structures.

These recent developments should be understood within the context of the challenges inherent to archaeological investigations in a living urban expanse. Archaeology in the sprawling metropolis of Rome has always been a messy affair, contending as much with powerful ideological agendas as with the frenetic rhythms of modern development. The resulting glimpses into the city’s past have rarely been more than fragmentary, leading to a preference for topographic or *extensive* studies of particular building types rather than *intensive* studies of individual sites.²⁶³ Predictably, the focus of such work has been weighted toward the *Forum*

²⁶¹ Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 174.

²⁶² De Franceschini 2005, xiii; Hales 2003, 11.

²⁶³ Lanciani 1901; Platner and Ashby 1929; Castagnoli 1969; Coarelli 1983; 1988; 1997; Richardson 1992; Palombi 1997; Carandini 2004; 2012.

Romanum, the *Campus Martius*, the Palatine, the Capitoline, and other monumental sectors, with comparatively little effort dedicated to private dwellings.²⁶⁴ Late antique and medieval discoveries, meanwhile, have historically been all but ignored.²⁶⁵

While excavations from the late 19th century through the period of Mussolini were responsible for clearing extensive swaths of early modern and medieval accumulation over the ancient city center,²⁶⁶ archaeology in the outskirts of the city was a limited affair throughout most of the 20th century.²⁶⁷ Lorenzo Quilici bemoaned this fact in a 1979 article, reflecting on the “almost entire loss of [Rome’s] suburban cultural heritage.”²⁶⁸ On the other hand, alongside the expansion of survey archaeology, interest in Rome’s surroundings did experience a notable uptick following World War II.²⁶⁹ From the late 1960s forward, the *Forma Italiae* series was especially responsible for synthesizing and diffusing knowledge about the topography of the area around Rome, focusing especially on villas and other rural settlements.²⁷⁰ Throughout the 1980s, meanwhile, the increased pace of rescue excavations following the sprawl of the city outward encountered several villas in the *periferia*, brief accounts of which often appeared in the

²⁶⁴ For general considerations of housing in Rome, see Wallace-Hadrill 2000; Carandini et al. 2014. For the topography of households: Chioffi 1999; Buccino 2015.

²⁶⁵ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 126; Paroli 2004, 12; Dey 2021, 89-90. Crucial exceptions include the medieval remains in the area of the *Forum Romanum* and Palatine Hill (e.g., the church of *Santa Maria Antiqua*) documented by Giacomo Boni (Russo et al. 2021). For household excavations, see the *Villa di Voconio Pollione* (see below, page 116) excavated by Lanciani (1884) and recently reconsidered by Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera (2018, 89-92).

²⁶⁶ For the history of 19th-century excavations in Rome and the origins of urban archaeology, see Palombi (2006). Pensabene (1990) focuses in particular on excavations on the Palatine. See also Barbanera 1998, 35-39. Firsthand accounts are widely available in the writings of Lanciani (e.g., Lanciani 1892) and Boni, director of excavations in the *Forum Romanum* from 1898 to 1923 (see Russo et al. 2021). For archaeology in the fascist period, see Manacorda 1982b; Manacorda and Tamassia 1985; Arthurs 2012. For excavations in Rome from the late 19th century and throughout the 20th century, the primary periodicals are *Notizie degli scavi di antichità* (1876-1924, 1946-1989) and the *Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* (1872-present).

²⁶⁷ The most significant studies were conducted by Thomas Ashby (e.g., Ashby 1927). For villas, see Lugli (1923; 1924). See also the summaries of Quilici (1979, 310-312) and De Franceschini (2005, xv).

²⁶⁸ Quilici 1979, 309.

²⁶⁹ Quilici 1979, 312; Potter and King 1997, 4-5; Witcher 2013, 206.

²⁷⁰ e.g., Giuliani 1966; 1970; De Rossi 1967; 1979; Muzzioli 1970; Tortorici 1975; Pala 1976; Mari 1983. See also the various volumes of the *Latium Vetus* series (e.g., Quilici and Quilici Gigli 1978; 1980; 1993; Quilici 1982; Quilici Gigli and Quilici 1986).

Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma.²⁷¹ While commentary on the final phases of these villas was rarely extensive,²⁷² the increasing adoption of stratigraphic excavation techniques meant that archaeologists were growing more attuned to the long-term diachronic transformations of individual sites, despite the usually limited scope permitted by rescue digs.

These trends coincided with new directions in research exemplified by the excavation of the villa at *Mola di Monte Gelato*, published in 1997.²⁷³ Discoveries at this site demonstrated all that could be gained by extensive, open-air stratigraphic excavations of suburban villas. Particular interest surrounded the complicated late antique and early medieval phases of the site, when it played host to an array of artisanal activities, a series of burials, and the eventual foundation of a church linked to a *domusculata* or proto-manor.²⁷⁴ Combined with the recent results of John Moreland's *Farfa Survey*, which found that villas further afield from Rome continued to be occupied into the 7th century CE,²⁷⁵ scholars in the 1990s began to formulate critical questions about the long-term fate of the villa system in the Roman hinterland and the individual, site-level transformations underlying it.²⁷⁶ In Lucrezia Spera's 1999 study on the area between the *via Latina* and *via Ardeatina* outside of the Aurelian Walls, for example, she relied heavily on the evidence from villas to formulate her claims. She concluded that this suburban zone was a densely occupied "pseudo-city,"²⁷⁷ and that while changes in local patterns of land

²⁷¹ Key examples are the villas of *Boccone Borghese/Val Melaina* (see below, page 165; see Messineo 1982; Bellini and Marra 1985; Calci et al. 1989), *Borgata Ottavia* (Ciufferi et al. 1986; Santolini Giordiani and Mineo 1987), *Casal Bianco* (Calci et al. 1990), *Casale Ghella* (see below, page 166; see Messineo et al. 1985; Vigna et al. 1987), *Casale Novelli* (Santangeli Valenzani et al. 1987), *Casalotti* (Mineo et al. 1985; 1986), *Castel Giubileo* (Di Gennaro et al. 1986; 1987), and *Cinquina* (Messineo and Perego 1988).

²⁷² See the discussion by Di Gennaro and Griesbach (2003, 126, footnote 7).

²⁷³ Potter and King 1997.

²⁷⁴ Potter and King 1997, 59-60, 62-65, 67-71, 77.

²⁷⁵ Leggio and Moreland 1986; Moreland 1987; Moreland and Pluciennik 1991; Moreland et al. 1993. See also Moreland 2009, 862.

²⁷⁶ This was paralleled by an interest in the origins of the villa system, a topic inspired especially by Carandini's excavation at *Settefinestre* and his ideas on the *villa schiavistica*. See Giardina and Schiavone 1981; Carandini 1985; cf. Marzano 2007, 125-153. See also Becker and Terrenato 2009.

²⁷⁷ Spera 1999, 439.

exploitation clearly unfolded in Late Antiquity, nearby villas continued to be occupied into the 5th-6th century CE.²⁷⁸

Awareness of the considerable evidence for late antique housing in the city center also expanded in the latter part of the 20th century, starting with the 1986 publication of Federico Guidobaldi.²⁷⁹ Prior to this, considerations of housing in Rome were usually limited to a handful of sources: the Regionary Catalogues, the *Forma Urbis Romae*, the evidence for archaic huts on the Palatine hill, and monumental structures like the *Regia*, the *Atrium Vestae*, and the *Domus Aurea*.²⁸⁰ Guidobaldi, on the other hand, revealed that the evidence for late antique houses in Rome was in fact significant and widespread, but often interlocked with later constructions, especially churches. Drawing on legacy excavation data, recent findings, and literary sources, Guidobaldi identified 116 known late antique *domus* in Rome, ranging from sprawling structures like the *Domus delle Sette Sale* to more humble examples, such as the *Domus* of Octavius Felix (fig. 9).²⁸¹ Guidobaldi attempted to summarize the most distinctive architectural and decorative aspects of these houses, noting several of the characteristics discussed in the previous chapter (e.g., apsidal halls, *opus sectile* mosaics, marble wall paneling, fountains, etc.).²⁸²

Legacy excavations and literary sources would continue to be an important source for studying both urban and suburban late antique houses in Rome throughout the 1990s. The steady

²⁷⁸ Spera 1999, 440-442.

²⁷⁹ Guidobaldi 1986.

²⁸⁰ e.g., McKay 1977, 64-77. For the *Forma Urbis*, see Rodríguez Almeida 1981. For the Regionary Catalogues, see Guilhembet 1996; Dey 2021, 10-32. The two documents, the *Notitia* and *Curiosum urbis Romae regionum XIII*, date to the 4th century and purport to be a topographical catalogue of public and private buildings across the 14 regions of Rome. They list, among other figures, a total of 46,602 *insulae* and 1,790 *domus* for the entire city (Dey 2021, 28). While some (e.g., Guidobaldi 2001) have treated the catalogues as a more-or-less reliable source for housing in the 4th century and reflective of the situation observed archaeologically, others (e.g., Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 197, footnote 70) have been more skeptical. In terms of physical remains, the most widely known late antique examples in Rome were the *Ara Coeli insula* (see below, page 190; Muñoz and Colini 1930; Packer 1968; see also Ramieri 1997; Ippoliti 2015); the *domus* beneath the *Basilica dei Santi Giovanni e Paolo* (Germano di San Stanislao 1894; Colini 1944, 164-195); the *Domus dei Valerii* (Gatti 1902; Colini 1944; see also Brenk 1999; Barbera et al. 2005; 2008); and, more recently excavated, the *Domus delle Sette Sale* (Cozza 1974).

²⁸¹ Guidobaldi 1986, 167-171, 206, 223.

²⁸² Guidobaldi 1986, 206-219.

release of volumes in the *Lexicon topographicum urbis Romae* series was instrumental in condensing the vastness of this documentation into a revised topographic overview, documenting both public and private structures across the city and suburb.²⁸³ In 1996, Robert Coates-Stephens drew upon some of these same sources to highlight the extensiveness of post-Roman-era housing in the city.²⁸⁴ Others attempted to draw new conclusions by closely examining the documentation of single households excavated in the earlier part of the 20th century. For example, the *domus* uncovered in the 1940s beneath *Piazza dei Cinquecento*, near Termini Station, revealed how the abandonment of urban residences in Late Antiquity was not always straightforward: after a break in occupation during the 5th century, a smaller residential structure, featuring traditional elements such as a small courtyard and portico, was cut out of the original house and persisted until the 6th century.²⁸⁵

The most significant developments during the 1980s-1990s on archaeology in the city center, however, stemmed from new data revealed by the diffusion of stratigraphic methods. Especially revelatory were the excavations of the *Crypta Balbi*, where evidence suggested the survival of a vibrant local economy in Rome, craft knowledge, and access to long-range commercial networks throughout the 7th century.²⁸⁶ In residential buildings, however, most indications seemed to point to discontinuity, a point illustrated by Carlo Pavolini's excavations on the Caelian.²⁸⁷ His investigations of the *Domus* of Gaudentius revealed that it was initially built in the 2nd century and, like the example at *Piazza dei Cinquecento*, abandoned in the 5th

²⁸³ Steinby 1993; 1995; 1996; 1999a; 1999b; 2000; La Regina 2001; 2005; 2007; 2008; Coarelli and Battaglini 2004a; 2004b; Focchi Nicolai and La Regina 2004; Tomei and Liverani 2005. See Chioffi (1999) for a consideration of elite housing in and around Rome on the basis of these sources.

²⁸⁴ Coates-Stephens 1996.

²⁸⁵ Meneghini 1999, 172-177. See also Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 1996.

²⁸⁶ Manacorda 1982a; 2001; Arena et al. 2001; Ricci 2004; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 24; Sagui 2004; Dey 2021, 96.

²⁸⁷ For the full results of these excavations, see Pavolini 1993a; 1993b; Pavolini et al 1993. Briefer overviews of the various domestic contexts encountered are contained in the catalogue of the exhibit *Aurea Roma: dalla città pagana alla città Cristiana* (Ensoli and La Rocca 2001). See the individual contributions of Carignani (2001), Pavolini (2001), and Spinola (2001).

century, followed by ongoing occupation in a smaller portion of the residence into the 6th or early 7th century.²⁸⁸ In the area of *Piazza Celimontana*, meanwhile, Pavolini documented three *insulae* constructed in the Flavian period, tracing their modifications through the 4th century, followed by their spoliation throughout the 5th-6th century, the insertion within them of infant tombs, their eventual burial beneath sterile accumulation layers, and the conversion of the area into a space for cultivation in the medieval period.²⁸⁹ Elsewhere, excavations of the *insula* beneath the former “*Caserma del Reparto a Cavallo di Pubblica Sicurezza*” in *Trastevere* were revealing a similar picture on the other side of the river.²⁹⁰ The discovery there of a 5th-century infant tomb cast special attention on the origins of intramural burial, a topic that would soon be taken up by broader studies.²⁹¹ Finally, Riccardo Santangeli Valenzani’s excavation of the two *domus solarate* in the Forum of Nerva, discussed in the previous chapter, offered the first stratigraphic evidence for the emergence of this new housing form in Rome during the 8th-9th century, contributing to the *longue durée* view emerging from reflections on the end of the *domus* in different cities across the Mediterranean.²⁹²

The year 2000 represented a turning point in the archaeology of Rome owing to a jolt of cultural heritage funding coinciding with the Great Jubilee. Previous excavations were wrapped

²⁸⁸ Pavolini et al. 1993, 473-483. See also Spinola 2001; Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 42. The nearby *Domus* of the Symmachi was also partially investigated and revealed a similar pattern (Pavolini et al. 1993, 494; Carignani 2001).

²⁸⁹ Pavolini 1993b, 53-57.

²⁹⁰ Parmegiani et al. 1989, 112-114.

²⁹¹ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 1993, 105. For later considerations of intramural burial, see Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 1995; 2004, 103-125; Meneghini 2013.

²⁹² Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 43-54; 2011, 78-89. Prior to this, the first securely dated medieval house in Rome was the *Casa dei Crescenzi* near the Theater of Marcellus, probably dating to the 12th century (Coates-Stephens 1996, 255). For the possible identification as a house of the structure documented in the *Largo Argentina*, see Guidobaldi 1986, 175-181; cf. Santangeli Valenzani 2007, 65-66. For the structure on the Aventine dating to the early 7th century and of uncertain identification, see Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 33.

up or, in some cases, finally published,²⁹³ and new field projects planned.²⁹⁴ In the years that followed, archaeologists began to apply the lessons learned from the honing of stratigraphic methods in the 1980s-1990s to a greater diversity of contexts, having a significant effect on the excavation and recording of household sites across the modern city. One of the most significant trends since 2000 has been the increased pace of urban rescue excavations, including those connected with the *Linea C* metro, spanning from Rome's monumental core near the Colosseum to its outskirts along the ancient *via Praenestina*.²⁹⁵ These activities have encountered a number of household contexts and have been paralleled by the ongoing publication of data recovered during open-air excavations of villas (e.g., the *Villa dell'Auditorium*, the *Villa ai Cavallacci*, the Villa of the Quintilii)²⁹⁶ and of residences in suburban centers (e.g., *Gabii*),²⁹⁷ as well as by more extensive household excavations in the city center (e.g., beneath *Palazzo Valentini* and the *Rinascente* department store on the *via del Tritone*).²⁹⁸ The results of these excavations demonstrate that archaeologists have grown more sensitive to the documentation of final household phases, critically foregrounding them in their narrative accounts of site development. At the same time, digital innovations in mapping and disseminating these results, especially the development of Rome's *SITAR* (*Sistema informativo territoriale archeologico di Roma*), have

²⁹³ Including, for example, Santangeli Valenzani's excavations at the Forum of Nerva, finished in 2000 (Paroli 2004, 12), or the excavations by the *Soprintendenza Archeologica di Roma* of in the central area of *Gabii*, begun in 1987 and partially published by Majerini and Musco (2001).

²⁹⁴ For a general overview of these developments, the indispensable volume is *Archeologia e giubileo: gli interventi a Roma e nel Lazio nel piano per il Grande Giubileo del 2000* (Filippi 2001). For household contexts, see Filippa and Sbarra 2001; Menghi and Pales 2001; Filetici et al. 2001a; 2001b; Sapelli 2001; Barbera and Vergantini 2001; Musco 2001; Paris 2001; Morganti 2001; Santolini Giordani 2001; Socrate and Ventura 2001; Rossi 2001; Messineo 2001; Majerini and Musco 2001. See also the discussion in Santangeli Valenzani and Volpe 2009.

²⁹⁵ Egidi et al. 2011; Rea 2010; 2011; 2016.

²⁹⁶ Sites no. 28, no. 4, and no. 19 in this dissertation. For the *Villa dell'Auditorium*: Terrenato 2001; Carandini et al. 2006. For the *Villa ai Cavallacci*: Aglietti 2011; Aglietti and Cuccurullo 2014; Cuccurullo 2015; Cuccurullo 2020. For the Villa of the Quintilii: Frontoni & Galli 2010; Paris et al. 2012; 2015; 2019.

²⁹⁷ Opitz et al. 2018; Glisoni et al. 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018; Musco et al. 2018a; 2018b; Glisoni and Zanella 2019; Glisoni 2020; Banducci et al. 2021; Samuels, Cohen et al. 2021; Samuels, Naglak et al. 2021.

²⁹⁸ Sites no. 39-49 and no. 33-36 here. For *Palazzo Valentini*: Baldassarri 2008; 2009; 2011; 2016; 2017; Baldassarri and Crespi 2014; Napoli & Baldassari 2015; Faedda 2019. For *via del Tritone*: Baumgartner 2017c.

made it easier to access in-depth stratigraphic information previously unavailable on a wide scale.²⁹⁹

In terms of research, however, the most notable recent accomplishments have revolved around the rehashing of data recovered during the 1980s-1990s, a practice motivated especially by ongoing considerations of Rome's urban topography. Much of this work has been aimed at revising previous understandings of the early medieval city, especially Richard Krautheimer's seminal account, published in 1980 and thus predating the fundamental developments brought about by the diffusion of stratigraphic excavation techniques. Like most contemporary historians, Krautheimer imagined the Visigothic sack of 410 CE as a fundamental turning point, after which most of the city was generally abandoned, with the remaining population taking up residence in the "patched up and near collapse" housing units flanking both sides of Tiber Island (i.e., the *abitato* and *disabitato*).³⁰⁰ Scholars since 2000, in contrast, have argued for a more piecemeal process of abandonment, resulting in a leopard-spot occupation of the depopulated cityscape and the gradual introduction of activities conventionally associated with suburban zones, including agricultural cultivation, artisanal production, and burial.³⁰¹

The most confident expression of this new vision is Roberto Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani's 2004 book, *Roma nell'altomedioevo: topografia e urbanistica della città dal V al X secolo*. The authors contend that the sack of 410 CE did not uniformly impact the entire city,³⁰² instead emphasizing deeper and more severe structural changes punctuated by a series of

²⁹⁹ Serlorenzi et al. 2021.

³⁰⁰ Krautheimer 1980, 45-46, 68-69; cf. Dey 2021, 89-90.

³⁰¹ See above, footnote 219.

³⁰² For example, the event appears to have led to the near abandonment of the Caelian (Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 152), as Pavolini had previously noted (Pavolini 1993b, 53), and perhaps of the Aventine and *Trastevere* as well (Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 145, 194). On the other hand, the authors argue that the *Forum Romanum* preserved its monumental aspects well into the 6th century (Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 157), whereas areas like the *Emporium* along the western bank of the Tiber experienced abandonment prior to 410 CE (Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 190).

traumatic episodes in the later 5th century, including the Vandal sack of 455 CE, Ricimer's siege in 472 CE, and the Vandal invasions of North Africa that cut Rome off from its primary grain supply. These events, they argue, were generally devastating and produced a sharp reset in the city. While the authors acknowledge the somewhat more upbeat image provided by data from the *Crypta Balbi*, their view of post-5th-century Rome is essentially one of contraction and decline.³⁰³ They speculate that populations were reduced by as much as 90% in the late 5th-6th century, leading to the widespread abandonment of residential buildings, which were subsequently interred by thick layers of collapse and refuse.³⁰⁴

The conclusions of Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani are generally in line with the broader narrative of the end of the *domus*.³⁰⁵ Similar takes have since been repeated in a variety of articles and smaller studies.³⁰⁶ Most recently, Dey's sweeping 2021 book, *The Making of Medieval Rome: A New Profile of the City, 400-1450*, has also echoed this thesis. While Dey offers a generally more optimistic view of Rome's medieval transformations than Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani, in the case of households, he agrees with the notion of a "residential contraction" (if not "total collapse") following 455 CE, leading to the widespread abandonment of Rome's urban housing.³⁰⁷ In sum, the concept behind the end of the *domus* in Italy as first formulated by Jacopo Ortalli's 1992 article has largely gone unaltered in recent studies of Rome, despite a rapidly expanding dataset.

Moving away from the city center, scholars since 2000 have become more attuned to the importance of the Roman suburb as a liminal or transitional environment combining aspects of

³⁰³ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 24-27.

³⁰⁴ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 21, 33.

³⁰⁵ See in particular Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 31-34. Ortalli 1992; Brogiolo 2011, 69-70.

³⁰⁶ e.g., Machado 2012b, 117-124. See also Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani (2020, 533), who make clear their impression that the situation in 5th-century Rome is "basically attested in all of Italy."

³⁰⁷ Dey 2021, 41-42, 54.

both urbanism and rural landscapes.³⁰⁸ This contrasts with prevailing 20th-century views, which were often polarized between the producer and consumer city models, but which almost always assumed strict and significant boundaries separating urban cores from their rural hinterlands.³⁰⁹ These new approaches are promising, but they contend with the limitations imposed by the continuity-versus-discontinuity debate characterizing the majority of site-level and regional analyses in the last 20 years.

In Italophone research, the definitive account is the edited volume *Suburbium: il suburbio di Roma dalla crisi del sistema delle ville a Gregorio Magno*, a collection of conference proceedings published by the *École française de Rome* in 2003.³¹⁰ As the title suggests, the chapters in this volume are framed within debates over the “crisis of the 3rd century” and its effects on the villa system.³¹¹ The various contributions take a topographical approach, highlighting the variable nature of occupational continuity across the suburb.³¹² For example, the chronology of villa decline is shown to differ between the south and north banks of the *Aniene* river. In the former, villas appear to undergo abandonment starting in the 3rd century CE, while in the latter, signs of abandonment do not appear widely before the 5th century.³¹³

³⁰⁸ See, in particular, the contributions to the volume *I confine di Roma* (Dubini 2019).

³⁰⁹ Witcher 2013, 206; Emmerson 2020, 2. See in particular the work of Finley (1973). See Bandow (2013) for a general consideration of these issues in late antique contexts.

³¹⁰ Pergola et al. 2003. The conference and subsequent publication served as a capstone to several research initiatives carried out during the 1990s, including the project begun by Carandini in 1993 aimed at the landscape reconstruction of the suburban zones encompassed by the modern *municipi* II, IV, IX, X, and XVIII (Carandini et al. 2007). Also in the 1990s, the *Sistema Direzionale Orientale*, an urban development project focused on the eastern section of modern Rome, spurred several archaeological investigations of the ancient suburban landscape in this area (Caruso et al. 1998). Most notable were those centered around the neighborhoods of *Centocelle* and *Torre Spaccata* (Gioia and Volpe 2004; Gioia 2008). See also the contribution of Volpe (2001b) to the volume *Aurea Roma: dalla città pagana alla città cristiana* (Ensoli and La Rocca 2001) as well as the various contributions in *Roman Villas Around the Urbs* (Santillo Frizell and Klynne 2005), which presented new discoveries (e.g., Guldager Bilde 2005; Ricciardi 2005; Volpe and Huyzendveld 2005) with a fresh look at legacy data (e.g., Zarmakoupi 2005 on the villa at *Anguillara Sabazia* north of Rome).

³¹¹ See in particular Di Gennaro and Dell’Era 2003, 119-121; Pergola et al. 2003, 637-640; 646-648 (roundtable discussions); Santangeli Valenzani 2003.

³¹² See especially Messineo 2003; Pavolini et al. 2003; Di Gennaro and Dell’Era 2003; Calci and Mari 2003; Volpe 2003; Rea 2003; Spera 2003a.

³¹³ Di Gennaro and Dell’Era 2003, 108-119; Pavolini et al. 2003, 70-71, 79 (roundtable discussions). See Pavolini et al. (2003, 71) for argument that there was not one *suburbium* of Rome, but many *suburbia*.

Unfortunately, the volume reserves little space for placing these various trends in dialogue with one another. While the included transcripts from the conference's round-table discussions provides some fodder for debate, individual contributions are primarily limited to catalogues and descriptions of sites, usually with an eye toward tracing their ongoing frequentation or abandonment on a century-by-century basis.

Much of the research into suburban villas in the meantime has also relied on the practice of cataloguing as a primary research aim. A good example is Marina De Franceschini's seminal 2005 publication, in which she offers a deep dive into the occupation history of 100 villas.³¹⁴ Her conclusions point to an increase in cases of abandonment during the 4th century CE, an outcome she reads within a "gradual and progressive decline" of the villa system.³¹⁵ While the strength of De Franceschini's work as a catalogue is unquestionable, it is limited by the uneven quality of the available documentation for each site and its altogether light emphasis on critical analysis. This same assessment applies for most recent work on suburban villas around Rome, where continuity versus discontinuity continues to be the driving theme.³¹⁶

³¹⁴ De Franceschini 2005, 1-289.

³¹⁵ De Franceschini 2005, 298. De Franceschini (2005, 297-298) notes, however, that quality evidence for determining the date of individual cases of abandonment is limited. In several cases (e.g., the villa on *via Capobianco*, no. 26, or the villa at *Casale Bonanni*, no. 38), information is lacking altogether. In the majority, the evidence is inconclusive. See the summary of De Franceschini's findings offered by Volpe (2014, 270). See also Marzano 2007 (Appendix A) for a schematic overview of villa chronology across central Italy.

³¹⁶ See, for example, the study by Volpe (2014), which examines a series of villas excavated during the late 1990s in the neighborhoods of *Centocelle* and *Torre Spaccata*, tracing the chronology of settlements in this area and various aspects of their transformation. She points to a "crisis" of villa abandonment in the 5th-6th century (Volpe 2014, 274-276). Volpe (2014, 268) argues that her sample can be used to form a general model for villa transformation in the late antique Roman suburb. See also Volpe (2000). Angelelli (2016), meanwhile, catalogues the mosaics of 142 suburban villas from the republican period to Late Antiquity but offers little commentary on the significance of this immense dataset. A more critical assessment is offered by Marzano (2007), who however considers the broader context of central Italy, not just the Roman territory. Marzano follows Lewit (2003; 2005) in questioning the "squatter hypothesis" along with the broader narrative of villa decline tied to it. She also takes issue with the strict correlation between "lower standards of living in country villas" and a collapse of the villa system itself, arguing that in many cases, even as the structural upkeep of villas appears to have lapsed, ongoing evidence for imported goods at many sites suggests that their occupants were still "able to participate in the commercial transactions necessary to acquire such goods, an element that does not seem to be symptomatic of economic crisis" (Marzano 2007, 210, 216). Finally, in the recent publication by Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera on the territory of *Bovillae*, the authors advance a more nuanced view of abandonment as a slow process of "dismissal" rather than a singular phenomenon (Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 87-93), but maintain a strong emphasis on the theme of continuity versus discontinuity throughout the study.

Studies of burial inside the walls of suburban villas, a widely noted phenomenon, have generated a more critical dialogue. In their contribution to the 2003 *École française de Rome* volume, Francesco Di Gennaro and Jochen Griesbach offered the first broadscale reckoning of this phenomenon across the area of Rome, showcasing a catalogue of 57 examples.³¹⁷ The authors questioned whether the appearance of tombs in villas should be interpreted as a sure sign of their abandonment, showing that while some sites might have lost their “original function” by the time burials first appeared, ongoing frequentation is occasionally indicated by datable finds assemblages and structural interventions (especially the construction of *tamponature* and partition walls, but occasionally of ovens or hearths).³¹⁸ Chronologically, they noted that the first villa burials occurred in the 3rd century CE before picking up pace in the 4th-5th century,³¹⁹ thus appearing earlier in suburban areas than in the city center.³²⁰

In interpreting these findings, Di Gennaro and Griesbach reflected on the supposed taboo in Roman society against the intermingling of spaces for the dead and for the living, considering what the spatial patterning of villa burials might reveal about the survival of such concerns.³²¹ Ultimately, they concluded that the “ideological separation” of the living and the dead suggested by villa burial was so reduced that it amounted to a violation of previous norms.³²² The authors speculated that this development could have been related to new mentalities connected with the spread of Christianity, in particular the concept of *ad sanctos* burial.³²³ Many subsequent studies

³¹⁷ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 146-157.

³¹⁸ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 125-126, 137. See, for example, the villas at *Boccone Borghese* (see below, page 165) and *via Dante da Maiano* (Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 148-149), both with possible chronological overlap between the deposition of tombs and signs of ongoing frequentation. See also the case of the villa on *via Monte Ciccardo/via Piagge* (see below, page 165), discussed at length by the authors (Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 124-128).

³¹⁹ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 136.

³²⁰ In the city center, the first intramural burials are dated to the 5th century, but the practice only appears on a wide scale in the 6th-7th century (Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 123).

³²¹ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 145. They note, for example, that tombs are frequently found along periphery walls and not in central areas (Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 123-124, 135-136).

³²² Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 145-146.

³²³ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 146.

have accepted this hypothesis.³²⁴ Moreover, even as villa burials are acknowledged to indicate a certain symbolic topographical continuity, most scholars have imagined them as a sign of fundamental discontinuity in terms of culture, paralleling the shift from extramural to intramural burial in the Roman city.³²⁵

Despite the near consensus that has emerged on this issue, there is still room for debate. For example, in addition to exploring the connection between villas and monumental tombs prior to Late Antiquity,³²⁶ John Bodel has argued that *ad sanctos* burial only emerged during the 5th century CE, and thus cannot explain the appearance of tombs inside villas as early as the 3rd century.³²⁷ In general, Bodel rejects the notion that Christianity was uniquely responsible for new funerary practices in Late Antiquity.³²⁸ In the case of villas, he has emphasized the importance of memory, permanence, and communal care of the dead as chief factors.³²⁹

More recently, burial in the suburb of Rome is a key theme of Allison Emmerson's 2020 study, in which she argues that suburban funerary practices, along with many other aspects of the landscape, have been misunderstood by previous scholars.³³⁰ Contrary to the conventional association between extramural burial and a supposed taboo against "death pollution," Emmerson maintains that the "interweaving of structures for the living and the dead" was a longstanding element of Roman urbanism.³³¹ In addition to an original reading of the relevant

³²⁴ See, for example, Volpe 2000, 206-207. This model has affinities with the argument set forth by Lewit (2005). See also Spera 2005; 2007; 2009.

³²⁵ This despite the chronological disconnect between these developments. Volpe (2000, 206; 2003, 232; 2014, 9), for example, explicitly connects villa burial with intramural burials. For intramural burial as a break with the past, see Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 1993, 108-109; Fiocchi Nicolai 2003; Meneghini 2013; Galletti 2018. See Fiocchi Nicolai (2003, 963-964) for additional commentary on the connection between villa burial and intramural burial.

³²⁶ Bodel 1997.

³²⁷ Bodel 2014, 185.

³²⁸ Bodel 2008.

³²⁹ Bodel 2014, 185-186. A similar sentiment is contained in Griesbach 2005. See also Yasin (2005), who problematizes the notion of *ad sanctos* burial even further.

³³⁰ Emmerson 2020, 230.

³³¹ Emmerson 2020, 1, 3. See also the discussion by Lenon (2014, 136-166).

literary sources,³³² her thesis is based on a series of archaeological premises. First, as recent studies have shown, the *suburbium*, along with related terms like the *ager Romanus* or *campagna Romana* amount to fluid, variously defined concepts. It is increasingly difficult to imagine the *pomerium* or walls of Rome as impenetrable conceptual barriers, and scholars currently remain skeptical of any attempt to sketch out the physical limits of Rome and its regional footprint.³³³ Emmerson herself opts for the term *suburb* in describing her area of focus, which she defines as the *continentia aedificia* or area of contiguous building stretching for roughly a mile around the city walls.³³⁴ She argues that despite the obvious physical and conceptual differences between the suburb and the urban core,³³⁵ the density of construction and frequentation in Rome's periphery meant that it was a fundamental component of the cityscape rather than its antithesis.³³⁶ Tombs were an integral part of this dense suburban fabric, lining the monumental roadways leading into the city center, and Emmerson concludes that this is incongruent with a fear of death pollution.³³⁷ She thus downplays the extent to which intramural burial represented an ideological break with the past.³³⁸ Since the dissolution of the supposed death taboo has been a central theme in the interpretation of late antique villa burial, Emmerson's conclusions raise the need to reconsider this issue.

As I have shown, archaeological accounts in Rome have reflected the conventional narrative surrounding the end of the Roman house. Scholars have primarily approached this phenomenon from a topographical standpoint, emphasizing the continuity or abandonment of

³³² Emmerson 2020, 12-13, 60-62.

³³³ La Rocca 2003, xii; Witcher 2005; 2013; Mandich 2015; Goodman 2016; Volpe 2019; Emmerson 2020, 3.

³³⁴ Emmerson 2020, 5-10. Emmerson (2020, 8) avoids the term *suburbium* because it denotes, in her estimation, "a type of elite lifestyle that was marked especially by participation in villa culture," a "state of mind" rather than a "topographic zone." For the limit of the *continentia aedificia*, see Dubbini 2015, 21-22.

³³⁵ Emmerson 2020, 9.

³³⁶ Emmerson 2020, 3. Dubbini (2015, 25) presents a similar argument for the area around the first mile of the *via Appia*.

³³⁷ Emmerson 2020, 12-13.

³³⁸ Emmerson 2020, 88-91.

residences from one century to the next. Interpretations, consequently, have revolved around systems-level questions regarding the decline of the villa network as well as the depopulation and reconfiguration of the city center. Close analysis of the situation *inside* households leading up to and after periods of abandonment have been rare. The most productive of such analyses have revolved around the appearance of burials inside residential structures, although the recent contributions of Emmerson and others require us to revisit the way this phenomenon has previously been interpreted. In particular, Emmerson allows us to see how little discussions surrounding the end of the *domus* and end of the villa in Rome have reacted to the emergence of new evidence and debates since 2000. One of my primary objectives is to address this myopia, and the first step in doing so is to establish a specific dataset for developing an updated assessment.

Selection of the Case Studies

Between open-air excavations, partial investigations, and field survey, the number of known ancient domestic sites in and around Rome amounts to at least 700.³³⁹ The 46 houses at the center of this study represent an essential cross section of this immense body of evidence, ranging from elite residences in the city center, to smaller dwellings in urban *insulae*, monumental suburban villas, more modest settlements shortly outside Rome, and far-flung properties at the threshold of Rome's suburban reach. As I will explain shortly, far from being a hindrance, the limitation of my research to 46 sites has the benefit of allowing an intensive look at the data in question, distinguishing my work from the broad view of previous approaches. Given this, it is worth considering the specific criteria which contributed to their selection.

³³⁹ Marzano (2007, 247-647) counts 384 villas in the region of *Latium*, while the *LIAAM* database reports around 700 total residential sites.

I have already mentioned the powerful contributions to archaeological research in Rome offered by the public launch of the *SITAR* platform, which has been instrumental in consolidating and disseminating the unruly body of documentation for stratigraphic excavations across the city.³⁴⁰ These accomplishments are enriched by other resources aimed at the cataloguing of data across a broader geographical range, including the sweeping databases produced by the University of Siena's *LIAAM* (*Laboratorio di informatica applicata all'archeologia medievale*) and the University of Padova's *Tess* (*Sistema per la catalogazione informatizzata dei pavimenti antichi*).³⁴¹ The possibilities afforded by these resources – in combination with more traditional sources such as the *Bullettino della commissione archeologica comunale di Roma* – provided the bedrock of my initial research, leading to the identification of around 250 total residential sites in reasonable proximity to Rome with potentially significant evidence for abandonment.

The primary criteria used to filter these sites for inclusion in the catalog was the quality of their documentation. The most important factor in determining this quality was whether the excavation and publication of the site occurred before or after the year 2000. After a preliminary review of the initial sample, over 100 sites were excluded from the catalog because their excavators had recorded little or no evidence of their final phases. This group primarily included sites investigated prior to 1980, which was before stratigraphic methods became widely used, as well as several excavated since then. For example, the villa at *Colonnacce* to the west of Rome, although investigated fairly recently, lacks in-depth publication and was thus not selected.³⁴² Finally, all sites excavated since 2000 (and some from the 1990s) were included in the catalogue if they met two criteria: thorough and quality publication, such that the phasing and chronology

³⁴⁰ Serlorenzi et al. 2021.

³⁴¹ For the *LIAAM*: Valenti 2014. For *Tess*: Angelelli and Tortorella 2016.

³⁴² See Rossi 2015; Humar 2019.

of a range of activities could be reasonably determined, and the preservation of significant evidence for abandonment or “late” transformations. Regardless of their excavation date, several sites were not included as primary case studies, but nonetheless presented relevant data for contextualizing my focus sites and were thus selected to serve as *comparanda*.

Geographical considerations also played a role in these selections. In assessing whether a site was sufficiently documented to warrant its inclusion in the catalogue, more tolerance was applied to those closer to or within the modern urban area of Rome. Generally, urban sites were more susceptible to damage from later construction activities (from the medieval period to the present day), resulting in an incomplete archaeological record. Due to the tough conditions of rescue digs, they might also have been excavated in small trenches that only managed to reveal a limited portion of the overall building. However, a few fragmentary urban sites were ultimately included because, despite their limitations, they still offer exceptional data compared to most residential structures excavated in the city, warranting their inclusion in this study. Therefore, as will become clear in chapter 4, some case studies located in Zones 6, 7, 8, and 9 come with less extensive and detailed information or less precise absolute chronologies, but nonetheless offer valuable information.

Beyond this, the biggest geographical factor in the selection of the case studies was distance from Rome. The decision to include residences from both the city and region of Rome responds to the lack of direct comparison between urban and rural contexts in discussions about the end of the Roman house.³⁴³ This raises the question of where to draw the limits of Rome’s regional footprint or *suburbium*, but research has recently demonstrated the impossibility of clearly defining such boundaries.³⁴⁴ As a result, a strictly distance-based criterion was employed,

³⁴³ See above, pages 56-57.

³⁴⁴ See above, footnote 333.

excluding all remaining sites more than 40 kilometers from the *Forum Romanum*.³⁴⁵ This benchmark is admittedly arbitrary and broad, but it corresponds with the preliminary suburban zones proposed by Matthew Mandich and so has a basis in current research.³⁴⁶ Moreover, a 40-kilometer radius roughly coincides with the distance between Rome and the mountainous terrain to its east and north, which some scholars have offered as a tangible border defining the edges of the *suburbium*.³⁴⁷

Most importantly, a simple distance-based selection helps avoid the terms suburb, *suburbium*, and *ager Romanus* as conceptual criteria, the variable connotations of which render them difficult to apply in practical ways.³⁴⁸ Therefore, while I occasionally opt for the terms *suburb* or *suburban* to refer to this 40-kilometer radius around Rome, I do so for convenience and clarity, seeking to avoid the shaky assumptions sometimes attached to such terms. Finally, in comparison with the limited scope of more conventional definitions of the *suburbium*,³⁴⁹ a 40-kilometer radius allows for a broader spectrum of topographical settings to be considered, ranging from the city center itself to fairly distant and isolated settlements. This works in acknowledgement of the view that Rome, as an “extended metropolis,” functioned at a “regional scale” in cultural, demographic, political, and economic terms.³⁵⁰ As I explain in the following chapter, my choice to classify the residences of my catalogue into nine microregional groupings allows for a holistic view of Rome’s interlinked suburban landscape to emerge, but also creates space for highlighting its diversity and variability.

³⁴⁵ An example is the *Villa di Cazzanello* near Tarquinia, whose evidence was otherwise well-published and highly relevant (Aoyagi and Angelelli 2014).

³⁴⁶ Mandich 2015, 95. Goodman (2007, 58-59), albeit with reservations, cites a 35-kilometer radius as “helpful from a modern perspective.”

³⁴⁷ Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001, 98, footnote 49.

³⁴⁸ See discussion in Volpe 2000, 193-185; Emmerson 2020, 8-10.

³⁴⁹ For example, *Lexicon Topographicum Urbis Romae: Suburbium* series (See above, footnote 283) catalogues sites within nine miles of Rome; cf. Dubbini 2015, 17-18, footnote 40. See the map reproduced by Volpe (2014, 2), which extends for roughly 10 kilometers around the city. Pavolini et al. (2003, 55) offer a general definition of “within seven kilometers of the city center.”

³⁵⁰ Dubbini 2015, 21, footnote 67. See Witcher (2005) for the concept of the “extended metropolis.”

A conspicuous absence in this catalogue is any mention of houses from the city center of *Ostia*.³⁵¹ This fact might attract special scrutiny given the inclusion of residences from *Gabii*, another suburban center in the region of Rome. Two factors justify this choice. First, the unique conditions of *Ostia*'s excavation and preservation have resulted in an immense and idiosyncratic dataset which could hardly be rendered justice within the scope of my research. Second, while *Gabii* assumed a characteristically suburban aspect by the 1st century CE,³⁵² a distinctly urban trajectory continued to unfold in *Ostia* throughout most of the imperial period.³⁵³ As a result, it is more appropriate to consider imperial *Gabii* as a general component of the Roman suburb, while *Ostia* warrants a unique consideration. Recent work on late antique *Ostia* has made promising advances,³⁵⁴ and I hope to integrate this data with my findings in the future.

Abandonment and Activities

I have previously stated that conventional approaches to the Roman house limit themselves to consideration of architecture and decoration, assuming a strictly structural relationship between built space and social behavior. The static nature of this model, which is based heavily on modern perceptions about elite lifestyles in the Roman past, leaves little room for the analysis of diachronic transformation. *Change*, however, is a fundamental concept in any account of ancient residential buildings, especially when it comes to their abandonment. Lacking a robust methodology for addressing this, most scholars have relied on an essentialist, static vision of the “ideal” elite Roman house as a primary point of contrast with late antique houses.

³⁵¹ For a general look at various questions related to late antique housing in *Ostia*, see Becatti 1948; Pavolini 1986; Hansen 1997; Lenzi 1998; Tione 1999.

³⁵² Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 114-119.

³⁵³ Boin 2013, 47-80.

³⁵⁴ See, for example, Massimiliano et al. 2014; Boin 2013 (cf. Pavolini 2014); Batty 2018, 3-4, 123-134; Poulsen 2020a and other contributions in Karivieri 2020a.

Deviation from this ideal from the 5th century onward is imagined as dramatic and stark, resonating with pessimistic narratives of an antiquity whose lateness is a sign of its inadequacy. As I argued in chapter 2, this has led to a reductive view of late antique household transformations as a product of crisis, minimizing the role of human agency.³⁵⁵

A renewed focus on stratigraphic evidence is one way of providing a more dynamic account in which credible Roman human beings, regardless of their socioeconomic status, play a role. Unlike the study of a house's formal qualities, stratigraphic interpretation inspires consideration of human *activities*. I wish to show that these activities, whether or not they adhered to the perceived standards of elite lifestyles, can be foregrounded as logical outcomes in the rhythms of daily life choices made intentionally and coherently rather than at the mercy of abstract social processes like decline.

An approach emphasizing human activity and choice also allows for a more attentive consideration of individual site trajectories. Architectural interventions in Roman houses were obviously significant affairs and should be acknowledged as important waypoints in a household's lifespan. However, the physical modification of a home should itself be understood as a willful, conscious, and reasonable human activity, not simply the product of structural changes occurring throughout late Roman society. Moreover, it is important to acknowledge that daily life evolves at a faster pace than the physical structures of built space. Short-term adaptations to taste, environment, economic events, social trends, and everyday occurrences can be challenging to observe archaeologically, owing to the unique formation processes of stratigraphy in domestic contexts.³⁵⁶ The sweeping of floors, the disposal of unwanted objects, the clearing of waste, and the use of perishable furnishings are just a few examples of regular

³⁵⁵ Bianchi 2013, 195-197.

³⁵⁶ Foxhall 2000, 491-495.

household activities that could have prevented evidence of daily life from entering into the stratigraphic sequence.³⁵⁷ On the other hand, the increasing availability of in-depth stratigraphic documentation raises the need to test these limitations. It is therefore worth reconsidering the available frameworks for identifying and interpreting the activities of those who experienced household abandonment and the end of the Roman house.

In stratigraphic archaeology, each anthropic *context* – whether a wall, a trash heap, or an irrigation ditch – is defined as the result of a distinct human activity that led to its formation.³⁵⁸ Traditional monographs may organize single stratigraphic contexts into larger groupings related to multi-step activities (e.g., “cutting of the foundation trench”, “construction of the wall”), the sum of which contributes to the phases of a site’s development.³⁵⁹ While the phasing of sites is a necessary process in archaeological interpretation, it can mask the fluidity with which physical changes occurred and the human factors that motivated them. As Penelope Allison points out, this situation is compounded by the perennial “difficulty of separating out household activities through artifact assemblages” and a simplistic view of “room use.”³⁶⁰

As I discussed in the previous chapter, some scholars have reacted to this by looking beyond the stratigraphic record. For example, Michael Anderson utilizes algorithmic spatial analysis to consider Roman houses as the “consequence[s] of the action of individuals.”³⁶¹ Yet the representation and analysis of homes in computational approaches, as well as in the less processual considerations of agency and phenomenology that use immersive 3D reconstructions, is usually limited to their structural remains, leaving unanswered questions about actual lived

³⁵⁷ Lamotta and Schiffer, 1999, 21; Furlan 2017, 328.

³⁵⁸ Harris 1989, 19-20.

³⁵⁹ The approach taken by, for example, Carandini et al. 2006 for the *Villa dell’Auditorium*.

³⁶⁰ Allison 2004, 131-153, 157.

³⁶¹ Anderson 2005, 147, 148-150.

experiences in these spaces. In terms of stratigraphic analysis, the most successful attempts to humanize the multispectral data from household digs have taken a synthetic approach. The *Gabii Project Reports* series, for example, classifies stratigraphic contexts not only according to distinct activity instances and conventional phasing but also in terms of thematic activity types (e.g., “construction,” “abandonment”).³⁶² This approach balances conventional stratigraphic interpretation with a less linear view of domestic transformations that is better suited to studying the rhythms of daily household life and the situational response to perceived problems as they arose.

These previous efforts aimed at inserting human agency into the study of ancient houses offer some general lessons. First, since many aspects of daily life can be difficult to read in the stratigraphic record, it is essential to ask suitable questions. Consequently, one of my objectives is to focus on activities that are reasonably discernable given the current state of archaeological documentation. Second, the interpretation of human activities in the stratigraphic record must occur independently of preexisting assumptions to the greatest extent possible. While I therefore attempt to structure my catalogue in a manner that relates evidence for household activities to previous debates, I also seek to look beyond the customary themes and analyze my findings on their own terms. The last point regards the issue of household activities and diachronic transformation. Recent work has shown the importance of emphasizing the stratigraphic record as resulting from dynamic formation processes, avoiding the trap of the *Pompeii premise*, or the assumption that archaeological evidence can be used to reconstruct single moments in time.³⁶³ In the case of late Roman houses, James Dodd’s work, discussed previously, has placed particular

³⁶² Opitz et al. 2018, location 9-11; Banducci et al. 2021, location 52.

³⁶³ The concept of the *Pompeii premise* originates with Ascher (1961, 324). See Lang (2005, 12-13) on the trap of imagining ancient homes as places where “no change of any kind took place from the original foundation until the abandonment.”

emphasis on this issue, considering how activities occurring at various temporal scales contributed to the pace of final household transformations.³⁶⁴ Similarly, the broad chronological range of the framework I will now propose, stretching from the 1st-7th century CE, is aimed at facilitating insight into these temporal rhythms, rather than assuming that the end of the Roman house is a story limited to Late Antiquity.

With these lessons in mind, my catalogue tracks the presence of 16 activities in the transformation of households in and around Rome from the 1st-7th century CE. To varying degrees, each of these activities has been a factor in previous discussions of household continuity (or use) versus discontinuity (or disuse and abandonment), but they have rarely been approached in a systematic fashion. In the case of continuity, the specific meaning of this term is almost never circumscribed in an explicit manner. Meanwhile, attempts to formalize the range of activities associated with post-abandonment phases have taken a much-needed step forward but have relied on an unjustified implicit logic.³⁶⁵ In particular, as I stated at the end of the last chapter, critical definitions of the phenomena that these activities are thought to represent (*abandonment, disuse, reuse, etc.*) have not been offered.

My approach differs from these previous treatments in several ways. To begin, I offer an explicit definition of each of the 16 activities that I analyze and clearly outline the evidence necessary for their identification. In cataloguing instances of these activities, I do not simply record their occurrence, but summarize their unique contexts and assess their chronological reliability. This supports the framing of households as living and dynamic environments rather than mere statistical datapoints. Additionally, my focus on a numerically limited but

³⁶⁴ Dodd 2019, 38-40.

³⁶⁵ e.g., Chavarría 2004, 76-85; Castorao Barba 2020, 293-294.

exceptionally documented body of case studies enables an intensive look at each, casting light on a wider spectrum of evidence than is normally considered.

The equal weight my catalogue provides to activities normally associated with continuity versus discontinuity is a further way of seeing past the simplistic way these concepts have been formulated. In order to highlight this, I group the 16 activities into two thematic categories, indicators of *use* and of *disuse*. This choice must be carefully explained as a thought experiment for evaluating previous assumptions, not an *a priori* interpretation of the data. My expectation, in fact, is that the rigidity of these categories will *not* hold up against the complexity of household evidence.³⁶⁶ Moreover, because each of the 16 activities are recorded individually, this choice has no effect on the recording or assessment of individual entries.

In order to provide a clear idea of how this strategy will work in practice, the following pages give an overview of the specific activities tracked in my catalogue, their archaeological indicators, and the significance of their inclusion.

Domestic Use Activities

DECORATIVE INTERVENTIONS

Evidence: the creation or maintenance of decorative pavements, wall or ceiling frescoes, decorative architectural elements (cornices, colonnades, apses, etc.), aquatic features, or other elements contributing to the symbolic embellishment of the household.

Significance: Decoration has been counted among the most defining aspects of the ideal Roman house. The presence of decorative features has thus been read as a sign of residential continuity and their degradation a symptom of abandonment or downgrading. In tracking this activity, I

³⁶⁶ Similar to the interpretation of Marzano (2007, 115-116; 207-208) regarding the villa at *Ossaia* (*Cortona*).

consider decorative features as the results of *interventions*, specific choices bounded in time, each with a unique context.

UTILITARIAN INTERVENTIONS

Evidence: the creation or maintenance of roofs, hydraulic infrastructure, non-decorative floor surfaces, or other elements essential to the functioning of the home, but not strictly related to symbolic representation.

Significance: Compared with decoration, accounts of Roman houses less frequently emphasize their practical, functional features. However, concern for practical upkeep was a necessity of all households, many of which inhabited structures passed down over multiple generations.

Utilitarian interventions are thus a key indicator of the ongoing use of houses as homes rather than “as is.”³⁶⁷

REGULAR MASONRY CONSTRUCTION

Evidence: masonry structures in standard Roman techniques.

Significance: The construction of walls in standard masonry techniques during Late Antiquity has been read within the continuity of classical building traditions.³⁶⁸ Archaeologists have grown increasingly aware, however, of the uncertainty surrounding the dating of masonry based on construction technique alone.³⁶⁹ I examine the chronologies suggested by recent excavation data and consider how choices related to construction technique could have stemmed from multiple factors.

³⁶⁷ Métraux 1998; cf. Marzano 2007, 221.

³⁶⁸ Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani 2020, 530-532.

³⁶⁹ Dey (2021, 76-79, 89-90), for example, points to the growing realization that *opus vittatum* continued as a regular construction technique in Rome into 6th-7th century, and late examples are often indistinguishable from earlier ones; cf. Meneghini (1999, 172-173), who dates the subdivision of the *domus* beneath *Piazza dei Cinquecento* to the 5th century based on the masonry style of an *opus vittatum* wall.

STORAGE, PREPARATION, CONSUMPTION OF FOOD

Evidence: ceramic wares for storing, cooking, or eating; installation/use of hearths, ovens, or pits for *dolia*; collection of storage/transport vessels in specific areas; organic food waste.

Significance: While food-related activities are constant elements of domestic life, the topic is most frequently considered within the symbolic rituals of elite dining and examined on the basis of literary, architectural, and decorative evidence.³⁷⁰ In seemingly post-abandonment contexts, rare forays into archaeobotanical analysis have been interpreted within the framework of existing historical narratives, but such approaches have been hampered by a dearth of available evidence.³⁷¹ At the same time, the analysis of ceramic assemblages – a primary body of evidence for studying food in the Roman home – almost never addresses issues of use and daily life. Instead, priority is limited to the economic factors of production, commerce, and circulation in broader regional systems.³⁷² Here, I consider ceramic assemblages in terms of essential food-related needs, comparing them with other evidence like ovens or waste. I also consider what, if anything, ceramic assemblages can tell us about the diversity of goods available to inhabitants and their participation in external networks of commerce, both key markers of quality of life in the ancient world.³⁷³

³⁷⁰ e.g., Dunbabin 2003; Roller 2006; cf. Allison 1999a; Hudson 2010; Banducci 2021. For a discussion of dining in the late antique house, see Polci 2003, 80-89.

³⁷¹ See, for example, the study of Sadori and Susanna (2005) on charred plant remains from a 5th-century-CE hut constructed on the site of an abandoned villa 50 kilometers northwest of Rome. The authors conclude that the presence of poor quality (and poisonous) crops in association with the hut points to a life of poverty concomitant with “other evidence of general regression in the late Roman Empire when there was widespread misery and famine” (392). The study falls short of considering these isolated datapoints against the wider panorama of contemporary ceramic evidence or other archaeological data. For the wider problem of reconstructing historical narratives based on limited archaeological evidence for diet, see Bowes, MacKinnon, et al. 2021, 517-518.

³⁷² Allison 1999a, 58.

³⁷³ Koepke and Baten 2005; Scheidel 2009, 6; Smith 2015. See also the comments of Bowes, MacKinnon, et al. (2021) on “tableware complexity” in peasant sites excavated in Tuscany. The authors argue that evidence for tableware assemblages can serve as “proxies for both dining practices and dietary complexity” and, in the case of the sites examined in their study, “points to something beyond the cycles of want and traditional ‘subsistence’ farming” and “better access to goods than [normally] imagined” (540-541).

AGRICULTURAL/INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IN PURPOSE-BUILT AREAS)

Evidence: the construction, maintenance, or use of agricultural or industrial production facilities distinct from residential areas of the house.

Significance: Roman literary sources appear unequivocal regarding the social significance of agricultural production in villas, where such activities are associated with the *pars rustica*.³⁷⁴

Furthermore, workshops connected with houses in Roman cities are a known feature of the archaeological record, suggesting that economic endeavors were a concern of many urban inhabitants as well.³⁷⁵ However, scholars have drawn a sharp distinction between the economic activities of what are thought to be functioning Roman households and those taking up shop in seemingly abandoned homes. By documenting examples of both (see discussion below), I explore the limits of this distinction.

FUNERARY (EXTRA-HOUSEHOLD)

Evidence: the construction of tombs, monumental or otherwise, in designated areas with immediate proximity to the residence.

Significance: This aspect of residential occupation is associated exclusively with villas and compared with other domestic activities, has been insufficiently addressed in general studies.³⁷⁶

As a result, the potential conceptual link between monumental villa tombs in the imperial period and the later practice of establishing burial *inside* houses demands further consideration.

³⁷⁴ See discussion in Marzano and Métraux 2018b, 7-14.

³⁷⁵ Bakker 1994, 56-76; Pirson 2007; Karivieri 2020b. See, for example, the *Casa del Fabbro* (I.10.7) in *Pompeii* (Ling et al. 1997).

³⁷⁶ Bodel 1997; Crowley 2011.. See discussion in Roymans and Derks 2011, 10-11.

Domestic Disuse Activities

CLOSURE OF SPACES

Evidence: construction of “*tamponature*,” or walls built to fill in a doorway in order to block or restrict access to a space, regardless of building technique.

Significance: Along with the subdivision of spaces, the blocking off of rooms or entire areas of a house is frequently read as a sign of progressive abandonment.³⁷⁷ On the other hand, such interventions might also point to the management of circulation patterns and could therefore be signs of actively lived-in domestic buildings.

SUBDIVISION OF SPACES

Evidence: construction of partition walls in rooms or courtyards, regardless of building technique.

Significance: This practice was one of the first to be associated with the end of the Roman house and is usually interpreted within a context of economic crisis, giving way to the downgrading of previously elite residences into makeshift multi-family units.³⁷⁸ Like for the closure of spaces, I analyze the activity of subdivision independently of this downgrading framework, considering it within the context of the ongoing management of building layouts.

DESTRUCTION OF DECORATIVE ELEMENTS

Evidence: Cuts, new floors, or other modifications which destroy, interrupt, or cover previous decorative elements.

Significance: While this activity has been categorically associated with the end of classical domestic lifestyles,³⁷⁹ the circumstances surrounding each instance are important to take into

³⁷⁷ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 125-126.

³⁷⁸ An argument originally advanced by Ellis (1988).

³⁷⁹ Ripoll and Arce 2000, 71-74. The most commonly cited cause is social and economic collapse (e.g., Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani 2020, 546) but interpretations have varied. See the discussion of Castrorao Barba (2020, 17-18). Polci (2003, 104-105)

consideration. For example, the destruction of decorative features during removal of reusable materials (i.e., spoliation), their gradual degradation, or their interruption during installation of features related to labor and production would each point to unique factors.

IRREGULAR CONSTRUCTION

Evidence: masonry, floors, or other structural elements in irregular techniques, including drystone construction, the laying of irregular courses, or the utilization of irregular or secondhand materials.

Significance: This activity is a point of contrast with constructions utilizing regular building techniques, discussed above. While construction techniques are notoriously hard to date,³⁸⁰ a perceived decline in classical building forms is generally associated with the 5th-6th century CE and taken as a sign of a less specialized workforce, concomitant with a general social downturn.³⁸¹ On the other hand, recent work on architectural recycling and construction techniques have identified masonry composed of irregular and secondhand materials as part of a “comprehensive cultural *habitus*” of building throughout the Roman period, particularly (but not exclusively) among lower-class people.³⁸² Given the greater attention paid to such structures in the description and phasing of recently excavated households, I provide an updated consideration of their context and chronology in the case studies examined.

POST-BUILT/PERISHABLE BUILDING

Evidence: postholes or other evidence for perishable timber structures.

suggests that the phenomenon could be connected with the shift of reception areas to the upper story, with formerly decorative areas on the ground floor giving way to utilitarian activities. See also the discussion of Dark (2004, 287-290), who poses the question: “If lack of money is the problem, why dig through an intact mosaic floor to create a hearth?”

³⁸⁰ Negro Ponzi 1994; Cagnana 2008, 42.

³⁸¹ Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani 2020, 533.

³⁸² Bowes 2021a, 576.

Significance: Post-built and perishable building forms have frequently been associated with the abandonment of late Roman residences. Like irregular masonry, this practice has been interpreted as a sign of declining capabilities in specialized construction due to economic collapse or, alternatively, associated with deeper cultural changes.³⁸³ The influence of non-Roman building traditions has been offered as a further point of discussion.³⁸⁴ While these issues will be taken into consideration, it is also necessary to consider the more practical concerns motivating post-built and perishable construction in terms of structural upkeep, repairs, and labor efficiency.³⁸⁵

CHRISTIAN WORSHIP

Evidence: Christian cultic structures within the space of the residence.

Significance: The establishment of churches, monasteries, baptistries, or other Christian buildings in the structures of former Roman homes has received much attention.³⁸⁶ This phenomenon has frequently been related to the fate of the Roman aristocracy and the establishment of new social hierarchies connected to the ecclesiastical system, but disagreement surrounds its ultimate implications. One possibility is that residential properties entered into the ownership of church authorities,³⁸⁷ suggesting they had been previously abandoned or donated by their former owners. Another is that they represent new social strategies among their elite

³⁸³ See Bianchi (2013) for a review of research on medieval dwellings in perishable materials. Lewit (2003) and Dark (2005) for new building practices as a sign of cultural transformations among the elite. Volpe (2005, 305-309) and Valenti (2007a) disagree, arguing instead that perishable building is a sign of declining material conditions indicative of economic crisis. See also Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani (2020, 543-546), who refer to such building techniques as a response to the “collapse of a social and economic system,” and an “emergency situation...the necessity of confronting a strongly degraded world.” Similarly, Brogiolo and Chavarría (2003, 33) argue that it is “incongruous” to imagine that the same elites who dedicated cultic structures built in high-quality masonry would have chosen “poor techniques” for their own homes (see also Brogiolo 2006, 269). For a review of this debate, see Castrorao Barba 2020, 33-39.

³⁸⁴ A discourse with roots in the studies of Cagiano De Azevedo (in particular, 1986). See Brogiolo and Chavarría 2008a; Valenti 2007b; 2011; Fronza 2011; Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 67-73; Bianchi 2013; Fronza and Santangeli Valenzani 2020, 547-549.

³⁸⁵ Dark (2004, 287), for example, notes that such constructions could have been related to “propping up of parts of the roof or walls.”

³⁸⁶ Ripoll and Arce 2000; Augenti 2003; Chavarría 2004; Castrorao Barba 2012; 2014; 2018b; 2020; Castiglia 2016; 2018b; Bowes 2018.

³⁸⁷ Brogiolo and Chavarría 2008b, 198-199, 202.

owners themselves,³⁸⁸ meaning that they might have continued to function, at least partially, as homes.

SPOLIATION

Evidence: Negative features (cuts or spoliation trenches) related to the removal of reusable materials. The collection of bricks, roof tiles, glass, marble fragments, or other reusable materials into stacks or piles, presumably for transportation elsewhere or recycling back into raw form.

Significance: Site reports and research frequently mention “robbing” as a general outcome of site abandonment in Late Antiquity, a term suggestive of clandestine activities.³⁸⁹ To the contrary, recent research has suggested that the spoliation of both public and private structures appears to have been an orderly affair, possibly sanctioned by authorities or property owners and contributing to specific economic or urbanistic strategies.³⁹⁰

DUMPING

Evidence: The deposition of waste, refuse, or soil inside or around the residence.

Significance: The accumulation of garbage and other forms of refuse is a regular facet of daily life.³⁹¹ In the case of functioning households, this practice rarely receives attention.³⁹² Recently, it has been argued that dumping layers can easily be misread as signs of abandonment.³⁹³ I attempt to discern the various types of dumping encountered throughout my catalogue, ranging from domestic to industrial waste, and to explore the significance of each.

³⁸⁸ See discussion in Polci (2003, 105) and Lewit (2003, 255-256, 268) for these “new strategies.”

³⁸⁹ e.g., Poulsen 2004, 65; Scott 2004, 56; Marzano 2007, 557; Waelkens et al. 2007, 508; Christie 2016, 143, 146; Fleming 2016, 150-151; Furlan 2017, 329-330; Brogiolo 2018b, 4; Chavarria 2018, 166; cf. Dodd 2019, 36-38. Frey (2016, 10) points out that the etymology of the word “spoliation” is itself related to *spoliare*, “to rob.”

³⁹⁰ Baldini 2007; Santangeli Valenzani 2007; Munro 2010; 2011; 2012; 2016.

³⁹¹ Lamotta and Schiffer 1999; Bar-Oz et al. 2007; Emmerson 2020, 110-111. See also the discussion in Havlíček and Morcinek 2016.

³⁹² See especially the discussion of Furlan (2017) on the House of Titus Macer in *Aquileia*. See also the discussion of Emmerson 2020, 114-117.

³⁹³ Emmerson (2020, 108-112), who utilizes evidence from *Pompeii* as a case study.

AGRICULTURAL/INDUSTRIAL PRODUCTION (IN READAPTED AREAS)

Evidence: the construction, maintenance, or use of agricultural or industrial production facilities in formerly residential areas of the house.

Significance: As suggested above, my consideration of this activity is aimed at testing our understanding of the difference between economic pursuits in lived-in Roman homes and the more improvised activities associated with their abandonment.³⁹⁴ I draw attention to the range of production types recorded in different houses, their extent, and longevity, considering how these attributes could indicate diverse strategies.

FUNERARY (INTRA-HOUSEHOLD)

Evidence: Tombs inside the residence or abutting the outside of its perimeter walls. These include various typologies: *a cappuccina*, *a cassone*, infant *enchytrismos* burials using *amphorae*, and simple inhumation trenches are the most common (fig. 17; fig. 18).

Significance: This serves as another intentional point of contrast with evidence for domestic use.

As I have discussed, the appearance of tombs in residential buildings has received much attention in studies of late antique Rome.³⁹⁵ The chronology of this practice is generally understood to begin during the 3rd century CE in the Roman suburb and the 5th century in the city. My analysis of this evidence takes particular inspiration from the recent arguments of Emmerson,³⁹⁶ attempting to understand whether the correlation between residential burials (which I call intra-household burials) and changing mentalities related to a “death taboo” has been exaggerated. In particular, the connection between residential burial and the spread of Christian beliefs remains particularly unclear, so special attention will be paid to the possible

³⁹⁴ For production in abandoned homes: Chavarría 2004, 76-80; Volpe et al. 2005, 284-285; Munro 2010; 2011; 2012; 2016; Stellati et al. 2012; Castrorao Barba 2017.

³⁹⁵ See in particular Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003; Santangeli Valenzani and Meneghini 2004, 103-125.

³⁹⁶ Emmerson 2020.

link between such activities and the establishment of cultic structures in former residences. When available, data from the anthropological analysis of intra-household burial remains will also be considered for what it can tell us about the lived experience of household (re)occupants.

Structure and Presentation of the Catalogue

While the activities just discussed represent the heart of my analysis, there are additional factors affecting the formation and presentation of my catalogue. These include my approach to chronology, data collection, and the interactive format in which the catalogue is presented.

Chronology and Data Structure

As I have explained, my study takes a long view of domestic trajectories, tracking a series of 16 household activities from the 1st-7th century CE. The decision to structure my catalogue around century-by-century accounts of these activities is an intentional strategy reacting to the nature of the available evidence. In some cases, the evidence for specific activities can provide a more precise chronology, perhaps narrowed down to a 50- or 25-year window. For the majority of instances, however, the best-case scenario is a possible chronology within a 100-year range, with many encompassing multiple centuries. Therefore, in the interest of consistency, all activities are tracked by single century, an acceptable level of precision given the limitations of assessing absolute chronologies for many stratigraphic contexts.

The data of my catalogue is distributed over two parallel tables, balancing the need to record a high quantity of in-depth stratigraphic information with that of distilling my findings into an easily presentable, synthetic format (table 1; table 2). Both tables follow an identical *long-data* structure, meaning that the activities associated with single sites occur over multiple rows, one for each century. An eighth row for each site is provided for evidence that is

undatable, either because its chronology could not be specified with any level of certainty or because it was simply not provided in published reports. In most cases, undatable evidence was not recorded unless it would otherwise be of special importance for understanding the long-term trajectory of a site. A ninth row records activities postdating the 7th century, which are not the explicit focus of my current research, but occasionally offer useful insights. In sum, both tables contain 9 rows of data for each site (one for each century, one for undatable evidence, and one for post-7th-century evidence), and each column records possible instances of the 16 given activities within the specified time frame. For the 46 sites in my catalogue, this results in 414 lines of data per table.

Apart from their identical structure, the two tables in my catalogue differ in the datatypes they handle. The first records nominal data: written descriptions of each recorded activity per century, with citations and a total date range. The second, on the other hand, records ordinal data: a numerical ranking, 0 to 2, describing the chronological reliability of each activity type per site, per century. “0” represents the absence of any detected activity. “1” represents the appearance of at least one activity instance potentially datable to the century, but no securely datable instances. Finally, “2” indicates the presence of at least one activity instance securely datable to the century, regardless of whether other less securely datable instances also occur. As such, the ordinal portion of the catalogue is *not* meant to represent the quantity of activity instances, but to rank their chronological reliability.

Compilation of the Catalogue

For each of the 46 case studies, a comprehensive bibliography was compiled, including dedicated site reports and monographs as well as synthetic studies referencing multiple sites. A variety of platforms were utilized to assemble this bibliography. These included the *SITAR*,

LIAAM, and *Tess* databases already mentioned, but also searches on the *Deutches Archäologisches Institut ZENON* database, *Pleiades*, *Fasti Online*, and other web repositories that often contain useful bibliography.³⁹⁷ As a result, my research represents an exhaustive survey of the available literature for each site.

In cases when evidence was directly reported by the *SITAR* and *LIAAM* databases, every attempt was made to obtain the sources they directly cited in order to review them for further details. If no published literature was referenced, my catalogue cites the relevant database directly. For sources from the *SITAR*, the “*origine dell’informazione*” (OI) code is cited.³⁹⁸ For entries in the *LIAAM* database, the unique site ID is cited.³⁹⁹

While my catalogue is thorough, it cannot pretend to be all-encompassing. Data in each cell of the nominal table occurs in list form, providing an overview of the single instances of each activity per site, per century. The choice of how to order these lists is necessarily arbitrary but seeks to be consistent, first providing any securely datable activity instances before listing those whose possible chronologies encompass a multi-century range. The composition of each list is also subject to an additional series of judgements. Groups of very similar activities might appear as a single entry in a list. For example, if new mosaics were applied in several rooms, this might be listed as a single activity instance to avoid repetition (e.g., “laying of several new mosaics in rooms around the courtyard”). However, if two rooms received mosaics within a similar timeframe, but only one of these can be securely dated, this might constitute two activity instances (one represented as a “2” in the chronology table, the other as a “1”). To give another

³⁹⁷ Valenti 2014; Angelelli and Tortorella 2016; <https://www.fastionline.org/folder.php?view=home>; <https://pleiades.stoa.org/>; <https://zenon.dainst.org/>. The only publications which were ultimately unobtainable pertained to the excavation of the *Vicus Caprarius insula* near *Fontana di Trevi* (see below, pages 190, 206-207; Insalaco 2003; 2005).

³⁹⁸ e.g., for the villa on *via Pollenza*, some entries are referenced with “SITAR OI 4048,” followed by the page number.

³⁹⁹ e.g., for the *Campo Barbarico* villa, some entries are referenced with “Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910241.”

example, if two furnaces for glass working were built at the same time in the same area, this might be considered a single activity instance. If, on the other hand, one glass furnace and one metalworking furnace were created, these might be listed as two activity instances in order to draw attention to this crucial distinction. Alternatively, single activities might sometimes satisfy more than one of the 16 categories. For example, the construction of an olive or wine press counts as a utilitarian intervention as well as an instance of agricultural production. Similarly, a *tamponatura* built with mixed secondhand materials would appear twice, once for closure of spaces and once for irregular construction.

A final issue regards the treatment of instances when activities could not be dated beyond a *terminus post quem* (or, more rarely, a *terminus ante quem*). In these cases, my catalogue reflects the inherent uncertainty of these relative chronologies. For example, if a *terminus post quem* of the 3rd century is reported, this activity would receive a low ranking “1” in terms of chronological reliability for the 3rd century. On the other hand, depending on the specific circumstances, the decision might have been made to record the possible occurrence of this activity in the 1st-2nd century, as well. This would be especially valid for chronologies offered chiefly on the basis of stylistic concerns (e.g., bichrome floor mosaics, examples of which are known throughout this specific period). In other cases (e.g., the installation of a glass kiln with a *terminus post quem* of the 6th century), it would be less logical to include this activity as a possible occurrence for each prior century barring the presence of other evidence which might provide a reasonable *terminus ante quem*. Activities dated solely on the basis of relative chronology might therefore have been classified as undatable or noted as a possible activity only for the century provided as a *terminus post quem*.

The citations given for each activity provide the page number(s) where it is described. In certain cases, page numbers are also provided for information that justifies the chronology of the activity assigned in the catalogue. This is particularly necessary when the absolute chronology of a site's various phases is not presented in an overly clear, schematic manner in a publication. For example, if the *terminus ante quem* of a given intervention is mentioned in a footnote or, according to my discretion, in a way that is not immediately obvious, care is taken to point readers to both the activity's description and the relevant information used to determine its chronological cutoff.

The Interactive Format

While the dual long-data table structure was adopted as the best solution for compiling this research, it does not allow for intuitive visualization of the data. Normally, catalogues are reproduced in chart or list form, useful for printing a large quantity of information but not for communicating synthetic interpretations. Maps, meanwhile, are the obvious choice for representing large collections of archaeological data in a regional context, yet traditional maps produced in a GIS environment have many limitations. The visual language of maps is subject to strong conventions, meaning that the toolset of mapping software is limited, leaving little room for innovation or creative solutions to representing unique datasets.⁴⁰⁰ As still images, maps are also poorly suited to representing diachronic change, a key emphasis of my current research.

In sum, the visual formats most commonly available to scholars make it difficult to strike a balance between information and interpretation. The more data involved, the larger the scale, and the wider the chronological window, the greater this difficulty becomes. These problems

⁴⁰⁰ See, for example, the discussions of Eve (2012, 582-583) and Fredrick and Vennarucci (2021, 217).

factored strongly into my choice to design an interactive, purpose-built medium for analyzing and presenting my dissertation catalogue. Here again, I borrow inspiration from the digital publication format of the *Gabii Project Reports*, whose chief accomplishment is the interlinking of narrative text, searchable databases, and interactive content created in a game engine.⁴⁰¹ Clearly, the limiting requirements of the dissertation format do not allow for such an ambitious approach. Dissertations must ultimately be submitted as a PDF file into which any supplementary materials (e.g., audio files or video) should be directly embedded, restricting the possibilities of including interactive, interlinked digital content.⁴⁰²

In an attempt to work within these confines, my solution revolves around [an interactive map created in the Unity3D game engine](#), hosted online in order to allow for anchored URLs directly within my dissertation manuscript. The map is programmed with a graphical user interface, tailor-made to suit the nature of my data. As a result of these qualities, it serves as an *interactive dissertation catalogue*, providing a useful alternative to traditional tables and charts.

The design of the interactive map is also intended to intuitively convey my findings at an interpretive level. Upon first opening the map, readers are presented with a regional overview of the study area, with icons representing each of the nine topographical zones discussed above (fig. 19). Clicking any of these icons offers the opportunity to navigate to a more detailed view of the zone and its individual sites (fig. 20). Then, the icons appearing for individual sites in each zone's map, when clicked, open a window containing a color coded and symbolized chart, summarizing the house's catalogued data (fig. 21). The top row of this chart represents evidence for domestic use activities, while the bottom row indicates domestic disuse activities. Each

⁴⁰¹ See above, pages 19-20.

⁴⁰² See the University of Michigan's *Dissertation Handbook* (<https://rackham.umich.edu/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/dissertation-handbook.pdf>).

column stands for one century, and each cell indicates the highest level of chronological reliability among all activities recorded in the given timeframe. If no activities are recorded for the given century, the cell is blank. If at least one activity possibly dated to the century is recorded, but none which are securely datable, the cell features a transparent icon. Finally, if at least one activity is securely dated to the given century, the cell features an opaque icon. For example, in fig. 21, both domestic use and disuse activities were recorded for each of the 1st-4th centuries CE (along with at least one undatable disuse activity), but only the domestic use activities of the 2nd century had at least one instance of a secure chronology (hence it is opaque, and the other icons are transparent). The chart thus provides an instant graphic summary of the catalogue's results. Clicking on an individual cell, furthermore, displays the extended descriptive data associated with that century in list form, along with the relevant citations.

This interactive format is aimed at supporting the reading experience of my dissertation by providing intuitive access to my catalogue both in summary form and at a detailed level. As a result, URLs accompany each site-level summary presented in the following chapter, allowing readers to view the in-depth evidence supporting my analysis. The content has also served as a key aid in my own exploration and analysis of the data during the writing of this dissertation, a testament to the possibilities of do-it-yourself digital solutions in archaeological research and providing an example upon which future efforts might elaborate.

Household Abandonment and Qualitative Assessments

In this chapter, I have selected Rome as a promising regional setting for reassessing the end of the Roman house, arguing that closer attention to stratigraphic evidence over a longer timeframe can challenge the conventional view. I have proposed that seemingly disused Roman houses were in fact used spaces, the results of intentional strategies and choices made by people,

not simply the detritus of social forces beyond their control. In justifying this view, I have raised several issues with the positivist, systems-level approach of previous research, contending that these are overly reductive, dismissive of human agency, and focus excessively on the fate of Roman aristocrats while minimizing the experience of non-elite people. In the case of housing in the late Roman world, these tendencies have contributed to a distinctly pessimistic vision, laying an unhelpful veneer of value judgement over the practice of archaeological inquiry.

It is entirely appropriate for archaeologists to ask questions about the quality of life in ancient periods, whether people lived comfortably or, as many have argued for Late Antiquity, in terror and destitution. But unlike the seemingly clear-cut methodologies behind the cataloguing and topographical accounting of household contexts from the late Roman and early medieval eras, qualitative assessments of this evidence have been grounded in assumption more than measurable criteria. As a result, despite their investment in the notion of declining prosperity, narratives of the end of the Roman house have added little to critical cross-cultural discussions on quality of life and well-being in the ancient world,⁴⁰³ nor have they been evaluated using any of the various methodologies proposed by scholars working on these topics.⁴⁰⁴

These shortcomings are partially explained by the fact that the end of the Roman house is a story told with an exclusively elite class of people in mind, contributing to an unnecessarily pessimistic tone. This is patently evident in the question posed by Andrea Carandini in 1993: “If what happened back then happened today, and we found ourselves crammed inside a hut and shivering, would we be able to avoid the word ‘catastrophe?’”⁴⁰⁵ In responding to this question, one must wonder if Carandini’s huddled hut-dwellers would really find the situation so dramatic

⁴⁰³ See the limited comments of Scheidel (2016, 16).

⁴⁰⁴ For the most recent assessment of this topic, see Smith and Kohler 2018.

⁴⁰⁵ Carandini 1993, 12.

had they not previously been fortunate enough to enjoy the niceties of an elite life. Many poor, non-urban Romans from earlier periods, in fact, might have found the post-built “huts” of the early Middle Ages not so radically different from their own dwellings.⁴⁰⁶ And if those same poor imperial-era Romans were offered the chance to move their hovels inside a large stone-built complex, rich in reusable materials and infrastructure, they might have even considered it an upgrade.

But before Roman household archaeology can make meaningful contributions to these issues, we must ensure that basic questions are answered. On the basis of archaeological data, what range of activities occurred inside Roman households? How did this change over time? Leaving aside the catastrophic bent of many narratives, these rudimentary questions have been underserved by the tendency to view archaeological evidence as datapoints in a system rather than the result of complex human activities. Nevertheless, the structure and data-driven composition of my catalogue is more in line with positivist methodologies than with the phenomenological or emic toolset of post-processualism. This is not casual. In the case of the end of the Roman house, processual approaches have been the most influential in driving debates. It is essential to engage with this tradition, or at least a familiar enough version of it, in order to interface with existing dialogues. By steeping my considerations in categorical assessments of excavation data, I therefore aim to speak the methodological language of previous approaches, even as I seek to avoid their more polemical tendencies. In this vein, my attempts to humanize the archaeological record, along with the creative format I have devised for sharing my findings, pave the way for a new style of investigation.

⁴⁰⁶ This is an argument considered by Santangeli Valenzani (2011, 72-73), citing numerous cases of Roman-era rural dwellings with a strong resemblance to examples from the 6th century and later.

Chapter 4 The Abandonment of 46 Households in Rome

The following chapter provides a contextual overview of the 46 households (table 3) featured as case studies in this dissertation, highlighting their transformation through the lens of 16 activities between the 1st-7th century CE. These activities are divided into the two categories of domestic *use* and *disuse* in the interactive catalogue accompanying this chapter, and my summaries below frequently employ this same vocabulary. As I explained in chapter 3, this terminology is not intended to reinforce, but to explore the limits of the assumptions framing the interpretation of household abandonment in site reports and other studies. My analysis below suggests that domestic use and disuse, despite their apparent antithesis, are frequently impossible to untangle in Roman household contexts. Furthermore, the chronology of domestic use and disuse is erratic from site to site, undermining the teleological narrative of the end of the Roman house discussed in chapter 2.

The division of this chapter into nine sections, each dedicated to a specific microregional zone of Rome, balances careful attention to each individual case study with acknowledgement of regional dynamics (fig. 22). The section for each zone is divided into three parts. The first introduces the zone, providing a brief topographical overview and considering the significant issues raised by recent research. Next, the case studies belonging to the zone are summarized alongside links to their full entries in [the online catalogue](#). These entries include a century-by-century account of the activities documented at the site along with plans and maps conveying their distribution across the landscape. At the end of each section, I offer a short discussion of the combined image supplied by the zone. As I will explain in the final chapter, my findings show

that topographical setting and natural terrain could sometimes influence domestic transformation, but a significant number of houses proves to have defied local trends, charting out unique trajectories compared with neighboring properties.

Some recurrent themes surface in my accounts below that will serve as the basis for discussion in the final chapter. One of these is the rhythmic, multidirectional transformation of household environments over their lifecycles. Rather than unfolding along a predictable course of foundation followed by increasing prosperity and then decline and abandonment, many houses here are characterized by ebbs and flows. This highlights the contrast between disuse and what is better described as *new uses of old domestic spaces*, which was a constant phenomenon throughout the entirety of the 1st-7th century CE. My case studies, in fact, show significant evidence for disuse in the first half of the imperial period, challenging any straightforward characterization of abandonment and “de-structuration”⁴⁰⁷ as uniquely late antique phenomena. Finally, the domestic transformations considered here raise questions about the concept of downgrading discussed in chapter 2. In many cases, the inhabitants of seemingly disused houses maintained strong access to commercial goods and utilized high-end material culture like fine ware pottery. This leads me to reassess assumptions about the connection between wealth, architecture, and well-being in Roman homes, especially during the late antique-early medieval transition.

A few conventions are followed throughout this chapter. In addition to the interactive maps in the online catalogue, I provide conventional maps with some further contextual information in the section for each zone. These maps include the locations of the numbered *comparanda* sites (C1, C2, etc.) and other topographical details about each zone. Next, dates

⁴⁰⁷ Brogiolo 2011, 34; 2018a, 8-9.

provided in all discussions are CE unless otherwise stated. Finally, at the beginning of each case study's discussion, a citation provides the sources utilized to compile its catalogue entry with occasional additional references. Specific information not contained in the catalogue receives its own citations. Otherwise, readers should consult the interactive catalogue for a full list of citations pertaining to the various activities summarized in this chapter.

Zone 1: Ager Ostiensis

Introduction

The area surrounding ancient *Ostia* (fig. 23) has been the subject of numerous investigations since the 1990s, contributing to knowledge of long-term transformation.⁴⁰⁸ In the Roman period, along with the pull of *Ostia* itself, key attributes of this landscape were the coastal expanse, the lagoon to the east of *Ostia*, and the Tiber delta (fig. 24). The built landscape of the zone, meanwhile, was defined not only by the harbor of *Portus*, but also the intersection of two major roadways: the *via Ostiensis* leading toward Rome and the *via Severiana* stretching southward along the coast. The combination of these elements resulted in a high traffic area at the coastal threshold of Rome, characterized by intense exploitation for agricultural and industrial production, activities that necessitated constant efforts aimed at managing the drainage of water and other aspects of the natural landscape.⁴⁰⁹ The primary focal points for these activities was a series of *villae rusticae* around the lagoon as well as a chain of maritime villas along the *via Severiana* (fig. 25).⁴¹⁰

⁴⁰⁸ See Cébeillac-Gervasoni et al. 2019; Arnoldus-Huyzendveld et al. 2019.

⁴⁰⁹ Pannuzi 2013; 2019a; 2019b; Pannuzi et al. 2013, 366-374; Rosa and Pannuzi 2017; Carbonara et al. 2018.

⁴¹⁰ Marcelli 2019, 36; Pannuzi 2019a, 14.

Throughout most of the imperial period, a dense collection of necropolises extended around *Ostia*'s southern limits, and these show evidence of continued usage into the 4th-5th century.⁴¹¹ During Late Antiquity, a reorientation of funerary practices occurred as burials began to gravitate around a series of early Christian sanctuaries and abandoned structures, including villas and, in the center of *Ostia*, public buildings.⁴¹² Meanwhile, archaeologists have described a general downturn in economic production activities during this period, and it has recently been suggested that the barbarian incursions of the 5th century and the Gothic War of the 6th century were the chief causes of depopulation and economic decline in the area.⁴¹³

Case Studies (sites no. 1-3)

*Site no. 1: Villa of Palombara*⁴¹⁴

[View catalogue entry](#)

Once mistakenly identified as the residence described by Pliny in a letter to his friend Gallus,⁴¹⁵ this monumental maritime villa (fig. 26) was situated on the *via Severiana*. Its first phase of construction dates as far back as the 3rd century BCE.⁴¹⁶ Occupying around four hectares, the structure was divided into multiple sectors distributed across a series of terraced foundations. The residential core was situated at the center of the villa's southwestern side, along which ran a monumental *belvedere* punctuated by two apsidal rooms. To the north of this was a *quadriportico* courtyard leading to a thermal sector. A large, enclosed garden space encompassed most of the northeastern portion of the villa, facing directly onto the *via Severiana*.

⁴¹¹ Pannuzi and Carbonara 2007; Pannuzi 2019a, 14-15; Germoni et al. 2019.

⁴¹² Pannuzi 2019a, 16-17.

⁴¹³ Pannuzi 2019a, 17.

⁴¹⁴ De Franceschini 2005, 260-264; Ramieri 2008; Buonaguro et al. 2012; Marcelli 2019; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910144.

⁴¹⁵ Pliny Ep. 2.17. See Buonaguro et al. (2012, 65-66) for a discussion of this mistaken designation.

⁴¹⁶ Fascitiello 2018, 3.

Residents of this villa prioritized the elaboration of its decorative and monumental aspects throughout the 1st-3rd century, embellishing the structure with mosaics, fountains, and colonnades. Meanwhile, the ongoing upkeep of the structure's utilitarian aspects were another form of investment. In addition to various interventions related to maintaining the structural integrity of the residential sector, these activities were also aimed at the furtherance of economic production. This is suggested by a pool possibly related to the breeding of fish and the addition of quarters for housing enslaved workers.⁴¹⁷

Simultaneously, indicators of domestic disuse are also observable throughout the 1st-3rd century. Room B (labeled on fig. 26 as "*atrio*"), likely the entrance of the villa in its first phase and located between the northern corner of the residential sector and the monumental garden, had its original doorway walled up and was subdivided into two spaces by the end of the 1st century CE. A new pavement was then installed, consisting of a heterogeneous mix of reused materials, including fragments of brick and stone, but also of broken floor mosaics and colored lime slabs. The counter-like feature built in this room suggests that these changes might have been related to its conversion into a kitchen, paralleling ceramic evidence in the villa for other food-processing activities dating to the 1st-2nd and possibly 3rd century (fig. 27). Nearby Room B, dumping layers consisting of ceramic fragments and malacofauna dated to the 2nd century, further evidence for the preparation of food in this sector of the villa. In sum, Room B is a good example of how an apparent case of downgrading in a single space positioned within the decorative area of a house could relate to ongoing daily domestic use activities.

⁴¹⁷ The villa's excavators relate the pool to commercial aquaculture (De Franceschini 2005, 261, footnote 13), although the socially conspicuous role of fishponds for personal consumption (see Kron 2014) raises the possibility that the feature also functioned as a status symbol, broadcasting the economic successes of the household. See also Potter and King 1997, 33.

Indicators of domestic use fall off after the end of the 3rd century. In the 4th-5th century, a small church was constructed just outside the villa near the *via Severiana*. An undatable *a cappuccina* burial was positioned near this church. Adjacent to this was also a monumental sarcophagus dating to the 2nd century, although its connection with the later church is unclear. The church continued to be frequented through at least the 7th century. Possibly dating to this range of time (the 4th-7th century) are other domestic disuse activities inside the villa, including spoliation trenches in one of the apsidal rooms. At the same time, numerous *tamponature* and the construction of various *muretti* with reused *cubilia* suggest the ongoing adaptation of the villa's original layout, and thus its ongoing frequentation, even if it is unclear to what extent this late occupation was domestic in nature.

*Site no. 2: Dragoncello Site A*⁴¹⁸

[View catalogue entry](#)

One of several villas recently excavated in the *frazione* of *Dragoncello*, this structure (fig. 28) was located near the *via Ostiensis* just off the ancient lagoon to *Ostia*'s east. During the 1st-3rd century, numerous activities related to the utilitarian upkeep of the villa were pursued. Together with evidence for an extensive *pars rustica* in the northern portion of the structure, these activities would seem to verify its designation as a *villa rustica*. On the other hand, several undatable decorative interventions (including the application of painted plaster and mosaics) suggest its residents also prioritized their home's symbolic aspects. Ceramic finds, meanwhile, provide evidence for the purchase and preparation of food through the 3rd-4th century.

⁴¹⁸ De Franceschini 2005, 254-255; Olcese et al. 2017; Olcese et al. 2018; Olcese et al. 2021; Castrorao Barba 2020, 240.

Domestic disuse activities occur simultaneously throughout this period, including numerous *tamponature*, instances of spoliation, and walls built in irregular techniques. Room V appears to have been converted into a dump heap already by the end of the 1st century CE, mirroring the situation near Room B in site no. 1. By the 3rd or 4th century, rooms X, Y, and T had apparently collapsed, and a series of five tombs was inserted inside them (fig. 18). Further burials date to the 5th century, a period lacking evidence for ongoing domestic occupation in the villa. In sum, site no. 2 shows how some sections of a house could fall into disuse and collapse, even as others continued to be actively utilized.

*Site no. 3: Dragoncello Site C*⁴¹⁹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Situated just to the north of site no. 3, this villa (fig. 29) also appears to have had a strongly agricultural, rustic aspect. Its original construction might date to the early 1st century BCE.⁴²⁰ Compared with site no. 3, however, this villa was less extensively excavated and less well preserved. Therefore, the chronological specificity of its various phases is limited. The evidence currently available is all datable between the 1st-2nd century CE and points to various utilitarian interventions, some decorative interventions, and agricultural activities related to wine or oil production. During the course of these activities, decorative elements probably dating to the villa's original foundation were occasionally removed and used as mixed building materials. For example, portions of an *opus scutulatum* floor were reused in the foundations of a phase 2 wall in Room C (fig. 30), comparable to the floor mosaic fragments utilized for the new pavement in Room B of site no. 1. Elsewhere, previous features were cut, removed, or patched

⁴¹⁹ Fascitiello 2018; Pellegrino and Fascitiello 2018.

⁴²⁰ Fascitiello 2018, 9.

over for the construction of new walls. In a third phase, unfortunately undatable, residents constructed an extension of the villa to the north, featuring a monumental courtyard, demonstrating how a wave of expansion and apparent prosperity could follow a period of characterized by destructive activities. In a final undatable phase, occupants divided this new courtyard into two with the construction of two walls, both made of irregular and secondhand materials. One of these walls cut a decorative column base of the courtyard's portico. Unlike sites no. 1 and 2, no burials were recovered in this villa, although the structure has not yet been entirely excavated according to the latest publications.

Discussion

The varying chronological trajectories of these three villas reveal how perceived processes occurring at the landscape level can obscure the more complicated rhythms of individual household microhistories. In this case, evidence for domestic use in each villa falls off significantly before the conflicts of the 5th-6th century, which have been offered as major catalysts for economic and settlement decline in this area, while indicators of domestic disuse activities are persistent features of all three sites as early as the 1st century CE.

Site no. 3 is a particularly strong example of this. Taken in isolation, the destruction and recycling of the home's original features during its second phase might seem in line with an image of gradual abandonment or downgrading. However, in a later phase, the structure underwent a wave of monumentalization focused on the courtyard in its northern portion. Later still, this courtyard was subdivided and partially destroyed, indicating that it was now being utilized in a new way. The currently available evidence leaves unclear whether these changes point to the transfer of the property between different owners over time or, alternatively, to changing economic circumstances and lifestyles among its residents. In any case, the ebbs and

flows of the home's development are difficult to sum up within unidirectional processes like continuity or decline. The same can be said for site no. 1, where the simultaneous appearance of domestic use and disuse activities are hardly suggestive of gradual abandonment, but rather the constant readaptation and modification of the home's layout and function.

Meanwhile, the appearance of burials in sites no. 1 and 2 would indeed seem to confirm the reorientation of funerary practices that scholars have attributed to the *ager Ostiensis* during Late Antiquity. On the other hand, the chronological range of these burials (spanning the 3rd-5th century) points to a variable and context-dependent process. In site no. 2, for example, the first wave of burials in the 3rd-4th century is in phase with deposits related to the dumping of household waste, and thus the likely continuation of domestic practices, whereas those at site no. 1 appear related to the seemingly post-abandonment church. This demonstrates how site-level transformation can reveal itself to be less clear-cut than the perception of general trends across the broader landscape might suggest.

Zone 2: ager Albanus

Introduction

These three villas were situated in the portion of the Alban Hills between *Lago Albano* and *Lago di Nemi*, part of what scholars frequently call the *ager Albanus* (fig. 31).⁴²¹ Roughly 25 kilometers to the southeast of Rome, this area was bisected by the *via Appia* and known for its rich archaeological record, with a long settlement history stretching back to prehistory.⁴²² Other than the mythical *Alba Longa*, key nearby centers were *Aricia*, the closest to the three villas in

⁴²¹ For an overview of this area, see Aglietti and Busch 2020. The term *ager Albanus* is a modern convention for the area, and multiple toponyms are used by ancient sources (Aglietti 2015, 25; Di Giacomo 2020, 57-59, 61, footnote 282; Stassi 2020, 223, 252, footnote 1628).

⁴²² Aglietti 2020, 15.

question, *Castrimoenium*, just to the north of *Lago Albano*, *Bovillae*, to the northwest of *Lago Albano* along the *via Appia*, and *Lanuvium* together with *Velitrae* to the south of *Lago di Nemi*. Of these, *Bovillae* exerted the most local influence by the early imperial period, functioning as a key suburban pole in Rome's regional network.⁴²³

By the late republican period, the *ager Albanus* became prime real estate for elite luxury villas which clustered around both lakeshores and on the slopes of the Alban Hills (fig. 32).⁴²⁴ In addition to the scenic and mythologically evocative setting of the Alban Hills, these villas also benefited from easy connection with Rome by way of the *via Appia*, along with key infrastructural investments throughout the early imperial period, especially the construction of at least three local aqueducts.⁴²⁵ These ideal conditions attracted the interests of Rome's Julio-Claudian emperors, leading to the gradual transfer of many local holdings into imperial hands.⁴²⁶ Toward the end of the 1st century CE, Domitian constructed an imperial residence on the southwestern shore of *Lago Albano*.⁴²⁷ Septimius Severus later founded the *Castra Albana* in this same position, built as a permanent garrison for the *Legio II Parthica*.⁴²⁸

The introduction of thousands of soldiers and a broader satellite community raised the need for increased civic investments, exemplified by the construction of a nearby amphitheater and monumental baths.⁴²⁹ As a result, the scenic Alban Hills might have assumed an appearance more typical of a frontier outpost than an attractive locus of *otium*, and scholars have pointed to a

⁴²³ The territory of *Bovillae* is conventionally defined as the 9th to the 13th mile of the *via Appia*. The first major study of *Bovillae* and its environs was conducted by De Rossi (1979) as part of the *Forma Italiae* series and still represents an essential resource. Recently, Fiochi Nicolai and Spera (2018) have offered an updated assessment of the settlement during Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages. See Dalmiglio et al. (2019, 119-122) for recent evidence for the settlement's precise location.

⁴²⁴ Chiarucci 2000; Aglietti 2015, 24-27. The most famous local landholders were Pompey the Great, Lucullus, Cicero, and Claudius Pulcher (Valeri 2021, 137). See also Di Giacomo 2020, 59-60.

⁴²⁵ Aglietti 2015, 27-31; 2020, 18-20; Valeri 2021, 137-138. These factors thus made the area an ideal setting for *otium*.

⁴²⁶ Aglietti 2015, 31; 2020, 21; Valeri 2021, 137.

⁴²⁷ Aglietti 2020, 21. See Valeri (2021) for an extended discussion.

⁴²⁸ Aglietti 2020, 21-23.

⁴²⁹ Aglietti 2015, 36-38.

concomitant decline in the monumental aspects of many nearby villas.⁴³⁰ Meanwhile, while the *castrum* itself was short lived, the growing civic identity of this community furthered the realignment of local poles away from nearby centers like *Bovillae* and *Aricia* and toward the western shores of *Lago Albano*.⁴³¹ During the reign of Constantine, the settlement was promoted to *civitas* and possibly earned its status as an episcopal see at this time.⁴³² This marks the beginning of a Christian topography in the broader zone circumscribing the Alban Hills, the history of which is traced through both literary records and archaeological evidence for a number of early churches and catacombs.⁴³³ During the Gothic War of the 6th century, the area served as a fortification of Belisarius.⁴³⁴ In the 10th century, a castle was constructed on the summit just above the former site of the *castrum*, a testament to the long-term resilience of the local community.⁴³⁵

Case Studies (sites no. 4-6)

*Site no. 4: Villa ai Cavallacci*⁴³⁶

[View catalogue entry](#)

Investigated intermittently throughout the 1980s and early 1990s, this villa (fig. 33) was subject to a more comprehensive program of excavation and survey between 2005-2009. The residence was positioned just to the southwest of the *via Appia* along a ridge stretching

⁴³⁰ Aglietti 2015, 37; 2019, 60-61, footnote 53. See Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera (2018, 75-77) for the situation closer to *Bovillae*.

⁴³¹ Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 99-101.

⁴³² Aglietti 2015, 38-40; 2019, 61. Nearby *Velitrae* also became a diocese during the 5th century (Fiocchi Nicolai 2001, 145-149; Mengarelli 2016, 349).

⁴³³ Fiocchi Nicolai 2001; Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 103-147; Aglietti 2020, 25-26.

⁴³⁴ Aglietti and Mengarelli 2015, 339.

⁴³⁵ Aglietti 2020, 25.

⁴³⁶ Chiarucci and Gizzi 1990; Chiarucci 2000, 184-190; 2003; Marzano 2007, 253-5; Aglietti 2011; Castrorao Barba 2012, 227; Aglietti and Cuccurullo 2014; Cuccurullo 2015; 2020.

downward from the *Lago Albano* crater.⁴³⁷ It is striking for its monumentality and expansive footprint, distributed over multiple sectors on a series of terraced platforms.

The construction of the building dates between the 2nd-1st century BCE and is documented by a limited number of *opus reticulatum* walls, a stairway, *cocciopesto* pavements, and a possible area for agricultural activities.⁴³⁸ The first major wave of monumentalization occurred during the 1st century CE, when the villa was embellished extensively with mosaic pavements, frescoes, marble paneling, other forms of architectonic decoration, and a large central courtyard with a curvilinear porticoed façade. These elements were continuously modified and updated over the course of the villa's occupation, and datable marble decorations suggest that investment into the home's decorative program continued as late as the 5th century. Utilitarian interventions related to the villa's hydraulic infrastructure along with structural modifications like the addition of stairways or the raising of floor levels occurred throughout the same time span. Production activities centered around the *pars rustica* and, based on evidence for the maintenance of these features, these persisted until at least the 3rd century. Finally, ceramic evidence for the purchase, preparation, and consumption of food spans the entirety of the site's occupational history.

Most of the villa was built using regular masonry, although irregular masonry was increasingly common from the 2nd century forward. Many such cases related to a series of *tamponature* in various doorways across the villa between the 2nd-3rd century, evidence of a frenetic program of architectural modification. Rooms 52 and 58 in the villa's southwest sector are a good example of this (fig. 10; fig. 34). After the doorway between these two spaces was closed, Room 52's decorative surfaces were covered and a sturdy, curbed cement floor was laid.

⁴³⁷ Cuccurullo 2020, 151.

⁴³⁸ Cuccurullo 2020, 172-173; 183-187.

Excavators relate this modification to a change in function, although no stratigraphic evidence is reported to corroborate this claim. Room 58, on the other hand, also had its decorative floor partially destroyed in the same moment, but the surface was restored afterward with the addition of new *tesserae*. Meanwhile, a wall in Room 40 (the small, northernmost room linked to the curvilinear portico) was reinforced with a pilaster that partially covered but did not destroy its frescoed decoration. Rather than a change of function, it is easier to imagine these modifications in the context of routine structural upkeep.⁴³⁹ In the process, decorative elements were not simply disregarded, but preserved or restored whenever possible.

Between the 3rd-5th century, further maintenance of the household is documented in the repositioning of two staircases, raising the obvious but unanswerable question of what activities might have occurred in the villa's upper floors. In the 5th century, a concentrated layer of dumping shows that residents were engaging in active waste-management practices; the wide chronological range of this layer, dating from the 1st-5th century, points to the consolidation of multiple deposits of refuse. Considering these activities against the wider backdrop of ceramic evidence recovered throughout the site, it seems that the villa continued to function as a household until at least the 5th century, even if some of its spaces became trash heaps and, starting in the 3rd century, others were used as resting places for the dead.

⁴³⁹ The need for such upkeep is illustrated by evidence that some rooms were experiencing collapse by the 3rd century CE.

*Site no. 5: Villa of S. Maria della Stella*⁴⁴⁰

[View catalogue entry](#)

This site (fig. 35) lies less than a kilometer to the east of site no. 4 and was positioned closer to the *via Appia*. It dates initially to the late 1st century BCE or early 1st century CE.⁴⁴¹ Like site no. 4, it was distributed over a terraced foundation comprising multiple sectors. Residents of the villa commissioned a routine series of decorative and utilitarian interventions throughout the 1st-4th century CE, aimed at embellishing or maintaining each area of the house: its domestic quarters, baths, kitchen area, and facilities for oil or wine production. By the end of the 2nd century, some earlier decorative features were impacted by ongoing structural maintenance (e.g., the niche in Room 33 in the northern portion of the house). In the final phase of the villa, dated between the 3rd-4th century, the doorways of numerous rooms were walled off, while other spaces, including the kitchen, were subdivided. These interventions were sometimes executed in irregular techniques. In the same phase, a series of graves was inserted in Room 28 in the villa's southwest corner, another likely case of intra-household burial coinciding with ongoing domestic inhabitation. No traces of activity are detected following the 4th century.

*Site no. 6: Villa of S. Maria a Nemi*⁴⁴²

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 6 (fig. 36) was located on the western shore of *Lago di Nemi* and dates originally to the mid-1st century BCE.⁴⁴³ Another sprawling residence situated across multiple terraces, the

⁴⁴⁰ Caserta 2006; 2015; Castrorao Barba 2020, 136.

⁴⁴¹ Caserta 2006, 169.

⁴⁴² Guldager Bilde 2003; 2005; 2006; Viitanen 2003; Poulsen 2004; 2010a; 2010b; 2020b; 2020c; Berg 2010; Bøggild Johannsen 2010; Bülow Clausen 2010; Mejer 2010a; 2010b. See in general. Moltesen et al. 2010; Moltesen and Poulsen 2020.

⁴⁴³ Poulsen 2020b, 46.

villa was divided between a bath area, *porticus triplex*, and peristyle area. The building has been speculatively associated with the villa of Julius Caesar *in Nemorensi*, although no specific evidence corroborates this identification.⁴⁴⁴

The villa displays some of the same outcomes as sites no. 4 and 5. Its principal phase of monumentalization dates to the 1st-2nd century, marked by the application of marble paneling, mosaics, and wall frescoes throughout the villa, as well as the careful landscaping of the garden area. In a later period, broadly dated to the 4th-7th century, some of these mosaics were restored. Also dating to the 1st-2nd century is a series of utilitarian interventions related to structural upkeep, management of the hydraulic infrastructure, and the thermal sector. Unlike sites no. 4 and 5, however, no direct evidence for agricultural or other production activities are detected in any phase of the villa. On the other hand, extensive and well-documented ceramic evidence, including fine and imported wares, shows that the purchase, storage, preparation, and consumption of food continued at this site over a long chronological arc, from the 1st-7th century.

Irregular construction techniques, the occasional damaging of decorative features, *tamponature*, and subdividing walls were persistent features of the villa starting in the 1st century, contemporary with the addition of monumentalizing features. Between the 4th-7th century, more than a dozen tombs were inserted within the structure. Some of these tombs reutilized materials evidently recycled from the villa itself. Compared to sites no. 4 and 5, site no. 6 preserves more extensive and direct evidence for spoliation in its last phases, including the orderly collection of recyclable materials for later use. Such activities continued into the medieval period.

⁴⁴⁴ Suet. Iul. 46; Di Giacomo 2020, 67-68; Poulsen 2020b, 45; 2020c, 528-529.

Discussion

Some aspects of these three case studies can be related to the general panorama of villas in and around the *ager Albanus*. In villas just to the north along the *via Appia*, structural upkeep is observed to become increasingly rare after the 3rd century.⁴⁴⁵ In many cases, this was followed by industrial activities related to spoliation and recycling. It is unclear whether these developments signify abandonment, as contemporary evidence for restorations and ceramics sometimes points to ongoing domestic occupation. The archetypical example of this is the *Villa di Voconio Pollione* (fig. 31, C1), documented with exceptional care by Rodolfo Lanciani and recently summarized by Vincenzo Fiocchi Nicolai and Lucrezia Spera.⁴⁴⁶ While the absolute chronology of this villa's late phases has never been determined, they preserved evidence for the intentional collection of glass, the dismembering of marble statues, and a lime kiln. Nearby, the more recent evidence from the villas excavated in the locations of *Messalla Corvino* (fig. 31, C2) and *Colle Oliva* (fig. 31, C3) are similar cases, the latter of which can be securely dated to the 4th-5th century CE.⁴⁴⁷ Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera argue that this evidence for production activities at *Messalla Corvino* and *Colle Oliva* shows that the villas were not totally abandoned during the phase of their spoliation, but reoriented toward new economic strategies.⁴⁴⁸ Expanding our view southward, similar transformations are observed in the recently documented settlements at *Colle Palazzo* (fig. 31, C4) and *Paganico* (fig. 31, C5) near Velletri,⁴⁴⁹ as well as *Castel Gandolfo* on the shores of *Lago Albano* (fig. 31, C6),⁴⁵⁰ with occupational histories stretching as late as the 7th century in an apparently downgraded state, at times occurring alongside evidence for improvised

⁴⁴⁵ Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 87, footnote 206.

⁴⁴⁶ Lanciani 1884; Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 89-92.

⁴⁴⁷ Blanco et al. 2013, 222-223; Betori 2016; Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 71-74.

⁴⁴⁸ Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 77.

⁴⁴⁹ Mengarelli 2016.

⁴⁵⁰ Aglietti and Mengarelli 2015.

industrial facilities. A major exception to the apparent 3rd-century downturn in this area, however, is the villa at *La Cesa* (fig. 31, C7), just to the south of sites no. 4-6, which was monumentalized in the 4th century according to typical late antique tastes.⁴⁵¹

The degree to which sites no. 4-6 reflect these trends is uneven. In all three, while the 3rd century is the period when the gradual deprioritizing of decorative and monumental aspects becomes fully evident, disuse activities had already begun during earlier centuries. Furthermore, evidence for spoliation, recycling, and other industrial activities suggesting new economic strategies is generally lacking for sites no. 4 and 5. Site no. 6 reflects this trend more closely, especially after the 4th century. Like some villas to the north, site no. 6 also appears to have been inhabited for some portion of the timeframe corresponding with this pivot (suggested especially by the restoration of its mosaics).

Intra-household burial is another persistent feature of villas in this area, individual examples of which vary significantly in chronology between the 3rd-7th century.⁴⁵² Sites no. 4-6, whose burials all span this period, confirm this general rule. A significant feature of burials in all three sites is their clear correlation with evidence for ongoing domestic habitation, including structural interventions and food-consumption activities.⁴⁵³ Site no. 4 is especially suggestive of this since domestic occupation seems to have continued there for as many as four centuries following the appearance of the first intra-household burial.

The varying chronologies of these developments make them difficult to relate to any singular microregional transformation. For example, scholars have placed great emphasis on the idea that the foundation of the *Castra Albana* in the 3rd century rendered the area less attractive

⁴⁵¹ Garofalo 2007, 98-101.

⁴⁵² Aglietti and Mengarelli 2015, 337-338; Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 37-38.

⁴⁵³ Also noted for some other nearby sites. See Fiocchi Nicolai and Spera 2018, 40.

as a senatorial retreat, and it is possible to imagine that some formerly elite properties were given over to satellite communities associated with the new garrison, leading to the gradual deemphasis of monumentality in local households.⁴⁵⁴ However, the question remains of how to explain the earlier examples of domestic disuse activities in sites no. 4-6, particularly those of site no. 6, whose 1st-century-CE phase includes subdivision and *tamponature*, irregular construction techniques, and the destruction of mosaic floors. Moreover, the closure of the *castra* by the 4th century seems to have had little effect on the modality of occupation in these sites,⁴⁵⁵ suggesting that longer-term dynamics were at play.

We must also consider the sometimes-mixed impression offered by each home from the 1st century CE forward. For all three sites, depending on which sector of the floorplan is examined within a given century, one might variously conclude that the home was being abandoned, remodeled, converted to a necropolis, or continuing to be inhabited as before. What explains these variable and multidirectional transformations? Considering the large footprint of each villa, one possibility could be the conversion of these structures into multi-familial housing units, a phenomenon for which the subdivision of rooms is usually considered a primary indicator. Subdivision is well documented in sites no. 5 and 6, and the widespread program of *tamponature* in site no. 4 similarly served to separate formerly linked spaces. On the other hand, as I will argue in my treatment of site no. 23 (Zone 6), subdivision alone is insufficient evidence for multi-familial housing. A more reliable indicator would be the repetition of facilities, such as those for cooking and storage, or sets of rooms with similar characteristics, aspects which are not immediately observable among the three case studies examined here. For example, a single kitchen was documented at site no. 5 and appears to have been utilized continuously between the

⁴⁵⁴ Aglietti 2019, 60.

⁴⁵⁵ For the departure of the garrison from the *castra*, see Aglietti 2020, 24-25.

1st-4th century. While it is possible that further excavation of this site could turn up additional cooking facilities or other repeating features, the evidence as it stands offers no reason to assume the house was divided into multiple living units.

Rather than attempting to explain the transformations of sites no. 4-6 through a single development or phenomenon, it is wiser to consider the more gradually changing situation around the *ager Albanus* as local holdings flowed increasingly into imperial hands. The resulting imperial estate was not singularly organized, but “enriched progressively by purchases, transfers, inheritances, and confiscations,” an “amassment of villas and pre-existing properties handed over and merged together in different moments” in a state of “continuous expansion.”⁴⁵⁶ This process occurred over a long arc, between the 1st-4th century,⁴⁵⁷ and it is within this framework of an ever more exclusive real estate market for Roman elites that we should imagine the trajectories of sites no. 4-6. On one hand, while the adjacency of local properties to the imperial holdings might have given some landowners a reason to purchase or hold onto existing villas,⁴⁵⁸ most wealthy Romans were ultimately edged out of the market. On the other hand, the imperial presence was a pull factor for freedmen and other non-elite Romans arriving to the area as dependents or laborers of the imperial estate.⁴⁵⁹ The sweeping floorplans of nearby villas could have provided an obvious source of housing for these incoming non-elite populations, a need which would have accelerated following the foundation of the *Castra Albana*.

At the same time, even if the occupants of sites no. 4-6 appear less and less “elite” as time goes on, neither do they seem extremely poor. In each, decorative aspects appear to have

⁴⁵⁶ Di Giacomo 2020, 57.

⁴⁵⁷ Di Giacomo 2020, 58-59.

⁴⁵⁸ Di Giacomo 2020, 63.

⁴⁵⁹ See Aglietti (2020, 21), who argues that agricultural production must have been a feature of the imperial estate, even if archaeological evidence is lacking. See Di Giacomo (2020, 64) for a discussion of non-elite workers in connection with private villas in the area.

been preserved or restored when possible, and ongoing structural interventions point to continued upkeep. Whoever lived in these villas – whether they were owners, renters, or some other class of people – therefore cared for them as homes. Meanwhile, the extensive presence of fine and imported wares in site no. 6 suggests significant levels of material comfort, and this apparently persisted even after the local impacts of the 6th-century conflict. All of this signifies that the occupants of these seemingly downgraded structures were invested in many of the same lifestyles and cultural conceptions as their predecessors, and while they perhaps deployed fewer resources on architectural monumentality, they clearly maintained strong access to commercial goods. This is hardly suggestive of a destitute or “barely Romanized”⁴⁶⁰ community, nor does it support the standard model of downgrading. Instead, the case studies in this zone provide a possible glimpse into non-elite inhabitants of the Roman suburb and their adaptable domestic practices in the face of microregional transformations.

Zone 3: Outer Limit

Introduction

Compared to the other zones featured in this study, Zone 3 comprises a much broader swath of Rome’s region, stretching from the northern tip of the *Monti Simbruini* to the area of *Monte Calvo*, a notable summit of the *Monti Sabini* near the *via Salaria*, to the *Treja* valley near *Nepi* (fig. 22). It therefore encompasses multiple discrete localities at the mountainous threshold of Rome.⁴⁶¹ While the villas in this zone are not physically adjacent, they are nonetheless united by their similar distance from Rome and their isolated geographic locations. Considering this area as a distinct zone presents the opportunity to consider how relative levels of regional

⁴⁶⁰ cf. Aglietti 2019, 60.

⁴⁶¹ Point to footnote in chapter 3.

connectivity might have influenced domestic trajectories throughout the imperial period, a topic to which I will return in chapter 5. In order to lay the foundations for this, the immediate topographical context for each villa in Zone 3 will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Case Studies (sites no. 7-11)

*Site no. 7: Villa at Piano della Civita*⁴⁶²

[View catalogue entry](#)

This villa was constructed during the 1st century BCE on the ruins of the ancient settlement just south and up the mountainous slope from the medieval town of *Artena* (fig. 37; fig. 38).⁴⁶³ This position is notable as the northernmost outcrop of the *Monti Lepini*, occupying a commanding position overlooking the *Sacco* valley, on the other side of which are the *Monti Prenestini*. This valley was traversed by the *via Labicana* and the southern branch of the *via Latina*.

Outside of its material remains, little is known about the ancient *Civita di Artena* that occupied the location known today as *Piano della Civita*.⁴⁶⁴ The surrounding area is distinguished by pockets of surface finds and some isolated structures, including monumental terrace walls and cisterns.⁴⁶⁵ A wall circuit built in polygonal masonry seems to have defined the city itself, studied first by Lorenzo Quilici and then Roger Lambrechts, the former of whom brought the settlement to light over more than a decade of excavations.⁴⁶⁶ The town's occupation appears to have stretched from the late archaic period to the 3rd century BCE, when it was either

⁴⁶² Brouillard and Gadeyne 2003; 2006; 2011; 2012; 2013; Marzano 2007, 270-272; Brouillard et al. 2012; Castrorao Barba 2020, 242-243; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580110001.

⁴⁶³ Brouillard and Gadeyne 2012, 103.

⁴⁶⁴ The ancient name of the settlement is unknown (Quilici 1982, 15; Valenti 2006, 36-38).

⁴⁶⁵ Valenti 2019, 133.

⁴⁶⁶ Quilici 1982; 1991; Lambrechts 1983; 1989; 1996.

abandoned or destroyed.⁴⁶⁷ More recent excavations have focused on the villa comprising this case study.

The villa was one of many along the edges of the *Monti Lepini*. The majority of these had a notably agricultural character and were fitted with large cisterns; at the same time, many also show clear signs of privileged lifestyles, signified by bathing facilities and rich decoration.⁴⁶⁸ For some, such as the villa at *Colle Castagna* (fig. 37, C9) where fine kitchenware dating to the 4th-5th century was recovered, this affluent character thrived during the period of Late Antiquity.⁴⁶⁹

The valley bellow *Piano della Civita* was defined by the *via Appia* and *via Labicana*. Just to the east, these two roads intersected at the juncture *ad Bivium*.⁴⁷⁰ Nearby was the settlement of *Colle Maiorana*, whose primary period of occupation was the 3rd-5th century.⁴⁷¹ Milestones recovered along the *via Latina* just below *Artena* suggest the road was maintained and restored in the 4th century, remaining a fundamental route into Rome during Late Antiquity.⁴⁷² Also near the juncture *ad Bivium* are the catacombs of *Sant'Ilario*, which attest to a budding Christian community between the 3rd-5th century; a small church was founded in this location during the 7th-8th century.⁴⁷³

After construction of the villa's original core gravitating around an *atrium* in the 1st century BCE, the building underwent a series of developments between the 1st-2nd century CE demonstrating the comfortable economic position of its residents. A thermal sector was constructed, fed with a large cistern, along with a peristyle. These spaces were embellished with rich decoration, including the bichrome mosaic datable to the 1st century CE. Meanwhile,

⁴⁶⁷ Valenti 2006, 34; 2017, 67.

⁴⁶⁸ Valenti 2006, 41-43.

⁴⁶⁹ Valenti 2006, 45.

⁴⁷⁰ For the specific routes of these roadways and their importance in integrating the regional landscape, see Thein 2005.

⁴⁷¹ Luttazzi 1996; Valenti 2006, 45-46; Thein 2005, 149.

⁴⁷² Thein 2005, 149.

⁴⁷³ Valenti 2006, 46.

facilities were also built and maintained for the production of wine or oil, an activity which likely persisted into the 2nd century.

Some of the villa's decorative features were obliterated during the 2nd century, when a mosaic basin was filled with discarded building material. Between the 3rd-5th century, dumping activities continued near the peristyle, some rooms were closed off, others had their floors raised, irregularly built walls were inserted in the bath sector, and two small structures were erected just outside the villa's northern perimeter using reutilized materials. On the opposite side of the villa, inhabitants erected a series of walls in mixed materials, interrupting the original orientation of the building (fig. 39). The spaces inside these walls show evidence of both domestic habitation (food consumption and storage) as well as artisanal activities related to textile production during the 3rd century.⁴⁷⁴ Elsewhere, animal bones recovered in dumping layers further attest to the consumption of food during this phase. Between the 3rd-4th century, two infant burials were placed near the villa, one of which was later destroyed by a wall constructed in spoliated masonry.

In the 5th century, postholes cut in the corners of a mosaic surface near the peristyle indicate management of the roof structure, while other unknown trenches cut various earlier features throughout the house. Dark earth material was deposited across the area in the 6th century, suggestive of agricultural or pastoral activities. In the 7th century, a square platform was constructed for unknown purposes.

⁴⁷⁴ Brouillard and Gadeyne (2013, 313) note how the structures erected in the 3rd century CE within the villa bear a resemblance to those which had originally occupied the area in the 4th century BCE; cf. Moreland (2009, 862), who argues that the data in the area of site no. 10 suggests a return to "normal" after the "aberration in the long-term settlement history" of the early imperial period.

Site no. 8: Villa at Formello (Palombara Sabina)⁴⁷⁵

[View catalogue entry](#)

After limited investigations in the late 1980s, this villa was more extensively excavated between 2008-2011 in the location of *Formello* on the slopes of *Monte Gennaro*, roughly 10 kilometers north of *Tivoli* and very near *Palombara Sabina* (fig. 40; fig. 41).⁴⁷⁶ The villa was one of several hugging the slopes of *Monte Gennaro* (fig. 42), part of a broader network of agricultural settlements stretching northward into the Sabine territory. It possessed a commanding view and was served by a north-south roadway running along the feet of the mountains and connecting the *via Tiburtina* with the *via Salaria*.⁴⁷⁷ The sites in this area, like the villa at *Monteverde*, have mostly been studied for their late republican phases, and little information is available regarding their outcomes in the imperial period.⁴⁷⁸

Site no. 8 was constructed in the 1st century BCE as a luxury residence before later taking on a more rustic character.⁴⁷⁹ Constructed atop a trapezoidal terrace, the original building was divided between a series of residential spaces to the south and a peristyle garden area to the north.⁴⁸⁰ In the 1st century CE, the first agricultural infrastructure was added, including a long basin for water collection and a series of terraces seemingly related to cultivation. In the 2nd century, residents made slight modifications to rooms in the domestic area and restored some pavements. Further alterations occurred over the next few centuries, consisting of *tamponature* and other modifications of doorways, and ceramic evidence suggests ongoing domestic use activities until at least the 4th century. In the 5th-6th century, three tombs were inserted within the

⁴⁷⁵ Mari 2011; 2013a; 2013b; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580750002.

⁴⁷⁶ For a history of its excavation, see Mari 2011, 83, footnote 4.

⁴⁷⁷ Mari 2011, 83; 2013a, 333.

⁴⁷⁸ Mari 1983; 2003; Mari and Sperandio 1995; Sciarretta 1995.

⁴⁷⁹ Mari 2013b, 89.

⁴⁸⁰ Mari 2011, 83.

villa. Comparing these with the 1st-5th-century series of “poor” tombs along the sideroad leading to the villa, the two groups are not only spatially separated but also assume different typologies (the former simple inhumation graves and incinerated remains in *olle*, the latter *a cappuccina*).⁴⁸¹ As the later tombs appeared, the eastern sector was systematically spoliated, and the production of lime is suggested by some circumstantial evidence, including the piling together of sculpture fragments, although no kiln was discovered. In an unknown period, a small chapel with painted decoration was built directly on top of the access road connecting the villa with the north-south thoroughfare below. Like site no. 7, the area occupied by the villa appears to have been intentionally buried to make way for cultivation activities, although this intervention is also undatable.

*Site no. 9: Villa of the Vigne di San Pietro*⁴⁸²

[View catalogue entry](#)

Speculatively identified as the Sabine villa of Horace,⁴⁸³ the site was situated about nine kilometers due east of site no. 8 in the *Licenza* Valley (fig. 40; fig. 43). It was near an ancient road that, roughly following the course of the modern *via Licinese*, united the *via Salaria* with the *via Valeria*, the roadway following the course of the *Aniene* east from *Tibur*. Around six kilometers south of the villa, the *via Licinese* (and the small *Licenza* river) met up with the *via Salaria* and *Aniene*. While surface finds and structures have been documented throughout the *Licenza* Valley near this crossroads, first by Giuseppe Lugli and then by Zaccaria Mari,⁴⁸⁴ only

⁴⁸¹ Mari 2013a, 335-336.

⁴⁸² Frischer et al. 2000; 2006; Marzano 2007, 393; Castrorao Barba 2020, 132; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580510001.

⁴⁸³ Frischer et al. 2006, 18-20.

⁴⁸⁴ See Mari and Sperandio 1995.

one other villa in the area (the villa at *Prato La Corte*; fig. 40, C8) has been thoroughly excavated and published.⁴⁸⁵ In total, around a dozen adjacent villas are known.⁴⁸⁶ Most of these were small to medium size rustic settlements during the late republican period.⁴⁸⁷

During the imperial period, the *Licenza Valley* benefited not only from its location at the center of the roadways connecting *Tibur*, *Subiaco*, and *Reate*, but also from a series of imperial infrastructural investments, including a number of aqueducts.⁴⁸⁸ Perhaps as a result, many of the rustic farmhouses in the area were converted into larger luxury villas, complete with baths and extensive decoration.⁴⁸⁹ A crisis of abandonment has been described for the 3rd-4th century, however, with some arguing the area was completely desolated by the 5th century.⁴⁹⁰ Around this period, many of the tracts of lands surrounding the valley were aggregated into *massae*, and a significant amount of historical evidence documents the transfer of such properties to various ecclesiastical foundations.⁴⁹¹ During the 6th-7th century, the area was impacted by raids, first at the hands of Totila, and then of the Lombards.⁴⁹² Little historical evidence exists for the fate of the area after this point.

After its foundation in the late republican era, site no. 9 was enlarged and embellished significantly during the 1st-2nd century CE, following the general pattern described elsewhere in the area. The entire residence was adorned with statues, mosaics, frescoes, marble paneling, and other architectonic decorations. Some of the rooms originally placed around the *atrium* were integrated into a richly decorated bath sector. The natural slope of the surrounding property

⁴⁸⁵ Frischer et al. 2006, 6; Marzano 2007, 391-396.

⁴⁸⁶ Frischer et al. 2006, 7.

⁴⁸⁷ Frischer et al. 2006, 8.

⁴⁸⁸ Frischer et al. 2006, 7-9.

⁴⁸⁹ Frischer et al. 2006, 9-10. The authors note, however, that while these villas were certainly of privileged status, they hardly rivaled the most ostentatious examples.

⁴⁹⁰ Tomei 1988; Frischer et al. 2006, 10.

⁴⁹¹ Frischer et al. 2006, 11-12.

⁴⁹² Frischer et al. 2006, 12.

underwent further terracing, and in the landscaped “pleasure garden” (sectors 5-7),⁴⁹³ a basin or cistern was installed for collecting a greater capacity of rainwater. By the end of the 2nd century, a new portico was erected, and fountains were placed in the garden. Throughout this period, food-processing domestic use activities are attested by the presence of ceramics as well as carbonized organic remains. Later ceramic evidence suggests that such activities continued unabated for several centuries, with the last transport vessels and tableware dating to the 7th century. In terms of major structural interventions, however, no activities are documented after the 2nd century.

Other signs of inhabitation appear between the 3rd-7th century and beyond, however. The garden became an area for waste disposal, deposits of which date between the 3rd-5th century. Various rooms and passageways were walled up with *tamponature* by the 5th century, activities which accompanied the subdivision of rooms in the bath sector with irregularly built walls. In some rooms of the baths (Sector 1), *a cappuccina* graves were inserted. In the process, some mosaics were destroyed and replaced with beaten earth floors. Other rooms of the baths were given over to the dumping of waste. Meanwhile, decorative elements were systematically spoliated. In the garden area, for example, a fountain was stripped of its revetment and used to collect various reusable materials dismantled elsewhere in the villa.

Similar activities – subdivision, the destruction of decorative elements, spoliation, dumping, and burial – continued to occur after the 5th century in a chronological range stretching as late as the 9th century. At the same time, inhabitants conducted maintenance and modification of the ancient drainage system. Extensive recovery of 8th-9th-century Forum Ware fragments, including cups and other tableware, attest to the continuation of the essential domestic practice of

⁴⁹³ Frischer et al. 2006, 9.

food consumption and participation in consumer culture. In sum, site no. 9 is an exceptional example of how trajectories of continuity and discontinuity can exist simultaneously in the same residence over several centuries.

*Site no. 10: Villa at Madonna dei Colori*⁴⁹⁴

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The villa, also called the “*Villa dei Bruttii Praesentes*” was positioned on the western slopes of *Monte Calvo* near the ancient course of the *via Salaria* between its 22nd and 23rd mile (fig. 44; 45).⁴⁹⁵ Roughly 20 kilometers to the west, the *via Salaria* split from the course of the Tiber. On the other side of the river at this position was the *Villa dei Volusi* (fig. 44, C10) a site founded in the 1st century BCE which continued to undergo occupation until at least the 5th century.⁴⁹⁶ Around the 9th century, a convent or monastery was founded on the ruins of the *Villa dei Volusi*.⁴⁹⁷ Returning eastward toward site no. 10, the *via Salaria* moved into the territory of *Cures Sabina*, a Roman settlement with significant mid-imperial phases which received a bishop by the 5th century and was sacked by the Lombards in the late 6th century.⁴⁹⁸ Rounding *Monte Calvo*, the *via Salaria* intersected with the access road leading to *Farfa*, the site of a Roman villa that was transformed into “one of the foremost Italian monasteries” in the 7th century.⁴⁹⁹ The area around *Farfa* was investigated extensively by the *Farfa Project* during the 1980s and early 1990s.⁵⁰⁰ Findings from this work revealed a peak of Roman villas in the region between the 1st-2nd century CE, followed by a sharp decline in the total number (around 80%) by the 5th century,

⁴⁹⁴ Alvino 2003; Bazzucchi and Lezzi 2006; Bazzucchi 2007; Marzano 2007, 403-404; Bazzucchi et al. 2009.

⁴⁹⁵ Bazzucchi et al. 2009, 557.

⁴⁹⁶ De Franceschini 2005, 274-286.

⁴⁹⁷ Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580360001.

⁴⁹⁸ See contributions in Cavalieri and Smith 2017. See also Brucchiotti 2018; Cavalieri et al. 2019.

⁴⁹⁹ Moreland and Pluciennik 1991, 477. See also Donaldson et al. 1979; 1981.

⁵⁰⁰ Leggio and Moreland 1986; Moreland 1987; 2009; Moreland and Pluciennik 1991; Moreland et al. 1993.

but with dispersed settlement continuing into the 8th-9th century, often in connection with former villas.⁵⁰¹ Key to this realization was development by the *Farfa Project* of a system for securely dating pottery from the 6th-7th century.⁵⁰² In combination with the discovery of Forum Ware from the 8th-10th century at a total of seven sites, the survey revealed evidence for the long-term continuity of economic links between this area and the city of Rome, roughly 40 kilometers to the south.⁵⁰³

The construction of site no. 10 dates to the 1st century CE and its excavators conclude that it was “at least partially” abandoned by the 3rd century.⁵⁰⁴ Limited evidence for decorative features and utilitarian interventions, including the construction of a latrine, are documented for the 1st century CE. Evidence for an extensive decorative program of statuary can be dated to the 2nd century. No activities are recorded for the 4th century. In the 5th or 6th century, a series of burials appeared, followed by the foundation of a church (*Santa Maria de Viconovo*) whose structures were built in *opus vittatum*. Grave goods from further tombs near the church dating to the 7th century suggest a Lombard presence in the area during this period. The church continued to be utilized as late as the 13th century.

*Site no. 11: Villa at Mola di Monte Gelato*⁵⁰⁵

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Site no. 11 (fig. 46) is one of the most famous type sites for the long-term transformations of Roman villas during the early medieval period and has played an important role in various

⁵⁰¹ Moreland and Pluciennik 1991, 478-480.

⁵⁰² Moreland 2009, 862.

⁵⁰³ Moreland and Pluciennik 1991, 479-480.

⁵⁰⁴ Bazzucchi et al. 2009, 557.

⁵⁰⁵ Potter and King 1997; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580580002.

thematic discussions – from villa burial to the Christianization of villas to the reuse of residential structures for industrial activities – since its initial publication in 1997.⁵⁰⁶ The villa was located about 34 kilometers north of Rome in the *Treja* Valley on a local road that paralleled the *via Amerina*, an offshoot of the *via Cassia*, and provided access to several nearby villas (fig. 44).⁵⁰⁷ This area was part of the broader *ager Faliscus*, whose topographic evolution was extensively studied by early antiquarians and 20th-century archaeologists alike.⁵⁰⁸ Near site no. 11, field survey has revealed extensive evidence for a tradition of artisanal production stretching from pre-Roman times to the late Roman period.⁵⁰⁹ For the medieval period, the area has received particular attention, like the territory around *Farfa*, in the study of the transition between Roman-period dispersed villa settlement and nucleated settlement in fortified hilltops.⁵¹⁰ Timothy Potter and Anthony King suggest that the area’s status as a “frontier zone” following the Lombard invasion of 568 is especially important for contextualizing this transition.⁵¹¹

Site no. 11 was only one of several local “large and luxurious” villas in the vicinity, and some of these are known for their late Roman phases.⁵¹² The villa at *Prati San Martino* (fig. 44, C11), a short distance north of site no. 11 along the *via Cassia*, is a particularly well-documented example.⁵¹³ Originally constructed in the 1st century CE, this villa was distributed over three terraced foundations and featured lavish bichrome and opus sectile pavements.⁵¹⁴ By the 3rd century, the residence appears to have been abandoned in a state of partial collapse.⁵¹⁵ During the

⁵⁰⁶ For recent examples, see Munro 2016; Castrorao Barba 2017; Bowes 2018.

⁵⁰⁷ Potter and King 1997, 1, 11-15, 17-26.

⁵⁰⁸ Potter and King 1997, 4.

⁵⁰⁹ Potter and King 1997, 4. See also the study of Peña (1987) on local pottery kilns.

⁵¹⁰ See Potter and King (1997, 4-5), who explain how the presence of 8th-9th-century Forum Ware pottery at some nearby nucleated sites predates the traditional 10th-11th chronology for *incastellamento* offered by Toubert (1973).

⁵¹¹ Potter and King 1997, 5.

⁵¹² Potter and King 1997, 15-16.

⁵¹³ Gilkes et al. 2000.

⁵¹⁴ Gilkes et al. 2000, 373-374.

⁵¹⁵ Gilkes et al. 2000, 376.

4th-5th century, spoliated masonry, ceramics, and evidence for agricultural activities suggest a renewed phase of life.⁵¹⁶ Some spaces were reused for the burial of at least 10 individuals, most of whom show signs of significant degenerative disease.⁵¹⁷ Finally, a single fragment of Forum Ware pottery suggests that, like other sites in the area, the villa at *Prati San Martino* featured a long occupational history stretching as late as the 9th century.⁵¹⁸

The core of site no. 11 was constructed in the 1st century CE using *opus reticulatum* and is represented by a highly embellished colonnaded courtyard, featuring an ornamental garden, sculpted decoration, and various aquatic features. In connection with this decorative environment, the presence of animal bones and extensive ceramic remains from this period represent the occurrence of regular dining activities. At the same time, the owners of the villa also invested heavily in economic activities. A fishpond was constructed and subjected to frequent maintenance, including with irregular masonry modifications.⁵¹⁹ A series of basins was added for oil production, and the presence of ceramic wasters in dumping layers associated with the villa might point to an involvement in pottery production.⁵²⁰

In the 2nd century, residents added a thermal area and undertook several landscape and hydraulic modifications around the villa. In the process, a new access road was built, along with a monumental mausoleum just to the west of the villa. The fishpond went out of use and was converted to a dump for food waste. Fine ceramics and an extensive variety of transport, tableware, and kitchenware provide further evidence for regular dining activities. In the 2nd-3rd century, some of the villa's decorative features were destroyed. This includes the white mosaic

⁵¹⁶ Gilkes et al. 2000, 376.

⁵¹⁷ Gilkes et al. 2000, 377.

⁵¹⁸ Gilkes et al. 2000, 377.

⁵¹⁹ It should be noted, however, that the excavators associate this feature with an ornamental more than productive function (Potter and King 1997, 33). See above, footnote 417.

⁵²⁰ Potter and King 1997, 32.

floor surface in the vestibule, which was impacted during the construction of a drain. Afterwards, a tile floor was laid, and an irregular masonry structure was added to the southern entrance of the room. Potter and King note the “contradictory” nature of these interventions, given the general image of “widespread demolition” during this time.⁵²¹ In a similar timeframe, dumping layers began to appear inside the cisterns.

While some pottery datable to the 3rd century appears within the ceramic record of site no. 11, the house’s occupation appears to have been scaled back significantly during this century. In the 4th century, however, the structure underwent a wave of interventions aimed at modifying doorways, room divisions, and floor levels using irregular construction techniques. While the continued deposition of ceramic and organic waste suggests ongoing food-processing activities, the villa now began to take on a new life. Some features, including the monumental tomb,⁵²² were spoliated of their materials and used to produce lime in the kiln constructed in the southern portion of the villa. Meanwhile, the addition of new masonry structures heavily modified the large Room A, and a previous mosaic floor in this area was eventually covered with a *cocciopesto* surface. In the northern portion of Room A, wooden structures for a stable were added.

Over the course of the 4th-6th century, a series of irregular masonry structures was built in the thermal sector, where simultaneously the mosaics and hypocausts of some rooms were damaged or removed for unknown reasons. Activities were particularly concentrated in the spaces around Room A. “Bins” were constructed in the adjacent corridor using perishable materials, perhaps for storing agricultural produce. In Room A itself, metalworking activities were carried out, evidenced by the remains of a kiln, which was surrounded by a post-built

⁵²¹ Potter and King 1997, 55.

⁵²² Potter and King 1997, 68.

structure, and cooling pits. Further metalworking areas and another set of stables also appeared in the lower terrace. At the same time, Room A continued to be modified with *tamponature*, the closure of a doorway, and the addition of a new drain. In the 6th century, the floor in its southern portion was repaired.

The small church constructed in the southern portion of the site dates to the 5th-6th century and seems roughly contemporaneous with the adjacent metalworking facilities, which might have continued to be active as late as the 8th century. Three burials found near the church also date to the 5th-6th century, and another burial appeared in the 7th. However, through at least the 6th century, ongoing domestic occupation is signified by the vast amount of late Roman ceramics recovered at the villa, as well as evidence for cooking hearths near the corridor area. Thus, in its final phases, site no. 11 emerged as a truly mixed-use facility, with discrete but closely connected areas dedicated to habitation, labor, worship, and burial.

Although most scholars have emphasized these final phases in discussing site no. 11 (including the continuation of industrial activities as late as the 9th century, when a new church and necropolis were established), it is worth emphasizing the state of the house leading up to this. For the 1st-2nd century, while the monumental character of the structure was clearly maintained, some features were already given over to domestic disuse activities like onsite dumping. The key moment of transition appears to be the 3rd century when activities in the villa contracted significantly. In the 4th century, the first signs of a mixed-use residential-agricultural-industrial settlement appeared around Room A. It is significant that these activities predated the foundation of the church, whose construction should be imagined as a result of, not an impetus behind this new phase of life for the structure.⁵²³

⁵²³ See Bowes (2018) for a discussion on whether churches built on villa sites should be read as the products or, alternatively, the “magnets” of reoccupation phases. Bowes ultimately concludes that “there is almost certainly no single answer, for their

Discussion

The physical distance between the five villas in question and the uniqueness of their topographical contexts make it impossible to draw sweeping conclusions at the level of regional transformations. On the other hand, the villas were united by their significant distance from Rome and mountainous or hilly settings, and it is worth considering the relative levels of connectivity these liminal positions at the edge of the Roman regional network might have offered. In terms of the road network, sites no. 7 and 10 were both adjacent to major vectors into the Roman city, the *via Latina* and *via Salaria*. Sites no. 8 and 9, meanwhile, were positioned along secondary roads which united the *via Salaria* and *via Tiburtina/via Valeria*, while site no. 11 sat on a local path connected with the *via Amerina*. Turning to the settlement network, sites no. 7 and 10 both fell within the territory of medium or small sized suburban centers with significant mid-imperial phases, while sites no. 8 and 9 would have fallen firmly under the influence of *Tibur*, one of the primary centers outside of Rome. Site no. 11, on the other and, occupied a relatively isolated position in the northern portion of the region, but one which was the center of important changes in the settlement landscape during the medieval period.

It is interesting to consider some of the similarities between all five sites, despite these differing levels of connectivity with Rome. First, all five sites enjoyed long settlement histories stretching into the 6th-7th century, featuring burials and, in the case of sites 8, 10, and 11, ecclesiastical structures. The long timescale and slow pace of transformation in these villas are vividly illustrated by site no. 7, where irregular masonry interventions carried out by the 5th century partially destroyed an earlier infant tomb. Considered on the whole, site no. 7 appears to

chronologies, surrounding ecclesiastical circumstances, not to mention the archaeology itself, are so diverse that we must imagine a range of circumstances” (Bowes 2018, 457-458).

have continued in a state of seeming disuse for a far longer period than bears resemblance to any ideal image of the Roman house. Meanwhile, sites no. 9 and 11, the most isolated of the five, offer the most secure evidence of ongoing use as a house during these late phases, even if the domestic use activities entailed might point to different modes of occupation than those witnessed in the earlier imperial period.

Leading up to these final outcomes, other patterns emerge in the relative balance between domestic use and disuse activities in the five sites. In all cases, residents invested in monumental aspects during the 1st-2nd century, with a falloff in the 3rd century. This correlates with the peak of villa occupation observed by the *Farfa Survey* near the northern portion of Zone 3. On the other hand, the 1st-2nd century also corresponds with an increased involvement in activities related to economic production, exemplified in particular by site no. 8. In sites no. 7, 8, and 11, production activities (either agricultural or industrial) show signs of continuing past the 3rd century, and the plots of the first two appear to have eventually been given over to agricultural cultivation. The impression that arises from site no. 9, however, is of a much more domestically oriented household setting, with ongoing architectural modifications of the living quarters and extensive evidence for food consumption. Site no. 11 serves as a middle ground, with both domestic occupation and labor occurring alongside one another.

In sum, different levels of connectivity with Rome seem to correlate little with the transformations in domestic use activities witnessed among these villas. It is therefore possible that their shared distance from the city or similarly mountainous settings were bigger factors in their transformations than proximity to major roads or suburban settlements.

Lastly, site no. 10 is one of the only houses in this catalogue in which a clear state of abandonment appears evident in the stratigraphic record, in this case during the 4th century. This

period of abandonment separated the residential occupation of the villa from the phase in which it was used for burials, an important point of contrast with most of the evidence we have seen so far. Still, it would seem prudent to heed the advice of Moreland, who argues that villas in this area can be easily mistaken as abandoned due to a declining supply of datable ceramics from Late Antiquity on.⁵²⁴

Zone 4: *Gabii* and Territory

Introduction

Zone 4 features seven case studies, five of which (sites no. 12-16) were urban residences in the city center of *Gabii*, about 20 kilometers east of Rome along the *via Praenestina*. The other two (sites no. 17-18) were villas positioned along the *via Labicana* in the broader territory of *Gabii* (fig. 47). After arising as one of the foremost local settlements during the archaic period, *Gabii* has long been associated with its proverbial decline and abandonment during the imperial era.⁵²⁵ The decline of *Gabii*, along with other suburban centers like *Bovillae* and *Labicum*,⁵²⁶ has historically been imagined as a natural outcome of Rome's regional dominance.⁵²⁷ Investigations since the late 1990s, however, have revealed a more complex image of the settlement's long-term transformations.

Knowledge of the area around *Gabii* is mostly based on field survey and sporadic emergency excavations across the area between the *Aniene* to the north and the *via Labicana* to the south, and from the area of *Tor Vergata* in the west to the *Colli Prenestini* in the east.⁵²⁸ The

⁵²⁴ Moreland 2009, 862.

⁵²⁵ Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001, 98; Becker et al. 2009, 630-632; Johnston and Mogetta 2020, 108-109.

⁵²⁶ See Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001, 98.

⁵²⁷ Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021, 132.

⁵²⁸ See in particular Gazzetti 1998; Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001; Musco et al. 2002.

image which has resulted is one of a broadly integrated territory, with the main roadways traversed by a series of secondary arteries, characterized by fertile soils and furnished with three aqueducts.⁵²⁹ One of these, the *Aqua Alexandrina*, was constructed in the 3rd century CE and maintained as late as the 7th century.⁵³⁰ The area around *Gabii* was thus well-suited for agricultural exploitation throughout antiquity. Following its transfer to Roman control in the 4th century BCE, numerous small to medium sized rural settlements were established, a trend that increased in the late republican period and reached its peak in the 1st-2nd century CE.⁵³¹ In the 3rd century, survey data suggests a sharp decline in the total number of occupied villas, with small and medium settlements the most likely to be abandoned. Very few are shown to have survived into the 4th century and beyond, and those that did were clustered along main roadways like the *via Praenestina*.⁵³²

A few excavations at villa sites near *Gabii* provide further context to this image. The villa excavated between 1999-2001 at *Rocca Cencia* (fig. 47, C12), for example, fits squarely within the model just described.⁵³³ After a first phase in the 4th century BCE, the site was expanded between the 2nd-1st century BCE, with particular emphasis on its agricultural facilities. Between the 1st-2nd century CE, the site was at least partially abandoned, with no activities detected until the 7th century, when a series of dumping layers was deposited in order to create a new floor surface over its ruins. A different image emerges at the nearby villa in the neighborhood of *Borghesiana* (fig. 47, C13), about halfway between the *via Labicana* and *via Praenestina* and roughly four kilometers southwest of *Gabii*.⁵³⁴ The residence saw a significant 1st-2nd-CE-

⁵²⁹ Gazzetti 1998, 9, 38; Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001, 98-99.

⁵³⁰ Musco et al. 2002, 268-278.

⁵³¹ Gazzetti 1998, 38.

⁵³² Gazzetti 1998, 38.

⁵³³ Musco et al. 2002, 256-258.

⁵³⁴ Di Jorio 2008, 443-448; Manigrasso 2007.

century phase of monumentalization followed by continuous structural interventions until at least the 4th century. Statuary potentially datable to the 3rd century signifies continued investment in its monumental aspect throughout this time. By the 5th century, a burial appeared within the villa. Finally, the probable *statio* at *Ponte di Nona (ad Nonum)*, just to the west of *Gabii*, seems to have survived into the 4th century, demonstrating the high-traffic nature of this zone throughout most of the imperial period.⁵³⁵ Similarly, a 1st-century-CE public bath complex on the main thoroughfare of *Gabii* remained in use until the 4th century, a further indication of this area's importance within the travel network around Rome during the imperial period.⁵³⁶

Elsewhere in the city center of *Gabii*, recent excavations have documented the settlement's transition between a series of archaic hut clusters to an orthogonally planned urban center by the end of the 5th century BCE (fig. 48).⁵³⁷ In the 4th-2nd century BCE, civic activities are attested by the foundation of a unique "*domus publica*" (the Area F complex) adjacent to the imperial baths and a nearby piazza space paved in basalt.⁵³⁸ Between the late republican and early imperial period, the settlement was probably impacted by a significant drop in population, with the remaining inhabitants concentrating along the main thoroughfare.⁵³⁹ While ancient sources convey that *Gabii* had been abandoned by this point, recent data shows ongoing occupation and a reorientation of local strategies throughout the imperial period. In the 5th century, *Gabii* received a bishop,⁵⁴⁰ and in a period generically dated as "post-classical and early medieval," the church of *San Primitivo* was founded just off the main thoroughfare, suggestive of the settlement's long-term continuity.⁵⁴¹

⁵³⁵ Corsi 2000, 118-119.

⁵³⁶ D'Agostini and Musco 2016, 342; Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 115.

⁵³⁷ Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021, 138.

⁵³⁸ Johnston et al. 2018; Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 110-114; Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021, 138-141.

⁵³⁹ Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 114-115.

⁵⁴⁰ Cifarelli and Zaccagnini 2001, 99.

⁵⁴¹ Majerini and Musco 2001, 493.

Case Studies (sites no. 12-18)

Site no. 12: Area A House⁵⁴²

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Originally constructed in the 3rd century BCE on the site of an archaic hut cluster, site no. 12 (fig. 49) was a Sabine *domus* abandoned by the end of the 1st century BCE.⁵⁴³ The house was positioned on a north-south road near an intersection with the main east-west thoroughfare and directly across from the Area F monumental complex. No indicators of residential use are recorded for the imperial period. During the 1st century CE, the building was systematically spoliated before the plot was given over to quarrying of the underlying *lapis Gabinus* deposits, an essential stone for masonry constructions in the city of Rome.⁵⁴⁴ In addition to the negative features left behind by these extraction activities, several cuts related to quarrying machinery are also documented. Quarrying continued during the 2nd century. At some point in the 1st-3rd century, a single *a cappuccina* tomb was inserted in the former house plot. Due to the extensiveness of the spoliation and quarrying at site no. 12 during the imperial period, almost nothing can be said of its earlier household phases.

Site no. 13: Tincu House⁵⁴⁵

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The southern neighbor of site no. 12, site no. 13 (fig. 50) was another mid-republican era *domus* which had gone out of use by the imperial period.⁵⁴⁶ The house consisted of an open

⁵⁴² Banducci et al. 2021.

⁵⁴³ Banducci et al. 2021, location 17/paragraph 17, location 42/paragraph 118.

⁵⁴⁴ See discussion in Banducci et al. 2021, location 102/paragraph 141-144; cf. the villa excavated beneath the *Scuola Manzoni* in the neighborhood of *San Giovanni*, also partially destroyed during quarrying activities (Montella et al. 2008, 286-287).

⁵⁴⁵ Opitz et al. 2018. Banducci et al. 2021.

⁵⁴⁶ Opitz et al. 2018, location 75-91.

central courtyard lined with four rooms on its eastern side. Residents carried out various structural modifications, including the addition of new walls and rooms, ahead of the 1st century CE. At some point in this time span, its original entrance was blocked up and a new one constructed, perhaps suggestive of the building's conversion to an annex of the monumental Area F complex just across the street.⁵⁴⁷

One of the last interventions possibly related to the domestic occupation of site no. 13 was the restoration of its western perimeter wall between the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE. At the same time, a new wall was constructed traversing the northern portion of the courtyard, destroying the *tufu* well cover and effectively subdividing the property in two. The northern rooms, adjacent to site no. 12, then served as a dumping ground for activities related to the quarry, and a new floor surface was soon constructed over these dumping deposits. Spoliation of the house also occurred during the 1st century CE, and some deposits related to the detritus of these activities were documented.

The final phase of site no. 13 relates to its conversion into a necropolis, with several burials recovered dating to the 1st-3rd century CE (fig. 17). Bio-archaeological analysis provides some idea of the social status of the individuals buried within the house. Skeletal evidence for injuries and biomechanical stress, potentially associated with repetitive labor, and a non-diverse carbohydrate-heavy diet suggest the necropolis accommodated a non-elite, working class community.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁷ Opitz et al. 2018, location 85. See Johnston et al. 2018.

⁵⁴⁸ Killgrove and Tykot 2018; Banducci et al. 2021, location 296/paragraph 487, location 300/paragraph 496, location 303/paragraph 501-location 308/paragraph 512.

Site no. 14: Area C House⁵⁴⁹

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Located to the east of sites no. 12 and 13, site no. 14 (fig. 51) was also a *domus* constructed in the mid-republican period, but better preserves evidence for a long trajectory of transformation. The building was constructed around an impluviate *atrium* (Space 7), which was accessed via the main entrance on the northeastern side. To the northeast of spaces 10 and 11 was an exterior garden area. Virtually no evidence of domestic occupation related to the earliest phases was recovered.

By the end of the 2nd century BCE, the building showed its first signs of disuse, entering into a probable period of abandonment. The absence of deposits related to a roof collapse and direct evidence for removal of the *impluvium* suggests the structure was spoliated during the 2nd century BCE. Between the 1st century BCE and 1st century CE, however, the building appears to have been reoccupied. During this phase, the ground level of the former garden to the north was raised, the perimeter wall separating it from the rest of the house was removed, and a series of new walls was constructed to enclose it. Botanical remains recovered in this area suggest its association with agricultural activities. Later, in the 1st century CE, this facility itself went out of use and was, in turn, spoliated and covered with dumping layers, activities which might have occurred sporadically over the next few centuries.

⁵⁴⁹ Sewell et al. in press. Because this structure is the subject of active ongoing analysis, the data reported here should be considered preliminary and subject to future revision.

Site no. 15: Area I House⁵⁵⁰

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Site no. 15 (fig. 52), discussed in the introduction of this dissertation, is found to the southeast of sites no. 11 and 12 on the other side of the main thoroughfare. The plot was occupied from at least the 3rd century BCE, but construction of the first building securely identifiable as a residence dates to the 1st century BCE-1st century CE. This building featured *opus reticulatum* walls, floors in crushed red *tuffo*, and, like site no. 13, a wellhead covering. Later interventions render it impossible to ascertain the nature of its occupation during the 1st-2nd century CE.⁵⁵¹ In the 3rd century, residents of the house carried out an extensive remodeling project, updating its layout and decoration in line with the tastes that would come to be standard for Late Antiquity. An apsidal room was constructed in the western corner and decorated with a mosaic floor and wall revetment, complimenting the bichrome mosaics installed in the rooms nearby. Elsewhere, new spaces and facilities, including drains and basins, were built for the production of wine.

Later in the 3rd century, occupants of the house closed some of its various internal and external doorways with *tamponature*. The richly decorated area gravitating around the apsidal room was converted to industrial use, and a newly built basin partially destroyed a mosaic floor. Between the 3rd-4th century, another basin was built in reused materials for mixing mortar, and the nearby recovery of burnt marble fragments suggest lime production. Dumping layers recovered in the residence date from the 4th-6th century. In an undatable moment, six postholes were cut into the *opus signinum* pavement of a room connected with the building.

⁵⁵⁰ Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 114-119; Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021, 137, 145-149.

⁵⁵¹ Samuels, Naglak, et al. 2021, 145.

Site no. 16: UA2 Domus⁵⁵²

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This *atrium*-style *domus* (fig. 53) was located to the northwest of the sites just discussed and a few city blocks away from the main thoroughfare near the sanctuary of Juno, which was constructed in the 2nd century BCE and re-monumentalized in the imperial period.⁵⁵³ Still the subject of ongoing investigations, the chronology of the house's first phases is yet to be determined, but its fate during the early imperial period is well documented. In the 1st century CE, the floor level of two rooms were raised. In another, a subdividing wall was erected, and frescoes were applied. The *atrium* (B4/C1) was also subdivided into two spaces with the construction of a wall in *opus mixtum*, partially destroying its original floor. During these interventions, slabs from the *impluvium* were removed and reused as part of the new room's threshold, and the gaps left behind were replaced with agglomerations of *tuffo* and mortar. The cistern beneath the *impluvium* was filled with deposits of refuse dating to the 1st-2nd century, a high quantity of which consisted of animal bones, suggestive of food consumption. This indicates that the *impluvium* was no longer hydraulically functional at this time, so its cosmetic restoration might point to an ongoing symbolic significance in the household.

During the 2nd century and possibly the 3rd, ongoing inhabitation is suggested the laying of new floor surfaces, the construction of new masonry features, and maintenance of the house's hydraulic infrastructure. Three burials were also inserted within the house during this period. The first dates to the 2nd century and is located in the northern part of the subdivided *atrium* (B4), just off the house's main entrance. The other two, both *a cappuccina* tombs, were placed nearby in the 2nd-3rd century.

⁵⁵² Glisoni et al. 2016a; 2016b; 2017; 2018; Musco et al. 2018a; 2018b; Glisoni and Zanella 2019; Glisoni 2020.

⁵⁵³ Glisoni et al. 2016a, 17-18; Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 111, 115.

Site no. 17: Villa at Colle La Noce⁵⁵⁴

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Moving outside of *Gabii* proper and into the suburban territory to the south, site no. 17 (fig. 54) is located at the 18th mile of the *via Labicana* near the *statio ad Status*, which was occupied between the 1st-3rd century CE.⁵⁵⁵ Recent excavations have revealed the floorplan of a sizeable villa complete with a thermal sector and at least 30 residential rooms distributed around a porticoed courtyard.⁵⁵⁶ In the first phase, dated between the 1st century BCE-1st century CE, the core of the villa was constructed in *opus incertum* and decorated with mosaic pavements along with a program of statuary. In the 2nd century, decorative features were revamped with the construction of new mosaics and the restoration of old ones, and frescoed thermal rooms were added in the northern portion of the villa. In the 3rd-4th century, the villa was restructured and enlarged. Residents commissioned the further maintenance of previous decorative features and installation of new ones, including a large aquatic feature with niches, fresco, stucco, and polychrome marble revetment. The home's occupants thus clearly prioritized its monumental character throughout most of the imperial period, although undatable evidence related to irrigation canals and other hydraulic infrastructure point to wine production activities within the household, as well. Nearby, a series of modest tombs (including *a cappucina* types) might relate to the dependent or enslaved laborers involved in these activities.

Between the 4th-5th century, a relief panel was dismantled and reused to restore a section of floor in the thermal area. Several other instances of spoliation (and at least one *tamponatura*) are documented but are all undatable. In the 6th or 7th century, four *a cappucina* graves were

⁵⁵⁴ de' Spagnolis 2003; 2012a; 2012b; Recco 2011; 2012; Betori and Recco 2015; Betori and Vincenti 2015; Castrorao Barba 2020, 116.

⁵⁵⁵ Corsi 2000, 117-118.

⁵⁵⁶ Betori and Vincenti 2015, 227-228.

inserted in a wine production basin. Another tomb near a terracing feature outside the villa along with a small funerary monument in *tufo* blocks is undatable. Sporadic spoliation of the structure's ruins continued into the modern period.

*Site no. 18: Villa of Passolombardo*⁵⁵⁷

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Located further west along the *via Labicana*, site no. 18 (fig. 55) was subject to ongoing excavations between 1994 and the early 2000s that documented a long period of occupation spanning the 3rd century BCE-6th century CE.⁵⁵⁸ The first phase of the structure pertains to a medium size rustic villa divided between a residential sector organized around an *atrium* and, in the northern sector, a series of spaces for agricultural production. In the second and third phases, between the 1st century BCE-2nd century CE, the residence was extensively remodeled. A peristyle was added in the center of the structure just to the west of the *atrium*, several rooms were fitted with marble wall facing, and a thermal sector was constructed in the southwest corner. New features for wine and oil production appeared in the *pars rustica* to the north. Between the 2nd-4th century, a new monumental portico was constructed on the southern and eastern sides of the villa, the *atrium* was restored and redecorated, and infrastructure for the thermal sector was updated and modified. In the earlier peristyle, the spaces between the columnated portico were walled off and the central area was converted into a large basin. Walls in reused materials appeared in the 4th century.

⁵⁵⁷ De Franceschini 2005, 214-215; Ricci 2005; Rustici and Tondi 2010; Castrorao Barba 2012, 227; 2014, 282, 285; 2020, 122; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910184.

⁵⁵⁸ Rustici and Tondi 2010, 287-288.

The final phase dates to the 5th-6th century when the entire property underwent a radical transformation into an industrial-scale wine production operation (fig. 56). The original *pars rustica* went out of use and was replaced by a large apsidal structure in which numerous cuts for the storage of *dolia* were documented. The erection of this feature led to the destruction of some previously mosaiced rooms, mirroring the situation at site no. 15 (the Area I House in *Gabii*) but on a much larger scale. On the other hand, the thermal sector continued to function during this period, and was in fact expanded and remodeled.

Discussion

Several common aspects of the domestic transformations documented in and around *Gabii* can be highlighted. First, activities related to labor and production have a strong role in shaping the transformation of each household examined, save for site no. 16. Quarrying activities led to the full or partial destruction of sites no. 12 and 13 in the early imperial period,⁵⁵⁹ while site no. 14 was readapted for cultivation activities. In addition to the clear emphasis their residents placed on the monumentality of their domestic quarters, agricultural production was also a fundamental element of the villas at sites no. 17 and 18 and completely defined the late antique phases of the latter. Site no. 15 shows a similar trajectory inside of *Gabii*'s urban core, with both monumental features and agricultural production characterizing the life of its residents during the 3rd century, followed by industrial activities in later periods. Site no. 15 is exceptional within *Gabii*, as its 3rd-century phase is the only example so far of agricultural activities clearly occurring alongside domestic inhabitation in one of the city's urban residences.⁵⁶⁰

⁵⁵⁹ cf. Spera (1999, 462) who, examining the area just beyond the southern portion of the Aurelian Walls, considers quarrying activity in relation to nearby residential construction.

⁵⁶⁰ Similar agricultural settlements in formerly urban areas have been documented at *Crustumerium* and *Fidenae* (see Di Gennaro and Dell'Era 2003, 108).

The practice of intra-household burial in this zone deserves special consideration. Outside *Gabii*, no signs of continued domestic occupation are documented at site no. 17 past the arrival of the first intra-household burials, while the 1st-5th-century tombs near the residence were clearly separated from the living area. On the other hand, the absence of attention to ceramics data in the various site reports for this structure result in ongoing questions about the general state of affairs during its last phases, and many indicators of both domestic use and disuse activities at the site could be contemporary with its 5th-6th-century burials.

Inside *Gabii*, we can draw firmer conclusions. Both sites no. 13 and 16 are cases in which the central courtyard was walled off prior to the appearance of the first burials. For site no. 13, the necropolis dates to a moment when the structure had clearly ceased to function as a home, and no subsequent activities other than widespread dumping are documented. In site no. 16, however, domestic occupation might have continued leading up to and after the introduction of burials, as suggested by ongoing structural interventions and the deposition of food waste. Given this, it is possible that the dividing wall in the *atrium* of site no. 16 served to separate living space from funerary space, and a similar purpose can be imagined for the *tamponatura* between rooms B5 and C2. This hypothesis is reinforced by the fact that all three burials were found to the north of this wall, while most of the seemingly domestic activities dated after the 1st century – including maintenance of the *impluvium* and a series of new beaten earth floors – occurred to its south. At the same time, the adjacency of the living and the dead in this building, both of which were housed under the same roof, is an unexpected development in the 2nd century CE if we take the notion of a Roman death taboo at face value.

Whatever physical structures might have isolated the tombs in sites no. 13 and 16 from nearby spaces for the living, the appearance of burials in the urban center of *Gabii* already in the

1st century CE, a period when the settlement benefits from a series of civic initiatives,⁵⁶¹ shows the fluidity with which such norms could be negotiated. On the other hand, the presence of burials inside *Gabii* could also point to the slow suburbanization of its city center (a process that might also explain the villa-like qualities of site no. 15), making the presence of the dead a normal affair. In any case, the early date of the tombs in sites no. 13 and 16 seem to discredit the notion that intramural and intra-household burial can be read primarily within cultural changes stemming from the growth of Christianity in Late Antiquity.⁵⁶²

Some further implications can be drawn from the early date of domestic disuse activities recorded at *Gabii*, many of which predated the 1st century CE. In zones 2 and 3, we have seen that the decline of suburban settlements like *Bovillae* or the *Civita di Artena* did not necessarily entail the abandonment of nearby villas. Similarly, sites no. 17 and 18 show that the countryside around *Gabii* continued to thrive throughout the imperial period, despite the apparent downgrading of *Gabii* itself. Inside *Gabii*, while cases of residential abandonment accelerated throughout the imperial period, sites no. 15 and 16 show how the trend was not all-encompassing. Furthermore, the frenzy of activity surrounding these old buildings, not to mention the clear signs of civic investment, caution against seeing imperial *Gabii* as an abandoned wasteland. Lastly, the case of site no. 14 is an essential example for understanding the process of residential abandonment prior to Late Antiquity. Despite occurring in the late republican period, the fate of the building appears remarkably similar to much later examples: it is abandoned, spoliated, then witnesses a series of low-impact modifications and is utilized for production purposes. This suggests that a similar cultural logic determined the reutilization of

⁵⁶¹ This includes the reorganization of the area in front of the Area F complex, the foundation of a public bathhouse, and renovation of the sanctuary near site no. 16 (D'Agostini and Musco 2016, 336; Samuels, Cohen, et al. 2021, 115).

⁵⁶² See above, pages 71-72.

disused structures throughout the Roman period, problematizing the notion that these processes were symptoms of society-wide decline or the development of a non-Roman, medieval mindset.

Zone 5: The Southern Suburb

Introduction

Zone 5 (fig. 57) encompasses the area just to the south of Rome between roughly the third and fifth miles of the *via Ardeatina*, *via Appia*, *via Latina*, and *via Labicana*. Today, this zone is occupied by corridors of dense urbanism mixed with open expanses of greenspace preserving an exceptional, if endangered, archaeological heritage.⁵⁶³ Following the establishment of the *Parco Regionale dell'Appia Antica* system in the late 1980s, strategies aimed at the conservation of this unique archaeological zone have paralleled a renewed scholarly interest in its ancient landscape transformations.⁵⁶⁴ Since the late 1990s, researchers have been particularly active in cataloging the dense topography of villas, tombs, and early Christian structures clustered along these four major ancient roadways leading to Rome from the southeast.⁵⁶⁵

The natural terrain of Zone 5, characterized by stream-fed rolling plains and the fertile *Almone* valley, is well suited to cultivation, and it was once assumed that this area of the suburb was divided into large, wealthy agricultural estates.⁵⁶⁶ On the contrary, investigations in the last decades have shown that local villas, while often giving an impression of social privilege, were densely distributed, sometimes positioned as little as 700 meters apart.⁵⁶⁷ Surveys have also revealed an extensive network of secondary roads linking the main routes in the area, some of

⁵⁶³ Volpe 2003, 211; Dubbini 2015, 26-27; Quilici 2015.

⁵⁶⁴ Paris 2003.

⁵⁶⁵ In particular, see Carbonara et al. 1998; Spera 1999; 2002; 2003a; 2003b; De Rossi and Granelli 2003; Rea 2003; Volpe 2003; 2007c; 2008; 2014; 2017; Volpe and Arnoldus-Huyzendveld 2005; Ippoliti 2020.

⁵⁶⁶ This was the hypothesis of Coarelli (1986); cf. Volpe 2014, 268-269.

⁵⁶⁷ The case, for example, for the villas documented by Volpe in *Centocelle* and *Torre Spaccata* (Volpe 2003; 2007a; 2008; 2014; Gioia and Volpe 2004; Volpe and Huyzendveld 2005). See also Spera 1999, 458-459.

which were lined by shops and workshops, pointing to a high level of commercial interconnectivity with the nearby city.⁵⁶⁸ According to most assessments, this proximity to Rome made the zone ideal for aristocratic elites seeking to advertise their luxurious country living, but needing to remain connected with urban affairs. As a result, villas in the area are primarily highlighted for their ostentation.⁵⁶⁹ Those that were economically active seem to have specialized in small-scale pursuits such as the cultivation of fruit, flowers, fish, and other commodities not easily transportable over a long distance, taking advantage of their close position to Rome.⁵⁷⁰ Zone 5 thus pertains to that part of Rome's suburb which is thought to be an "almost city," not quite rural, but not quite urban.⁵⁷¹ Due to these factors, research has concentrated on the zone for evidence of the topographical transition between Rome and its hinterland.⁵⁷²

Topographical studies of villas in Zone 5 have offered some long-term chronological assessments. Settlement numbers picked up momentum in the late republican period, expanded during the Augustan period, and peaked in the 2nd century.⁵⁷³ Many continued to be inhabited in the 3rd century and some saw expansion or remodeling in the 4th century.⁵⁷⁴ Scholars have argued, however, that the 3rd-century crisis significantly impacted the zone, leading to a

⁵⁶⁸ Spera 1999, 445-458, 461-463; 2003a, 268-270, 275, 292-293; Volpe 2003, 213.

⁵⁶⁹ Volpe 2003, 215.

⁵⁷⁰ This corresponds with the model proposed by Carandini for the immediate suburb of Rome (1985; cf. Pavolini et al. 2003, 54-56). See Spera 1999, 459-460; De Rossi and Granelli 2003, 340; Volpe 2003, 213; 2007c, 393-394). It might be noted that archaeologists have experienced difficulty in identifying a clear distinction between the *pars rustica* and *pars urbana* among some villas. See, for example, Villa A 204 in *Torre Spaccata* (see below, pages 157-158; Volpe 2008, 265-266).

⁵⁷¹ Spera 1999, 439.

⁵⁷² De Rossi and Granelli 2003, 331; Spera 2003a, 326-327. Recent work, however, has tended to deconstruct the divide between the city and countryside (Dubini 2015, 16-25; Emmerson 2020, 2-3).

⁵⁷³ Spera 1999, 458; Volpe 2003, 213; 2007c, 390, 394-395; 2008, 263-264; Ippoliti 2020, 276-277. See Volpe (2017) on villas along the *via Appia* in the mid-republic.

⁵⁷⁴ Spera 2003a, 286-287; Volpe 2003, 218; 2008, 269-270. The most famous example is the Villa of Maxentius on the *via Appia* (Spera 2003a, 274).

reduction in the total number of occupied sites through the 5th century.⁵⁷⁵ By the 6th century, the villa system seems to have tapered off entirely, a development which has been read as a result of the Gothic War, a period when many were systematically stripped of their decorative materials.⁵⁷⁶ After the 6th century, evidence for the occasional frequentation of some villas is tentatively associated with pastoral or other seasonal activities.⁵⁷⁷

The role of this zone, especially the portion concentrated along the *via Appia*, as a crucial funerary landscape just outside Rome has been widely discussed.⁵⁷⁸ Starting in the 2nd century CE, monuments in the area trended toward a collective model, represented by the appearance of *columbaria* and other multi-grave complexes along roadways, then subterranean catacombs.⁵⁷⁹ Several examples of intra-household burial are recorded starting in the 3rd century.⁵⁸⁰ From the 4th century forward, group burials were drawn toward martyrs' tombs and sanctuaries, leading to an increasingly Christianized landscape.⁵⁸¹ While these long-term changes are usually read within a context of cultural and spiritual transformation, the specific phenomenon of intra-household burial in Zone 5 has been interpreted differently. Rita Volpe, noting that habitational continuity sometimes occurred alongside intra-household burial, envisions the phenomenon as a precursor to intramural burial,⁵⁸² and therefore relates it to the same processes of demographic and economic decline used to explain the appearance of tombs in Rome during later centuries.⁵⁸³

⁵⁷⁵ Spera 2003a, 273; Volpe 2003, 228; 2008, 268; Ippoliti 2020, 277-278. Volpe (2014, 270), however, problematizes the fact that this image is largely based on conclusions drawn from legacy and survey data, which have proven to be unreliable in documenting later imperial phases.

⁵⁷⁶ Volpe 2003, 228-229; Ippoliti 2020, 277-278.

⁵⁷⁷ Volpe 2003, 229, 237; 2014, 274-276.

⁵⁷⁸ Spera 1999, 463-464; 2003a, 270; De Rossi and Granelli 2003, 351-356; Volpe 2003, 230-231; 2017.

⁵⁷⁹ Spera 2003a, 275-279, 293-294; Volpe 2003, 231-232. While this development is traditionally read within the rise of Christianity, see the discussion of Bodel (2008) for a critical consideration.

⁵⁸⁰ Rea 2003, 241-242; Volpe 2003, 229-230; 2008, 272.

⁵⁸¹ See the study of Guyon (1987). See also Spera 1999, 440, 455-456; 2003b; Volpe 2003, 231.

⁵⁸² Volpe 2000, 206-207; 2003, 232; 2008, 272; 2014, 273.

⁵⁸³ Volpe 2003, 232-234; 2014, 275. Volpe (2014, 273-274) notes the absence of cultic structures in association with villa burials in this area, save for the exception of the villa at *Tor Carbone* (C15), mentioned below.

Case Studies (sites no. 19-22)

Site no. 19: Villa of the Quintilii⁵⁸⁴

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Site no. 19 (fig. 58) was located at the fifth mile of the *via Appia*, roughly three kilometers south of the villa at *Capo di Bove* (fig. 57, C14), reportedly abandoned in the 4th century,⁵⁸⁵ and one kilometer south of the villa at *Tor Carbone* (fig. 57, C15), where a series of burials was recovered in connection with a 4th-5th-century baptistry.⁵⁸⁶ The villa at site no. 19 is traditionally attributed to the senatorial Quintilii brothers, consuls in 151 CE, whose property was confiscated by Commodus in 182 CE.⁵⁸⁷ It was subject to various investigations starting in the late 18th century before being systematically excavated between 1998-2010.⁵⁸⁸ These operations have revealed an impressive structure built on a terraced platform and divided into multiple pavilions. The floorplan featured a monumental *nymphaeum* (R1), a porticoed garden area (T), a circular structure identified as a *ludus* (F1), and thermal areas with an extensive hydraulic infrastructure (D-E), all gravitating around a residential core (A).⁵⁸⁹ The decoration of this sprawling residence was extravagant, including a rich collection of statuary, wall frescoes with figural decoration, marble revetment, and mosaics in multiple styles and techniques. The owners of the villa, undoubtedly among the most powerful individuals in Rome, clearly sought a highly curated and monumental environment for their home.

⁵⁸⁴ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 153; De Franceschini 2005, 222-236; Frontoni & Galli 2010; Paris et al. 2012; 2015; 2019.

⁵⁸⁵ Mazzotta 2006, 366.

⁵⁸⁶ Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910185.

⁵⁸⁷ Paris et al. 2012, 6. The attribution is based off of the discovery of a stamp bearing the brothers' names found in 1829 by Nibby. Later in the 19th century, *fistulae* with the names of Alexander Severus and Gordian were recovered, suggesting the structure's survival as an imperial-owned property during the 3rd century (Paris et al. 2012, 8).

⁵⁸⁸ Paris et al. 2012, 8; 2015, 195.

⁵⁸⁹ Paris et al. 2012, 9.

The period of occupation associated with the development of these monumental features dates between the 2nd-3rd century. Between the 4th-6th century, some of these elements were restored, including an *impluvium* (a feature not normally associated with late antique domestic architecture)⁵⁹⁰ and the large *nymphaeum*. The recovery of vast quantities of ceramic transport vessels dating from the 2nd-7th century suggests that throughout the entirety of this timespan, residents enjoyed comfortable access to commercial goods and regularly engaged in dining activities.

While site no. 19 has yet to produce evidence for the sort of agricultural facilities normally associated with villas,⁵⁹¹ evidence was recovered for a wide range of industrial activities conducted on the villa grounds throughout the course of its occupation. From their beginning, these activities were closely connected with the dismantling and recycling of marble materials for making lime. In the 2nd-3rd century, such instances occurred in tandem with a frenetic pace of decorative and structural interventions, and it seems likely that builders and artisans cannibalized older structures to obtain raw materials for new projects. By the 4th century, however, industrial activities no longer seem tethered to onsite construction projects, and alongside the continued production of lime, operations related to glass and pottery production encroached upon formerly monumental spaces like the baths and *nymphaeum*. This trend continued into the 6th century, by which point metallurgy also appeared. The general image provided by this body of evidence has led excavators to describe site no. 19 as a veritable *worksite*, not simply a villa.

In addition to spoliation and production-related activities, other domestic disuse activities occurred from the 3rd century forward. Near the *ludus*, a curvilinear corridor was subdivided in

⁵⁹⁰ See above, page 23.

⁵⁹¹ See De Franceschini 2005, 223.

the 3rd century, while irregular spoliated blocks were used to build a retaining wall near the *nymphaeum*. On the whole, however, there is a general absence of evidence related to the rearrangement of doorways, dividing walls, and other spatial interventions frequently noted among the other case studies. In the 6th-7th century, a series of graves was inserted in a thermal area. Frequentation of the site for industrial activities continued to occur for an exceptionally long period after the 6th century; the recovery of reusable materials and lime production persisted as late as the 16th century, just around 200 years before its first archaeological excavations.

*Site no. 20: Villa at Casale Novelli*⁵⁹²

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This villa (fig. 59) was excavated between 2001-2003 within the first mile of the *via Ardeatina* outside of the Aurelian Walls.⁵⁹³ Due to the dense fabric of modern occupation along the *via Grotta Perfetta*, which roughly follows the course of the ancient *via Ardeatina* in the vicinity of site no. 20, this area represents the least archaeologically documented portion of Zone 5.⁵⁹⁴ The first phase of site no. 20 dates to the early imperial period and gives the impression of a rustic dwelling, with a porticoed courtyard constructed for carrying out agricultural activities (rooms H and Q). In the 2nd century, residents shaped the villa into a more urbane structure, adding a decorative thermal sector (rooms A-D). At the same time, a series of at least 10 tombs with various typologies, including *a cappuccina*, was positioned in a nearby trench left behind by quarrying activities. Prior to this moment, the trench had been used as a waste pit by the household, demonstrated by the presence of 1st-2nd-century dumping layers. In the 3rd century,

⁵⁹² Ricciardi and Durante 2002; Ricciardi 2005; Angelelli 2016, 108.

⁵⁹³ Ricciardi 2005, 197.

⁵⁹⁴ See discussion in De Rossi and Granelli (2003). The limited examples of other villas in this area are only known partially from legacy data.

new floor surfaces were laid in several rooms of the house and restorations were carried out in the thermal sector. Following the 3rd century, several interventions of an imprecise date were undertaken to modify the villa's floorplan, including *tamponature* and subdivisions (fig. 12). No ceramic data is reported which might add additional context to these final transformations in the villa.

*Site no. 21: Villa del Campo Barbarico*⁵⁹⁵

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 21 (fig. 60) is located near the 13th-century *Tor Fiscale* near the fourth mile of the *via Latina*. Around one kilometer to the north along the ancient roadway is the *Basilica di Santo Stefano* (fig. 57, C16), founded on the site of a villa, and around 2.5 kilometers to the south sits the *Villa dei Sette Bassi* (fig. 57, C17), a residence which survived into the 6th century.⁵⁹⁶ In the immediate vicinity of site no. 21 are the villas of *Quadraro* (fig. 57, C18) and *Le Vignacce* (fig. 57, C19). The first of these was occupied until at least the 4th century, after which point it was spoliated and possibly used as a temporary shelter.⁵⁹⁷ The second saw a phase of expansion and remodeling during the 3rd-4th century before witnessing a series of *tamponature*, modifications of floor surfaces, and spoliations. In the 5th-6th century, it seems to have been partially fortified in connection with the “*campo barbarico*,” which lends itself to the name of the site.⁵⁹⁸

⁵⁹⁵ Rea 2003, 245-265; Rea 2004; Castrorao Barba 2020, 244; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910241.

⁵⁹⁶ Rea 2003, 242; Quilici 2016, 307.

⁵⁹⁷ De Franceschini 2005, 197.

⁵⁹⁸ Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910182. For the *campo barbarico*, see Quilici 1995; Rea 2003, 242-245. The area is associated with the events described by Procopius (Procop. *Goth.* II.2) when the Ostrogoths, besieging Rome in 537, fortified the intersection of the *Aqua Claudia* and *Aqua Marcia* by walling up their archways.

Site no. 21's original phase of construction in *opus reticulatum* dates to the 1st century BCE. Like site no. 19, the complex is distinguished by a large circular structure near the residential area identified as a *ludus*. This feature was connected to the rest of the villa via a semi-colonnaded portico.⁵⁹⁹ The residential area had an *atrium*, ornamental colonnaded garden, a series of service rooms and shopfronts along the road, and a thermal sector.⁶⁰⁰ After its initial construction, no significant interventions or other activities are documented until the mid-imperial period, when the thermal rooms were constructed and decorated. Near the *ludus*, a decorative fountain and colonnade façade were added. Between the 3rd-4th century, various *tamponature* and subdividing walls appeared in the northeast portion. In the 4th century, modifications occurred in the thermal sector. These included a mosaic in irregular, reused materials laid in the courtyard area as well as cuts in the pavement of its entranceway resulting from the maintenance of underground drainage features.

Between the 4th-7th century, the courtyard in the thermal sector was divided into three separate spaces and most of the 4th-century mosaic was dismantled. *Amphorae* and other ceramics point to the occurrence of dining activities within this same timeframe, although this evidence (or at least its publication) is limited. In the 5th century, the side road leading to the villa was partially repaved and its drainage canals restored. In the 6th century, the floor level near the entrance to the villa was raised and further spoliation activities occurred. During the course of these activities, additional *tamponature* were constructed in irregular techniques, including in the spaces identified as shopfronts, and circular postholes were cut into the pavement of an apsidal room in the southeast portion of the villa. By the 7th century, a single *a cappuccina* burial was inserted against a wall to the northwest of the access road.

⁵⁹⁹ Rea 2003, 247; 2004, 206.

⁶⁰⁰ Rea 2003, 250; 2004, 206.

Features possibly pointing to the presence of Ostrogothic troops in the structures of the villa are related to a series of walls built to block the building from its access road and the *via Latina* (fig. 61). A similar technique was contemporaneously used to divide the residential area of the villa from the thermal sector. Constructed in large, irregular, reused materials, these walls are comparable to Procopius' description of the structures built by the Ostrogoths to close up the archways of the nearby aqueducts.⁶⁰¹ Their association with Ostrogothic troops is reinforced by their stratigraphic *terminus post quem* of the 6th century.

*Site no. 22: Villa of Centocelle "ad duas Lauros"*⁶⁰²

[View catalogue entry](#)

The floorplan of this villa (fig. 62) was revealed by surveys and aerial photography conducted between the 1920s and 1950s, and it was subject to the systematic excavation of its northern sector during 1996-1998 before it was published extensively throughout the early 2000s.⁶⁰³ It originally dates to the 2nd-1st century BCE and its earliest phases appear to have emphasized monumental- over production-related aspects, although nearby trenches in the bedrock probably relate to the cultivation of a small vineyard.

Site no. 22 is one of several villas documented in the area of *Centocelle* and *Torre Spaccata* off the ancient *via Labicana*.⁶⁰⁴ The nearest are the *Villa delle Terme* (fig. 57, C20) and the *Villa della Piscina* (fig. 57, C21). The *Villa delle Terme* preserves the remains of a vast late antique thermal sector.⁶⁰⁵ Four burials were recovered in the residence, notable for their seeming

⁶⁰¹ Rea 2003, 260.

⁶⁰² Armellini 2003; Camilli 2003; Caruso et al. 1998, 281-284; Volpe 2003; 2007b; Bartoloni and Spagnoli 2004; De Franceschini 2005, 176-179; Volpe and Arnoldus-Huyzendveld 2005; Marzano 2007, 487; Castrorao Barba 2020, 115, 240; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910176. See in general Gioia and Volpe 2004; Volpe 2007a.

⁶⁰³ De Franceschini 2005, 176.

⁶⁰⁴ See Volpe 2014, fig. 2.

⁶⁰⁵ Volpe 2007c, 391.

level of status; one utilized a secondhand 4th-century sarcophagus and the other a wooden box with lead bracers at the corners.⁶⁰⁶ In a later period, the structure was perhaps used as a temporary shelter for episodic activities, a situation analogous to that of the nearby villa in *Torre Spaccata*.⁶⁰⁷ For the *Villa della Piscina*, meanwhile, a long life spanning the mid-republican period to the 4th century CE is documented.⁶⁰⁸ The villa owes its name to the presence of a large rectangular basin seemingly used for aquaculture, constructed in the 1st-2nd century CE and still functional in the 4th-5th century.⁶⁰⁹

Also relevant are two of the villas excavated in the neighborhood of *Torre Spaccata*, just to the west of site no. 22. In the villa identified by Volpe as “A 204” (fig. 57, C22), a 3rd-5th-century phase saw the residence completely made over, with the former *pars rustica* converted to luxury residential spaces.⁶¹⁰ At the end of this period, the residence appears to have been temporarily abandoned, but later interventions raised its floor levels, suggesting a phase of reoccupation.⁶¹¹ A series of tombs was recovered in this structure, although it is unclear whether they date to before or after its seeming abandonment.⁶¹² The villa along *via Togliatti* (fig. 57, C23) also displays a long occupational history stretching between the 2nd century BCE-6th century CE.⁶¹³ It is a notable example of a villa which clearly continued to function according to the traditional model in the 5th-6th century, a period in which it was subject to decorative interventions, modification of its kitchen area, and the ongoing use of its agricultural facilities.⁶¹⁴

⁶⁰⁶ Volpe 2003, 232-234.

⁶⁰⁷ Volpe 2003, 237-238.

⁶⁰⁸ De Franceschini 2005, 172.

⁶⁰⁹ De Franceschini 2005, 172-173.

⁶¹⁰ Volpe 2008, 269-270.

⁶¹¹ Volpe 2008, 270-271.

⁶¹² Volpe 2008, 272.

⁶¹³ De Franceschini 2005, 180.

⁶¹⁴ De Franceschini 2005, 180-181.

The occupants of site no. 22 constantly transformed their residence over the course of the imperial period. After construction of the original *atrium* and peristyle core, modifications in *opus reticulatum* led to the addition of new rooms (some of which were decorated with mosaics) and a colonnaded portico to the north of the garden between the 1st century BCE-1st century CE. In the 1st century CE, the cistern near the *atrium* lost its original purpose and was converted to a trash heap, a situation also encountered in sites no. 16 and 22. Between the 1st-2nd century CE, the villa was expanded, and a thermal sector was added. In the same phase, one of the corridors was subdivided into several smaller rooms (similar to the intervention recorded at site no. 19 during the 3rd century) and the portico constructed on the northern flank of the garden was walled up.

The thermal sector was expanded in the 2nd-3rd century and new decorations were applied. In the 3rd century, a monumental *a tempietto* tomb was constructed near the villa. A number of *opus sectile* pavements date to the 4th century, when an apsidal hall was added along with a second funerary monument (this one circular in form). The new structures were built in *opus vittatum*, some portions of which contained reused elements. Decorative pavements continued to be updated in the 5th century and some masonry structures were restored with buttresses. A third monumental tomb was added (also circular in form) and the surrounding area embellished with a mosaiced basin.

In the 5th-6th century, more than 20 burials appeared around the existing funerary complex reusing marble slabs and other dismantled materials originally belonging to the *a tempietto* monument. Four additional graves were placed in other areas of the villa, including inside the portico, whose original entrance had been previously blocked up with the construction of a niched masonry feature. Physical analysis of the buried individuals reveals a range of ages

and dental profiles consistent with a carbohydrate-heavy diet.⁶¹⁵ During the 6th century, the villa was evidently abandoned and its features systematically spoliated. Sometime afterwards, a series of irregular structures was built in the thermal sector.

Discussion

In many ways, the four sites in Zone 5 fit well into the general landscape image offered by previous research, which has emphasized the presence of large, monumental, densely distributed villas engaging in small scale agricultural activities. The zone's essential funerary connotations are also reflected among all four case studies, which feature a range of burial types spanning from monumental structures (e.g., site no. 22) to simpler group burials (e.g., site no. 20) to tombs inside previously residential spaces (e.g., sites no. 19 and 22). Finally, the commercial and industrial role of the zone, thought to be essential to its suburban character, is demonstrated particularly well by site no. 19. At site no. 20, the presence of a quarry near the house recalls the wider evidence for extraction activities throughout the *Caffarella* valley. This presents an interesting contrast with site no. 12 at *Gabii*, where quarrying activities led to the dismantling and destruction of a residence.⁶¹⁶ For site no. 20, the quarry is more likely related to the home's construction, and larger scale quarries found in this vicinity have indeed been related to the frequency of residential building in the area during the early imperial period.⁶¹⁷

With this initial assessment in mind, there are reasons to question the extent to which these four villas can be interpreted as simple functions of their topographical setting. Chronologically speaking, the model of villa settlement advanced for this area generally resembles the image usually offered for all of Italy: an initial boom in the late republican period,

⁶¹⁵ Salvadei et al. 2007, 409.

⁶¹⁶ See above, page 139.

⁶¹⁷ Spera 1999, 462.

a peak in the 2nd century CE, and gradual decline after the 3rd century CE.⁶¹⁸ While the succinctness of this account is appealing, it can mask the more complex transformations observed within the single residences just considered. For example, the late domestic phases of sites no. 19, 21, and 22 challenge the idea of a 2nd-century peak followed by a 3rd-century decline, revealing that a local drop in total settlement numbers need not correspond linearly with the standards of living maintained in surviving homes. Conversely, in site no. 22, some interventions in the 1st-2nd century (e.g., the walling up of the garden portico, the conversion of the *atrium* cistern into a trash heap) could be taken as early signs of decline if read in isolation. Following this, however, domestic inhabitation continued through at least the 5th century and included ongoing investment in the monumental aspects of the household. Meanwhile, site no. 19 was occupied throughout the entirety of the imperial period, and the gradual expansion of industrial activities in the residence from the 2nd century onward suggests an expansion of its economic function, and this is out of step with the notion of decline. Nor does the alternative model of *topographical continuity and functional discontinuity* totally describe the situation, since indicators of ongoing domestic inhabitation, albeit with a reduced footprint, are documented through at least the 6th century in the villa. As such, many outcomes of the four case studies in Zone 5 fit poorly within the standard settlement narrative offered for the area. This illustrates the limitations of an approach based primarily on the number of total sites from century to century rather than a close examination of the activities taking place inside them.

A central theme in studies situated around Zone 5 has been the area's role as a transitional suburban zone combining aspects of rural settings with near-urban/almost urban levels of density. These characteristics are thought to have produced unique patterns of both

⁶¹⁸ See above, pages 25-26.

residential occupation and reuse following the 3rd-century decline.⁶¹⁹ However, this theory falls short of explaining some of the most salient aspects of domestic transformation in the four case studies. Instances of intra-household burial in Zone 5, for example, have been read as a result of demographic and economic decline tied to the vicissitudes of Rome.⁶²⁰ Why such factors would induce inhabitants to establish burials in formerly residential spaces remains unclear. Somewhat surprisingly, there is an absence of commentary in current research on how the phenomenon of intra-household burial might have fit into the larger funerary landscape of the *via Appia*, where fundamental issues include the development of collective and *ad sanctos* funerary practices, trends associated with the gradual Christianization of the area from the 3rd century on.⁶²¹ Certainly, indications of a collective approach to burial could be read in the cases of sites no. 20 and 22. On the other hand, similarly clear examples of collective burial inside residential structures are recorded both very near the city center (e.g., the more than 20 3rd-century tombs inserted within site no. 30, around 250 meters from the Aurelian Walls) as well as further away at site no. 6 (Zone 2), no. 8 (Zone 3), no. 12 (Zone 4), and no. 17 (Zone 4). It is also crucial to consider the diversity of evidence for intra-household burial in Zone 5, which includes not only collections of modest tombs, but monumental funerary monuments (e.g., sites no. 21 and 22) and smaller groupings isolated to single sectors of the household (e.g., site no. 18). Zone 5 thus provides a range of evidence for intra-household burial similar to other areas of Rome's territory addressed in this study. As a result, the seemingly unique aspects of this zone, from its special funerary connotations to its supposedly parallel relationship with demographic trends in the nearby city, do not offer a convincing explanation of the phenomena.

⁶¹⁹ This is the essential claim of Spera (1999). For the topic of burial, see Volpe (2000, 206; 2003, 232; 2014, 273).

⁶²⁰ See above, footnote 583.

⁶²¹ See above, pages 71-72.

A similar argument can be made for the appearance of production-related domestic disuse activities. Archaeologists have argued that Zone 5, due to its proximity with Rome, had a particularly important role in serving the city's commercial and industrial needs, and this is thought to have strongly influenced the fate of abandoned residential structures in the area during Late Antiquity.⁶²² On the other hand, like intra-household burial, the appearance of industrial activities in formerly residential spaces is a widely documented phenomenon across the region of Rome. For the industrial activities at site no. 19, one exceptional aspect is clearly their scale and diversity, not to mention their longevity (although the case of site no. 11 shows that industrial production could occur over a long timeframe far from Rome, as well). These are issues to which I will return in the final chapter.

Overall, the case studies in Zone 5 show that household occupants around Rome were not deterministically bound to the nature of their immediate topographical surroundings. To the contrary, the evidence addressed so far in zones 1-5 points to similarity with the strategies and choices influencing domestic trajectories throughout the surroundings of Rome, regardless of the specific microregion, over a wide chronological range.

Zone 6: The Northern Suburb

Introduction

Zone 6 (fig. 63) highlights the suburban area to the north of Rome with a particular emphasis on the corridor of the *via Cassia* running between Rome and *Veii*.⁶²³ Sites no. 27 and 29 provide additional insight into the situations along the *via Cornelia* and *via Nomentana*, while site no. 28 lies east of the Tiber on the *via Flaminia*, about two kilometers north of the Aurelian

⁶²² Spera 1999, 461-463.

⁶²³ Mosca 2002, 73-89.

Walls. Compared with Zone 5, the area encompassed by Zone 6 has been more thoroughly impacted by the sprawl of dense modern development since World War II and has been a smaller target of archaeological conservation efforts, leading to a more fragmented record.⁶²⁴ As such, research in this area has depended heavily on legacy surveys and the data provided by sporadic rescue excavations. While the case studies handled here are intended to represent some of the best recently documented examples of villas, the majority have been excavated only partially and have received little attention by researchers. On the other hand, the villas at sites no. 23 and 28 stand out as exceptional examples of thoroughly documented structures, providing essential context to the more fragmentary cases.

Zone 6 is bisected by the Tiber and falls broadly within its alluvial plain. To the west of the river, the location of sites. 23-26 along the *via Cassia* and site no. 27 along the *via Cornelia*, the terrain is hilly and steep, contrasting with the rather flat rolling plain to the Tiber's east, where sites no. 28 and 29 are positioned.⁶²⁵ The plain to the east is bisected by the west-east course of the *Aniene*, and it is this selection of the zone (roughly the area between Rome and the ancient settlements of *Fidenae*, *Crustumerium*, and *Ficulea*) that has received the most attention among researchers since the 1980s.⁶²⁶

The results of these efforts reveal a variable situation. For the area to the south of the *Aniene*, home to site no. 28, scholars offer an image of dispersed agricultural holdings (*villae rusticae*) during the 1st-2nd century CE and a sharp decline in the 3rd-4th century, followed by increased funerary usage of the landscape (evidenced by the construction of catacombs along

⁶²⁴ See Di Gennaro and Dell'Era 2003, 97-102; Messineo 2003, 25; Marchi 2008, 13-17; Ceccarelli et al. 2019, 1-2.

⁶²⁵ Funicello et al. 2007, 27.

⁶²⁶ See the crucial studies on these three settlements by Quilici and Quilici Gigli (1980; 1993) and Quilici Gigli and Quilici (1986), as well as the study on villas in this area by Di Manzano et al. (1985). Meanwhile, the portions of surrounding area falling within the second and fourth *municipi* were the subject of extensive landscape studies led by Carandini starting in 1993 (Carandini et al. 2007).

roadways) and a switch toward ecclesiastical management of agrarian activities.⁶²⁷ Just to the north of the *Aniene*, in the area of site no. 29, a different situation is described, characterized by larger scale *ville schiavistiche* during the 1st-2nd century CE, general continuity in the 3rd century, and a gradual contraction between the 4th-6th century.⁶²⁸ A good example is the villa found between *via Monte Ciccardo* and *via Piagge* (fig. 63, C24), near the ancient *via Salaria*, which occupied a large footprint and had a clearly agricultural aspect.⁶²⁹ This residence lasted from the late republican period to the 5th century, when it was destroyed by a fire.

Villas in this eastern portion of Zone 6 were strong poles of both the living and the dead during Late Antiquity. At the *via Monte Ciccardo* villa just mentioned (fig. 63, C24), 13 tombs were positioned against various walls during the 3rd century; this was around 200 years before its destruction by fire, and its ongoing occupation up until this final moment was signified by the recovery within its collapse layers of an individual evidently killed during the conflagration event.⁶³⁰ Similarly, seven tombs were recovered with a *terminus post quem* of the 3rd century at the nearby villa at *Tenuta Settebagni* (fig. 63, C25).⁶³¹ Further south, about halfway between the *via Salaria* and *via Nomentana*, the villa at *Boccone Borghese* (fig. 63, C26) witnessed an expansion of its production facilities in the 3rd century, the appearance of three tombs in the 4th century, and subsequent structural modifications into the 5th century.⁶³² East of site no. 29 along the *via Nomentana* is the villa (Site A) at *Sant’Alessandro* (fig. 63, C27), whose chronology spans the 1st-5th century CE.⁶³³ In the 4th-5th century, after some structures in the villa had already

⁶²⁷ Pavolini et al. 2003, 55-67. See specific examples of villas at 74-75, 78, 85-86, 88.

⁶²⁸ Di Gennaro and Dell’Era 2003, 106-117.

⁶²⁹ Tronelli 2003.

⁶³⁰ See Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 127-128. The individual was carrying a purse containing 4th-century coins. See also the two burials found at the very nearby villa on *via Force* (Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 124-128, 147).

⁶³¹ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 130-131.

⁶³² Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 148-149; De Franceschini 2005, 81; Castrorao Barba 2012, 227.

⁶³³ Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910195.

collapsed, basins were dug directly into mosaic floor surfaces and two infant tombs were placed in separate rooms.⁶³⁴ The continuity of villas into the 5th century is thus an important aspect of this area, and this entailed a mix of domestic use, industrial or agricultural activities, and intra-household burials.⁶³⁵

On the other side of the Tiber along the *via Cassia*, sites no. 23-26 fell within the territory of *Veii*.⁶³⁶ This area has been noted for an uptick in monumental villas in the 1st-2nd century CE, paralleling the expansion of civic investment in *Veii* itself, followed by a widespread crisis in the 3rd century leading to total abandonment by the 6th-7th century.⁶³⁷ As a case in point, the villa on *via dell'Ospedaletto Annunziata* (fig. 63, C28), near sites no. 24-26, was destroyed in the 3rd century.⁶³⁸ This process does not appear to affect all sites equally, however. Occupying a position at the center of sites no. 24-26 is the villa at *Casale Ghella* (fig. 63, C29), which underwent a process of continuous expansion and monumentalization between the 1st-3rd century CE.⁶³⁹ This included the construction of a monumental tomb in the 2nd century.⁶⁴⁰ At some point, several *tamponature* were constructed, the *atrium* was repaved, its *impluvium* covered, and one burial was placed directly into the floor.⁶⁴¹ In the 4th century, a lime kiln was constructed near the garden, while the accessway leading to the monumental tomb was repaired, even as the tomb itself was spoliated.⁶⁴² Ceramics here suggest occupation as late as the 5th century.⁶⁴³

⁶³⁴ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 149.

⁶³⁵ Di Gennaro and Dell'Era (2003, 112), however, suggest that the presence of burials in this mix is a symptom of crisis, not continuity.

⁶³⁶ See Cascino et al. 2012.

⁶³⁷ Fusco and Soriano 2018, 391-394.

⁶³⁸ Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910152.

⁶³⁹ De Franceschini 2005, 63-66.

⁶⁴⁰ Messineo 2010, 90.

⁶⁴¹ Vigna et al. 1987, 504-509.

⁶⁴² Remotti 2017, 344-349.

⁶⁴³ Remotti 2017, 349.

Moving toward site no. 27, the area along the *via Cornelia* (which led to *Caere*) has been particularly neglected in archaeological research.⁶⁴⁴ The fragmented data currently available – a disjointed collection of isolated tombs, drainage features, cisterns, basalt road sections, and various masonry structures – provides an insufficient basis for significant conclusions regarding the local landscape.⁶⁴⁵ One case that offers important insight is the villa documented at the *Tenuta di Mazzalupo* (fig. 63, C30), about 1.5 kilometers southeast of site no. 27. Even if the poor state of this villa’s preservation makes it impossible to determine the absolute chronology of its various phases, a rich and well-documented finds record suggests that it was occupied for a long period between the 3rd century BCE to the 4th-5th century CE.⁶⁴⁶ The structure was enlarged around the late 1st century BCE, and some of its rooms were subdivided with features in irregular masonry.⁶⁴⁷ In the 1st century CE, residents added a decorative thermal sector.⁶⁴⁸ Between the 2nd-3rd century, two monumental tombs were constructed near the villa and at least 28 graves clustered around them.⁶⁴⁹ This is similar to the situation found at site no. 22 (Zone 5), but occurs about two or three centuries earlier. Analysis of the remains at *Tenuta di Mazzalupo* suggests a community of a “medium-low” socioeconomic range.⁶⁵⁰ Elsewhere, other walls in irregular masonry techniques further modified the layout, some hydraulic interventions were carried out, and various rooms in the bath sector were converted to industrial use.⁶⁵¹ It is not clear whether these interventions predated or postdated the necropolis.

⁶⁴⁴ Marchi 2008, 13; Ceccarelli et al. 2019, 1; De Cristofaro and Ricchioni 2022, 261-262.

⁶⁴⁵ Marchi 2008, 17; De Cristofaro and Ricchioni 2022, 262

⁶⁴⁶ Marchi et al. 2008, 27-28; Ceccarelli et al. 2019, 18. See also Presen et al. 2008.

⁶⁴⁷ Marchi et al. 2008, 73. See Ceccarelli et al. (2018, 19) for evidence of a nearby quarry, perhaps related to the extraction of building material for interventions during this phase and suggestive of a generally self-sufficient economic strategy.

⁶⁴⁸ Marchi et al. 2008, 73-74; 76.

⁶⁴⁹ Marchi et al. 2008, 44.

⁶⁵⁰ Marchi et al. 2008, 48.

⁶⁵¹ Marchi et al. 2008, 74.

Case Studies (sites no. 23-29)

Site no. 23: Villa of Campetti a Veio⁶⁵²

[View catalogue entry](#)

This villa (fig. 64) was located off the *via Cassia* on the southwestern side of the plateau of *Veii* near the Temple of Apollo and was the subject of systematic excavations between 1996-2009.⁶⁵³ While Fusco has argued for the identification of the multi-terraced complex as a sanctuary in the early imperial period, mostly on the basis of some euergetic inscriptions reused as materials for a pilaster, this hypothesis is unconvincing given the building's overall architectural appearance.⁶⁵⁴ Its original construction dated to the 2nd-1st century BCE, consisting of an *atrium* core built in *opus quadratum* and *opus reticulatum* walls along with floor surfaces decorated with *tesserae*.⁶⁵⁵

In the 1st century BCE-1st century CE, the villa was expanded to include a larger peristyle on a lower terrace, a decorative *nymphaeum*, and various rooms were embellished with frescoes and mosaics. A richly decorated thermal sector was also added, featuring a figural mosaic with marine motifs. The baths, *nymphaeum*, and lower terrace all underwent maintenance or further monumentalization during the 2nd-3rd century. Starting in the 3rd-4th century, some areas of the villa entered into a state of disrepair accompanied by sporadic spoliation activities. From the 4th century, more significant transformations are evident. Inhabitants constructed various *tamponature*, subdivided the corridor along the northern edge of the courtyard in the upper terrace, replaced some decorative floors with beaten earth surfaces, built drystone walls to form

⁶⁵² Fusco 2001; 2021; De Franceschini 2005, 4-9; Marzano 2007, 631; Fusco et al. 2016; Fusco and Soriano 2018.

⁶⁵³ Fusco and Soriano 2018, 391.

⁶⁵⁴ See Fusco 2001; cf. De Franceschini (2005, 9) who rightly points out that the complex is unmistakably a villa on the basis of its various attributes: an *opus quadratum* terrace, cisterns and drains, an *atrium*, agricultural facilities, thermal baths, etc.

⁶⁵⁵ De Franceschini 2005, 4.

new rooms, and erected three pilasters in reused materials on the northern terrace (including the one containing the euergetic inscription mentioned above). Five tombs were placed within the villa. Evidence dating to the 5th century shows some signs of organized spoliation activities, as occupants collected *tegulae* and marble fragments into orderly piles in both the upper and lower terrace, either for sale elsewhere or onsite recycling. Simultaneously, ceramics dating from the 4th-6th century indicate ongoing residential occupation during this period.

*Site no. 24: Villa on via Barbarano Romano*⁶⁵⁶

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 24 (fig. 65) was built over various levels on a hillside just off the *via Cassia*. A portion of the site was encountered during excavations in 1981 and more extensive operations were carried out in connection with a residential development project in the early 2000s.⁶⁵⁷ After its original construction in the republican period, the villa was enlarged with *opus reticulatum* walls in the 1st century BCE-1st century CE and the residential area was embellished with decorative pavements. Residents also added a series of agricultural facilities, including an area with an *opus spicatum* pavement, basins, and drainage channels. By the end of the 1st century CE, agricultural work began to take priority over the villa's monumental aspects; two basins were inserted in the residential area and pits for *dolia* were cut into a marble floor. One room was subdivided with a wall made of irregular, reused materials, and a new floor was laid consisting of ceramic fragments and reused basalt pavers. Afterwards, activities in the *pars rustica* appear to have been carried out through the 2nd-3rd century, and ceramic evidence suggests ongoing domestic use as late as the 4th century. Eventually, the villa was badly damaged

⁶⁵⁶ De Franceschini 2005, 59-60; Cerrito et al. 2006.

⁶⁵⁷ Cerrito et al. 2006, 343.

by a fire.⁶⁵⁸ At some point between the 3rd-5th century, it was systematically spoliated, and a lime kiln was constructed for reprocessing dismantled marble elements.

*Site no. 25: Villa at the Fosso della Crescenza*⁶⁵⁹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Located about 1.5 kilometers east of the *via Cassia* and perhaps along a section of the ancient *via Veientana*, this villa (fig. 66) was documented by rescue excavations in 2004 and 2007-2009.⁶⁶⁰ The first activities documented in the area date to the 1st century BCE-1st century CE and pertained to the construction of a monumental mausoleum. Adjacent to this structure, a series of spaces was constructed in *opus mixtum* during the 1st-2nd century CE forming the core of the villa, and these were embellished with a colonnaded portico. Modifications of this structure occurred through the 3rd century, entailing the addition of a bichrome figural mosaic, marble paneling, a thermal sector with an apsidal room, and a second apsidal space of uncertain designation. Other rooms were subdivided or closed with *tamponature*. Structural repairs in the form of buttresses cut some earlier features, including the mosaic floor in Room A. While some new structures in the 3rd century were built in *opus vittatum*, others used irregular masonry techniques and secondhand materials.

In the 4th-5th century, marble, stone, and other building materials were dismantled and placed in stacks near the center of the structure. Some rooms of the villa collapsed during this period. After, a new room was constructed on top of an amassment of concrete poured directly over layers of disintegrated masonry. This room appears to have been decorated with a crude

⁶⁵⁸ Cerrito et al. 2006, 346.

⁶⁵⁹ Ward-Perkins 1955; Fentress 1983; Sbarra 2009; SITAR OI code 11858.

⁶⁶⁰ Sbarra 2009, 236.

mosaic surface and, contemporaneously, a new accessway to the area was constructed.

Unfortunately, little indication is offered by the archaeological evidence about what sort of activities might have unfolded in this new space, whether domestic or otherwise.

*Site no. 26: Villa at the American Overseas School*⁶⁶¹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 26 (fig. 67; fig. 68; fig. 69) was found directly along the *via Cassia* and four of its rooms were documented with exceptional care by John Bryan Ward-Perkins in 1959. Later, in 2002-2003, emergency excavations documented some further rooms associated with the same building just to the north. The villa's construction dates to the 1st century CE, consisting of *opus reticulatum* and *opus latericium* walls, and a funerary monument was built nearby. The residential area was adorned with decorative pavements, wall frescoes, and *terracotta* relief panels. Further masonry interventions in *opus latericium* are dated to the 2nd century, and ceramic evidence suggests ongoing residential occupation throughout this time. In the 3rd century, buttresses were constructed against two walls, one of which partially destroyed a bichrome mosaic. 4th-5th-century occupation is indicated by ceramic finds, but little context about this phase is offered. Various cuts, spoliation activities, and irregular masonry constructions might date to this period, but have no secure absolute chronology.

⁶⁶¹ Ward Perkins 1959; Pallasmann-Unteregger 1987; De Franceschini 2005, 74-75; Cerrito et al. 2006; Angelelli 2015a; 2015b; 2015c; 2015d.

Site no. 27: Villa of Casalotti⁶⁶²

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 27 (fig. 70), located on the *via Cornelia*, was partially excavated in 1930, further investigated in the 1980s, and more systematically documented in 2000 and 2006.⁶⁶³ Its first phase dates to the 2nd century and featured *opus latericium* walls, mosaic pavements, wall fresco, a thermal sector, and facilities for agricultural production. Agricultural activities are especially attested by the recovery of numerous *dolia* found *in situ* during the 1930s. The site continued to be occupied until at least the 4th century and its decorative features may have been maintained up until this point. In the 4th-5th century, a glass kiln was constructed directly atop a mosaic surface, abutting a wall from the first phase of the villa. Nearby, dumping layers containing waste from the kiln mixed with animal bones and other materials were documented. Numerous *tamponature*, masonry in reused materials, crude floor surfaces, and spoliation activities are undatable. The remnants of *a cappuccina* grave markers and human bones in secondary position suggest the presence of burials within the villa at some point.

Site no. 28: Villa dell'Auditorium⁶⁶⁴

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 28 (fig. 71), excavated in 1996 and 1997 along the *via Flaminia* about 1.5 kilometers north of the Aurelian Walls, has garnered extensive attention for its archaic to mid-republican phases.⁶⁶⁵ On the other hand, the villa also preserves an interesting case of early

⁶⁶² Mineo et al. 1985; 1986; Santolini Giordiani 2001; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 155; De Franceschini 2005, 133-135; Marzano 2007, 552; Humar 2018; SITAR OI code 7615.

⁶⁶³ De Franceschini 2005, 133; SITAR OI code 7615.

⁶⁶⁴ Terrenato 2001; De Davide and Ricci 2003; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 155-156; De Franceschini 2005, 116-120; Di Santo 2006a; 2006b; Castrorao Barba 2020, 131. See in general Carandini et al. 2006.

⁶⁶⁵ Terrenato 2001; Carandini 2006.

abandonment, paralleling other examples in this study. Its earliest phase featured a courtyard floorplan and dates to the 6th century BCE.⁶⁶⁶ Extensive modifications and an overall expansion of the structure occurred through the 1st century BCE.⁶⁶⁷ By this point, the villa had taken on the canonical aspects of a residential area built around an *atrium* and a separate area for agricultural production activities.⁶⁶⁸

The last phases of the villa are broadly dated between the early 1st century BCE and early 3rd century CE.⁶⁶⁹ Residents carried out decorative interventions in the 1st or 2nd century CE, including the application of wall painting, mosaics, and marble revetment, as well as various structural interventions, including the building of a new *impluvium*. Production facilities were also expanded, and evidence for a kitchen along with a varied ceramic record point to the regular occurrence of dining activities. The last ceramics are possibly dated to the 4th century.

By the 2nd century, dumping activities led to the almost complete infill of the *atrium* area and the villa began to undergo spoliation. Starting in the 3rd century, a series of tombs was inserted within some layers of collapse, suggesting a general state of dilapidation around the periphery of the building (fig. 72). This is confirmed by the fact that two buttresses in *opus vittatum* were used to reinforce an older *opus reticulatum* wall. While these buttresses have been dated to the 4th century on the basis of construction technique,⁶⁷⁰ the excavators themselves underscore the lack of stratigraphic evidence for their chronology.⁶⁷¹ For this reason, this activity has been classified as undatable in the catalogue. On the other hand, even a conservative dating of the masonry structure to the 3rd century on the sole basis of technique would have important

⁶⁶⁶ Terrenato 2001, 7.

⁶⁶⁷ Terrenato 2001, 8-11; De Davide and Di Giuseppe 2006.

⁶⁶⁸ De Davide and Di Giuseppe 2006, 226-227.

⁶⁶⁹ Di Santo 2006a; 2006b.

⁶⁷⁰ De Davide and Ricci 2003.

⁶⁷¹ Di Santo 2006a, 296.

implications, suggesting the villa received structural repairs, began to collapse, underwent spoliation, and was used to house burials all within the span of a century. This is a reminder that the disuse and collapse of a building was not a singular moment. Instead, it was a nonlinear process, and while parts of a building might have been crumbling, others could have been actively maintained.

*Site no. 29: Villa of Pollenza*⁶⁷²

[View catalogue entry](#)

This villa (fig. 73) was first investigated in 1983 and 1984 and systematic excavations were conducted between 2002-2006. Built on a small hillside, the building was first constructed during the 1st century BCE in *opus reticulatum* and featured mosaic pavements and a sector for agricultural production.⁶⁷³ Further mosaics were added in the 1st century CE, and new walls in *opus mixtum* appeared in the 1st or 2nd century. In the 2nd century, the villa was expanded with the addition of decorative baths, and repairs in *opus latericium* were made of some older masonry structures. Based on the chronology of this evolution, De Franceschini highlights this site as an archetypical example of villa transformations in the Roman countryside during the early imperial period.⁶⁷⁴

In the 3rd or 4th century, at least three child burials were positioned in the *pars rustica*. Some irregular masonry constructions were erected in the 4th century, including *tamponature*, and a drainage channel was filled in and blocked. Simultaneously, repairs were made to a mosaic floor surface with reused bricks and ceramic tiles. Other activities pertaining to spoliation and

⁶⁷² Ammannato and Pulimanti 1985; Calci 2003; Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 135, footnote 14, 150; De Franceschini 2005, 101-103; Marzano 2007, 555; SITAR OI code 4048; Db Carta Archeologica LIAAM, Site ID 0580910163.

⁶⁷³ De Franceschini 2005, 101-102.

⁶⁷⁴ De Franceschini 2005, 103.

the use of spoliated materials are undatable on the basis of stratigraphic evidence, but probably occurred within a similar timeframe.

Discussion

As investigations into most of the sites just discussed are partial, the extensively documented sites no. 23 and 28 offer the best opportunity to analyze domestic transformations in Zone 6. Comparing these two sites, which are found along the same roadway but at significantly different distances from the city center, provides a useful basis for interpreting the other examples, which are distributed within a similar range of distance from Rome. Additionally, while site no. 23 is a vast monumental structure, site no. 28 displays a greater emphasis on agricultural production, even if decorative aspects were clearly prioritized during the early imperial period. Both sites therefore represent the social standing of wealthy property owners, but their different typologies offer the opportunity to consider whether the earlier character of villas had any bearing on their long-term fates, a topic to which I will return in chapter 5. In the case of these two villas, the rustic character of site no. 28 seems in line with the majority of case studies examined in Zone 6. This accords with the landscape image advanced by previous scholars, which highlights the luxurious nature of villas in the vicinity of *Veii* (like site no. 23) and the more agricultural function of those closer to Rome.

Along with its monumentality, another apparent element that sets site no. 23 apart from the others is its possible evidence for new habitation types starting in the 4th century. Based on the subdivision of a corridor connected to a portico on the upper terrace, the site's excavators suggest that the villa was reoccupied by a series of three individual habitations during its final

phases (*abitazione* A, B, and C on fig. 74).⁶⁷⁵ These dwellings, they argue, entailed various structural modifications, and preceded the transformation of the villa into a “spoliation worksite.”⁶⁷⁶

While it is clear that the subdivision of the portico predated the collection of spoliated materials at site no. 23,⁶⁷⁷ the association of this activity with multi-familial housing is tenuous. The extent of occupation in the villa indeed appears to contract by the 4th century, but various structural interventions occurred across the upper terrace; both the upper and lower terrace, meanwhile, were utilized for the burial of five individuals, and various additional “layers of frequentation” are documented in the lower area.⁶⁷⁸ Because contemporary activities were well distributed across the site, the subdivision of a single corridor is insufficient evidence for multi-familial occupation. The absence of hearths or other direct evidence for the preparation of food adjacent to the three supposed dwellings casts further doubt. Moreover, the excavators do not provide precise data on the locations of the various ceramic assemblages reported, rendering it impossible to evaluate the claim of multi-familial (re)occupation with any rigor.

The lack of information about the 3rd century at site no. 23 presents an obstacle in the way of understanding the essential transformation that occurred between the 2nd century, when residents of the villa undertook a massive program of embellishment and expansion, and the 4th-century, when it appears to have been downgraded. In this case, a lack of securely datable 3rd-century activities could potentially be read as a sign of temporary abandonment between the monumental phase and subsequent “reuse.” On the other hand, several activities at site no. 23

⁶⁷⁵ Fusco and Soriano 2018, 396-397.

⁶⁷⁶ Fusco 2021.

⁶⁷⁷ See Fusco and Soriano 2018, 398.

⁶⁷⁸ Fusco and Soriano 2018, 396-398.

have possible chronologies encompassing the 3rd century, meaning that a strand of continuous occupation cannot be ruled out.

In either case, what is clear is a general shift in occupation of the site away from monumental and luxury aspects and toward lower-impact domestic practices and regular interactions with spaces for the dead. This highlights the need to consider transformation as a gradual long-term process, not merely an episodic one. However, the essential question of whether the transformations observed for the 4th century at site no. 23 represent systemic cultural change, a willful choice of the villa's residents, or the infliction of economic woes upon the household is difficult to answer. The presence of imported pottery and fine glassware dating to the last phases would seem to count against the hypothesis of total economic decline, and it is unfortunate that greater attention is not dedicated to detailing these materials in the various reports on the villa. This sort of evidence is essential in understanding the subtle conditions leading up to and during periods of disuse or significant change in residential sites, and the absence of such reported data for site no. 23 presents a major barrier.

Turning to site no. 28, the situation during the 1st-2nd century CE appears similar to that of site no. 23, despite the differing typology and topographical setting of the two villas. Namely, decorative and structural interventions occurred through the 2nd century in both but fell off sharply afterwards. However, unlike site no. 23, the 1st-2nd century at site no. 28 also saw the beginning of doorway closures, irregular masonry constructions, and sporadic spoliation activities. Meanwhile, the burials in both sites occurred in clear relation to previous masonry structures (fig. 75).⁶⁷⁹ On the other hand, some of those at site no. 23 were clearly positioned *against* standing masonry features, while all the burials at site no. 28 cut into collapse layers or

⁶⁷⁹ For site no. 23, see Fusco and Soriano 2018, 397-398.

walls themselves. But despite the uncertainty surrounding the specific chronology of the final structural interventions at site no. 28, ceramic evidence falling within the range of the burials raises the possibility that the villa continued to be occupied, despite the collapse of some rooms. At site no. 23, the excavators leave little doubt that domestic occupation and burial occurred alongside one another in the villa. Taken at face value, these similar fates indicate that the abandonment process could unfold similarly in different chronological, typological, and topographical contexts.

How did these two situations compare with other sites in Zone 6? For sites no. 24-26, all located midway between sites no. 23 and 28 along the *via Cassia*, both similarities and differences occurred. At site no. 24, like site no. 28, some monumental investments occurred during the 1st century CE alongside instances of subdivision, irregular construction, and the destruction of previous decorations. However, agricultural activities appear to have continued for some time after this at site no. 24 (there is no direct evidence for this at site no. 28), and domestic occupation suggested by the pottery record might have corresponded with activities of spoliation and lime production dating to the 3rd-5th century. For site no. 25, investment in decorative elements and monumentality continued throughout the 3rd century alongside various domestic disuse activities, including informal modifications of the floorplan and the destruction of previous decorative surfaces. Spoliation activities in the 4th-5th century appear to have occurred absent of ongoing domestic occupation, and the villa entered into a state of at least partial collapse during this time. Like site no. 28, site no. 25 appears to have been frequented even after its collapse, but this entailed the construction of a new, single-room, decorated space rather than the insertion of graves. Site no. 26, meanwhile, appears continuously occupied through the 4th or 5th century, and its only securely datable domestic disuse activity pertains to the partial

destruction a bichrome mosaic during the structural upkeep of a damaged wall, an example of the frequent contradictory overlap between the seemingly dichotomous categories of use and disuse. Meanwhile, a vast quantity of irregularly constructed walls, *tamponature*, and various spoliation activities in the structure generally resemble the evidence from the other sites, even if their absolute chronology is impossible to determine. In any case, it is clear that while the situations in sites no. 24-26 bear several similarities (in particularly the presence of spoliation and/or recycling at sites no. 24 and 25), the chronologies and transformational sequence of each is unique. One aspect that unites all three is the absence of any burials (in contrast with sites no. 23 and 28), although the partial nature of the data precludes any strong conclusions that might be drawn from this.

The evidence for sites no. 27 and 29, on the *via Cornelia* and *via Nomentana* respectively, is similarly fragmentary. At site no. 27, various domestic use activities and investments in the structures and decoration of the villa occurred throughout the 2nd-4th century. However, the absence of secure chronologies for most of the later modifications, especially those which directly impact the villa's floorplan, make it impossible to know whether residential occupation occurred alongside the glass production activities assigned to the 4th-5th century. The levelling of collapse layers in at least one room might suggest some form of frequentation during or after the villa's dilapidation. Whether this was in connection with the undatable spoliation activities, burials, or the 4th-5th century glass-working phase, however, is unclear. At site no. 29, meanwhile, monumental building seems to have fallen off after the 2nd century. Three child burials and a series of structural interventions, along with a single decorative intervention, occurred during the 3rd-4th century. No activities are registered beyond this point and only a few

activity instances are undatable, suggesting that the villa was indeed abandoned by the 5th century.

In sum, the case studies in Zone 6 share a few common aspects in their transformations throughout the imperial period: a gradual deemphasis of monumental and decorative aspects and a growth in less ostentatious building forms, followed by periods of spoliation or recycling and – in the cases of sites no. 23, 28, and 29 – burial. On the other hand, the sites are differentiated by the specific sequence with which these transformations unfold. In some cases, burial and spoliation appear to have coincided with the cessation of domestic occupation, while in others, these transformations occurred as part of the living history of the household.

Zone 7: Before the Walls

Introduction

Zone 7 (fig. 76) takes us to the threshold of Rome in the area just beyond the southern portion of the Aurelian Walls, constructed in 270-275 and enclosing the urban fabric that had been sprawling outward since the late republican period. This sector of Rome is of prime importance for investigating the conceptual boundaries of the city and the connection between the urban core and periphery, a relationship acknowledged as blurry and complex.⁶⁸⁰ Of the three case studies in this zone, site no. 30 was located between the *via Ostiensis* and the Tiber River. Sites no. 31 and 32, meanwhile, sit between the *via Latina* and *via Appia* in the modern neighborhood of *San Giovanni*, an area of extensive rescue excavations in the past two decades in connection with the construction of the *Linea C* metro.⁶⁸¹ Paralleling these field efforts has

⁶⁸⁰ Dubbini 2015, 16-25; Emmerson 2020, 1-13. On the other hand, Dubbini (2015, 80) argues that the foundation of the Aurelian Walls served to make this distinction more rigid, a claim echoed by Rea and Saviane (2020, 26).

⁶⁸¹ Rea 2010; Rea and Saviane 2020.

been a series of important thematic studies on different portions of this extramural zone, which have mixed topographic analysis and literary sources to produce urbanistic microhistories.⁶⁸²

Starting in the area of site no. 30, Fabrizio Bisconti and Giovanna Ferri's recent study of the *via Ostiensis* includes extensive discussion of the portion straddling the Aurelian Walls.⁶⁸³ They trace the history of the area inside the walls as a commercial zone with important links to the Tiber River and *Ostia* from the 2nd century BCE forward.⁶⁸⁴ This aspect is best represented by the *Emporium/Porticus Aemilia* and *Monte Testaccio*.⁶⁸⁵ Outside the wall, the authors point to a situation of "mixed urbanism," with funerary monuments, private residences, public baths, and extensive quarries all found a short distance from the *Porta Ostiensis*.⁶⁸⁶ In Late Antiquity, the *via Ostiensis* became an important religious vector, connecting Rome with the *Basilica di San Paolo fuori le Mura*, which had been built at the site of a pagan necropolis.⁶⁸⁷ In terms of villas, the authors emphasize the mixed agricultural-residential nature of the few sites documented.⁶⁸⁸ They present the archetypical case of the villa partially documented on *via Libetta* in 2002 (fig. 76, C31), which was built in the 1st century CE and then abandoned and spoliated by the 2nd century CE.⁶⁸⁹ In general, Bisconti and Ferri argue that villa occupation ended by the 3rd century in this section of Rome, with gradual abandonment evidenced by a contraction of the occupied space within residences, followed by burials, episodic flooding from the Tiber, and, in cases like the villa with 2nd-century mosaics excavated beneath the *Federazione Italiana Consorzi Agricoli* (fig. 76, C32), wholesale conversion into necropolises.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁸² In particular, Dubbini 2015; Bisconti and Ferri 2018.

⁶⁸³ Bisconti and Ferri 2018.

⁶⁸⁴ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 11.

⁶⁸⁵ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 26-30, 35-37.

⁶⁸⁶ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 11, 43-57.

⁶⁸⁷ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 66-68, 105-138.

⁶⁸⁸ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 48.

⁶⁸⁹ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 47.

⁶⁹⁰ Bisconti and Ferri 2018, 47-48.

Moving closer to sites no. 31-32, Rachele Dubbini recently considered the area of the *via Appia* just outside the Aurelian Walls on a *longue durée* scale.⁶⁹¹ She imagines this area as a playground for Rome's wealthiest aristocrats during the late republican period, characterized by expansive gardens dotted with luxury villas, while funerary monuments were clustered along the roadway.⁶⁹² Dubbini describes the increasing privatization of this space throughout the imperial period.⁶⁹³ Starting with Augustus, she recounts how the city began to expand beyond its traditional limits, taking on an increasingly dense and residential aspect (the *continentia aedificia*) and incorporating existing funerary monuments within new constructions.⁶⁹⁴ This is epitomized by the conversion of some older funerary monuments into shop spaces.⁶⁹⁵ After the foundation of the Aurelian Walls, which she claims helped to reify the boundary between city and countryside, Dubbini maintains that villas in this area lost their agricultural function, as larger productive holdings were now located further and further from the sprawl of the city.⁶⁹⁶

Turning to the area around *San Giovanni*, the modern neighborhood in the area of sites no. 31-32, Rossella Rea and Nicoletta Saviane's 2020 article sums up some of the most notable results of emergency excavations stemming from construction of the *Linea C*.⁶⁹⁷ They preface their study with the caveat that an overall understanding of this area's ancient topography is rendered impossible by the limitations of rescue archaeology.⁶⁹⁸ In general, however, they argue that land use in this area grew more intense and diversified leading up to the construction of the Aurelian Walls, after which point this trend was reversed, resulting in a homogenous landscape

⁶⁹¹ Dubbini 2015.

⁶⁹² Dubbini 2015, 78.

⁶⁹³ Inside the walls, meanwhile, properties increasingly entered into imperial hands (Dubbini 2015, 81-82).

⁶⁹⁴ Dubbini 2015, 80.

⁶⁹⁵ Dubbini 2015, 83.

⁶⁹⁶ And thus, they grew more and more "private" and isolated from the public setting of the city, in line with standard social-historical narratives of the late antique house (Dubbini 2015, 81).

⁶⁹⁷ Rea and Saviane 2020. See also Rea 2010.

⁶⁹⁸ Rea and Saviane 2020, 25.

characterized primarily by agricultural activities and funerary monuments.⁶⁹⁹ The two examples of earlier imperial structures they cite, a probable barracks discovered alongside *viale Ipponio* and some thermal rooms attached to a portico documented on *via Sannio*, both show continuous modification through the 3rd century and a falloff in activity after that point. Tombs were placed in the structure on *via Sannio*, which plausibly pertains to a suburban villa, by the 5th century.⁷⁰⁰ Both structures appear to have experienced difficulty adapting to the local terrain, which was unstable and prone to flooding due to its proximity to a stream leading into the Tiber.⁷⁰¹

Case Studies (sites no. 30-32)

*Site no. 30: Villa at the Istituto Superiore Antincendi*⁷⁰²

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 30 (fig. 77) was documented in various rescue excavations conducted between 1996-2004 beneath the *Istituto Superiore Antincendi* on *via del Commercio*, a short distance west of the ancient *via Ostiensis* near the confluence of the *Almone* and Tiber. While the structure was not revealed in its entirety, sufficient data was gathered to suggest that the residence was divided into multiple sectors. To the north were a series of decorative spaces, including two apsidal rooms, circumscribed by a corridor and gravitating around a large central room. This area has been interpreted as a *pars urbana* based on the recovery of fragments of painted plaster and decorative pavements.⁷⁰³ A *pars rustica*, meanwhile, is identified among the spaces located in

⁶⁹⁹ Rea and Saviane 2020, 26. This contrasts with Dubbini's (2015, 81) argument that agricultural activities in local villas had largely ceased by this point. Nevertheless, based on the evidence provided by the series of luxury *domus* near *Porta Maggiore* destroyed by the construction of the Aurelian Walls, it seems clear that the area had begun to take on a more "residential" character by the 2nd century CE (Barbera and Colli 2005; Borgia et al. 2008a; 2008b). The situation was therefore likely to have been mixed.

⁷⁰⁰ Rea and Saviane 2020, 41. See Montella et al. (2008) for a discussion of evidence for other possible villas in the area (e.g., the structures documented on *via Populonia*).

⁷⁰¹ Rea and Saviane 2020, 28, 41-43.

⁷⁰² Di Gennaro & Griesbach 2003, 154; SITAR OI code 1608.

⁷⁰³ SITAR OI code 1608, 14.

the southern portion of the excavation, which featured basins, an *opus spicatum* pavement, and a circular well.⁷⁰⁴

The primary phase of the residence's construction dates to the 1st century CE and included *opus reticulatum* and *opus mixtum* masonry. On the basis of the materials recovered, especially those pertaining to domestic ceramic wares, occupation continued until at least the 2nd century. While pottery finds from the 3rd-4th century were also documented,⁷⁰⁵ it is unclear whether the villa continued to be occupied as a domestic residence by this point. Between the 2nd-3rd century, the *pars urbana* was systematically spoliated of its decorative elements, and some evidence suggests that these activities also targeted more mundane building materials like roof tiles and lead pipes. In one room, fragments of marble cornices were stacked in a corner, indicating their intentional collection, perhaps for lime production. No direct evidence for the recycling of materials was recovered onsite, however.

In the 3rd century, the area corresponding with the *pars rustica* was used for more than 20 tombs, including *a cappuccina*, *a loculo*, and *amphora* burials. Most were built directly against a series of drywall masonry features that, perhaps erected in phase with the tombs themselves, were unaligned with the original structures of the villa.⁷⁰⁶ Other tombs were placed within cuts in the villa's walls and floor surfaces. In the 4th century, a second group of five tombs was inserted within accumulation layers deposited by alluvial events. At some point after this, most of the walls were razed and the plot might have been converted into an area for cultivation. Undatable activities pertaining to the life of the villa include the restoration of a *cocciopesto* floor with

⁷⁰⁴ SITAR OI code 1608, 14-15.

⁷⁰⁵ SITAR OI code 1608, 25.

⁷⁰⁶ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003, 154.

reused mosaic *tesserae*, a *tamponatura* constructed in *opus reticulatum*, and the subdivision of a room with a wall in *opus craticum*.

*Site no. 31: Villa at Piazza Epiro*⁷⁰⁷

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Site no. 31 (fig. 78), positioned just to the north of the *via Latina* and documented during emergency excavations between 2004-2006, is a notable example of a villa constructed *ex novo* at Rome's threshold during Late Antiquity. The first phase of construction was in the 4th-5th century using *opus vittatum* and *opus mixtum*. While some evidence for decorative interventions is recorded, the general impression of the structure based on the portion documented is one of a rustic residence, suggested especially by the use of beaten earth and brick floor surfaces. At the same time, no direct evidence for agricultural production was documented in this partially excavated villa, and the current evidence all points to domestic functions.

Site no. 30 is a good example of how lived-in buildings were constantly changing buildings. Almost immediately after its foundation, inhabitants of the structure set out to modifying it, leading to a frenzied pace of transformation. New floor surfaces and masonry in crude techniques were added almost continuously into the 6th century, resulting in the subdivision of some rooms and the blockage of doorways. Pottery assemblages recovered inside the villa preserve a range of vessels (from common ware to imported goods and fine tableware) related to the purchase, preparation, and consumption of food, while two hearths and a probable kitchen area were documented in Room 3. Eventually, the building was abandoned under unclear circumstances and given over to widespread spoliation.

⁷⁰⁷ Montella et al. 2008.

Site no. 32: Villa on via Apulia⁷⁰⁸

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This residence (fig. 79) was brought to light in a series of separate trenches excavated between 2004-2006 and again in 2014. Despite the disjointed nature of the evidence, a general image of the structure's transformation over time can be offered. The earliest securely datable phase is in the 1st century CE,⁷⁰⁹ although the remains of frescoed walls and traces of a mosaic pavement likely date to the 1st century BCE, suggesting the possibility of an earlier phase.⁷¹⁰ In the 1st century CE, the pre-existing structures were modified. This entailed the destruction of some earlier masonry features and the restoration of others, including the perimeter wall, using a mixture of *opus mixtum*, *opus latericium*, and *opus reticulatum*. New pavements were also created, including at least one bichrome mosaic and a compact mortar surface. In the room with the mosaic, traces of wall fresco were documented that likely date to this same phase. No evidence is dated to the 2nd century, although the limited nature of the villa's excavation makes it impossible to interpret the significance of this absence. Prior to the 4th century, however, the deposition of alluvium within some of the excavated spaces suggests a period of at least partial abandonment. Whatever the case, in the 3rd-4th century, at least three separate floors had their levels raised, a modification that perhaps served to protect the structure against the encroachment of alluvial runoff. Decorative revetment was applied to three of these surfaces, including a mosaic with orthogonal *tesserae* and an *opus scutulatum* pavement consisting of irregular marble inlays inserted directly within an earthen surface. Some earlier walls were again destroyed in the 4th century, followed by new structures in *opus vittatum* and the addition of a new drainage

⁷⁰⁸ Baumgartner and Di Felice 2016; Montella et al. 2008.

⁷⁰⁹ Baumgartner and Di Felice 2016, 348.

⁷¹⁰ Montella 2008, 291.

channel. Finally, also dating to the 4th century are three burials cut directly into the most recently laid floor surfaces.

Discussion

Research on this zone has highlighted its mixed urbanistic nature in the earlier imperial period, followed by its homogenization after the foundation of the Aurelian Walls, resulting in an area primarily utilized for agricultural, residential, and funerary purposes. Sites no. 30-32 point to the variety of outcomes that could have emerged within this general picture. Of the three, site no. 30 preserves the most extensive evidence, and the emphasis its occupants placed on monumental aspects during the 1st century CE resonates with the privileged character assumed to have characterized this zone during that period. The same can be said for site no. 32. Meanwhile, clear evidence for investment in agricultural facilities at site no. 30 during the 1st century CE shows that economic production was also a priority for local households. In both sites no. 30 and 32, no evidence for structural interventions is noted for the 2nd century and tombs appeared by the 4th century. While renewed residential activity in the 3rd-4th century preceded the appearance of tombs in site no. 32, frequentation at site no. 30 appears limited to spoliation and funerary activities in this same period.

Although the evidence is limited, the focus on decorative elements in the 3rd-4th-century restorations of site no. 32 combined with its absence of evidence for agricultural activities resonates with Dubbini's argument that local villas lost their productive function by the time the Aurelian Walls were constructed. Site no. 31 offers a similar perspective. Founded *ex novo* in the 4th century, its occupants appear to have invested very little into monumental aspects. Despite its rustic appearance, however, the building had a clearly residential character, even if future investigations might reveal direct evidence confirming its designation as a *villa rustica*. Overall,

the different outcomes of these three buildings – from conversion to a burial ground to destruction for the establishment of an agricultural plot to frenzied processes of physical evolution – therefore all fit in with the view that following the foundation of the Aurelian Walls, the zone took on a primarily funerary, agricultural, and residential character.

An additional element that might unite these three sites is their possible struggle with periodic flooding. Both sites no. 30 and 32 preserve direct evidence of alluvial deposits in their abandonment layers, and the constant pace of modification at site no. 31 (particularly the raising of floor levels) could possibly be read as a struggle to protect against flooding events. While it is unclear to what extent flooding might have factored into the evolution of these buildings, water-management was a known issue in this area, owing to the vicinity of the Tiber and the presence of several spring-fed streams that cut through the landscape in ancient times. Therefore, Zone 7 offers a possible illustration of how aspects of the local terrain might have influenced the transformation of residential buildings in some settings.

Zone 8: Between the Walls

Introduction

Zone 8 (fig. 80) corresponds with the portion of Rome falling between the Aurelian and Servian walls. This portion of the city was constituted by several different neighborhoods in antiquity, each with a unique microhistory and specific urbanistic character. The general image offered by scholars, however, stresses the sparse, monumental aspect of these areas during the late republican period, followed by a transition toward dense urbanism throughout the imperial period as Rome expanded beyond the Servian Walls. The majority of the case studies here belong to the *Campus Martius*, while sites no. 43 and 44 are found in *Trastevere*. Site no. 37,

meanwhile, is located on the eastern Esquiline Hill, a less densely occupied sector of the ancient city that, unlike other portions of Zone 8, continued to be characterized by *horti* and various monumental structures during the mid-imperial period.⁷¹¹

Beginning with the *Campus Martius*, the area took on its characteristic monumental aspect during the late republican and early imperial periods, marked first by the construction of the Theater of Pompey, followed by the various Augustan building projects: the Theater of Balbus, the Baths of Agrippa, the Mausoleum of Augustus, the *Horologium* of Augustus, and the *Ara Pacis*.⁷¹² The 2004 work of Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani and a 2014 study by Spera have offered the most comprehensive recent assessments of the area for the late imperial period and early Middle Ages.⁷¹³ Spera argues that the urban fabric of the *Campus Martius* displayed a remarkable physical continuity during the 4th-5th century, a period when various entertainment buildings, baths, and some pagan temples were still maintained or utilized.⁷¹⁴ Following this, Spera highlights the slow transformation of many public buildings, indicated particularly by their use for new activities related to artisanal production, burial, domestic habitation, and paleo-Christian worship. In the *Crypta Balbi*, for instance, the eastern exedra underwent several changes between the 4th-8th century, first adapted into a glass workshop, then a space for burials, then a trash heap, and finally a lime kiln.⁷¹⁵ Spera notes that such transformations were gradual and did not necessarily preclude the partial utilization of public structures in their original form.⁷¹⁶ Although not in the *Campus Martius*, she offers the Colosseum as a point of comparison, where the continuation of games and spectacles, structural maintenance, spoliation,

⁷¹¹ Coates-Stephens 2001, 217; Barrano et al. 2007.

⁷¹² Spera 2014, 47.

⁷¹³ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 200-205; Spera 2014.

⁷¹⁴ Spera 2014, 49-51.

⁷¹⁵ Spera 2014, 59.

⁷¹⁶ Spera 2014, 61.

and inhumation burials were all aspects of the building's 5th-6th-century life.⁷¹⁷ Of the different forms of reuse that she highlights, Spera argues that artisanal production was the most significant, completely reconfiguring the *Campus Martius* during the Middle Ages.⁷¹⁸

Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani place more emphasis on private buildings in their assessment of the *Campus Martius*, highlighting the discontinuity of the urban fabric as a major theme. They offer several examples of abandonment from the 5th century forward, such as the *insulae* beneath the *Cinema Trevi* (fig. 80, C33) and at *Piazza Colonna* (fig. 80, C34), none of which shows later signs of activity.⁷¹⁹ On the other hand, the authors also stress reuse as an important aspect. The sacred area at the *Largo Argentina*, for example, was converted into a monastery, while the private *insula* at *San Paolo alla Regola* (fig. 80, C35) was reoccupied in the 6th century seemingly for activities related to the butchering of pigs.⁷²⁰ Elsewhere, however, some residential structures appear to have undergone unabated occupation well into the early medieval period. This is the case for the *insulae* documented along *via dei Maroniti* (fig. 80, C36), as well as the famous example of the *Ara Coeli insula* (fig. 80, C37) near the Capitoline.⁷²¹

In sum, while Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani point to some examples of continuity in the *Campus Martius* and note a short-lived uptick in monumental investment during the Ostrogothic period, they ultimately emphasize its degradation.⁷²² A primary piece of evidence they used to support this view is the appearance of burials in public buildings, such as those dated to the 6th-7th century in the Baths of Nero.⁷²³ The presence of these burials, according to

⁷¹⁷ Spera 2014, 61-62.

⁷¹⁸ Spera 2014, 62.

⁷¹⁹ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 203.

⁷²⁰ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 201, 202-203.

⁷²¹ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 201-202, 203.

⁷²² Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 204.

⁷²³ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 204. The authors note, however, that the building continued to function as a bath during the 5th century and that by the time the first burials appear, the building is still in a "good state of conservation;" cf. Spera (2014, 61), who argues that the transition of public buildings to forms of reuse, including burial, was often piecemeal and not necessarily indicative of outright abandonment or the total loss of original functions.

the authors, is evidence for a leopard-spot occupation of the *Campus Martius* during the Middle Ages, showing that the neighborhood was never completely abandoned, but “severely depopulated.”⁷²⁴

Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani paint a very similar image of *Trastevere*, which they present as a densely populated area until the 5th century, after which several examples of abandoned or seemingly reused *insulae* appear in the archaeological record. The 5th-century infant burial in the former “*Caserma del Reparto a Cavallo di Pubblica Sicurezza*” (fig. 80, C38) has already been mentioned in chapter 3.⁷²⁵ Another example is the 2nd-3rd-century *insula* discovered beneath the *Convento di San Pasquale* (fig. 80, C39), where a newly built *domus* was completely interred during the 5th century. Later, the whole area was used as a dump before a series of burials appeared in the 6th-7th century.⁷²⁶ Finally, several residential buildings in the area were converted into churches, as is the case for the titular *Santa Maria in Trastevere*, *San Crisogono*, and *Santa Cecilia in Trastevere* (site no. 43).⁷²⁷

Both the *Campus Martius* and *Trastevere* thus offer an archaeological record that is spotty, but nevertheless considered sufficient for forming a basic image of the early medieval urban transition. An even sparser record exists for the neighborhood of site no. 37, the Esquiline, an area whose archaeological heritage was more gravely impacted by the urban expansion of the 19th century.⁷²⁸ The area is known for its association with the *Horti Lamiani*, a vast holding of greenspace that entered into imperial hands during the reign of Tiberius.⁷²⁹ By the 4th century, however, while the portion of the Esquiline within the Servian Walls (nearer Nero’s *Domus*

⁷²⁴ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 204.

⁷²⁵ See above, page 65.

⁷²⁶ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 193.

⁷²⁷ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 191-192.

⁷²⁸ Coates-Stephens 2001, 218-219.

⁷²⁹ Pegurri 2022, 47.

Transitoria) probably became a dense residential neighborhood of the senatorial aristocracy,⁷³⁰ the image is less clear for the portion nearer to site no. 37. In one of the most influential recent studies, Robert Coates-Stephens argued that evidence such as the reuse of statuary fragments in the walls of a private thermal complex on *via Ariosto* points to the private appropriation of materials sourced from disused imperial properties in the area during Late Antiquity.⁷³¹ Recent data has generally supported this view of a spoliated landscape. At *Piazza Vittorio Emanuele II*, excavations between 2006-2011 revealed a *nymphaeum* inserted within a monumental building dating to the Severan period.⁷³² The structure, almost certainly part of the imperial holding, was spoliated as early as the 4th century.⁷³³ At *Piazza Dante*, another *nymphaeum* associated with the imperial property was discovered during excavation activities between 2013-2017, revealing a similar process of disuse and spoliation by the 5th century.⁷³⁴ The building was then used for various artisanal purposes, including metalworking and the baking of bread, before it was definitively abandoned in the 6th century.⁷³⁵ Similarly, the structure at *Piazza Vittorio* also documents a long history of frequentation after its initial abandonment. Here, a limited series of masonry interventions broadly dated between the 5th-9th century possibly related to a small domestic habitation, and a group of associated burials is dated to the 8th-10th century.⁷³⁶

On the whole, then, while the *Campus Martius*, *Trastevere*, and the Esquiline represent three unique neighborhoods of Rome, some of the same urban transformations occurred from Late Antiquity forward: the gradual disuse of both public and private buildings, often

⁷³⁰ Pegurri 2022, 48. See also Guidobaldi 2004, 42-45.

⁷³¹ Coates-Stephens 2001.

⁷³² Pegurri 2022, 50-51; Barbera et al. 2010; Barbera 2013.

⁷³³ Barbera et al. 2010, 49. Pegurri (2022, 50) notes that the structure's sewage infrastructure went out of use by the late 3rd-early 4th century, the date of its infill layers.

⁷³⁴ Pegurri 2022, 51-52.

⁷³⁵ Pegurri 2022, 51-52.

⁷³⁶ Barbera et al. 2010, 21, 41-46, 49.

accompanied by their spoliation and reuse for other purposes, especially burial and artisanal/industrial activities.

Case Studies (sites no. 33-44)

*Site no. 33: via del Tritone Domus*⁷³⁷

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Site no. 33 (fig. 81) was a *domus* carved out of a preexisting 1st-2nd-century-CE *insula* to which site no. 34 also belongs. The structure (along with nearby sites no. 35 and 36) occupied a position about 200 meters from the Servian Walls at the fork of two roads, one of which is the *via Salaria Vetus*. This northern portion of the *Campus Martius* had a distinctly suburban character in the early imperial period, illustrated by the Augustan-era tombs later incorporated within the structures of the *insulae* (a significant example of the negotiation between domestic space and funerary space).⁷³⁸ It then assumed an increasingly dense urban form in the following centuries, resulting in a mixed residential and commercial space.⁷³⁹ Within this context, site no. 33 was first constructed in *opus latericium* around the beginning of the 3rd century, contemporaneous with the luxurious thermal structure built across the street.⁷⁴⁰ A large portion of the *domus* was thoroughly documented by excavations between 2010-2015, revealing a central, colonnaded garden area flanked by a series of smaller rooms.⁷⁴¹ Evidence dating to the building's first phase suggests that it was decorated with marble wall revetment, marble slab pavements, and at least one bichrome floor mosaic.

⁷³⁷ Acampora 2017; Saviane 2017. See in general Baumgartner 2017c.

⁷³⁸ Pultrone 2017.

⁷³⁹ Baumgartner 2017b.

⁷⁴⁰ Saviane 2017, 114.

⁷⁴¹ Saviane 2017, 107. For the circumstances of the excavations, which were responsible for uncovering sites no. 34-36, see Baumgartner 2017a.

In the 4th-5th century, residents continued to invest in decorative aspects. In the western portion, an apsidal hall was constructed, and the garden received a new portico. A circular fountain was built between these two spaces, while the entire area was embellished with updated mosaics and marble revetment. In the eastern portion, a probable *stibadium* was built in Room 4a. Meanwhile, various elements of the house's hydraulic infrastructure were maintained and reworked. These modifications were accompanied by a series of *tamponature* and subdividing walls, some constructed in regular masonry techniques.

In the 5th-7th century, occupants of the building continued to modify its layout through the construction of further *tamponature* and subdividing walls, whose masonry techniques took on an increasingly irregular form. Post-built additions appeared in the apsidal hall by the end of the 5th century and, later on, in two other nearby rooms. Widespread spoliation also occurred throughout this period, evidently in tandem with ongoing occupation, since some utilitarian interventions in the structure, such as the raising of floor levels, post-date the spoliation activities. Other contemporary domestic use activities are suggested by the presence of a *dolium* and hearth in phase with these events. By the 6th century, the thermal building across the street had apparently gone out of use and was utilized as a trash heap by the inhabitants of the *domus* and other nearby structures.⁷⁴² Toward the 6th-7th century, Room 9 was infilled with dumping layers. In the 7th century, the last significant activities were marked by the deposition of two *amphorae* one over the other inside of a trench, possibly an infant burial.

⁷⁴² Acampora 2017, 154.

Site no. 34: *via del Tritone Building A*⁷⁴³

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Site no. 34 (fig. 82) was a smaller residence physically connected with site no. 33 and located just to its west. Its first phase was contemporaneous with the original construction of the *insula* in the 1st-2nd century CE. Modifications were carried out in the 2nd-3rd century in *opus latericium* and new floor surfaces were added. In the 3rd-5th century, a new stairway was built in irregularly laid, reused marble blocks. More dramatic transformations occur between the 5th-7th century. Floor levels were raised throughout the building, obliterating at least one mosaic, and replaced with simple tile surfaces. Some doorways were closed or shrunk, and new masonry additions were built in irregular brickwork and reused materials. A single infant burial, meanwhile, was deposited along the western perimeter wall.

Site no. 35: *via del Tritone Building D*⁷⁴⁴

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 35 (fig. 82) was just to the north of sites no. 33 and 34. Along with site no. 36, it was part of the same *insula* of the thermal structure mentioned in the description of site no. 33. The floorplan of the residence was defined by a trapezoidal perimeter and consists of a series of interconnected rectangular rooms, some of which were likely commercial spaces (*tabernae*) with access directly to the street.⁷⁴⁵ The construction of these spaces, along with some *opus spicatum* floors and various hydraulic infrastructural elements, dates to the 1st-2nd century. In the 2nd-3rd century, some pavements were restored, and three doorways were plugged with *tamponature* in

⁷⁴³ Acampora 2017; Buonaguro 2017.

⁷⁴⁴ Acampora 2017; Buonaguro 2017.

⁷⁴⁵ Buonaguro 2017, 98-99.

opus latericium. In the 3rd-5th century, two doorways leading to the street were blocked off and two rooms inside the residence were subdivided. These interventions were carried out in *opus vittatum* as well as irregular techniques in reused materials. New basins were also constructed in reused materials and, along with the recovery of a millstone, point to ongoing commercial activities in the *tabernae*. In the 5th century, one of the earlier *opus spicatum* floors was covered with a beaten earth surface. No activities are registered for the 6th century. In a timeframe dated generically from the 7th century forward, a kiln was constructed in reused bricks, an indication of artisanal activities.

Site no. 36: via del Tritone Building F⁷⁴⁶

[View catalogue entry](#)

Just to the east of site no. 35, site no. 36 (fig. 82) consists of a series of rooms along the *via Salaria Vetus* connected with a mixed residential-commercial building. It was originally built in the 2nd-3rd century reusing a pre-existing structure and features, like site no. 35, various *opus spicatum* pavements. A decorative mosaic with large *tesserae* is also dated to this phase. A wave of interventions in the 3rd-5th century served to update the floorplan and add commercial infrastructure for metalworking activities: some of the doorways along the street were walled off, one room was subdivided, the mosaic floor was replaced with a tile and brick surface, and basins were added along with other hydraulic infrastructural features. Ceramic evidence suggests the at least partial domestic utilization of the building in the 4th century, and dumping layers containing transport vessels, tableware, and kitchenware indicate the continuation of food-processing

⁷⁴⁶ Acampora 2017; Buonaguro 2017; Casalini 2017.

activities into the 6th century. Further management of the building's hydraulic infrastructure also occurred in the 5th-6th century.

*Site no. 37: Domus on via Giolitti*⁷⁴⁷

[View catalogue entry](#)

This residence (fig. 83) was located about 350 meters northwest of the monumental structure dating to the Severan period discovered at *Piazza Vittorio*.⁷⁴⁸ Excavated in three separate trenches, its floorplan is known only partially. Moreover, while the chronological succession of the activities discussed below is based on the interpretations provided in the field report, the excavators note the generic, tentative nature of the site's dating to "Late Antiquity."⁷⁴⁹ Despite these limitations, the site's location in an area of Rome whose residential transformations during Late Antiquity are little understood warrant its inclusion in this study.

The original structure appears to have been a rich *domus*, evidence for which is provided by an *opus sectile* pavement and various elements of hydraulic infrastructure related to a probable garden area.⁷⁵⁰ Some drainage features were modified after their initial construction. Other later interventions included the construction of irregular dividing walls and beaten earth floor surfaces. The structure was eventually spoliated and subject to the accumulation of debris. A basin along with some walls in *opus vittatum* were then erected above these abandonment layers. Elsewhere, a group of tombs points to the reuse of the area for funerary purposes.

⁷⁴⁷ Serlorenzi et al. 2016.

⁷⁴⁸ For the identification of the structure as a *domus*, see Serlorenzi et al. 2016, 269.

⁷⁴⁹ Serlorenzi et al. 2016, footnote 3.

⁷⁵⁰ Although the presence of *opus reticulatum* walls is suggestive of an earlier structure.

*Site no. 38: Domus on via Cesare Battisti*⁷⁵¹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 38 (fig. 84) takes us to the southern portion of the *Campus Martius*, just to the northwest of *Piazza Venezia* and thus in the neighborhood of the imperial *fora*. Also subject to only limited excavation in two separate trenches, the evidence for residential occupation of this structure is dated to the 4th-5th century. Within this timeframe, a monumental colonnade was constructed, probably related to a peristyle, and decorative floor surfaces were added in addition to wall frescoes. Later, the colonnade was walled up, and marble revetment was applied to the new masonry, which was built using irregular brickwork. Just off the peristyle, a new decorative floor surface was added, consisting of irregularly placed and colored *tesserae* (fig. 11). The structure appears to have been destroyed by a fire by the end of the 4th century.⁷⁵² Much later, in the 8th-9th century, thick layers of ash were deposited in the building, likely related to nearby industrial activities.⁷⁵³

*Site no. 39: Palazzo Valentini Domus A*⁷⁵⁴

[View catalogue entry](#)

Sites no. 39 and 40 (fig. 85) both pertain to the complex excavated between 2005-2010 beneath *Palazzo Valentini*, positioned just to the north of Trajan's Forum, a project which presented the remarkable opportunity to undertake the extensive documentation of a private context just outside the Servian Walls in the heart of Rome.⁷⁵⁵ Excavations documented portions

⁷⁵¹ Egidi 2011; Serlorenzi and Ricci 2015.

⁷⁵² Egidi 2011, 103.

⁷⁵³ Serlorenzi and Ricci 2015, 165.

⁷⁵⁴ Baldassarri 2009; Faedda 2019.

⁷⁵⁵ Baldassarri 2008.

of two structures, one of which (*Domus B*, site no. 40) eventually overtook the other (*Domus A*, site no. 39). The documented portion of site no. 39 consists of a peristyle and three adjacent rooms. The initial construction of the residence dates to the 2nd century CE in a formerly public area characterized by large stalls fitted with basins.⁷⁵⁶ The first activities in this century relating to the construction of a private residence entailed the modification of the earlier drainage system, the addition of a new fountain, and the raising of floor levels. In the 3rd-4th century, a characteristic *atrium* was added (another late example of this form, along with site. 19) and this featured a mosaic floor surface and *impluvium*. Other decorative interventions foresaw the application of marble wall revetment. In the process, some features were partially spoliated. By the 4th century, site no. 39 was completely overtaken by site no. 40 and ceased to function as a distinct residence.

*Site no. 40: Palazzo Valentini Domus B*⁷⁵⁷

[View catalogue entry](#)

Occupying the same *insula* as site no. 39, the first phase of construction for site no. 40 (fig. 6; fig. 85) also dates to the 2nd century CE and was marked by the erection of perimeter walls, enclosing a former basalt-paved piazza space, and transforming it into a residential courtyard.⁷⁵⁸ Just off this courtyard, the first paved floors and hydraulic infrastructure for a thermal sector were created in the 2nd-3rd century. In the 3rd century, residents embellished the basalt courtyard area, creating an ornamental garden with a fountain. Mosaics and marble wall

⁷⁵⁶ Faedda 2019, 4.

⁷⁵⁷ Baldassarri 2009; 2016; 2017; Faedda 2019. For additional bibliography on both of the *Palazzo Valentini* structures, see: Baldassarri 2008; 2011; Napoli and Baldassarri 2015.

⁷⁵⁸ Faedda 2019, 4.

revetment were added in the 3rd-4th century, even as, like in site no. 39, the presence of cuts dating to this same period points to the spoliation of some previous building materials.

In the 4th century, occupants of the building undertook a massive program of remodeling, providing the residence with its characteristic elements. *Opus sectile* pavements (some of which reutilized previous materials) and new marble wall revetment were added, the thermal sector was expanded and redecorated (fig. 86), a multi-apsidal feature was constructed, and some earlier features were restored. Activities related to the maintenance of decorative and infrastructural features continued into the 5th century, often making use of materials spoliated from existing features. Floor levels were soon raised, obliterating elements of the courtyard along with a travertine floor surface. At least one room was subdivided, and some areas were given over to the dumping of waste. Marble floors were spoliated from the thermal sector, while this same area was used for the storage of ceramic vessels related to the preparation and consumption of food. The inhabitants had access to fine tableware during this period. By the end of the 5th century, a single *a cappucina* tomb was placed in the courtyard area, a notably early example of intramural burial. At some point in the 5th century or later, preexisting walls and mosaic surfaces were cut during the construction of an irregular masonry feature unaligned with the previous floorplan.

Spoliation activities continued into the 6th century, increasingly stripping the building of its precious decorative materials. Dumping activities also persisted. In the western portion of the *domus*, however, a new marble panel floor surface was created with reused materials. A kiln was then constructed in the thermal sector, leaving behind direct evidence for glass production. Some portions of the structure collapsed by the 7th century, and further materials in marble and metal were removed afterward. In the southwestern portion of the building, waste related to the production of lime was deposited.

Site no. 41: S. Ambrogio della Massima⁷⁵⁹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 41 (fig. 87) was discovered during the 2000 excavation of a series of rooms beneath the complex of the former *Convento di Sant’Ambrogio della Massima*.⁷⁶⁰ In the seven rooms investigated, various *opus latericium* and *opus vittatum* walls emerged along with some floor surfaces, including one embellished with marble panels. Domestic pottery in phase with these structures was also recovered. These remains are interpreted as part of a wealthy *domus* dating to the 4th century.⁷⁶¹ The residence would have been positioned within the northeast corner of the *Porticus Philippi* and the western portion of the *Porticus Octaviae*.⁷⁶² As a result, although the image provided by its excavation is limited, the structure serves as a classic example of the encroachment into public space of private residences in Late Antiquity.⁷⁶³

At some point from the end of the 4th century onward, the floor of the area in Room 7 was removed. This was followed by the deposition of layers containing partially fired masses of clay, suggestive of ceramic production. Perhaps in phase with this activity is a series of *tamponature* and spoliation events, although these interventions lack a precise chronology. Later on, likely in the 6th century, the spaces found in Room 4 were filled with thick deposits of building material, including fragments of masonry, *opus sectile* and mosaic pavements, various marble paneling, disintegrated mortar, and *cubilia*.⁷⁶⁴ The admixture of these inclusions suggests that they related to a single activity of demolition rather than the intentional collection of

⁷⁵⁹ Angoli et al. 2014.

⁷⁶⁰ Angoli et al. 2014, 205-206.

⁷⁶¹ Angoli et al. 2014, 318-319.

⁷⁶² Angoli et al. 2014, 315, 319.

⁷⁶³ For the general phenomenon, see Ellis 1988, 566; Chavarría 2007a, 123, 127; Baldini 2007. For Rome, see Coates-Stephens 1996, 249-254; Guidobaldi 1999, 56-57; Santangeli Valenzani 2007; Machado 2012a; 2012b; 2018.

⁷⁶⁴ Angoli et al. 2014, 310-311.

recyclable materials. At some point, the entire area was transformed into the *Convento di Sant'Ambrogio*, a structure whose first historical mention dates to the early 9th century.⁷⁶⁵

*Site no. 42: Domus at Palazzo Spada*⁷⁶⁶

[View catalogue entry](#)

Two areas located along the *Viccolo del Polverone* beneath the *Palazzo Spada* were excavated between 1996-2009, revealing the remnants of a richly decorated private residence occupying a 1st-2nd-century-CE *insula* (fig. 88; fig. 89).⁷⁶⁷ During the 2nd century, the residence was embellished, including with bichrome mosaics.⁷⁶⁸ In the same century, two basins were constructed in the space adjacent to a decorated room in Area 1, perhaps related to the operation of a *follonica*. The presence of these features in an otherwise residential area of the house is notable.

No activities are registered during the 3rd century, perhaps indicative of a brief period of abandonment. In the 4th century, however, the southern portion of the residence (Area 2) was extensively remodeled. An apsidal hall was constructed and decorated with an *opus sectile* pavement and marble wall-revetment. The room also possessed a secondary apse embellished with a fountain feature. Later, in the 4th or 5th century, a portion of the pavement was replaced with reused marble panels, one of which included a funerary inscription. In the same phase, a room in Area 1 had its window walled up and was subdivided. Its pavement was partially

⁷⁶⁵ Angoli et al. 2014, 319.

⁷⁶⁶ Rinaldoni and Savi Scarponi 1999; Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 123; Acampora and Baumgartner 2018. See also Ferrazzoli and Rinaldoni 2001; Rinaldoni 2004.

⁷⁶⁷ One of the trenches (Area 1; fig. 89) also revealed the remains of a second *insula*, “*edificio B*,” indicated as A1 on fig. 88 (Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 24-25). The residence examined here consists of Area 2 (fig. 89) plus the portion of Area 1 labeled as A2 on fig. 88.

⁷⁶⁸ The mosaic and wall painting recovered in room A2 (Rinaldoni and Savi Scarponi 1999, 5-6) might also date to this phase but do not have a secure chronology.

spoliated and replaced with a surface consisting of basalts and reused blocks. In the 5th century, some floor levels were raised, and portions of the building begin to collapse shortly after.

Extensive dumping occurred within the residence along with further spoliation activities.

The final abandonment of the building might have resulted from traumatic event such as an earthquake.⁷⁶⁹ Later, in the 6th or 7th century, a series of 18 *a cappuccina* tombs was placed in the area currently constituting the garden of *Palazzo Spada*. Legacy excavation data suggests the presence of early medieval walls in the area, perhaps a precursor of the 12th-century industrial zone which would develop in this sector of the *Campus Martius*.⁷⁷⁰

*Site no. 43: S. Cecilia in Trastevere*⁷⁷¹

[View catalogue entry](#)

The *domus* beneath the basilica of *Santa Cecilia in Trastevere* (fig. 90) was first encountered during 19th-century excavations before it was systematically explored in the 1980s and -90s.⁷⁷² The most recent data was summarized by the 2004 volume of Neda Parmegiani and Alberto Pronti, offering an in-depth look at the transformation of the site over the course of several centuries.

The earliest evidence pertaining to a residential structure is a group of basins dating to the 1st century CE. In the 2nd century CE, the *insula* in which the residence was located underwent a complete transformation, and the house was remodeled. Floor levels were raised, and new infrastructure was added for drainage and a thermal sector. A central courtyard was created,

⁷⁶⁹ Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 26.

⁷⁷⁰ Rinaldoni 2004, 380; Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 26.

⁷⁷¹ Auriemma 2004; Meneghini & Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 120; Riganati 2004. See in general Parmegiani and Pronti 2004. See also La Bella et al. 2007.

⁷⁷² Goodson 2007, 9-12; 2010, 96-99.

destroying an earlier decorative *cocciopesto* surface. In this phase, the home was embellished with mosaics and marble pavements.

In the 3rd century, new wall painting was added, while some infrastructural elements were updated. The colonnade of the courtyard was partially walled up and the central area was divided into a series of small rooms. In Room O, a new pavement was created using mixed, irregular materials. In the 4th century, three more rooms were subdivided, and some doorways were walled off by masonry features made of reused bricks. These changes were contemporaneous with the laying of new mosaics and the beginning of work on an apsidal hall in the northwestern portion of the home. The hall, decorated with a basin, marble wall revetment, mosaic floor, and colonnade, appears to have been left unfinished. Elsewhere, ongoing maintenance of the building's infrastructure was carried out and some walls were shored up with pilasters.

More drastic changes occurred moving into the 5th century when a feature probably related to a baptismal font was added, marking the introduction of cultic structures into the building. The feature was constructed with reused and irregular materials. Extensive dumping occurred in the exedra around this time. After, a new marble slab pavement was built atop the dumping layers. Some preexisting walls were restored, and new masonry features were built, further subdividing the rooms of the house. By the end of the 5th century, the entire structure was converted into the titular basilica.

The most recent excavations documented a rich record of ceramics spanning a wide range of classes and productions and dating in a broad arc between the 1st-6th century CE. This evidence suggests that the at least partial ongoing occupation of the building for domestic purposes continued right up to the foundation of the church and possibly for a short time after.

Excavations in the early 20th century encountered two burials within the *atrium* of the basilica, possibly dating to the 6th-7th century.

*Site no. 44: Convento di San Francesco a Ripa*⁷⁷³

[View catalogue entry](#)

Located just south of site no. 43, site no. 44 (fig. 91) was excavated in 2009-2010 as part of a larger, decades-long project aimed at the study and conservation of the *Convento di San Francesco a Ripa* in *Trastevere*.⁷⁷⁴ These operations revealed several rooms related to a private domestic context whose foundation happened in the 2nd century CE, the period to which its *opus latericium* walls and bichrome mosaic belong. Pottery evidence from this century includes transport vessels, kitchenware, and tableware. In the 3rd century, a series of embankments made of mortar and ceramic shards was constructed just outside the house, and these are interpreted as a reinforcement against flooding from the nearby Tiber. No major structural interventions are recorded within the residence, but the presence of 3rd-century pottery points to its continued occupation. Floor levels were raised in the 4th-5th century through the deposition of layers composed primarily of ceramic waste, and a new beaten earth floor was added in Room A. The presence of a millstone in this room suggests its use for commercial activities. The retaining walls were maintained in the 5th century as new walls appeared inside the residence in *opus vittatum*. The backside of these walls was left unfaced. While ceramic evidence suggests the ongoing occurrence of domestic use activities into the 5th century, the rooms in question were soon filled with dumping layers. Room A was spoliated in the 6th century. The last traces possibly related to ongoing domestic habitation in the area pertain to various 6th-century

⁷⁷³ Filippi et al. 2011.

⁷⁷⁴ Filippi et al. 2011, 149. See, in general, the contributions in Degni and Porzio 2011.

assemblages containing a high quantity of glass fragments (cups, glasses, bottles, lamps, and *ampolline*).⁷⁷⁵ By the end of the 6th century, the entire area began to be covered with alluvial deposits from the flooding of the Tiber.

Discussion

Like Zone 7, the urban setting of Zone 8 serves as a particularly limiting factor in the documentation of its archaeological contexts, leading to a more variable dataset in terms of quality and extent compared with most of the other zones in this study. As a result, the impression provided by the fragmentarily documented sites in Zone 8 must be balanced against the limited number of extensively documented residences. Two salient aspects that emerge from this exercise include the frequency of industrial reuse in domestic contexts and the cyclical modulation between episodes of spoliation and destruction, on one hand, and building and remodeling on the other. Neither aspect appears limited to the period of Late Antiquity; instead, both can be traced over a wide chronological range.

Beginning with the structures in the northern *Campus Martius*, sites no. 33-36 represent exceptional data sources for domestic transformations and have attracted attention in the recent studies of Allison Emmerson and Hendrik Dey. Emmerson analyzes the structures through the lens of urbanistic transformations impacting the suburban surroundings of Rome. She offers them as a key example of the phenomenon by which “high-density residences, shops, and workshops” began to overtake Rome’s greenbelt following the Augustan period.⁷⁷⁶ She offers the nearby *insulae* beneath the former *Cinema Trevi* (C33) and *Piazza Colonna* (C34) as further examples.⁷⁷⁷ In the 4th-5th century, however, Emmerson describes how this density began to

⁷⁷⁵ Filippi et al. 2011, 188.

⁷⁷⁶ Emmerson 2020, 33.

⁷⁷⁷ Emmerson 2020, 37-38.

subside, as many *insulae* were “converted to large houses.”⁷⁷⁸ Dey, on the other hand, emphasizes the fate of these buildings in the urban environment that emerged during the 5th century and later. He argues that the example of the *Cinema Trevi insulae* (C33), which were evidently destroyed by a fire during the 5th century, represent a broader phenomenon of abandonment and destruction in this period, and he reads the *via del Tritone* structures within this context.⁷⁷⁹ Both authors therefore analyze the structures in terms of urban transformations at different moments in Rome’s history.

Turning to a closer look at the transformations that unfolded *inside* these residences, one aspect of the *via del Tritone* structures that stands out immediately is the range of economic statuses they represent. In the smaller and less ostentatious houses, sites no. 34-36, we witness a fairly even pace of transformation over time: floorplans were constantly adapted through the closure of doorways, new floor surfaces were laid, and various structural interventions occurred regularly throughout the lifespan of each house. Each of these buildings also show the fluidity that could exist between residential and commercial or industrial space. In site no. 36, this is reflected in the mosaiced room that is converted into a work area after the 2nd century. In all three residences, investment in commercial facilities took a strong priority over decoration and monumentality, making it hard to know if there was a precise moment when their residential use stopped, and their industrial reuse began. Of course, the presence of stairways (and thus the unknown of what happened on the upper floors) further complicates this.

Turning to the *domus* at site no. 33, physical transformations in this home initially occurred in a comparatively more episodic fashion, characterized by massive building interventions that impacted whole areas of the house (e.g., the 3rd-century construction of the

⁷⁷⁸ Emmerson 2020, 38-39.

⁷⁷⁹ Dey 2021, 54.

colonnaded portico or the 4th-century construction of the apsidal hall and fountain). From the 4th century, however, the pace of change became more frenetic, in line with what we see in the smaller adjacent residences. In particular, the frequent construction of *tamponature* and the subdivision of rooms are a notable aspect of these phases. Nevertheless, it is crucial to recognize how even these seemingly radical transformations were not necessarily signs of overall degradation. In the 4th century, for example, instances of *tamponature* and subdivision occurred in tandem with the embellishment of site no. 33's apsidal hall. Furthermore, while postholes were eventually cut into the floor of this apsidal room, this was simultaneous with other efforts undertaken to increase the livability of the structure like the raising of floor levels and the addition of new features for food preparation. Therefore, as the comparable situation at site no. 7 (Zone 3) revealed, interpretation of the postholes in site no. 33's apsidal hall depends heavily on one's framing. Taken at face value, they might be considered a disregard for previous decoration (and thus a form of downgrading); on the other hand, given the broader context of the household environment, they can be understood as crucial maintenance of an exceptionally decorated space given the available resources and capabilities. What is certain is that while the 5th-century residents of site no. 33 certainly did not undertake the kind of unified, monumental construction programs that characterized earlier phases, they continued to occupy the building domestically and sought to maintain its integrity and upkeep.

Finally, the two cases of infant burial in the *via del Tritone* structures provide an additional point of contrast between the large *domus* and the smaller apartment units. At site no. 33, the burial clearly dates to the 7th century and thus to the final period of the building's occupation. The burial in site no. 34, on the other hand, appears to be in phase with ongoing

occupation and maintenance of the structure. This demonstrates the variable sequences of transformation that could unfold in adjacent residential structures.

The *via del Tritone* residences represent an essential resource for shining light on the more partial datasets in this zone. Site no. 37, for example, developed within a similar urban setting: a vast area of suburban greenspace that became more densely occupied throughout the imperial period. Although the data is limited, the salient aspect of site no. 37 is the contrast between the monumental phase of the 4th century and its subsequent wave of seeming domestic disuse activities. However, the evidence provided by site no. 33, where the transformation of some individual spaces would appear identical to the situation at site no. 37 if taken in isolation, shows that caution must be exercised before drawing conclusions based on such limited data.

Turning to the case studies in the southern *Campus Martius*, these are a mixture of extensively documented and highly fragmentary sites. The best documented residences are sites no. 39 and 40, and these raise several issues worth highlighting. First, both are examples of the phenomenon associated with Late Antiquity where private residences overtook formerly public spaces, a process also represented by site no. 41. For sites no. 39 and 40, however, this development is dated to the 2nd century CE, and thus represents an early example of urban “de-structuration,” or at least of how residential spaces could develop in unexpected ways given their immediate urban surroundings (here, the houses are established in a highly public and monumental area near the imperial *fora*). Site no. 40 continued to be a point of contrast with its urban surroundings during Late Antiquity; while nearby buildings were either completely abandoned (e.g., site no. 38) or assumed a markedly industrial character (e.g., the *insula* beneath *Palazzo Generali*, which is completely given over to metalworking activities during the 4th-6th

century),⁷⁸⁰ site no. 40 followed the same course as site no. 33: a 4th-century phase of monumentalization rich in apsidal features and marble revetment.

The most remarkable aspect of site no. 40, however, is its distinctly rhythmic development overtime, fluctuating between phases of spoliation or voluntary destruction and phases of building or remodeling. To some extent, this is similar to the situation encountered in site no. 33, and illustrates how the destruction, dismantling, and reuse of preexisting building materials was a regular aspect of Roman housebuilding. This was not necessarily limited to Late Antiquity, casting doubt on the notion that architectural recycling was always a phenomenon born out of strict necessity or a lack of resources.⁷⁸¹ Another example of this rhythmic fluctuation regards the 5th-century burial in site no. 40, a particularly early example in the city of Rome, that preceded the addition of a new marble panel floor surface in the 6th century.

Moving closer to the Tiber, sites no. 41 and 42 are found in one of the least well understood zones of the *Campus Martius* in terms of urban topography, rendering them essential case studies.⁷⁸² Each unfolded along a unique trajectory. Site no. 41 was an *ex-novo* private residence blocking the passageway of two public porticoes, including the *Porticus Philippi*. After a short-lived monumental phase in the 4th century, the residence was at least partially used for industrial activities (like the nearby public area of the *Crypta Balbi*) before being intentionally demolished in the 6th century or later. One possibility is that the destruction of site no. 41 was part of an urban reclamation project connected to the foundation of the church of *Sant’Ambrogio della Massima*, which would eventually incorporate the footprint of the *Porticus Philippi*. Either way, the entire situation is an example of the intensely negotiated boundaries between public and

⁷⁸⁰ Egidi and Serlorenzi 2008; Serlorenzi and Sagui 2008, 180-181; Mundy 2018, 581-582.

⁷⁸¹ See above, page 38.

⁷⁸² Rinaldoni and Savi Scarponi 1999, 4.

private, residential and commercial, and domestic and sacred in late antique cities. Compared with site no. 40, then, site no. 41 was more affected by local urban dynamics.

Site no. 42, in contrast with site no. 41, is documented in greater detail. The residence provides, like sites no. 33 and 40, a further example of a 4th-century phase of monumentalization that includes the addition of apsidal rooms. Prior to this, however, it was also an example of the partial conversion of a decorative household sector for industrial activities (in this case, a *fullonica*) dating to the 2nd century. This illustrates how the evolution of domestic buildings often is multidirectional and that the appearance of production activities in private spaces is not always a case of site-level disuse or total reuse at the level of the entire property. Like sites no. 39 and 40, site no. 42 is thus a further example of rhythmic transformations.

Both of the case studies located in *Trastevere* (sites no. 42 and 43) are linked with later Christian structures. However, the vastly different chronologies of the two ecclesiastical foundations (the 5th century for the titular basilica founded at site no. 43 and the 10th century for the monastery at site no. 44) precludes any connection with a general trend. At site no. 44, the absence of stratigraphic data from the 7th-9th century has been interpreted as evidence of a depopulation crisis impacting the area.⁷⁸³ On the other hand, given the alluvial nature of the residence's post-abandonment deposits and the clear struggle of its occupants in previous centuries with the flooding of the Tiber, it is equally possible to read this evidence as a result of localized natural phenomena. Meanwhile, in combination with the basilica of *Santa Maria in Trastevere* and *San Crisogono*, site no. 43's ultimate transformation into a church shows that *Trastevere* may have been depopulated, but it was still home to a significant community of residents whose identity was tied to religious monuments in the area.

⁷⁸³ Filippi et al. 2011, 150, 169.

Site no. 43 is also another example of rhythmic transformations, with the walling off of its courtyard colonnade and subdivision of various rooms followed by further decorative interventions and, judging from its ceramic record, the continuation of daily domestic use activities. At site no. 44, we see the use of residential rooms for commercial purposes in the 4th-5th century, but also contemporaneous domestic ceramics. Both cases raise questions about the significance of ceramics data in urban domestic contexts where, compared with villas, it is less certain whether finds assemblages in later phases should be associated with the residence itself or with its use as a trash heap for waste originating in other households. Interpretations can vary significantly depending on the specific way such evidence is presented in site reports, an issue to which I will return in the final chapter.

Overall, while the domestic trajectories of the various sites in Zone 8 are variable, some general trends can be observed. The monumental *domus* in this zone show how activities normally interpreted as downgrading, including intentional acts of destruction, could play a role in the rhythmic physical transformation of spaces, an indication of regular, ongoing investment by residents rather than decline or abandonment. In smaller, less monumental structures, the admixture of domestic areas with commercial or industrial spaces is a particularly common phenomenon, including before Late Antiquity, blurring the line between domestic use and disuse/reuse. However, even more ostentatious structures are affected by the push-and-pull of residential and industrial use in later phases; in the case of site no. 42, this can be observed already in the 2nd century. Overall, while some sites buck the trends of local urban transformations, others appear to have been more caught up in the wave. This is more pronounced in the urban setting of Zone 8 compared with the extramural zones 1-7.

A final observation regards the potential destruction of sites no. 39, 40, 42, and 44 by natural forces. According to its excavators, site no. 42 might have been subjected to a non-voluntary destruction, perhaps an earthquake, and a similar fate has been hypothesized for sites no. 39 and 40.⁷⁸⁴ Site no. 44, on the other hand, appears to have been irreparably damaged by regular flooding.⁷⁸⁵ Beyond Zone 8, structural degradation or collapse as a result of natural forces was also a factor for sites in Zone 7, and we will see a further example in site no. 46 (Zone 9). The fate of these urban or near-urban buildings, most of which continued to be inhabited or frequented right up until the moment of their destruction, could have multiple implications: they might point to an inability of previous occupants to rebuild or reclaim the destroyed area, or simply indicate that the structures were no longer considered essential or worth further investment. While both possibilities could be suggestive of economic decline or depopulation, the varying chronologies of these destruction events discourages any attempt to tie them to a single social cause. Nevertheless, the fact that the impact of natural forces and shifting topographical dynamics seems more noticeable for residences closer to the city or inside it could suggest that, overall, urban dwellers had less agency in controlling the fate of their homes than inhabitants of the countryside.

Zone 9: The Ancient Urban Core

Introduction

The final zone of this study (fig. 80) brings us to the heart of Rome, highlighting two houses located on the Aventine and Palatine. On the Palatine, site no. 45 was excavated in 1989-1994 and initially published in 1994, but it has been subject to extensive analysis and the

⁷⁸⁴ Napoli and Baldassarri 2015, 97; Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 26.

⁷⁸⁵ Filippi et al. 2011, 169.

publication of new data in the meantime, warranting further consideration. Site no. 46, meanwhile, represents some of the most recent data to have emerged for household contexts in the city of Rome and is remarkable for the depth and quality of its documentation. As a result, while Zone 9 only contains two case studies, the exceptional nature of both has the potential to provide unique insight into two of the most ancient neighborhoods of Rome within the Servian Walls.

Both neighborhoods are handled extensively in the 2004 study of Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani, who present a general image that has recently been echoed by Dey's 2020 assessment.⁷⁸⁶ The Palatine is noted as a particularly poor source of evidence for the late antique and early medieval city, given the near complete disregard for and destruction of "post-classical" features during 18th-20th-century excavations.⁷⁸⁷ On the basis of historical and limited archaeological evidence, it is known that the Palatine maintained its imperial associations beyond the 5th century, evidenced by the 6th-century restorations of Theodoric and the fact that Narses took up residence in the area until his death in 573.⁷⁸⁸ However, beginning in the 5th century, several structures in marginal areas of the Palatine (e.g., the *Schola Praeconum* on the southern slopes) were interred by layers of dumping, a phenomenon which Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani generally see reflected in all areas of Rome.⁷⁸⁹ In the 6th century, the phenomenon of dumping reportedly impacts structures positioned in more central areas of the hill, including the *Domus Tiberiana*.⁷⁹⁰ On the other hand, the foundation of various ecclesiastical complexes between the 4th-6th century points to ongoing investment.⁷⁹¹ While

⁷⁸⁶ Dey 2021, 11, 61, 73–4, 80.

⁷⁸⁷ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 207.

⁷⁸⁸ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 207-208.

⁷⁸⁹ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 208.

⁷⁹⁰ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 208.

⁷⁹¹ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 209.

evidence for the fate of the Palatine during the 7th-8th century is extremely scarce, Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani posit that it generally continued as a center of civil power in Rome throughout this time.⁷⁹²

The Aventine, historically a lower-class neighborhood, was a zone of prized real estate for the Roman aristocracy during the imperial period. Most evidence for private residences, however, comes in the form of historical records, and archaeological investigations on the Aventine have been limited.⁷⁹³ During the 5th century, Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani argue that the Aventine lost its privileged character and was utilized primarily for cultivation, citing, for example, the disuse of a thermal complex and its conversion into a wine production facility.⁷⁹⁴ Later, burials appeared in the Baths of Decius and the Antonine Baths in the 6th-7th century.⁷⁹⁵ In general, however, the evidence for Late Antiquity and beyond is inconclusive and mostly takes the form of ecclesiastical foundations in connection with reused public and private buildings (e.g., the *domus* beneath *Santa Balbina*, a church that is first mentioned in 595).⁷⁹⁶ The data for the 7th-9th century is even less clear. A structure likely dating to the 7th century, featuring a marble panelled floor and a circular press, is tentatively interpreted as a stone-built residence, but its identification is ultimately uncertain.⁷⁹⁷ The area appears to have been generally abandoned until the 10th century, when it once again emerges as an aristocratic neighborhood and important center of civil politics.⁷⁹⁸

⁷⁹² Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 209-210.

⁷⁹³ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 145.

⁷⁹⁴ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 127-132, 145.

⁷⁹⁵ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 145.

⁷⁹⁶ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 145-146.

⁷⁹⁷ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 33, 147-148

⁷⁹⁸ Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani 2004, 33, 149.

Case Studies (sites no. 45-46)

Site no. 45: *Palatine East Domus*⁷⁹⁹

[View catalogue entry](#)

Excavated in 1989-1994, a detailed preliminary report of site no. 45 (fig. 92) was published in 1994, revealing extensive evidence for a late Roman residence on the northeastern slopes of the Palatine Hill. In the meantime, extensive analysis and dissemination of the residence's finds record has been conducted by the *Palatine East Pottery Project*, adding to the depth of perspective offered by this site.⁸⁰⁰ As a result of these efforts, site no. 45 boasts a rich record of ceramic materials documenting the constant presence of food-processing activities in association with the site between the 1st-6th century CE.

The structure was defined by a large apsidal hall and a series of smaller rooms to its south (sectors A-C) along with various barrel-vaulted structures just to the west (sector D).⁸⁰¹ The earliest features consisted of a group of walls in *opus reticulatum* and *opus latericium* dating to the early 1st century CE, although the layout of the structure in this phase is impossible to determine. A small fountain was also constructed in the 1st century CE, along with an *opus spicatum* pavement. Extensive dumping then occurred in Sector D, followed by the deposition of levelling layers. In the 2nd century, the building began to take on its characteristic form. A multistorey residential complex was constructed and, in Sector D, a series of vaulted chambers. At the same time, the earlier fountain was restored, and new drainage features added. One of the upper story rooms was decorated with wall frescoes in the red and green linear style. The room was also provided with a bichrome mosaic depicting flowerlike circular forms.

⁷⁹⁹ Hostetter et al. 1994; Ikäheimo 2003; Hostetter and Brandt 2009; Peña 2018; Peña et al. 2018.

⁸⁰⁰ <http://resromanae.berkeley.edu/node/3574>

⁸⁰¹ Hostetter et al. 1994, 133.

In the 3rd century, an apsidal hall was constructed along with several other smaller apsidal and rectangular rooms to its south. The majority of the masonry belonging to these new spaces utilized reused bricks. Although hardly any traces of decoration were recovered in the apsidal hall, an idea of its monumentality is provided by the remnants of a marble-lined water channel in a raised portion of its floor.⁸⁰² Around the time these features were constructed, two doorways belonging to previous rooms were walled off.

Extensive dumping occurred to the south of the structure in the 4th century. Within these layers, hundreds of discarded fragments of worked bone were recovered, suggesting the possibility of artisanal activities in connection with the building. From this moment on, the chronology of the various activities recorded in the archaeological record becomes less precise. Within the 6th century, new frescoes were applied to the room previously decorated in the linear style, the original 1st-century-CE fountain was again restored, and the vaulted structures in Sector D were reinforced, even as some materials in this area of the residence were spoliated. In Sector B, various doorways were walled off. Further dumping layers to the south of the house are securely dated to the 5th century, and other deposits could date as late as the 9th. Masonry structures closing off the vaults in Sector D and at least one other doorway also date to as late as the 8th-9th century, and various materials attest to at least sporadic frequentation and spoliation of the site throughout the early medieval period.

⁸⁰² Hostetter et al. 1994, 145.

Site no. 46: *Domus at Piazza Albania*⁸⁰³

[View catalogue entry](#)

Site no. 46 (fig. 93) emerged during emergency excavations in 2014-2018 beneath a modern apartment building positioned on the southeastern slopes of the Aventine. These operations revealed a residential building consisting of a series of rooms oriented around a central rectangular hall and decorated with elaborate bichrome mosaics.⁸⁰⁴ The initial construction of these features dates to the 1st-2nd century CE, a period in which one room was provided with an *opus spicatum* pavement and drainage channel. Throughout the 2nd century, the residence appears to have suffered from major structural issues, perhaps in connection with a sinkhole. Floor levels were raised multiple times, a new drainage system was added, and at least one new mosaic was laid irregularly utilizing secondhand *tesserae*. Similar episodes of structural restoration occurred throughout the 2nd-3rd century, sometimes accompanied by the remodeling of decorative surfaces. On the other hand, other decorative surfaces were replaced with more utilitarian ones. In the 2nd century, for example, one mosaic was covered by a floor in *cocciopesto*, and in the 2nd-3rd century, another was covered by a beaten earth surface. In this second room, a kiln was also constructed, suggestive of industrial activities.

By the 3rd century, all of the residence's original mosaics had been covered up and some areas of the house were used to dump refuse. Between the 3rd and 5th-6th century, dumping activities persisted, but the structure also continued to be modified by the construction of subdividing walls and *tamponature*. Limited decorative restorations might have also occurred during this timeframe. Meanwhile, the finds record from this period, including fragments of fine

⁸⁰³ Quaranta and Narducci 2018; Narducci and Buonaguro 2020; Ricci 2020.

⁸⁰⁴ Quaranta and Narducci 2018, 222-223.

glass and tableware, is a possible suggestion of its ongoing domestic occupation until the building's collapse in the 5th-6th century.⁸⁰⁵

Discussion

In contrast with their significance in the early urban development of Rome, the late antique history of both the Palatine and Aventine are poorly understood. Given this, it is useful to ask whether the trajectories of sites no. 45 and 46 match up with the limited image provided by previous research. To start, the residents of site no. 45 constructed an apsidal hall in the 3rd century, one of the earlier examples of this form. The trendsetting nature of this intervention would seem to agree with the home's privileged location in the imperial period, although it is important to remember other cases of 3rd-century apsidal halls in suburban areas (e.g., site no. 15 in *Zone 4/Gabii*).⁸⁰⁶ In the 4th century, domestic disuse activities began to play a bigger role in the trajectory of the house. The site's later chronology is not precise enough to make a secure determination of when it was ultimately abandoned. However, the continuation of structural interventions and the deposition of dumping layers during the medieval period stands in contrast with the notion that liminal areas of the Palatine were completely abandoned by the 5th century.

Turning to site no. 46, the structure seems to have lost many aspects of its privileged monumental character significantly before the 5th century, the period normally associated with the Aventine's abandonment. It is worth considering the unique circumstances of this outcome. Much of the physical transformation of the site appears to be in response to a struggle with the underlying terrain, raising the possibility that the building's conversion into a more utilitarian structure might have resulted from factors other than urban abandonment or economic hardship.

⁸⁰⁵ See Narducci and Buonaguro (2020, 41) for the date of the residence's collapse.

⁸⁰⁶ See site no. 15.

Instead, like many previously discussed sites, the transformation of site no. 46 is better described as a rhythmic process, with the intentional covering of decorative surfaces sometimes followed by the restoration of others.

Moreover, the site is a powerful example of how the thorough publication of finds data can have a mixed effect on the impression provided by an excavated household. In the later phases of the house, the voluntary destruction of decorative surfaces and the frequent recovery of dumping layers stand out as typical signs of abandonment. On the other hand, the presence of fine wares and imported goods dating to the 5th-6th century might indicate the building's continued occupation by a group with access to significant economic resources. This issue raises continued questions about the best way to interpret the deposition of discarded ceramics in an urban context, a matter to which I will return in the final chapter. Setting this uncertainty aside for now, site no. 46 generally fits better than no. 45 within the image of 5th-century abandonment in previous accounts of the Palatine and Aventine areas. However, it reveals how the final abandonment of a building can result from protracted processes over multiple centuries (defined especially in this case by issues with the natural terrain) rather than a singular period of crisis.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusions

The end of the Roman house, as normally told, is a catastrophic story about the end of an era, marked by Rome's failure to sustain the niceties of civilized, classical life in the face of a multipronged crisis. In chapters 2-3, I highlighted several critical issues tied to this narrative, including its local manifestation in the city and suburbs of Rome, arguing that it falls short in several ways. Most troublingly, it primarily relies on dated information and overlooks the critical methodological and theoretical strides made by Roman household specialists since the 1990s. These problems negatively impact archaeological interpretation at the site level. As the accounts in chapter 4 have shown, household transformation and abandonment are complicated processes, but due to the limited toolset offered by current approaches, they are most typically filtered through the reductive lens of continuity versus discontinuity. In applying this framework, archaeologists usually focus on decoration and architecture as the most meaningful aspects of a house, treating evidence for standard Roman building techniques and unified architectural designs as straightforward barometers of prosperity and continuity. Conversely, the final phases of households are conveyed as chaotic and destructive, an image of discontinuity and failure to live up to the imagined standards of Roman living.

As I insisted in chapter 2, this perceived contrast has much more to do with the biases of archaeologists than with close analysis of the material evidence. Notions of the "ideal" Roman house continue to color the imagination of scholars, contributing to a desire to neatly typologize, conceptualize, and label the remains of excavated Roman homes while preventing a diachronic view of residential buildings as dynamic, lived-in spaces where use and disuse often exist side-

by-side, virtually from the origin of the structure. This partially explains the perennial drive to reconstruct the (imagined) original aspect of domestic buildings and a concomitant lack of consideration for late phases. Meanwhile, quality, site-level data for the evolution of domestic space between the imperial period and Late Antiquity has been scarce and, with a fair bit of editorializing, forced into the perceived incongruity between ideal homes and discontinuous ones.

The analysis I conducted in chapter 4 was intended to challenge this *status quo* in a number of ways. While current views universally situate the end of the Roman house in Late Antiquity, I strived to construct a *longue durée* account of household transformation and abandonment across the region of Rome. This choice protected against *a priori* assumptions about the fate of residential buildings during Late Antiquity and enabled me to move beyond the prevailing, static model of Roman households. Simultaneously, the long chronological view of my accounts was balanced by a deep view, and I supplied thick descriptions of individual households in the interest of constructing a richer evidentiary basis for their transformations. Moreover, although I catalogued the evidence for all my case studies in a standardized way, I approached each house on its own terms. This enabled me not only to acknowledge variability, but also to discuss its significance. The image of the Roman house that has emerged is more than a mere reflection of social structures, environmental factors, or abstract processes like continuity, discontinuity, or crisis. Instead, it is a mosaic of human choices that left a range of impacts on the archaeological record, filtered through the decisions and capabilities of the archaeologists who encounter their traces in the field.

In this final chapter, I show that despite the inherently noisy nature of this body of evidence, it offers a few concrete lessons. The first of these is an updated assessment of

abandonment and *disuse* as critical concepts. In light of this, I identify five distinct trajectories taken by my case studies in the lead up to their final abandonment. I then assess the relationship between these transformational processes and the local factors specific to each site. Next, I relate my findings to the most influential global (or society-wide) models used to explain Roman household abandonment in Late Antiquity. Finally, I explain how seemingly abandoned or downgraded houses have been overlooked as a potential source of information on the building traditions and daily life practices of non-elite Romans, a topic which archaeologists have long considered elusive.

Redefining Domestic Abandonment and Disuse

Most previous studies have only offered loose definitions, if any, of abandonment. The interlocking concepts of disuse and reuse have also been poorly defined, with both encompassing everything from the collapse of walls to the dumping of trash to the wholesale conversion of domestic buildings into industrial facilities, necropolises, or churches. In chapter 3, I explained my intention to test the limits of this vocabulary, formulating an approach for cataloguing 16 activities normally associated with domestic *disuse* and its implied antithesis, *use*. In chapter 4, I went on to trace these activities century by century throughout the life of each case study. The results of this exercise suggest that what is normally described as domestic abandonment in the Roman world is often better understood as a gradual but active process undertaken by inhabitants (often from very early in the history of the structure) rather than a sudden or terrible event that occurs to them.

My accounts in chapter 4 revealed the inseparability of the seemingly dichotomous phenomena of domestic use and disuse (fig. 94; fig. 95; fig. 96; fig. 97). Very few case studies, if any, exhibited a clean break between periods of seeming use and disuse, meaning that the

heuristic distinction between these terms is of limited value. Therefore, although these concepts have played an integral role in the pages of this dissertation, my work has ultimately served to deconstruct them. What have been called disuse activities were in fact regular facets of domestic life.

This invites us to reevaluate some common assumptions about the Roman house. Symmetrical and carefully planned layouts, the decoration of public-facing areas like the *atrium* and adjacent rooms, the separation of decorative spaces from utilitarian facilities, and the use of purpose-made building materials were indeed important aspects of Roman residential buildings. Yet these characteristics must be recognized as only part of what made a Roman house “Roman.” Improvisation, the adaptation of preexisting spaces for new purposes, the use of secondhand building materials, and the prioritization of functionality over monumentality were all additional frequent aspects of residential buildings in Rome throughout the imperial period, not just during their abandonment in Late Antiquity. In at least one case study, even the most supposedly taboo of domestic arrangements – life alongside the dead – occurred at an unexpectedly early date of the 2nd century CE.⁸⁰⁷ While this example is exceptional, it reminds us that Roman houses were negotiable spaces and that the conditions of daily life in the ancient world might not always have aligned with our current expectations. For the late antique Roman house, if we limit our focus to apsidal halls, elaborate marble paneling, and *opus sectile* pavements, we miss this negotiable aspect, confusing monumentality for continuity, and natural trajectories of transformation for discontinuity or even abandonment.

What therefore should become of abandonment as an archaeological concept? To start, the identification of abandonment amounts to the difficult, if not logically impossible task of

⁸⁰⁷ Site no. 16 in *Gabii* (Zone 4).

proving a negative. Given the prevalence of perishable construction techniques and the frequent absence of datable pottery for periods stretching beyond the 5th century,⁸⁰⁸ many perceived episodes of abandonment could plausibly amount to examples where late antique or early medieval frequentation simply escaped the eye of archaeologists. This is especially evident when a significant number of activities are assigned to a generic and vaguely dated “abandonment phase” in excavation reports, suggesting a limited level of recognition.⁸⁰⁹ Any interpretation tied to such a site’s abandonment should therefore be taken as provisional, and we should avoid applying the term simply when a building fails to match our expectations about what a Roman house is supposed to be. Instead, the term should only be used to describe residential buildings that have, as far as can be told, ceased to be used for any activities whatsoever.

Additionally, the designation of “post-abandonment phase” must be limited to frequentation following discernible periods of total inactivity. Unambiguous examples of this have been rare.⁸¹⁰ At site no. 23, for example, it is unknown whether the 3rd century entailed the cessation of all activities or, alternatively, a massive scaling back of the occupation’s footprint. These chronological gray areas are often essential for understanding site development, but are usually glossed over in excavation reports, where phases of inhabitation and abandonment are presented as discrete episodes. Furthermore, renewed frequentation following possible occupation lulls can take various forms, ranging from those thought to be typical of post-abandonment houses,⁸¹¹ to monumental phases in line with the standard canon of late antique domestic architecture.⁸¹² Rather than signifying an inherently late antique post-abandonment

⁸⁰⁸ Sfameni 2004, 349-359.

⁸⁰⁹ A good example of this is site no. 27 (Zone 6).

⁸¹⁰ Sites no. 10 (Zone 3), no. 23 and 25 (Zone 6), no. 32 (Zone 7), and no. 42 in the *Campus Martius* (Zone 8) are possible cases.

⁸¹¹ e.g., the burials and spoliation at site no. 23 (Zone 6), or the church constructed at site no. 10 (Zone 3).

⁸¹² e.g., the apsidal hall and related features at site no. 42 (Zone 8).

occupation type, many of these examples are more accurately described as *new uses of old domestic spaces*, which was something that happened constantly in Roman houses, pointing to flexibility (not rigidity) in how Roman houses, households, and families were constituted and physically manifested.

With these issues in mind, the significance of the 10 disuse activities traced in chapter 4 proves to be context dependent.⁸¹³ Many instances pertained to houses in an apparent state of dilapidation, degradation, and general abandonment, suggestive of a place that was no longer a home. Nevertheless, it is not always clear whether perceived disuse meant a definitive change for the worse, and there is reason to believe that burials in the *atrium*, wine basins in the *apodyterium*, and lime kilns in the peristyle, despite their failure to conform to elite ideals about the form and function of a house, could all have been aspects of buildings that were sites of thriving domestic life.

First, the subdivision of spaces and *tamponature* could occur throughout the lifespan of households, amounting to normal aspects of architectural transformation. Far from signs of disuse or abandonment, these modifications are indicative of the piecemeal way that residents adapted floorplans to fit their needs from one generation to the next. More dramatic transformations are sometimes signified by walls that significantly interrupted previous floorplans. One example of this is site no. 7 (Zone 3) where, sometime between the 3rd-5th century, a series of rooms was constructed in the villa's southern corner at a diagonal angle with earlier walls (fig. 39). Contemporaneously, some sections of the villa experienced collapse or were used to heap trash, even as contextual evidence like butchered animal bones, tableware, and storage jars shows that it continued to be a lived-in space. Therefore, the catty-corner walls may

⁸¹³ Dodd 2019, 40.

have been a physical interruption of the earlier layout, and this should be understood as a moment of significant change at site no. 7, but they were not an interruption of the building's essential domestic function and might have served to make it a more livable space.

Subdivisions, *tamponature*, and other built features can also be assessed on the basis of construction technique. Some subdivisions and *tamponature*, like the *opus vittatum* wall closing Room 1a-b of site no. 33 (Zone 8), were constructed in regular techniques, but most were in irregular or mixed techniques.⁸¹⁴ Usually, it is assumed that features constructed with irregular or reutilized materials are indicative of downgrading at the household level (and in broader terms, at the societal level). Yet among the cases examined in the last chapter, the line between regular and irregular masonry was often blurred. Many sites employed both improvised techniques and more canonical Roman building forms contemporaneously. This is the case for site no. 19 (Zone 5), where 3rd-century walls in *opus vittatum* and *opus latericium* were combined with another feature made of spoliated blocks from nearby funerary monuments. Other times, single walls were neither entirely regular nor irregular, such as the 3rd-4th-century *opus vittatum* using secondhand bricks at site no. 22.⁸¹⁵ Most significantly, many examples of seemingly irregular construction, walls or otherwise, occurred in earlier imperial-era phases, including ones with significant monumental or decorative elements.⁸¹⁶ All of this serves to confirm that, as scholars are increasingly aware, informal construction techniques and the reuse of secondhand materials

⁸¹⁴ See also sites no. 30 (Zone 7) and no. 46 (Zone 9).

⁸¹⁵ See the comparable examples of site no. 45 (Zone 9).

⁸¹⁶ e.g., site no. 1 (Zone 1), where a 1st-century-CE floor reuses old mosaic fragments, similar to the situation encountered at site no. 46 (Zone 9) in the 2nd century. See also site no. 6 (Zone 2), which features roughly built subdividing walls in a 1st-century-CE phase characterized otherwise by ostentation, and site no. 25 (Zone 6), which integrates improvised techniques into a wave of decorative remodeling. Moreover, the reverse could also be true, i.e., walls in regular Roman masonry might feature in seemingly downgraded or reused structures. A critical example in determining a site's overall chronology is site no. 28 and its *opus vittatum* wall (see above, pages 173-174).

were both part of the general milieu of building practices throughout the Roman period,⁸¹⁷ even if they increased in frequency during Late Antiquity.

The destruction of decorative features could also occur in a diversity of contexts. Many cases were tied to programs of remodeling or embellishment, not downgrading.⁸¹⁸ Others more clearly indicate the presence of household occupants for whom embellishment was a second priority to utility.⁸¹⁹ It is therefore important to examine the specific circumstances of each instance. For example, among the cases covered here, destruction could occur during the maintenance of household infrastructure,⁸²⁰ the addition of facilities for agricultural or industrial activities,⁸²¹ or alongside the restoration of other decorative elements.⁸²² Therefore, while all such instances involve the obliteration or damaging of specific physical elements, they could also help facilitate the potential of a building to satisfy pressing household needs.

Post-built and perishable features emerge as very rare among the houses examined here.⁸²³ This is significant since these are frequently cited as defining features of late antique and early medieval construction. Their rareness in Rome therefore raises questions. One possibility, if we accept the link between perishable construction and non-Roman ethnic traditions, is that the lack of examples around Rome suggests a decreased barbarian presence compared to other parts of the empire. Only one of the houses covered here included independent material evidence of barbarian populations (the 7th-century Lombard tombs at site no. 10 in Zone 4). Not even this

⁸¹⁷ Swift 2015, 107; Bowes 2021a.

⁸¹⁸ Site no. 40 (Zone 8) is the clearest example.

⁸¹⁹ e.g., the 3rd-century buttress and basin cutting a mosaic at site no. 25 (Zone 6).

⁸²⁰ This is the likely explanation for the 5th-century postholes cutting a mosaic floor at site no. 7 (Zone 3).

⁸²¹ e.g., site no. 15 (Zone 4) and no. 46 (Zone 9).

⁸²² e.g., the razing of portions of the thermal sector during the 3rd century at site no. 19 (Zone 5), even as new marble revetment was added.

⁸²³ The only examples here are sites no. 7 and no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 15 (Zone 4), no. 21 (Zone 5), no. 26 (Zone 6), and no. 33 (Zone 8).

site contained post-built or perishable structures, however, so tying the issue to ethnicity seems unadvisable for Rome.

It is more relevant to consider that, as recent work has shown, post-built structures – along with other perishable forms like *pisé* (gravel and sand), wattle-and-daub, and *opus craticium* – were frequently employed alongside masonry for rural buildings throughout central Italy, from peasant sites to agricultural villas.⁸²⁴ The few examples encountered here can be convincingly read within these canonical local traditions. Their low frequency is plausibly tied to a variety of factors, ranging from their erasure from the archaeological record due to natural factors like erosion to cases of missed recognition in the field.⁸²⁵ Therefore, at least for this dataset, the presence of post-built and perishable building techniques is of inconclusive significance.

The spoliation of households and the use of formerly residential spaces for agricultural or industrial production are two well-documented and often interlinked activities associated with abandoned Roman houses. Among many of the case studies here, these activities occurred to the detriment of decorative or monumental features, suggesting a rearrangement of priorities among inhabitants (perhaps corresponding to different mentalities or different ways of socially constructing the household and family),⁸²⁶ but not always outright abandonment.⁸²⁷ Both phenomena, in fact, could occur alongside the continuation of domestic occupation,⁸²⁸ albeit

⁸²⁴ Bowes 2021a. The single example of *opus craticium* reported among my case studies is an undatable, frescoed, subdividing wall at site no. 30 (Zone 7).

⁸²⁵ On problems related to the preservation and identification of such features, see Bowes 2021a, 572; Bowes, Collins-Elliott, and Crey 2021, 444.

⁸²⁶ e.g., the partial spoliation of the *impluvium* at site no. 16 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), the removal of mosaics at site no. 21 (Zone 5), or the spoliation of marble elements from site no. 8 (Zone 3), no. 19 (Zone 5), no. 23 and 25 (Zone 6), and others.

⁸²⁷ Examples of spoliation that *are* seemingly tied to abandonment include sites no. 12, 13 and 14 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), but also later examples like the 6th-7th-century phase of site no. 22 (Zone 5).

⁸²⁸ e.g., sites no. 2 (Zone 1), no. 9 and no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 23 (Zone 6), no. 42 (Zone 8), no. 33 and no. 40 (Zone 8), and no. 45 (Zone 9).

often in a scaled-back form.⁸²⁹ In many cases, the matter is ambiguous. For example, the 4th-5th-century glass kiln at site no. 27 appears to have been installed and utilized in the absence of clear evidence for residential inhabitation. However, leaving aside the recurring problem of undatable or unrecognized evidence, dumping layers of charcoal and ash in association with the kiln also contained fragments of transport vessels, tableware, and numerous bones of sheep and other small animals. It is unclear whether these materials should be taken as a sign of permanent domestic occupation in conjunction with the glass working activities (ash could have been mixed with food waste to prevent foul odors⁸³⁰), or the shuffling around of trash from other properties, or simply consumption activities connected with the people who labored in (but did not live in) the building. This example illustrates how spoliation- and production-related reuse are not always straightforward indicators of domestic abandonment. Moreover, evidence for the connection between spoliation and the onsite processing of recycled materials like marble and glass appears in several sites,⁸³¹ reinforcing the growing perception that these activities were not chaotic or reactive, but well-organized and strategic.⁸³² The most novel aspect of the spoliation/recycling activities in my catalogue is the occasional link they show with the active remodeling of lived-in spaces.⁸³³ This is a powerful indication of the rhythmic ebbs and flows that shaped the development of residential buildings, underscoring the need to understand Roman houses, along with the people or families who occupied them, as processes and not static entities.

⁸²⁹ See below, pages 236-239.

⁸³⁰ Emmerson 2020, 114.

⁸³¹ Evidence for this includes the stacking or collection of recyclable materials (e.g., sites no. 6, no. 8, no. 9, no. 19, no. 23, no. 25, no. 30, and no. 41) as well as kilns for glass (e.g., sites no. 19, no. 27, no. 40), lime production (sites no. 8, no. 11, no. 15, no. 19, no. 24), and metalworking (sites no. 11, no. 19, no. 36).

⁸³² See above, footnote 241.

⁸³³ The key example of this is site no. 40 (Zone 8), but the application of reused materials for decorative remodeling is also evident at sites no. 1 (Zone 1), no. 6 (Zone 2), no. 17 and no. 29 (Zone 4), no. 21 (Zone 5), no. 46 (Zone 9). For comparison, see Boschetti et al. (2016), who discuss a glass kiln built and then dismantled as part of the domestic remodeling project of a *domus* at *Aquileia*.

Moving on, the topic of dumping has arisen as a crucial inflection point in my analysis. This activity was selected as an indicator of disuse insofar as trashed spaces are usually assumed to have no longer been lived-in spaces.⁸³⁴ For example, following Kevin Dicus, Bowes argues that the “Roman habit among rich and poor, urban and rural, seems to have seen waste transported away from living spaces.”⁸³⁵ On the other hand, Allison Emmerson has recently suggested that dumping is often erroneously identified as an indicator of abandonment, when it was in fact an attribute of “active zones that served as staging grounds for cycles of use and reuse.”⁸³⁶ Such a description does not preclude still-occupied houses, and in some examples covered in the catalogue, the dumping of waste inside living houses is quite evident.⁸³⁷ Waste-management practices might have also been subject to fluctuations over time, and during Late Antiquity, evidence from *Ostia* suggests that refuse heaps “encroached” upon lived-in areas.⁸³⁸ There is also the question of how far was far enough when it came to transporting garbage away from living spaces.⁸³⁹ It is plausible to imagine that for some old residential buildings with a surplus of space, the deposition of refuse in rooms no longer being actively used would have been an efficient strategy for out-of-sight waste disposal. Yet another issue is how to interpret dumping layers in seemingly downgraded structures when they contain a significant quantity of imported goods or fine wares suggestive of lifestyles beyond the subsistence level.⁸⁴⁰

Close attention to the composition and stratigraphic attributes of dumping layers can shine essential light on these issues. For example, the model proposed by Emmerson

⁸³⁴ Emmerson 2020, 111.

⁸³⁵ Bowes 2021a, 582. See Dicus 2014.

⁸³⁶ Emmerson 2020, 93.

⁸³⁷ e.g., the 2nd-century dumping at site no. 11 (Zone 3). See also sites no. 1 and 2 (Zone 1), among other examples.

⁸³⁸ Gering 2013; Bowes 2021a, 582.

⁸³⁹ Bowes suggests distances ranging from 7-35 meters for peasant sites in south Tuscany (Bowes, Collins-Elliott, and Crey 2021, 444).

⁸⁴⁰ See below, pages 237-238.

acknowledges the frequent deposition of urban waste in suburban areas, but also describes the shuffling of refuse within the city.⁸⁴¹ It is therefore possible that dumping layers in residential buildings represent the trash from nearby or even far away homes, not to be associated with the building in which they are discovered. However, many dumping layers reported in the catalogue were homogenous and compositionally distinct, showing the characteristic signs of waste deposited near- or onsite.⁸⁴² This is in line with small-scale waste management, implying a possible connection with activities occurring elsewhere in the building. Meanwhile, cases of intermixed dumping that amount to generalized infill, the sort of characteristics expected for refuse originating from some distance away,⁸⁴³ are fairly rare in this study (or at least more rarely described in excavation reports).⁸⁴⁴ On the whole, it is reasonable to assume that for villas located in low-to-medium-density rural or suburban settings, trash recovered inside the structure is more likely to have originated inside the structure. In higher density, more urbanized areas, the matter is less certain.

A good example of this ambiguity concerns site no. 46 on the Aventine, whose excavators interpret the presence of extensive dumping in the 5th-6th century as a sign of abandonment.⁸⁴⁵ However, the site's excavation report also points out the difference between the thick levels of dumping located outside the house's perimeter compared with the thinner levels inside.⁸⁴⁶ This suggests two different circumstances of deposition, and the localization of

⁸⁴¹ Emmerson 2020, 110, 116.

⁸⁴² See Emmerson 2020, 114-117. Representative examples include the 2nd-century refuse layers located to the west of the kitchen area at site no. 1 (Zone 1), consisting primarily of malacofauna and ceramic containers (Buonaguro et al. 2012, 78); the 5th-6th-century dumping layer in a single room of site no. 36 (Zone 8), consisting entirely of domestic items like *amphorae*, lamps, imported tableware, and common ware goods for cooking (Casalini 2017, 208-210); and the "rather homogenous" layers of domestic refuse deposited in a single room of site no. 40 (Zone 8), also dating to the 5th-6th century (Faedda 2019, 63).

⁸⁴³ Emmerson 2020, 114-117.

⁸⁴⁴ Examples are found at site no. 28 (Zone 6), as well as no. 33 and no. 42 (Zone 8); cf. Meneghini and Santangeli Valenzani (2004, 21), for whom the phenomenon is all but ubiquitous in the 5th-century city center of Rome.

⁸⁴⁵ Ricci 2020, 81-83.

⁸⁴⁶ Ricci 2020, 81.

dumping within the house (the waste deposits are described as few in number) might imply that some of its spaces were still being utilized and kept clear of accumulation. Ultimately, it is unclear where the trash deposited at site no. 46 came from, but it is certain that the contents of these layers contain extensive evidence for the purchase, preparation, and consumption of imported goods, not to mention luxury objects like stamped glass and incised bone jewelry.⁸⁴⁷ If we imagine that these materials originated among site no. 46's last occupants, they were not destitute people, and this would contrast strikingly with the dilapidated state of the building.

This exemplifies the problems inherent in interpreting assemblages that, as is common for domestic sites, are recovered in secondary contexts.⁸⁴⁸ The problem is not so much a lack of interpretive framework (as recent contributions show, we have a sufficient working understanding of what to expect from a layer of Roman domestic waste⁸⁴⁹), but with the way this information is communicated. There is a frequent lack of critical details about material assemblages in site publications, especially when these take the form of preliminary reports. Sometimes, ceramic classes and productions are mentioned in mere passing to explain the chronological interpretation of building phases, with little consideration of their context. Even in cases where finds records are duly reported by specialists in extensive detail, assemblages are almost never considered in terms of what they reveal about the actual usage of a building. All of this poses a major obstacle and underscores the need for strategic improvements in the recording, reporting, and interpretation of household finds assemblages.

Finally, intra-household burial is extremely common among my case studies, showing up in over half of the examined sites. A first observation is that no examples of the phenomenon

⁸⁴⁷ Ricci (2020, 83), in passing, postulates that these objects might have been associated with an ecclesiastical structure.

⁸⁴⁸ See above, pages 79-80.

⁸⁴⁹ See above, footnote 842.

correspond with highly monumental or decorative phases. Furthermore, burials usually arose in the context of other significant changes, but several were contemporaneous with continued domestic habitation.⁸⁵⁰ In support of Emmerson's recent argument, the 1st-2nd-century examples of intra-household burial at *Gabii* work against the notion of a widespread Roman death taboo that, according to conventional views, only dissolved as a result of demographic or spiritual changes inherent to Late Antiquity.⁸⁵¹ To the contrary, the practice appears to have deeper roots. In this light, the conceptual similarity it shares with the Iron Age practice of *suggrundaria*, a form of burial that entailed interment of infants "beneath the eaves" and thus along the outer walls of domestic buildings, is an enticing prospect deserving future consideration.⁸⁵²

A final point on the topic of intra-household burial regards its lack of correlation with the foundation of churches. According to my case studies, there was a marked contrast between the widespread diffusion of intra-household burial across the Roman region and the comparative paucity of houses converted into churches or other Christian buildings, with a total of only six among the 46 case studies. Therefore, no generalizable correlation between the two is evident. On the other hand, at sites no. 10 and no. 11 (Zone 3), the vicinity of burials to newly established Christian structures demonstrates that a link could have sometimes existed.⁸⁵³ It is reasonable to conclude that while churches in former households could have regularly coincided with burials, intra-household burial was a generalized phenomenon existing independently of churches or

⁸⁵⁰ e.g., site no. 2 (Zone 1), no. 4, 5, and 6 (Zone 2), no. 16 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), no. 19 (Zone 5), no. 23 (Zone 6), no. 34 (Zone 8), and several other examples discussed in chapter 4.

⁸⁵¹ Emmerson 2020, 12-13. The earliest example being the 2nd-century tomb in site no. 16 (Zone 4/*Gabii*).

⁸⁵² A point first raised by Becker (1994).

⁸⁵³ At site no. 11 the burials appear to predate the church, whereas at site no. 10 they seem to be contemporaneous.

other cultic structures. In concert with the observations of John Bodel, this is another suggestion that intra-household tombs had little to do with *ad sanctos* burial.⁸⁵⁴

Five Pre-Abandonment Trajectories

I have just made the case that *abandonment* and *disuse* are two frequently mishandled concepts in Roman household archaeology, and that the 1st-7th-century residential activities examined in chapter 4 can be interpreted in various ways depending on their broader context. Specific configurations of these activities, and the physical site-level transformations they produced, can be unexpected and contradictory. This contrasts with the way that archaeologists have imagined the foundation, development, and abandonment of Roman houses as predictable, discrete steps.⁸⁵⁵ Teleological views of household evolution are therefore to be avoided. But while deviation from the norm might have *been* the norm, this does not make it impossible to sketch the various possibilities. Below, I highlight five types of transformation that might be used to build future interpretations of the household abandonment process. These are: (1) sudden abandonment, with a quick drop-off in domestic activities, especially decorative or unified architectural interventions, followed by a lack of further activity; (2) lower-impact occupational forms, entailing the ongoing use of houses for domestic inhabitation, but with a smaller footprint and lower levels of investment in major building projects and decoration compared to previous generations; (3) agricultural, industrial, or other economic production activities beyond shopfronts and the *pars rustica*, including spoliation and recycling; (4) the establishment of churches or other Christian buildings; (5) conversion into necropolises in an absence of other activities (table 3). These five possibilities, which I call pre-abandonment trajectories, represent

⁸⁵⁴ Bodel 2014, 185.

⁸⁵⁵ See, for example, the impression conveyed by De Franceshini (2005, 297-298): villas were built, embellished, expanded, and restored before being abandoned and destroyed, leading to the “end of villas.”

fluid processes, and most sites embodied more than one of them at some point in their life.

Therefore, while I identify the one or two trajectories most characteristic of each site's final phase on table 3, they are better imagined as sliding scales than fixed outcomes or finalities.⁸⁵⁶

First, sudden abandonment is the most difficult of these to identify with confidence. At site no. 3 (Zone 1), for example, the datable evidence suggests that frequentation ended abruptly after the 2nd century; nevertheless, a series of undatable interventions (including subdivisions and other new masonry structures) shows that life continued at the villa for an unspecified period of time, and it is therefore not considered an example of this trajectory. The same goes for site no. 29 (Zone 6). Similarly, activities at site no. 38 (Zone 8) seem to have dropped off suddenly following the 4th century, and it is thus provisionally included here, but the fact that only small portions of this site have been investigated means the circumstances of its abandonment are ultimately unclear.

Somewhat more tangible examples of sudden abandonment are found in sites no. 10 (Zone 3) and no. 39 (Zone 8), and both raise further questions. The occupation of site no. 10 seems to have halted after the 3rd century, but after a period of inactivity, tombs appeared on the villa property in the 5th century, followed by a church in the 6th century. Therefore, even if it was suddenly abandoned, this was not the end of its story. At site no. 39, near the Capitoline, the household ceased to exist abruptly in the 4th century, but this was due to its integration into the neighboring property (site no. 40), a transformation that can better be called displacement than abandonment.

The second trajectory pertains to lower-impact occupational forms. These are defined by a progressive deemphasis on major decorative and architectural programs but ongoing

⁸⁵⁶ Dodd 2019, 38-40.

investment in structural maintenance, the addition of new features in informal, *ad hoc* arrangements, and the continuation of domestic practices related to dining. The case studies that best represent this category are sites no. 3 in (Zone 1), no. 4-5 (Zone 2), no. 7, 9, and 11 (Zone 3), no. 16 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), no. 20-22 (Zone 5), no. 23 and 29, (Zone 6), and, in the city of Rome (Zone 8 and 9), sites no. 33, 40, and 46. In the final phases of these buildings, daily activities were often limited to certain areas. This led to a surplus of space, and unused or rarely used rooms might have been left to collapse, dismantled for the reuse of their building materials, walled-off, or utilized for waste-disposal. While subdividing walls and *tamponature* were regular features, these usually appear added in a piecemeal fashion, responding to needs as they arose rather than following a unified design. Often, sporadic interventions aimed at shoring up collapsing structures are documented, whether using perishable materials or (reutilized) masonry.⁸⁵⁷

Trash heaps are key to identifying these low-impact occupations, where in addition to above-ground rooms, basins and cisterns, including those associated with *impluvia*, were also a common option for waste disposal.⁸⁵⁸ The critical signs in these deposits are the presence of ash, domestic ceramics, animal bones, and other forms of food waste in phase with low-impact structural modifications. Evidence from dumping layers often indicates that this occupation type existed beyond the subsistence level, but had easy access to imported goods and, occasionally, luxury wares. This is especially the case for sites no. 6 (Zone 2), no. 9 (Zone 3), no. 31 (Zone 7),⁸⁵⁹ no. 40 (Zone 8), and, depending on how the contexts are interpreted, no. 45 and 46 (Zone

⁸⁵⁷ e.g., the wall in Room A of site no. 25 (Zone 6), or the postholes cut into the corners of a mosaic of site no. 7 (Zone 3) for the construction of a new roof.

⁸⁵⁸ e.g., site no. 2 (Zone 1), no. 7 and no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 16 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), no. 21 and no. 22 (Zone 5).

⁸⁵⁹ Site no. 31 is notable because, founded *ex novo* in the 4th century, it generally reflects the low-impact occupation style of “reused” buildings from its very beginnings.

9). Given the seemingly degraded physical state of these homes compared to earlier years, their residents had access to a greater degree of wealth and material resources than might be expected.

Were these low-impact occupation forms related to multi-familial housing? Among the houses covered here, this generally seems unlikely. The notion that formerly wealthy structures were subdivided and converted into apartments for poor families is longstanding.⁸⁶⁰ As I argued in my assessment of site no. 23 (Zone 6), however, the simple presence of subdividing walls (which are extremely common in late antique phases, but also occur in earlier examples) is insufficient evidence for identifying multi-familial occupation.⁸⁶¹ Instead, one might expect to find repeating elements such as hearths, basins, or other storage areas. Scant evidence along these lines was observed in some sites, limited to no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 28 (Zone 6), and no. 31 (Zone 7), all of which had multiple hearths constructed contemporaneously. Beyond this singular category of evidence, however, there are no particularly obvious signs of multi-familial occupation in these structures, nor is it entirely clear what signs one should look for in order to identify the phenomenon.⁸⁶²

Discussions of this topic typically miss the point that Roman households were constituted in a culturally specific way. As far as elite households are concerned, literary evidence suggests that extended families and dependent or enslaved laborers all lived under the same roof.⁸⁶³ While it is unclear to what extent this model applied to all ranges of society, it is plausible that informal, low-impact occupations were similarly constituted by extended groups of people with varying social bonds, and there is no need to see this as exceptional or unexpected. At the same time, it is also reasonable to hypothesize that behind the differing trajectories of physical houses,

⁸⁶⁰ Ellis 1988.

⁸⁶¹ See above, page 176.

⁸⁶² See above, pages 41-42.

⁸⁶³ Dixon 1992; Osgood 2011.

including those characterized by low-impact occupations, were differing trajectories of households and the groups that lived in them. This perhaps points to key differences between the elite and non-elite Roman family that, in addition to warranting further consideration in future studies, are too easily glossed over by the model of multi-familial housing.

The next trajectory is defined by increasing emphasis on agricultural or industrial labor, including the dismantling and recycling of building materials, often at the expense of formerly decorative spaces. Outside the city, the case studies most indicative of this are sites no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 12/13, 15, and 18 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), no. 19 (Zone 5), and no. 24 and 27 (Zone 6). Within Rome (Zone 8 and 9), the best examples are sites no. 34-36 and 44-45, although industrial activities and spoliation generally represent a recurring theme among the urban residences examined in chapter 4. This trajectory can be further divided into two sub-categories: large-scale and extensive projects, impacting the entirety of a building's floorplan and entailing multiple forms of production-related labor (e.g., site no. 19; Zone 5), and smaller scale endeavors, usually involving single types of production and limited to specific areas of a house (e.g., site no. 27; Zone 6). I will return to this trajectory type in greater detail toward the end of this chapter, considering what the distinction between these large-scale and small-scale endeavors might tell us about the agents responsible for them.

As I have already mentioned, although it is frequently cited as a major waypoint in the end of the Roman house,⁸⁶⁴ the conversion of houses into churches or other Christian structures is rare among my case studies, limited to sites no. 1 (Zone 1), no. 8, 10, and 11 (Zone 3), and no. 41 and 43 (Zone 8).⁸⁶⁵ Starting with the villas, at site no. 1, the establishment of a church dates to the 4th century, following at least three centuries of domestic occupation without any significant

⁸⁶⁴ Including specifically at Rome. See Guidobaldi 1986, 231-237; Machado 2012b.

⁸⁶⁵ The transformation of no. 44 (Zone 8) into a monastery dates to the 10th century and is thus not included here.

disuse activities or signs of structural degradation. For sites no. 8 and 10, on the other hand, the church appears to have followed a significant lull in residential occupation and perhaps outright abandonment. In the well-known case of site no. 11, the villa at *Mola di Monte Gelato*, the 5th-6th-century church was built in association with low-impact domestic occupation and a heavy presence of production activities. Among the urban residences, site no. 43 (the *domus* beneath *Santa Cecilia in Trastevere*) featured, like site no. 1, a rather seamless transition between domestic use and the ecclesiastical foundation. Site no. 41, meanwhile, had only an indirect connection with the convent that was later established in the area, no mention of which predates the 9th century, so it is impossible to say whether the indications of intentional destruction there related to construction of the Christian building. Therefore, among the six cases at our disposal, the lead up to the foundation of churches in households was a variable process.

I have also commented upon the remarkable frequency with which intra-household burials appear among the 46 case studies, especially from the 3rd century CE (fig. 98), with only 17 sites having no associated burials within their structures or against their perimeter walls. First, it is possible that this represents a selection bias. My case studies were generally chosen on the basis of whether they preserved extensive, well-documented evidence for the abandonment process, and the sites that qualify for this standard might have been more likely to attract the sort of frequentation that went hand-in-hand with intra-household burial. On the other hand, the near ubiquity of the phenomenon around Rome (and indeed for the western Roman Empire in general) has been previously noted,⁸⁶⁶ so the frequency of intra-household burial among my case studies is not a major surprise.

⁸⁶⁶ Di Gennaro and Griesbach 2003.

Most of the cases I examined featured small numbers of tombs. These could be isolated to a specific area⁸⁶⁷ or more evenly spaced throughout a building.⁸⁶⁸ These burials usually coincided with additional types of frequentation at the site. A limited number of sites, however, seem to have become true necropolises, places for the dead but not the living, suggested by an apparent absence of contemporary evidence for significant non-funerary activities. This applies to sites no. 2 (Zone 1), no. 13 and 17 (Zone 4), no. 30 (Zone 7), no. 42 (Zone 8, in the *Campus Martius*), and (to a mixed degree) site no. 22 (Zone 5). These sites were differentiated by a few aspects. First, the number of total burials varied significantly, from four at site no. 2 to more than 20 at site no. 30. Second, whereas burials are the last signs of datable evidence for all five sites, the initial chronology of the necropolis phase could overlap with other activities. This is true for site no. 30, where the necropolis began alongside a significant spoliation phase, but ultimately outlived all other forms of activity. At site no. 2, the first burials were positioned in a series of collapsed rooms during the 3rd-4th century while other areas of the house continued to be occupied. Then, in the 5th century, a second group of tombs was added, this time in the seeming absence of any other activities. In most cases, the transition into a necropolis seems to have unfolded rather gradually, following a tapering of the building's domestic function.

Site no. 22 is a significant edge case. Here, the final series of burials (more than 20 in number) dates to the 5th-6th century and, like site no. 30, occurred alongside a significant phase of spoliation. The majority of the burials were congregated around a 3rd-century monumental tomb, and many readapted spoliated materials from this structure.⁸⁶⁹ Four, however, were placed inside the residence itself, near the portico, an area of the house that appears to have been intentionally

⁸⁶⁷ e.g., the four *a cappucina* tombs positioned in a wine basin at site no. 17 (Zone 4).

⁸⁶⁸ e.g., the five tombs at site no. 28 (Zone 6), distributed across the western portion of the building.

⁸⁶⁹ cf. the comparable situation at the villa at *Tenuta di Mazzalupo* (C30). See above, page 167.

closed off. Therefore, while the final phase of no. 22 was not related to its necropolis, but to later spoliation activities, the evidence is somewhat suggestive of its status as a space for the dead. Unlike the other necropolis sites, moreover, the transition at site no. 22 was quite sudden, with efforts to maintain the building's monumental aspects persisting into the 5th century.

Site no. 22 raises the question of the connection that intra-household burials might have had with earlier extra-household tombs, whether monumental or not.⁸⁷⁰ Some studies have argued that villa burial suggests some continuity of association with a house's previous residents, or a persistence of their memory.⁸⁷¹ While possible, this would be an arbitrary way of interpreting site no. 22, since most cases of intra-household burial in the catalogue had no discernible links with prior tombs. What is evident, however, is that whatever their connection with the property might have been, the people who frequented site no. 22 in its later phases were engaged in an active physical negotiation with both the house and its dead, stripping previous tombs to erect new ones, then laboring in nearby spaces to retrieve valuable reusable materials for other purposes.⁸⁷² This is a further example of the social and spatial negotiability of residential buildings, an aspect that characterized site no. 22 both before and after its abandonment.

Casting residential transformations as trajectories, as I have done here, acknowledges the fluid, multidirectional nature of these changes rather than imagining them as isolated processes unfolding in predictable, linear ways. I commented extensively in chapter 4 on the frequently cyclical nature of site evolution, with residents oscillating between different priorities from one generation to the next, or within relatively short spans of time. This was a facet of most sites in

⁸⁷⁰ Sites no. 1 and 11, for example, also featured nearby monumental tombs in prior phases, while at site no. 8, a series of what are called "poor" graves were documented near the villa's access road and broadly dated between the early and late imperial era.

⁸⁷¹ Bodel 1997; Griesbach 2005.

⁸⁷² See the comparable situation at the villa at *Casale Ghella* (C29). See above, page 166.

one way or another.⁸⁷³ In all of these cases, individual instances of destruction or degradation might be misleading if read in isolation, underscoring the need to consider houses as holistic environments following long-term and, occasionally, contradictory trajectories of change. This stands at odds with the teleological language of continuity versus discontinuity.⁸⁷⁴ Instead, my findings reflect the same “continuous discontinuity,” “intense bursts of activity,” and generational fluctuations recently described in the analysis of what, on its surface, is a very different form of housing: the dwellings of rural peasants in south Tuscany.⁸⁷⁵ These same qualities might accurately describe a wider range of living arrangements in Roman central Italy, a point to which I will soon return.

Local and Global Factors of Abandonment

The five pre-abandonment trajectories I have just described represent contextually derived responses to a variety of factors ranging from the local (aspects pertaining to the typology of houses, their chronological lifespan, and their immediate physical setting) to the global (economic or demographic fluctuations, changes in spirituality and social structures, and other society-wide developments highlighted by previous approaches). I evaluate these factors below before suggesting some additional options for explaining household transformation starting in the imperial period.

⁸⁷³ Crucial examples are site no. 3 in Zone 1 (where acts of voluntary destruction were followed by the building of a monumental portico), site no. 19 in Zone 5 and sites no. 39-40 in Zone 8 (where spoliation and recycling went hand-in-hand with ostentatious remodeling projects), site no. 43 in Zone 8 (which featured subdividing walls and *tamponature* followed by new mosaics followed by an unfinished apsidal hall followed by the foundation of a church), and site no. 46 in Zone 9 (which oscillated between interventions at tackling essential structural problems to investment in decoration). Also worthy of consideration is the villa at *Tenuta di Mazzalupo* (C30; see above, page 167) in Zone 6, where irregular subdividing walls appeared alongside the villa's enlargement and before the addition of new mosaics. We might additionally reflect on the comments of Timothy Potter and Anthony King in their descriptions of the 2nd-3rd-century phase of the villa at *Mola di Monte Gelato* (site no. 11; Zone 3). This was a crucial period of the villa's development and was characterized by simultaneous acts of destruction and construction, leading to what the excavators call a “contradictory” situation (Potter and King 1997, 55).

⁸⁷⁴ Castrorao Barba 2020.

⁸⁷⁵ Bowes and Crey 2021, 637.

Local Factors – Typology, Chronology, and Topography

Local factors considered here start with the typology of residences upon their initial construction, which for the houses in this study can be divided into five broad categories: small urban apartments, medium or large urban *domus*, monumental villas, rustic villas, and mixed villas encompassing both agricultural facilities and monumental or decorative qualities (table 3). Additional points of discussion are the chronology of each home's initial foundation and abandonment, the period in which its pre-abandonment trajectory began to take hold, as well as its setting within the natural and human landscape. Addressing these variables is crucial for reckoning with the tendency to reduce single households to datapoints reflecting regional chronologies. Here, I wish to highlight how site development could defy local trends as often as confirm them.

Starting with the urban residences, three of the small apartments (sites no. 34-36) were located adjacent to one another in the northern *Campus Martius*, and the other (site no. 44) was found in *Trastevere*. Their final phases are the most difficult to classify due to their small physical footprints, resulting in a limited contextual backdrop. For example, the raising of floor levels and restoration of stairways in site no. 34 could have served to facilitate domestic activities (which might have primarily occurred upstairs) just as easily as commercial or industrial activities. One significant attribute of all these sites is the frenetic pace of their development over the centuries and their emphasis on utilitarian features like tile floors and basins. This is similar, in some ways, to the character of site no. 31 (Zone 7), just outside the Aurelian Walls, which also evolved in a frenzied state of physical alterations. However, unlike site no. 31, which gives every impression of a domestic building up until its abandonment, the evidence for metalworking in site no. 36, the concentration of activities in the *taberna* located in

the northern part of site no. 35, and the millstones recovered in site no. 35 and 44 produce the impression that the final phases of these buildings were linked to industrial activities and commerce more than domestic life. Chronologically, all four of the buildings began their pre-abandonment trajectories in the 3rd-5th century but experienced afterlives in the 6th century forward. Additionally, site no. 35 is the only of the three to have experienced a true post-abandonment phase during and after the 7th century when it was used for activities related to a kiln.

Moving onto the 15 larger urban structures in Rome and *Gabii*, identified here as *domus*, the situation is mixed, with each of the five pre-abandonment trajectories taking place in more than one house over a wide chronological range. The most common trajectory was that of increasing emphasis on agricultural/industrial production, occurring in at least eight of the sites. Five sites entailed some form of low-impact domestic occupation during their final phases. Of these, site no. 16 was the only one located in *Gabii*. Meanwhile, only two sites came to a sudden end. For site no. 39, this occurred when the house was annexed by the neighboring property (site no. 40), while at site no. 38, the circumstances are unclear.⁸⁷⁶ Two of the *domus* were converted into large necropolises. In both cases, this appears to have followed the definitive abandonment of the buildings for domestic purposes. The two sites, however, differ significantly in chronology, with the earliest burials at site no. 13 (Zone 4/*Gabii*) dating to the 1st century CE and those at site no. 42 (Zone 8/Rome) dating to the 6th-7th century. Finally, two *domus* (sites no. 41 and 43) are connected with an ecclesiastical foundation in the 5th century or later. This raises the observation that among the sites I have examined, church foundation is encountered either in the city center of Rome or in peripheral areas of the region, and I return to this issue below.

⁸⁷⁶ See above, page 236.

Chronologically, the onset of pre-abandonment trajectories is fairly well distributed among the 15 *domus*. The earliest examples in the 1st century BCE-1st century CE are unsurprisingly from *Gabii*. Among the cases in Rome, most began their pre-abandonment trajectories in the 4th century. This was prior to the demographic collapse widely assumed to have impacted the city starting in the 5th century, raising questions about the frequently cited link between residential abandonment, degradation of the urban fabric, and depopulation in the city center.⁸⁷⁷ The earliest example in Rome (site no. 46 on the Aventine) dates to the 2nd century and resulted from structural issues caused by the instability of the natural terrain. Nonetheless, occupation here would continue for as many as four centuries after the emergence of these problems. Lastly, while the date of final abandonment varies significantly among these sites, it generally corresponds with an interval of two or three centuries following the beginning of the pre-abandonment trajectory.

Turning now to the 14 monumental villas, these houses were all characterized by impressive footprints and a high degree of emphasis on decorative features, bath sectors, and monumental architecture in their early phases. None was founded later than the 1st century CE, and the vast majority saw the beginnings of their final trajectories between the 3rd-4th century. While none of the sites were converted into total necropolises, all but two (sites no. 25-26 in Zone 6, neither of whose initial typology is entirely secure) contained at least one intra-household burial. Three (all far from Rome) were eventually converted into churches, and none appears to have experienced an abrupt abandonment. Overall, the most common outcome among the monumental villas in this study was that of low-impact domestic occupation. This was often combined with a significant emphasis on industrial or artisanal activities, especially those related

⁸⁷⁷ See above, pages 67-68.

to spoliation and recycling, a logical result given the abundance of valuable materials that went into their construction and decoration in earlier phases. No significant chronological patterns are evident regarding the final abandonment of these residences, although, like the *domus* group, this typically occurred after an interval of two or three centuries from the onset of their pre-abandonment trajectories.

Seven case studies can be classified as *villae rusticae* during their early phases. All were established by the 1st century BCE, with the exception of site no. 31 (Zone 7), built *ex novo* in the 4th century. The first thing that stands out is the statistical lack of intra-household burial compared to the monumental villa group. Site no. 2 (Zone 1), as discussed above, was converted into a small necropolis after its abandonment in the 5th century, and this was preceded by five tombs that had appeared within some of its collapsed rooms while the villa was still occupied. The burials at site no. 28 (Zone 6) also corresponded with a period of structural collapse combined with ongoing, low-impact domestic occupation, and this occurred in a similar timeframe of the 3rd-5th century. Along with site no. 28, the other five villas were, like their monumental counterparts, all characterized by low-impact occupations and/or an increase in agricultural or industrial activities prior to their final abandonment. These changes occurred over a wide range of time from the 1st-5th century CE. Site no. 24 (Zone 6), where the *pars urbana* was converted into an industrial space in the 1st century CE, is a notable case of an early pre-abandonment trajectory. All were abandoned by the 5th-6th century (although the final abandonment date of site no. 3 is an open question), and most appear to have lasted for a shorter amount of time (around one century) following the beginning of their pre-abandonment trajectories compared to the monumental group. The exceptions are sites no. 24 and 28 (both in Zone 6), which continued for as many as four centuries. Site no. 28 is also one of the *villae*

rusticae featuring intra-household tombs, allowing us to hypothesize that the longevity of a villa's pre-abandonment trajectory could have influenced the likelihood that people would be buried there.

Finally, six sites are classified as mixed villas, and these varied in the relative weight they placed on agricultural facilities or, conversely, monumental and decorative elements. All were founded by the 2nd century CE, with four stretching back to the 1st century BCE or earlier. At least two of them (site no. 7 in Zone 3; site no. 29 in Zone 6) saw a trajectory of low-impact domestic occupation prior to their abandonment, and both of these sites were more residential/monumental than agricultural/productive. Two became necropolises. At site no. 17 (Zone 4), this occurred in the apparent absence of other forms of frequentation and featured only four tombs. In contrast, more than 20 tombs were recovered at site no. 30, and these might have overlapped with systematic spoliation efforts in the villa. The final chronologies of these villas are variable, revealing no obvious patterns.

This consideration of typology and chronology raises a few points. First, the frenetic and near-constant transformation of the four apartments reflects similar processes documented among other small dwellings in Rome, particularly those in the

Ara Coeli insula (C37).⁸⁷⁸ On the basis of this, we might surmise that smaller, possibly lower-class houses were highly dynamic and prone to informal, *ad hoc* solutions. This is also one way of reading the rapid transformations of site no. 31 (Zone 7), just outside the Aurelian Walls. For larger sites (both *domus* and villas), stable, formal arrangements were more persistent during the 1st-2nd century, but examples of informal, *ad hoc* transformations happened occasionally.

⁸⁷⁸ Ippoliti 2015. See above, page 190.

Then, moving toward Late Antiquity, the larger sites became more and more dynamic, often embodying the same frenetic rhythms of the small urban apartments.

In general, however, initial typology correlates with later trajectories most clearly in the case of villas. Monumental villas, for example, are distinguished by their frequent inclusion of intra-household burial compared with the *villae rusticae*, their longer overall pre-abandonment trajectories, and a higher likelihood of being used for low-impact domestic occupations in their later phases. We might posit that these three outcomes were interrelated with one another and explain their presence in monumental sites within the ample space, daily-life infrastructure (like drains, latrines, and cooking facilities), and range of reusable material resources (like marble, glass, metal, tiles, and bricks) that these buildings supplied. On the other hand, similar cases among the *villae rusticae* (in particular sites no. 20 in Zone 5 and no. 28 in Zone 6), not to mention the highly variable situation regarding mixed villas, imply that size and monumentality were not the only determining factors. Certainly, we can imagine that all of these building types would have offered different possibilities. What a *villa rustica* might have lacked in space and valuable decorative materials, it could have made up for in its useful infrastructure for agricultural or industrial purposes, and *vice versa*. The choice of how to utilize these buildings, however, would have depended on the specific priorities and needs of their inhabitants, not just their inherent physical qualities, leading to a variety of outcomes and chronologies for each villa type.

Turning now to chronological trends, 15 sites began their pre-abandonment trajectories in the 3rd century or earlier (fig. 99). Therefore, roughly one third of the case studies experienced the typical signs of disuse, and in some cases abandonment altogether, prior to Late Antiquity or just at its threshold. Meanwhile, 13 sites had pre-abandonment trajectories that began in the 4th

century on the basis of securely datable evidence, and an additional 10 fall possibly within this range, representing the majority of the case studies. The remaining seven sites experienced their final trajectories from the 5th century forward.⁸⁷⁹ The 4th century was therefore a major inflection point in abandonment trajectories.

In terms of final abandonment chronologies, only three sites, all in the settlement of *Gabii*, appear securely abandoned by the 3rd century. Other than those whose final abandonment is undatable, the rest of the sites were definitively abandoned in the 4th century or later. Of these, six were abandoned in the 4th century, eight in the 5th century, seven in the 6th century, six in the 7th century, and a remarkable 15 sites (roughly a third of the total case studies) featured some sort of frequentation following the 7th century. In general, regardless of whether sites began their pre-abandonment trajectories in earlier or later centuries of the imperial period, an interval of 200-300 years tended to pass before the date of final abandonment. Sites experiencing sudden abandonment or a high degree of longevity in their “pre-abandonment” state are thus exceptions to the rule.

These chronological trends suggest that the activities normally associated with the end of the Roman house were not uniquely late antique phenomena, since a significant number of sites begin their pre-abandonment trajectories in the 3rd century or prior. Nonetheless, there is indeed a predominance of new pre-abandonment transformations in the 4th century. This confirms that the rate of change in residential buildings around Rome began to accelerate during Late Antiquity but decouples these developments from the demographic drop of the 5th century. Moreover, almost all final abandonment dates occurred in the 4th century or later, and a large portion following the 7th century, regardless of whether identifiably domestic activities continued to

⁸⁷⁹ A single site, site no. 26 (Zone 6), has a pre-abandonment trajectory whose initial chronology cannot be securely established, but it probably dates to the 4th century or later.

occur this late. On the whole, these trends suggest that the end of the Roman house, which I can now better call the process of residential abandonment, was a phenomenon that started earlier, lasted longer, and followed a more varied course than previously recognized.

The last local factor to consider is physical context. This can be examined from two perspectives: setting within the natural terrain, and topographical context within the human landscape. Beginning with natural attributes, the region of Rome is split into a few types of terrain: coastal settings, very hilly and mountainous areas, and moderately hilly rolling plains. Zone 1 is the only coastal area and also falls within the alluvial plain flanking the mouth of the Tiber. Zone 3 and part of Zone 6 encompass the steep mountainous terrain bordering Rome to the north and east, while the sites in Zone 2 are distributed across the slopes of the Alban Hills leading to lakes *Albano* and *Nemi*. The majority of Zone 6, along with zones 4, 5, and 7 consists of rolling, gradually undulating plains intermixed with moderately hilly areas, the same type of terrain that naturally characterizes the urban area of Rome. Zone 6 is broadly intersected by the Tiber's alluvial plain as well as that of the *Aniene*, the river that forms the northern border of Zone 4. Small and medium riverways also cut through the mountainous terrain of Zone 3, while the *Almone* river wound from Zone 5 to 7. In addition to the *Almone*, countless other spring-fed streams of a similar nature could generally be found throughout the alluvial valleys surrounding Rome.⁸⁸⁰

While the region of Rome therefore offered diverse physical settings, the five pre-abandonment trajectories cut across each, suggesting that the natural landscape was not a particularly strong predictor of domestic transformations. One reason for this might be that the location of villas (the housing type making up the majority of sites in this study) were pre-

⁸⁸⁰ Dubbini 2015, 27-28.

selected on the basis of what were perceived to be favorable attributes: flat or gently sloping topology (usually on the spur of a hill), good soils for cultivation, and vicinity to roadways, among other factors.⁸⁸¹ Consequently, at least in terms of terrain, not much distinguishes the setting of most villas in the catalogue.

It is therefore useful to consider the outliers, starting with houses that are adjacent to rivers, lakes, or the coast. Here again, sites in such locations share little in common regarding the date or nature of their abandonment but, instead, represent a wide range of chronologies and outcomes.⁸⁸² One evident factor for some water-adjacent sites was the difficulty of guarding against flooding. This reinforces Eeva-Maria Viitanen's argument that large bodies of water were more a risk than an asset to villas around Rome (who tended to collect their water in cisterns or from small natural springs), meaning that such positions were usually avoided.⁸⁸³ This risk might have been augmented for sites closer to or inside the city, where the ability of households to manage drainage and water runoff was surely limited by their (sub)urban settings, and sites no. 30, 32, 42, and 44 (zones 7 and 8) all contained alluvial deposits indicating periodic flooding. Still, while flooding could have been a factor in the abandonment of these sites, it does not appear to have correlated with *how* they were abandoned (i.e., whether they became a necropolis, like site no. 30 and 42, or served a commercial/artisanal function, like site no. 44).

Another group of outliers consists of sites in very hilly or mountainous areas (which include all or some of zones 2, 3, and 6). In contrast to houses near waterbodies, this group had some significant shared aspects. Common trends were a long overall lifespan, with most founded

⁸⁸¹ Viitanen 2010, 162-166.

⁸⁸² This group includes sites no. 1-3 (Zone 1; the Tiber and Tyrrhenian coast); no. 4-6 (Zone 2; *Albano* and *Nemi*); no. 9 (Zone 3; near the confluence between the small *Licenza* and *Aniene* rivers); no. 12-16 (Zone 4; the volcanic lake at *Gabii*); no. 28 (Zone 6; the Tiber); no. 30 (Zone 7; the Tiber); and no. 41-44 (Zone 8; the Tiber).

⁸⁸³ Viitanen 2010, 83-107.

in the 1st century BCE and abandoned in the 6th century or later; a long continuity of occupation, even after the beginning of their pre-abandonment trajectories; the prevalence of ongoing, low-impact domestic occupation, often combined with agricultural or industrial activities; and the relative frequency of church foundation, comprising three of the six cases in this study.

However, we must consider whether the convergence of these trends resulted from attributes of the physical context or, conversely, the topographical context of these sites. This is especially true given that all of them shared a similar distance from the city of Rome, a factor that might have been particularly relevant for the phenomenon of church foundation.

Examples of residential church foundations in this study are located both in the city center and far away, but not in the more immediate suburb. There are a few ways of interpreting this. One possibility is that ecclesiastical buildings in suburban areas tended to be founded *ex-novo* or to reuse structures other than residential buildings. However, two counterexamples among the *comparanda* caution against this conclusion.⁸⁸⁴ Either way, it is easy to see how villas further from Rome, including in mountainous settings, could have had a higher chance of becoming ecclesiastical sites: the low density of occupation in these areas would have offered fewer established community gathering points, making villas, already an important marker of the sparsely occupied landscape, a natural choice for rural sanctuaries. It is also worth noting that three of the distant villa churches (sites no. 1, 10, and 11) were found along major roadways, and site no. 8 was positioned on a critical secondary road linking the *via Tiburtina* with the *via Salaria*. They therefore took advantage of the same vectors of people, goods, and information that had been useful for the villas in their previous manifestations. Moreover, precisely because they were located at a significant distance from Rome, these churches might have served to

⁸⁸⁴ C15, the villa at *Tor Carbone* (see above, page 152); C16, the *Basilica di Santo Stefano* (see above, page 155).

increase local levels of connectivity with the city. Archaeologically, it is firmly established that settlements around *Farfa*, even further from Rome, enjoyed strong commercial links with the city well into the early medieval period. The role of ecclesiastical foundations in solidifying these links would be harder to prove archaeologically.⁸⁸⁵ Still, historical research on other areas of central Italy have stressed the function of rural churches in structuring remote early medieval landscapes.⁸⁸⁶ This raises the possibility that similar dynamics existed outside Rome and is an example of how physical setting might have conditioned the final transformation of residential buildings in the region.

Aside from the cases represented by the most remote villas, however, the distance of residences from Rome is not a strong predictor of trends, and developments impacting the broader Roman region generally correlate with contemporary changes inside the city. This confirms the sense that Rome was an interlinked and extended metropolis. The major exception is the appearance of intra-household burial, which reached its peak outside of the Aurelian Walls by the 4th century, but did not appear within the city until the 5th century (fig. 98).⁸⁸⁷ Aside from this, both the distribution of pre-abandonment trajectories (table 3), the chronological onset of pre-abandonment trajectories (fig. 99), and the date of final abandonment (fig. 100) all follow similar trend lines both inside and outside of Rome. Therefore, while the process of residential abandonment could have certainly been influenced by physical context, topographical and ecological settings only occasionally correlate with strong discernible trends. The date of a site's foundation and its original typology also have their limitations. These results confirm the benefit

⁸⁸⁵ Historical evidence indeed suggests the church actively acquired land in at least some portions of the mountainous zones east of Rome (Frischer et al. 2006, 11-12).

⁸⁸⁶ Castiglia 2018b; 2018c.

⁸⁸⁷ The sole case within the Aurelian Walls potentially dating earlier than the 5th century is at site no. 37 (Zone 8), but this is assigned a broad chronology of the 4th-7th century, and almost certainly belongs to the later end of this range.

of an agent-centered approach to domestic transformations, demonstrating that, at least from a local point of view, Roman households were not mere products of their place and time, but the result of variable needs, choices, and strategies.

Global Factors – (De)population, Elites, and Economy

In chapter 2, I discussed some of the most influential models that have been used to formulate and explain the end of the Roman house. These take the form of high-level narratives tied to global factors like economic or demographic fluctuations, religion, and the fate of elites across the Roman west, issues to which I now return. How effectively do these models explain the situation in Rome? Because previous scholars have generally approached the end of the villa and end of the *domus* as separate topics, I will first consider these questions in terms of suburban and rural residences, then urban ones.

For villas, the essential idea to address is the Tuscan model, initially formulated by Riccardo Francovich and subsequently elaborated by scholars of the Siena school.⁸⁸⁸ It goes without saying that Francovich's perspective was regionally specific, but it has had a massive influence on debates surrounding the end of the villa across all of central Italy. To briefly recap, the Tuscan model is a disaster model, recounting the failure of the late Roman villa system and its economic, demographic, and social effects. Francovich maintained that the dispersed villa system progressively declined in the 5th-6th century before it was gradually replaced by a nucleated settlement system. These transformations were thought to take place in a desolate countryside, devoid of elites, lacking in social hierarchies, and home only to a scant population of peasants leading an independent but destitute existence. Both the ransacking and squatting of

⁸⁸⁸ See above, pages 38-39.

villas along with the establishment of hut-clustered villages, according to the Tuscan model, were systematic results of these developments.

Depopulation and a weak or absent aristocracy are thus key elements of this story. Both of these themes are reflected in the sites I have considered to some degree, but not in a way that closely lines up with the Tuscan model. As I have demonstrated, most instances of activities that could be misidentified as squatting or ransacking predate Rome's demographic drop in the 5th century, with a concentration especially in the 4th century, and thus the two phenomena cannot be directly related.⁸⁸⁹ Moreover, inhabitation of the countryside around Rome following the 5th-century population drop, while certainly sparser, continued to make use of villas, and there is no strong evidence of "agglomerative" settlement in these cases. The implication of this is that, at least around Rome, old patterns of rural occupation were recycled rather than replaced.

A weakened aristocracy implies the presence of fewer aristocratic inhabitants, and this is one option for interpreting the growing frequency of lower-impact domestic occupations moving toward the early Middle Ages. At the same time, these occupation forms had precedents in the earlier imperial era. This dilutes the catastrophic framing of residential downgrading and decenters the role of the 5th-century crisis as a causal factor in its origin. Moreover, the late antique and early medieval trajectories I have examined hardly reflect a population lacking in social hierarchies. In particular, some houses were subject to similar trajectories of transformation, but distinguished by scale and articulation. For example, sites no. 11 (Zone 3) and no. 19 (Zone 5) were two villas combining spoliation and artisanal production with low-impact domestic occupation. For both, these activities unfolded over multiple centuries, suggesting the presence of groups with sufficient resources to coordinate and sustain significant

⁸⁸⁹ A similar argument can be made for intramural and intra-household burial. cf. Volpe 2000, 206-207; 2003, 232; 2008, 272; 2014, 273.

economic endeavors.⁸⁹⁰ However, production at site no. 19 was more varied (encompassing lime-, glass-, and metalworking) and appears to have occurred at a truly industrial scale. At site no. 11, except for a short-lived lime kiln, production was limited to metallurgy and, while involving multiple workstations, more limited in scale. Smaller yet and shorter lived was site no. 15 (Zone 4), where formerly decorative areas were used for wine, then perhaps lime production for around half a century. At the bottom of the scale were sites like no. 27 (Zone 6), featuring a single glass kiln inserted in a mosaiced room and preserving evidence of sporadic dining activities. Therefore, although the final transformations of these sites involved similar trajectories (agricultural/industrial reuse combined with domestic activities), their distinctions in scale, intensity, and longevity are suggestive of agents possessing different levels of social and material resources.

Additionally, while archaeological evidence for domestic activities in seeming contrast with elite Roman lifestyles is certainly more visible for the 3rd-7th century, close consideration has shown that such practices did not necessarily take place in a context of destitution and subsistence-level living, including for smaller sites. This provides a further reason to rethink the implied dichotomy between the (elite) Roman family structure represented by the “ideal Roman house” versus the desperation, squatting, and altogether lack of meaningful family or social structures represented by the “end of the Roman house.” Waste deposits and evidence for the restoration of old decorative elements, or the creation of new ones using improvised materials and techniques (fig. 27; fig. 101),⁸⁹¹ have all been essential to the realization that the agents

⁸⁹⁰ Similar to what has recently been documented for the final phases of the villa at *Aiano Torracchia di Chiusi* (Cavalieri and Giunilia-Mair 2009; Cavalieri and Peeters 2020).

⁸⁹¹ e.g., the pavement in Room B of site no. 1 in Zone 1; the 3rd-4th-century restoration of a mosaic floor with a simple *cocciopesto* preparation at site no. 5 in Zone 2 (Caserta 2006, 170, 174); the 4th-7th-century mosaic restorations at site no. 6 in Zone 2; the 4th-century mosaic in large, reused *tesserae* at site no. 21 in Zone 5; or the improvised *cocciopesto* surface with reused *tesserae* inserts at site no. 30, or its frescoed *opus craticium* wall, and the beaten-earth *opus sculutaum*-esque floor at site no. 32, both in Zone 7.

behind these occupations were doing more than just getting by, investing in aspects of life beyond merely the utilitarian level. This illustrates the insights gained from close, site-level consideration, contrasting with the systems-level approach of the Tuscan model. Additionally, it raises crucial questions that must be investigated by future work regarding how non-elite families and communities were constituted and physically manifested in the buildings they (re)occupied.

Despite its general incongruity with the image around Rome, one aspect of the Tuscan model that therefore deserves further consideration is its attention to the interplay between elites and non-elites. Yet few scholars on either side of the late antique/early medieval divide have responded critically to this theme, and persistent biases generally limit assessments of 5th-7th-century non-elites to commentary on their miserable existence.⁸⁹² Meanwhile, most responses to the work of Francovich and his successors, whether in agreement or defiance, have been geared around some form of the question, “where are the elites?” This is evident, for example, in the theory that late Roman and post-Roman elites were militarized and ceased investing in monumental residences, thus leaving fewer material traces.⁸⁹³ In this study, no direct evidence of such a wave of militarization has been observed. The most common material evidence offered in support of the militarization model takes the form of fortified villas, but the only possible instance of this among my case studies (site no. 21 in Zone 5) was related to a single episode of conflict (presumably the siege of Vitiges in 537 CE).⁸⁹⁴ Tamara Lewit’s model of a Christianized and less materialistic late Roman elite is another option to explain their decreased visibility.⁸⁹⁵ Considering the scant direct evidence for ecclesiastical foundations analyzed here, and the clear

⁸⁹² See above, footnote 371.

⁸⁹³ Wickham 2005, 465-481.

⁸⁹⁴ See above, pages 155-157.

⁸⁹⁵ Lewit 2003, 255-256, 268.

demonstration of intra-household burial as a practice with early imperial roots, it is unclear what additional evidence could link my case studies to new spiritual values. Finally, the model of new economic strategies based on spoliation and recycling has been the most recent attempt to find the elites, who are postulated to have been the people who commissioned such endeavors.⁸⁹⁶ This is the theory with the best support in the evidence I have examined, especially for the large-scale spoliation and recycling projects just discussed, but not necessarily for the smaller ones.

Some of the same economic and social factors thought to be behind the end of the villa have also been linked to the abandonment of urban residences. In Italy, models of late antique and early medieval urbanism have emphasized the “destruction, de-structuration, and re-functionalization” of houses and, like the Tuscan model, have explained these phenomena as products of economic crisis and demographic collapse.⁸⁹⁷ Once again, the case studies here fit within this broad view of collapse in some ways, but not entirely. Generally speaking, “destruction, de-structuration, and re-functionalization” are all terms that can accurately describe the final trajectories of both the urban, suburban, and extra-urban residences in this study, but the causal relationship previously postulated between these phenomena and Rome’s 5th-century demographic collapse is questionable. For example, the beginning in Rome of intramural/intra-household burial and the conversion of houses into churches are indeed firmly tied to the 5th century forward. Yet the majority of pre-abandonment trajectories identified in the city have earlier origins between the 2nd-4th century. Because recent accounts have generally described this period of Rome in terms of demographic and social continuity, not discontinuity, unanswered questions remain. If abandonment and disuse were products of Rome’s 5th-century crisis, how do we explain these earlier examples?

⁸⁹⁶ Munro 2010, 237-238; 2012, 361-366. See also Munro 2016.

⁸⁹⁷ Brogiolo 2011, 34; 2018a, 8-9.

Gabii is one place to look for an answer since its cases of abandonment occurred even earlier and are better preserved stratigraphically. Despite the chronological disconnect, we see many of the same outcomes in *Gabii* that we do later in Rome, but as early as the 2nd-1st century BCE.⁸⁹⁸ These include intra-household burial, spoliation, the use of formerly ostentatious structures for industrial or agricultural purposes, and low-impact forms of domestic occupation. If we accept the standard narrative that *Gabii* was mostly abandoned by the late republican period, then these developments would indeed seem to coincide with a case of widescale depopulation. What the results of the *Gabii Project* have shown, however, is that lower overall levels of urban investment did not necessarily equate with total demographic collapse or chaos. While imperial *Gabii* might have shrunk, it was still an actively managed settlement based on a complex interplay of diverse economic strategies (from quarrying to commerce to wine production) and intense negotiation of the boundaries between public and private as well as those between the living and the dead. Thus, perhaps like its birth, the death of *Gabii* mirrors many of the same dynamics we see in nearby Rome centuries later.

As I have made clear throughout this study, cases of early abandonment (or early pre-abandonment trajectories) were not limited to *Gabii* but also occurred inside Rome itself and across its region prior to reaching a crescendo in the 4th century. In light of this, the various global models just discussed might be helpful for explaining the *acceleration* of the abandonment process during Late Antiquity, but they do not explain its origins. This realization suggests that although it has often been treated as such, the situation at Rome can hardly be considered a typical case of the “end of the Roman house.” While more work is necessary before determining whether this variation from the norm was due to Rome’s idiosyncratic character, my

⁸⁹⁸ See site no. 14.

findings also underscore the need to rethink the norm itself. One of the most critical areas for reconsideration, as I now wish to explain, is the role of non-elite Romans in structuring the outcomes that scholars have typically associated with the end of the Roman house and, along with it, the end of Roman lifestyles.

The End of the Roman House Beyond the Elite

In presenting abandonment as a trajectory, I have sought to convey that it was an active process resulting from intentional behaviors undertaken by human agents. I have found that these behaviors could be configured in a variety of ways and could vary in intensity over time. However, the range of activities they encompassed and their overall effect on individual buildings remained remarkably consistent from the 1st-7th century CE. While previous models of the end of the Roman house have sought to explain the emergence of these abandonment behaviors in a context of late antique crisis, they have failed to recognize that their origins do not lie in Late Antiquity at all, but in earlier periods (how early is yet to be defined). This observation inspires the search for historical constants that, while perhaps not establishing a causal explanation for the Roman practice of abandonment, help explain its continuity throughout this long period. One possible explanation to be considered by future studies is the substratum of domestic practices and household/family structures belonging to the Roman non-elite, a topic that is still elusive but the subject of growing archaeological attention. Quality-of-life studies, meanwhile, might help shine light on the material conditions and well-being of the agents responsible for pre-abandonment transformations, whom my observations throughout this study lead me to conclude were neither extremely wealthy, nor extremely poor.

Prevailing assessments have generally taken it for granted that decorative, monumental residences (those that are best documented) belonged to a limited class of elites, while smaller

examples represent the homes of middle-class Romans who sought to imitate their wealthy counterparts.⁸⁹⁹ This assumption can have negative side effects, including chauvinistic ideas about cultural influence and transmission (e.g., the trickle-down view often repeated in studies of Roman domestic architecture).⁹⁰⁰ It also explains the pessimistic reaction of many archaeologists to abandonment, where the disappearance of “classical,” elite housing styles is equated with a disaster, the negative effects of which were felt by rich and poor alike. There is a pressing need to push back against this elite-centric view, and it is for this reason that I choose the term *non-elites*, defined in the negative. This term is therefore broad, and while I use it here to think primarily about lower-class Romans, its connotation must remain flexible owing to the lack of robust current definitions for differentiating between the material culture of different socio-economic groups in Roman society.⁹⁰¹

The archaeology of low-class dwellings in Roman cities has been almost non-existent. For Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, imperial Rome was a city of contrasts, with the rich and poor crammed together from one neighborhood to the next.⁹⁰² While examples like the *Ara Coeli insula* are popularly associated with the urban poor, it is likely that a range of socio-economic levels inhabited single apartment buildings. Wallace-Hadrill theorizes that the worst living

⁸⁹⁹ Kron 2014, 123-124.

⁹⁰⁰ See above, page 24, footnote 100.

⁹⁰¹ Focus has mostly been on the middle class. Over the last century, most scholars have operated under the assumption that imperial Rome, and especially late imperial Rome, was a highly unequal society (see De Ste. Croix 1981, 372-408; Banaji 2001, 215-216), leading to pessimism about the prospects of identifying “middling” Romans in the archaeological and historical record (cf. Kron 2014, 125-126). In recent decades, however, this idea has been challenged, leading some to argue that the Roman middle class represented a significant, highly visible portion of society (see especially Wallace-Hadrill 2008; Mayer 2012). In terms of residential buildings, Simon Ellis investigated whether evidence for middle-class housing could be identified in eastern and North African cities (Ellis 2006). While he determined that his survey turned up positive results, he remained skeptical that a distinct middle-class housing style existed in cities, and even more so regarding the question of whether a rural middle class could be identified at all (Ellis 2006, 434-435). The study of Roymans and Derks (2011), on the other hand, found ample evidence of an internally differentiated middle class in the rural landscapes of northern Europe based on the spectrum of size and ostentation among villas, while Crowley (2011) linked “privileged” villa burials (which she defined as spatially distinguished and occurring in small numbers) with middle-class individuals.

⁹⁰² Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 209.

conditions would have been found on the top floors,⁹⁰³ leaving behind virtually no evidence. Another option is to focus on the smallest properties of a given *insula* at the street level, like the cases of sites no. 34-36. These structures were distinguished by their reduced footprints compared to neighboring properties, frequent modification from one generation to the next, the close proximity of areas for living and working, and low (but not absent) levels of investment in decoration. These are, I have argued, all qualities that characterized pre-abandonment trajectories more broadly, including in large and presumably once wealthy houses, and might have also been essential qualities of many non-elite dwellings throughout their occupation.

Compared to cities, there is better evidence for non-elite housing in the countryside. The monograph recently published by the *Roman Peasant Project* is the most comprehensive survey of relevance to central Italy and has injected new life into this topic. The study proposes a model of “distributed habitation,” with peasants moving regularly between multiple sites to work, trade, eat, and sleep.⁹⁰⁴ Some key aspects of the buildings used to house these activities were simple floorplans, often consisting of just a single room; walls mixing drystone masonry and perishable techniques like *pisé*; post-built add-ons; tile roofs; beaten-earth floor surfaces; agricultural installations like vats and basins; hearths; and large pits for waste disposal located at varying distances from the residence.⁹⁰⁵ Other than these formal qualities, some other attributes could have been a long but episodic lifespan; the tendency to undergo subdivision in later phases; frequent modifications including structural repairs and buttresses; and a range of material culture generally reflective of assemblages found in a variety of Roman domestic contexts, including fine tableware, kitchenware, and occasionally luxury objects like jewelry.⁹⁰⁶ On the whole, the

⁹⁰³ Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 206.

⁹⁰⁴ Bowes, Collins-Elliott, and Crey 2021.

⁹⁰⁵ Bowes, Collins-Elliott, and Crey 2021, 436.

⁹⁰⁶ Bowes 2021a; Bowes, Collins-Elliott, and Crey 2021, 436-437.

study concludes that peasant architecture was “more substantial than has sometimes been imagined,”⁹⁰⁷ and that while their access to material goods might have been lower than their urban counterparts, peasants “probably had more stuff, occupied more space, and left a greater archaeological footprint than we have assumed.”⁹⁰⁸ Moreover, while the authors of the report are somewhat agnostic about the 1st-5th-century-CE development of peasant “homes” (a term that they problematize), they argue that these structures were almost universally characterized by a “constant froth of activity” and unrelenting trajectories of change over long periods.⁹⁰⁹

It would be rash to draw a direct line between the peasants of rural south Tuscany and the inhabitants of Rome, but as Bowes and her collaborators point out, the techniques, materials, and styles of peasant building in their study were not necessarily regionally specific or limited to the poorest of the poor. Instead, they show up as quintessential elements in a range of buildings throughout Roman Italy.⁹¹⁰ It is exactly this kind of informal, but functional approach to construction and habitation that characterizes many houses in Rome with growing effect throughout the imperial period. There are also similarities between my case studies and those of the *Roman Peasant Project* at a level of material culture, and we have seen how the range of goods available to the occupants of “abandoned” houses could be incongruent with images of destitution. Furthermore, “distributed habitation” is a promising framework for explaining why at some sites,⁹¹¹ production activities appear alongside domestic ones, while in others,⁹¹² evidence suggests that work occurred absent of permanent occupation. It is possible that, like in

⁹⁰⁷ Bowes 2021a, 583.

⁹⁰⁸ Bowes and Crey 2021, 633.

⁹⁰⁹ Bowes and Crey 2021, 637.

⁹¹⁰ Bowes 2021a, 575.

⁹¹¹ e.g., site no. 11 (Zone 3), site no. 40 (Zone 8).

⁹¹² e.g., the final phases of site no. 15 (Zone 4/*Gabii*), lime production and spoliation at sites no. 8 (Zone 3) and no. 24 (Zone 6), and the glass-working activities at site no. 27 (Zone 6), among other examples.

south Tuscany, some buildings fit a wider range of daily activities under one roof,⁹¹³ while others were tied to patterns of daily and seasonal mobility, with inhabitants sleeping in one place but working, trading, and even dining in others.

All of this raises the possibility that the roots of the abandonment process lie among the non-elite classes of Rome and their domestic practices, or at least the increasing adoption of a non-elite mentality. At its core, this hypothesis is not entirely novel, but I wish to avoid the trope of “downgrading” by framing these developments as a potentially positive outcome for lower-class Romans. Most accounts have taken the textual sources at face value, repeating the claim that wealth inequality increased dramatically during Late Antiquity, leading to a more exclusive, authoritarian, and self-interested aristocracy who withdrew from public life into increasingly lavish private retreats away from the city. As the assumption goes, this meant that the largest and most opulent houses got larger and more opulent, while middle-class and low-class property owners and renters were severely displaced.⁹¹⁴ Burgeoning inequality then came to a tipping point, with the result that even aristocrats were no longer in a position to enjoy the comforts of a classical lifestyle. In Rome, some may have chosen to donate their now burdensome properties to the church, partially recuperating their losses, or to simply leave the city altogether. As for the urban and rural poor, the impact of these developments has rarely been considered, nor has much good evidence for doing so presented itself. Most merely assume that, like in previous centuries, late antique and early medieval low-class Romans had little or no agency in the choice of where and how to live.⁹¹⁵

⁹¹³ See the examples of *Marzuolo* and *Tombarelle* in Bowes 2021c.

⁹¹⁴ Ellis 1988, 573.

⁹¹⁵ Wallace-Hadrill 2000, 210-211.

Studies of inequality in the Roman period and its effects on people at different levels of society have produced variable results.⁹¹⁶ On their own, my findings offer no convincing evidence one way or the other about levels of inequality in Late Antiquity, but simply reveal decreasing levels of lavish, elite-style living from the 2nd century forward. This could be read as a sign of growing inequality but is just as easily interpreted as a flattening of social distinctions resulting in an increasing number of properties available to non-elite inhabitants, whether independent renters, the dependents of property owners (including ecclesiastical or imperial ones), or some other category of people. A flattening of distinction seems particularly plausible starting with the 4th century, when, according to Federico Guidobaldi and others, Rome experienced a housing glut brought on by the outflow of aristocrats toward the new imperial centers of *Ravenna* and Constantinople.⁹¹⁷ Whether or not this resulted in non-elites having increased agency in the selection of *where* to establish a home, those who found themselves in a large, formerly wealthy house were almost certainly guaranteed more options for *how* to live in it. Many such buildings would have offered a larger footprint compared with what we know of non-elite housing in earlier periods while also serving as a rich source of material goods, both factors that could have augmented the capacities of poorer inhabitants. This is in concert with what we see inside monumental houses during their final trajectories: the active restructuring of spatial layouts and the exploitation of reusable materials, both for economic gain and for erecting new features inside the home. The fact that these changes occurred with a high degree of local variability, furthermore, suggests that they were not simply reactive, but strategic.

⁹¹⁶ As mentioned, Roman society is usually argued to have been based on a highly unequal distribution of wealth, with the result that standards of living for the majority of Romans (those who are least visible in the archaeological record) were largely stagnate throughout the imperial period. See Scheidel 2009; 2016. For more optimistic takes, see Kron 2014; Flohr 2016.

⁹¹⁷ Guidobaldi 1986, 28-29. Guidobaldi framed the 4th century housing market as beneficial to the elites who remained, but not the non-elite, a claim repeated by Wallace-Hadrill (2000, 210-11).

My suggestions here resonate with Chris Wickham's account of western Europe between 500-800 CE as a time when "aristocratic power in the West was least totalizing," an effect brought on by low economic surpluses, leaving "most autonomy to the peasants themselves."⁹¹⁸ But even for earlier periods, there is reason to question the assumption that increasing levels of inequality among aristocrats always spelled disaster for Romans who were already poor, or not extremely wealthy. Zone 2 (the *ager Albanus*) is a primary example of this. The demographic and domestic fluctuations of this area are a microcosm for the larger narrative of late antique inequality but shifted back a few centuries. Historical research shows how the area fell under increasing imperial control between the 1st-3rd century CE, resulting in higher exclusivity and the displacement of previous senatorial property owners, before a cataclysmic event (in this case, the foundation of the *Castrum Albanum*, which severed the area from its previous associations of *otium*) marked the final "downfall" of the local system.⁹¹⁹ Eventually, like many single properties in Rome, the imperial holdings in the *ager Albanus* were donated to the church. But while the three villas in Zone 2 all show a steady deemphasis on monumental aspects throughout the increasing imperial presence of the 1st-3rd century, they are also distinguished by the long-term survival of the low-impact occupations that followed. In chapter 4, I argued that non-elite Romans might have been the later inhabitants of these buildings, and this is an example of how a perceived overall decline in elite-level ostentation is not always synonymous with general disaster. Zone 2 is only one example of this in the region of Rome, but future studies should explore avenues for studying the side-by-side vicissitudes of elite and non-elite housing at a local level in order to better contextualize overall demographic or economic trends. Similar developments, where comparatively lower levels of elite investment correlated with increased

⁹¹⁸ Wickham 2009, 432, 459.

⁹¹⁹ See above, pages 110-111.

opportunities for non-elite inhabitants, might have conditioned other cases of early abandonment throughout Rome, a possibility especially worth considering for the case of *Gabii*.

All of this draws attention to the fact that, although this specific terminology is rarely used, disaster models of household abandonment equate the phenomenon to a decline in *quality of life* among rich and poor alike. While the elite are thought to have eventually recuperated at least a small portion of their former living standards (particularly after the development of the *domus solarata* and related forms), the poor remained in their huts.⁹²⁰ Very little evidence yet exists to test this claim at Rome, but we can at least make progress by applying a more rigorous approach. Quality of life in the ancient world is one relevant topic that has produced tangible insights in recent years at both a theoretical and methodological level. This area constitutes a valuable prospect for studying late Roman houses, enabling questions that strike at the heart of the quintessential late antique question: was the fall of Rome disastrous for Romans? Were declining levels of household ostentation a result of generalized socio-economic collapse, or, alternatively, related to the more optimistic prospect of democratizing tendencies?

Three examples illustrate how quality of life research can offer new ways of approaching these questions, encouraging us to look beyond the sometimes-inconclusive evidence supplied by ancient domestic buildings alone, not to mention our biases in interpreting them. First, squatters have recently made their way back into archaeological theory, but this time with a positive connotation.⁹²¹ Outside archaeology, social theory since the 1970s has defined squatting as a diverse range of actions united not by their illegality, but a do-it-yourself, problem-solving, entrepreneurial ethic considered typical of disadvantaged communities.⁹²² In terms of building

⁹²⁰ Santangeli Valenzani 2011, 19, 33-66, 75-89.

⁹²¹ Worsham 2022.

⁹²² Turner 1972.

practices, this may result in informal spatial arrangements, but ones that are rationally conceived to improve material conditions and functional capacities. Archaeologically, Michael Smith sees this reflected in the “generative” as opposed to “regulative” planning of many ancient cities and the “informal” housing styles that are typical of them.⁹²³ While I still think the concept of “squatting” is too loaded to apply to seemingly abandoned Roman houses, a generative quality is evident in many of the structures I have examined. Read through the lens of problem-solving, the disuse of domestic space could reemerge as an act of self-help. If non-elite Romans were the agents behind such examples, these transformations might have represented a step up, not a step down. In this way, attention to quality-of-life models helps challenge our biases about the implication of the domestic abandonment process.

The second example, also based on a model proposed by Smith, concerns the use of quantitative methods for measuring quality of life in ancient households. Drawing upon analogies with modern communities, Smith highlights quantities of valuable goods, diversity of available goods, and participation in external social networks (measured via quantities of imported goods or locally produced goods reflecting non-local styles) as essential, archaeologically-observable factors.⁹²⁴ Considering the argument of Bryan Ward-Perkins, we might expect the occupants of disused Roman houses to score low on all three metrics: “even in Rome, high-quality pottery and imported *amphorae* were available only to the rich.”⁹²⁵ Among the case studies in chapter 4, however, there were key examples of dumping layers containing ranges of imported goods and fine ware vessels in the context of low-impact occupations in

⁹²³ Smith 2010, 235-237.

⁹²⁴ Smith 2015.

⁹²⁵ Ward-Perkins 2006, 107.

dilapidated buildings, including those beyond the 5th century.⁹²⁶ While this evidence might suggest a quality of life beyond mere subsistence levels, I have also pointed to some of the methodological issues facing its interpretation, and there is the additional challenge of recognizing that “more stuff” is not necessarily a promise of increased well-being.⁹²⁷ While still subjective, quantitative methods like those proposed by Smith would provide a tangible point of reference for examining this data, enabling a more robust assessment than the dreary assumptions about life in late Roman and post-Roman houses.

Finally, mortuary analysis, a woefully under-utilized aspect of the evidence for domestic abandonment, can also shed light on ancient quality-of-life levels. The conclusions drawn by the few specialist treatments of human remains from intra-household burials around Rome have mostly found signs of poor living conditions, denoted especially by a limited diet and repeated physical stress. On the other hand, as Kristina Killgrove and Robert Tykot recently stated in their examination of the graves from site no. 13 (the Tincu House at *Gabii*), it is essential to read mortuary data in context, not isolation.⁹²⁸ For instance, the people buried at site no. 13 had a less diverse diet in terms of carbohydrates compared to other communities in the vicinity of Rome, but had better access to aquatic resources due to the nearby presence of Lago di Castiglione.⁹²⁹ The connection between these findings and the living standards of imperial-era Gabines is not immediately clear. Hence, it is crucial to refrain from using individual pieces of data to support preconceived notions about the connection between abandonment and collapse, declines in prosperity, or any other catastrophic outcome.⁹³⁰

⁹²⁶ e.g., sites no. 6 (Zone 2), no. 9 (Zone 3), no. 11 (Zone 3), no. 19 (Zone 5), no. 23 (Zone 6), and possibly site no. 4 (Zone 2) and no. 45 (Zone 9).

⁹²⁷ Scheidel 2009, 9. See the commentary of Bowes and Crey (2021, 633).

⁹²⁸ Killgrove and Tykot 2018, 1047-1048; see also the comparison of the remains at site no. 22 (Zone5) with earlier and later samples by Salvadei et al. (2007, 410-411).

⁹²⁹ Killgrove and Tykot 2018, 1046.

⁹³⁰ Killgrove and Tykot 2018, 1047.

Some scholars have found that diachronic questions can produce unexpected results in the study of ancient human remains. For example, Nikola Koepke and Joerg Baten's survey of anthropometric data for 9,477 skeletons dated throughout the 1st-millennium-CE found that, on the basis of stature, biological standards of living might have experienced a noticeable uptick in the 5th-6th century after about 400 years of stagnation.⁹³¹ The authors interpret this as a sign that depopulation can have positive knock-on effects for remaining communities, pointing out that lower population densities might correlate with greater agricultural surpluses and better access to alimentary resources like high-quality proteins.⁹³² While the limits of this study should be acknowledged (biological well-being is just one factor influencing quality of life), it demonstrates the fresh insight that can be gained when assumptions are set aside. Mortuary analysis around Rome is an ever-evolving field, especially concerning our knowledge about dietary habits, lifestyles, and how they differed across various places and time periods within the region. As a consequence, we do not yet have a comprehensive understanding of general levels of well-being during the imperial era that can serve as a reference point for contrasting the evidence from abandoned houses.⁹³³ Given the prevalence of intra-household burial across Rome, domestic sites stand to make a crucial contribution to these issues, meaning that mortuary analysis is an especially promising area for future investment.

⁹³¹ Koepke and Baten 2005. This contrasts with the 1st-4th centuries CE, when these values remained largely stagnant (Koepke and Baten 2005, 76).

⁹³² Koepke and Baten 2005, 62, 81-82, 90.

⁹³³ For example, the intra-household burials at site no. 13, the villa at *Tenuta di Mazzalupo* (C30; see above, page 167), and site no. 22 all reveal a similar profile of carbohydrate-heavy diets and signs of physical stress, despite their chronological differences (the 1st, 2nd-3rd, and 5th century CE respectively). Therefore, in the case of these three examples, a decline in quality-of-life levels is not evident.

The End of the Roman House – A Post-Mortem

As the discussion above shows, studies of the end of the Roman house still have their work cut out for them, and a more inclusive approach that considers the experiences of non-elite people may provide new insights into the link between housing, prosperity, standards of living, and modalities of living across late Roman society. These are all critical issues in debates surrounding Late Antiquity. While we wait for further research in this area, my dissertation has offered a fresh perspective on the situation as it unfolded in Rome. Traditional narratives have portrayed Roman houses as striving to achieve an ideal. However, my analysis has shown that the Roman house had many embodiments, and while essential formal elements repeated from site to site, specific configurations were subject to variable modifications over time. The Pompeian model only gets us so far in recognizing this fluid quality. As physical buildings, Roman houses were adaptive and constantly changing, and archaeologists must acknowledge this as a normal part of the process.

Because some changes can be unexpected, we must constantly challenge our assumptions through careful and thorough consideration of the available data. My suggestions for rethinking the Roman house and its end – which include a more critical model for defining abandonment, increased attention to the context and depositional circumstances of dumping layers, and greater acknowledgement of informal domestic practices as fundamental components of the Roman cultural milieu (especially among non-elite people) prior to Late Antiquity – can help facilitate this. For example, contrary to normal expectations, my work here has shown that the process of residential abandonment, or pre-abandonment, was not a uniquely late antique phenomenon in Rome, but instead had precedents in earlier centuries. Seeking an explanation for this, I have related these early examples to patterns of living among the non-elite, raising the possibility that

what is usually identified as the downgrading of a residential building might actually have been an upgrade depending on the agents involved. The idea that the inhabitants of disused Roman homes could have seen improvements in quality-of-life levels quite obviously demands rigorous assessment. For now, my findings suggest that, at least in the area of Rome, the end of the Roman house may not have been a disaster for all who experienced it.

Tables

Table 1: Schematic example of activity descriptions in the long-data format.

Site	Century	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Site A	2 nd	i.Description (2 nd -3 rd c. CE) (citation)		i. Description (2 nd c. CE) (citation)
Site A	3 rd	i.Description (2 nd -3 rd c. CE) (citation)		

Table 2: Schematic example of activity chronological reliability in the long-data format.

Site	Century	Activity 1	Activity 2	Activity 3
Site A	2 nd	1		2
Site A	3 rd	1		

Table 3: All case studies.

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
1	1	Villa of Palombara	Coastal	Tiber, Tyrrhenian Sea	Monumental villa	pre-1st c. BCE	4	Yes	4th-5th c. CE	7th c. CE
2	1	Dragoncello Site A	Coastal	Tiber, Tyrrhenian Sea	Villa rustica	pre-1st c. BCE	5	Yes	3rd-4th c. CE	5th c. CE
3	1	Dragoncello Site C	Coastal	Tiber, Tyrrhenian Sea	Villa rustica	pre-1st c. BCE	2	No	2nd c. CE	Undatable
4	2	Villa ai Cavallacci	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	<i>Albano, Nemi</i>	Monumental villa	pre-1st c. BCE	2	Yes	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
5	2	Villa of S. Maria della Stella	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	<i>Albano, Nemi</i>	Monumental villa	1st c. BCE	2	Yes	3rd-4th c. CE	4th c. CE
6	2	Villa of S. Maria a Nemi	Very hilly/mountainous	<i>Albano, Nemi</i>	Monumental villa	1st c. BCE	2, 3	Yes	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
7	3	Villa at Piano della Civita	Very hilly/mountainous		Mixed villa (more residential)	pre-1st c. BCE	2	Yes	3rd c. CE	7th c. CE
8	3	Villa at Formello	Very hilly/mountainous		Monumental villa	1st c. BCE	2, 4	Yes	3rd c. CE	6th c. CE
9	3	Villa of the Vigne di San Pietro	Very hilly/mountainous	<i>Licenza/Aniene rivers</i>	Monumental villa	1st c. BCE	2	Yes	3rd c. CE	post-7th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
10	3	Villa at Madonna dei Colori	Very hilly/mountainous		Mixed villa	1st c. BCE	1, 4	Yes	6th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
11	3	Villa at Mola di Monte Gelato	Very hilly/mountainous		Monumental villa	1st c. CE	2, 3, 4	Yes	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
12	4	Area A House	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Lago Castiglione	Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	3	Yes	1st c. CE	3rd c. CE
13	4	Tincu House	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Lago Castiglione	Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	5	Yes	1st c. CE	3rd c. CE
14	4	Area C House	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Lago Castiglione	Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	3	No	1st c. BCE	4th c. CE
15	4	Area I House	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Lago Castiglione	Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	3	No	3rd c. CE	5th c. CE
16	4	UA2 Domus	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Lago Castiglione	Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	2	Yes	1st c. CE	3rd c. CE
17	4	Villa at Colle La Noce	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Mixed villa (more residential)	1st c. BCE	5	Yes	5th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
18	4	Villa of Passolombardo	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Villa rustica	pre-1st c. BCE	3	No	5th c. CE	6th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
19	5	Villa of the Quintilii	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Monumental villa	pre-1st c. BCE	3	Yes	3rd c. CE	post-7th c. CE
20	5	Villa at Casale Novelli	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Villa rustica	1st c. BCE	2	No	4th c. CE	5th c. CE
21	5	Villa del Campo Barbarico	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Monumental villa	1st c. BCE	2	Yes	4th c. CE	7th c. CE
22	5	Villa of Centocelle “ad duas Lauros”	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Monumental villa	pre-1st c. BCE	2	Yes	5th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
23	6	Villa of Campetti a Veio	Very hilly/mountainous		Monumental villa	pre-1st c. BCE	2, 3	Yes	3rd-4th c. CE	6th c. CE
24	6	Villa on via Barbarano Romano	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Villa rustica	pre-1st c. BCE	3	No	1st c. CE	5th c. CE
25	6	Villa at the Fosso della Crescenza	Very hilly/mountainous		Monumental villa?	1st c. BCE	2, 3	No	4th c. CE	5th c. CE
26	6	Villa at the American Overseas School	Very hilly/mountainous		Monumental villa?	1st c. CE	2, 3	No	Undatable	5th c. CE
27	6	Villa of Casalotti	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Mixed villa (more agricultural)	2nd c. CE	3	Yes	4th c. CE	5th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
28	6	Villa dell'Auditorium	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber	Villa rustica	pre-1st c. BCE	2, 3	Yes	1st c. CE	5th c. CE
29	6	Villa of Pollenza	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Mixed villa (more residential)	1st c. BCE	2	Yes	3rd-4th c. CE	4th c. CE
30	7	Villa at the Istituto Superiore Antincendi	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber/ <i>Almona</i>	Mixed villa (more agricultural)	1st c. CE	3, 5	Yes	2nd c. CE	4th c. CE
31	7	Villa at Piazza Epiro	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Villa rustica	4th c. CE	3	No	4th-6th c. CE	6th c. CE
32	7	Villa on via Apulia	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Monumental villa?	1st c. CE	2	Yes	2nd c. CE	4th c. CE
33	8	via del Tritone Domus	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	3rd c. CE	2	Yes	4th c. CE	7th c. CE
34	8	via del Tritone Building A	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Urban apartment	1st c. CE	3	Yes	3rd-5th c. CE	7th c. CE
35	8	via del Tritone Building D	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Urban apartment	2nd c. CE	3	No	3rd-5th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
36	8	via del Tritone Building F	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Urban apartment	2nd c. CE	2, 3	No	3rd-5th c. CE	6th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
37	8	Domus on via Giolitti	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	4th c. CE	2, 3	Yes	4th-7th c. CE	7th c. CE
38	8	Domus on via Cesare Battisti	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	4th c. CE	1	No	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
39	8	Palazzo Valentini Domus A	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	2nd c. CE	1	No	4th c. CE	4th c. CE
40	8	Palazzo Valentini Domus B	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	1st c. CE	2, 3	Yes	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
41	8	S. Ambrogio della Massima	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber	Domus	4th c. CE	3, 4	No	4th c. CE	6th c. CE
42	8	Domus at Palazzo Spada	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber	Domus	1st c. CE	5	Yes	6th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
43	8	S. Cecilia in Trastevere	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber	Domus	2nd c. CE	4	Yes	5th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
44	8	Convento San Francesco a Ripa	Moderately hilly/rolling plain	Tiber	Urban apartment	2nd c. CE	3	No	4th c. CE	post-7th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Site no.	Zone	Name	Terrain	Nearby waterbodies	Original typology	Construction	Pre-abandonment trajectory*	Includes burials	Pre-abandonment trajectory begins	Final abandonment
45	9	Palatine East Domus	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	1st c. CE	3	No	7th c. CE	post-7th c. CE
46	9	Domus at Piazza Albania	Moderately hilly/rolling plain		Domus	pre-1st c. BCE	2, 3	No	2nd c. CE	6th c. CE

*Note: 1) Sudden abandonment, 2) Low-impact domestic occupation, 3) Agricultural/industrial, 4) Church, 5) Necropolis

Figures



Fig. 1: (a) Location of *Gabii* in relation to Rome. (b) Known extents of *Gabii*. (c) Plan of the *Gabii Project* excavations, 2009–2018 (*Gabii Project*).

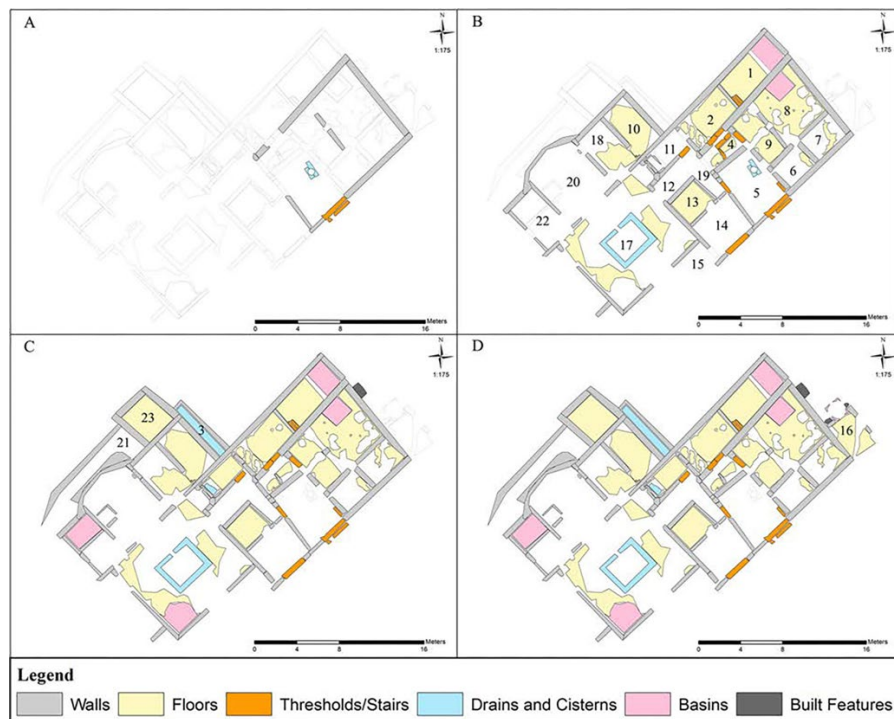


Fig. 2: Floorplan of the Area I House: (a) 1st century BCE–1st century CE. (c) 2nd–3rd century CE. (d) 3rd–4th century CE (*Gabii Project*).

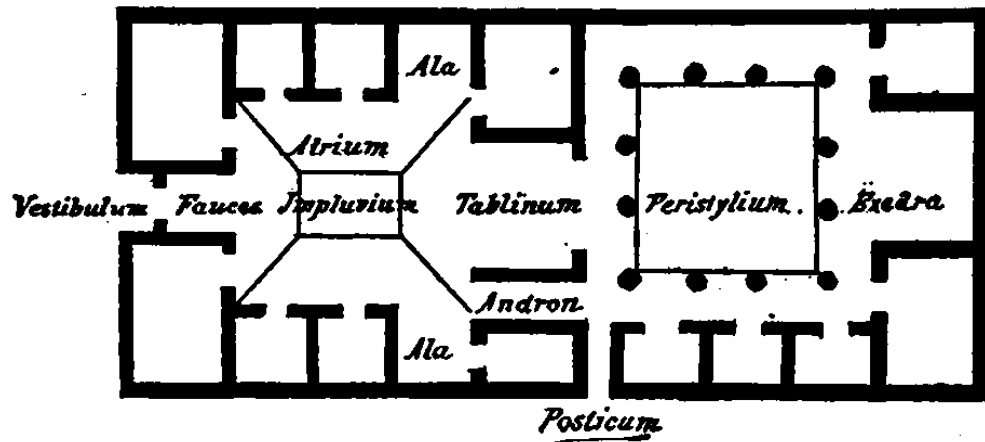


Fig. 3: Mau's "ideal Roman house" (Mau 1902, 247).

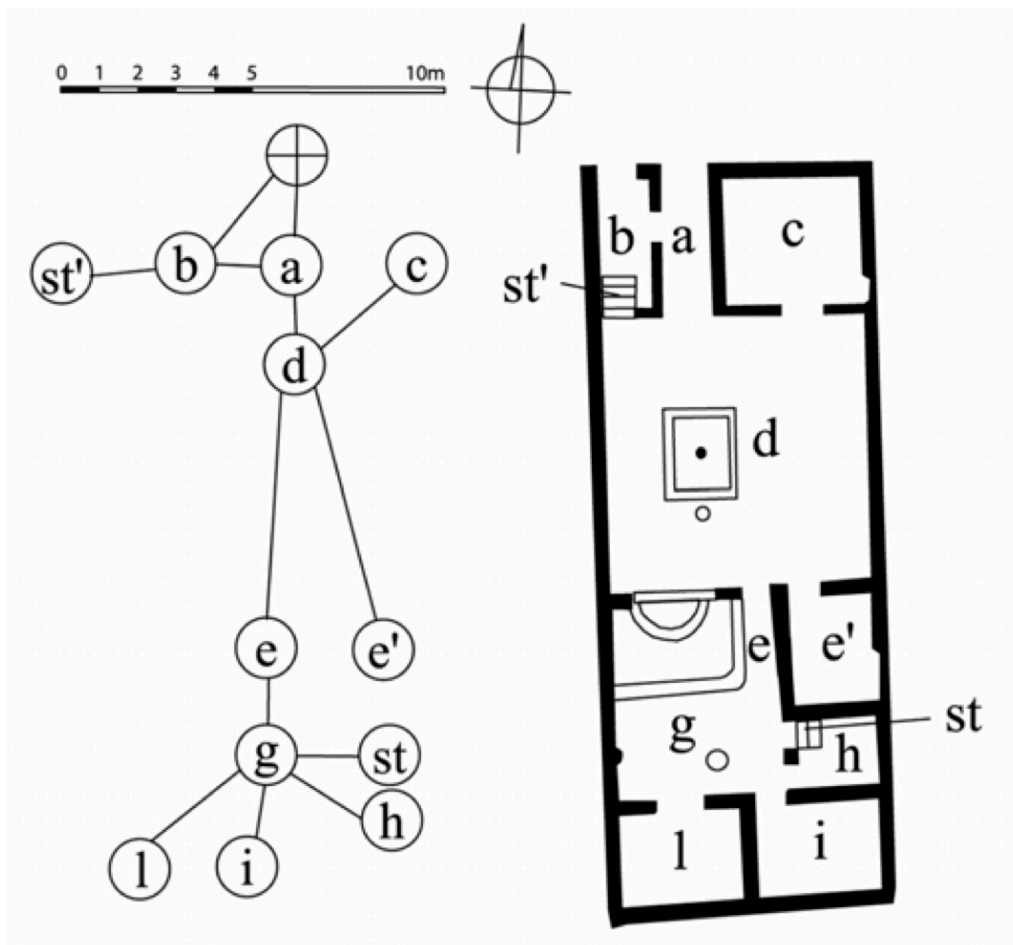


Fig. 4: A j-graph, which divides the rooms of a floorplan into "nodes" for spatial analysis (Anderson 2005, 149).

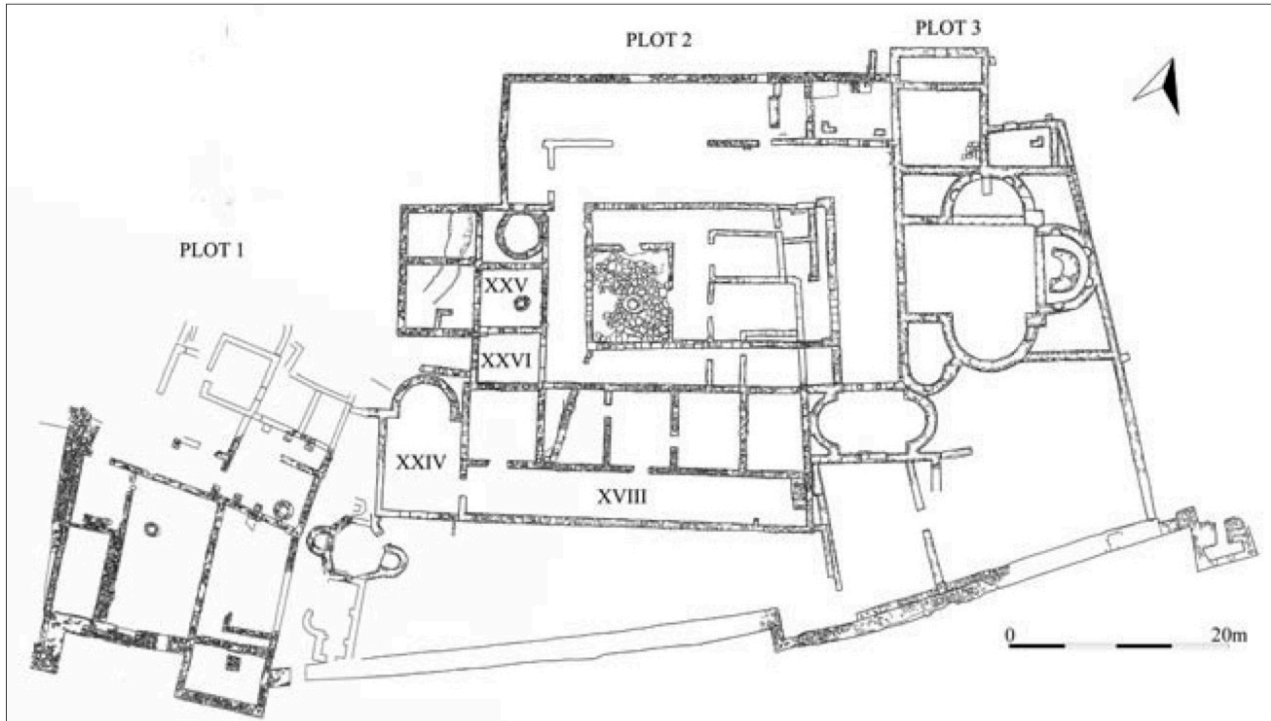


Fig. 5: Floorplan of the Triconch Palace in Butrint (Bowden and Mitchell 2007, 457).



Fig. 6: Typical decorative elements of the late Roman house, including the apse, opus sectile pavement, and marble wall paneling. Site no. 40 – *Palazzo Valentini Domus B* (Napoli and Baldassari 2015, 96).

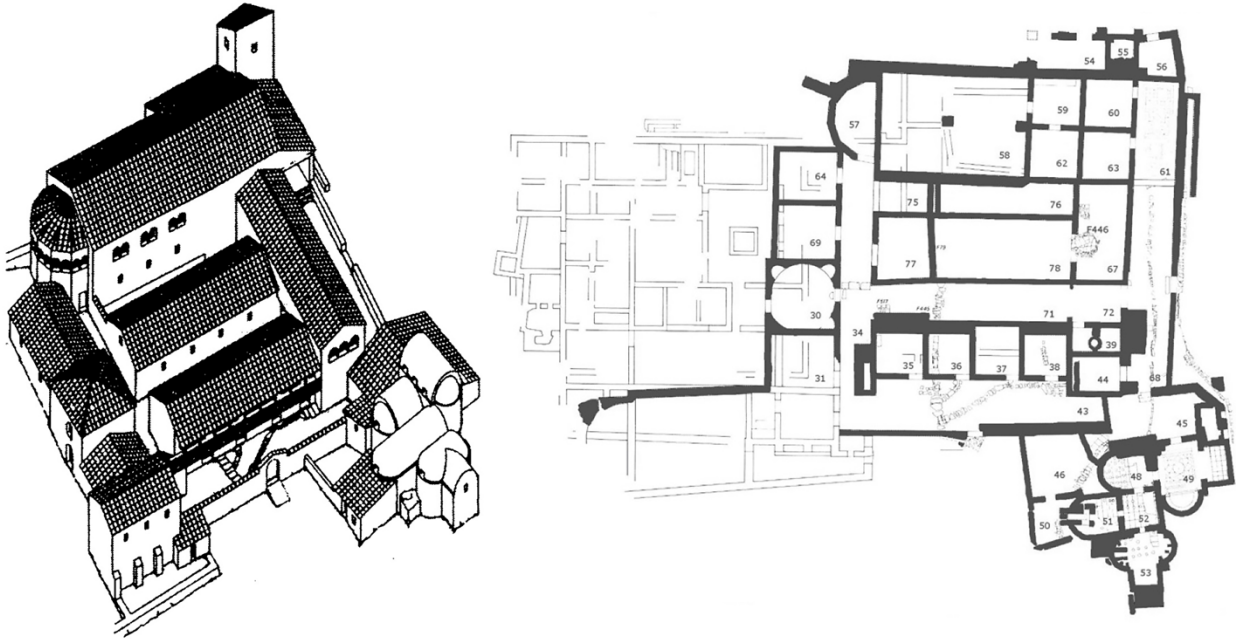


Fig. 7: Reconstruction (left) and floorplan (right) of the villa at *San Giovanni di Ruoti*. The 5th-century phase relies on narrow corridors, rather than open courtyards or peristyles, for circulation (Small and Buck 1994, 413; Munro 2010, 221).

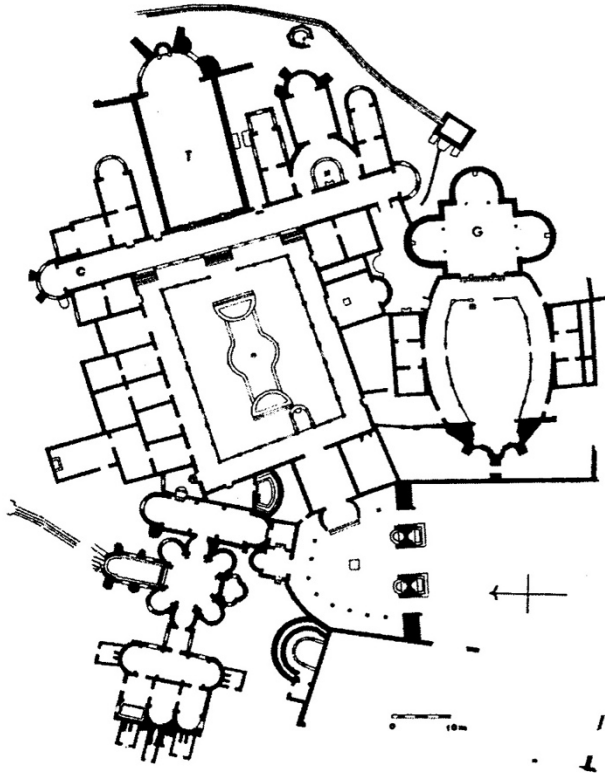


Fig. 8: Floorplan of the villa at *Piazza Armerina*, featuring a massive peristyle and compartmentalized layout (Polci 2003, 83 after Ellis 1991).

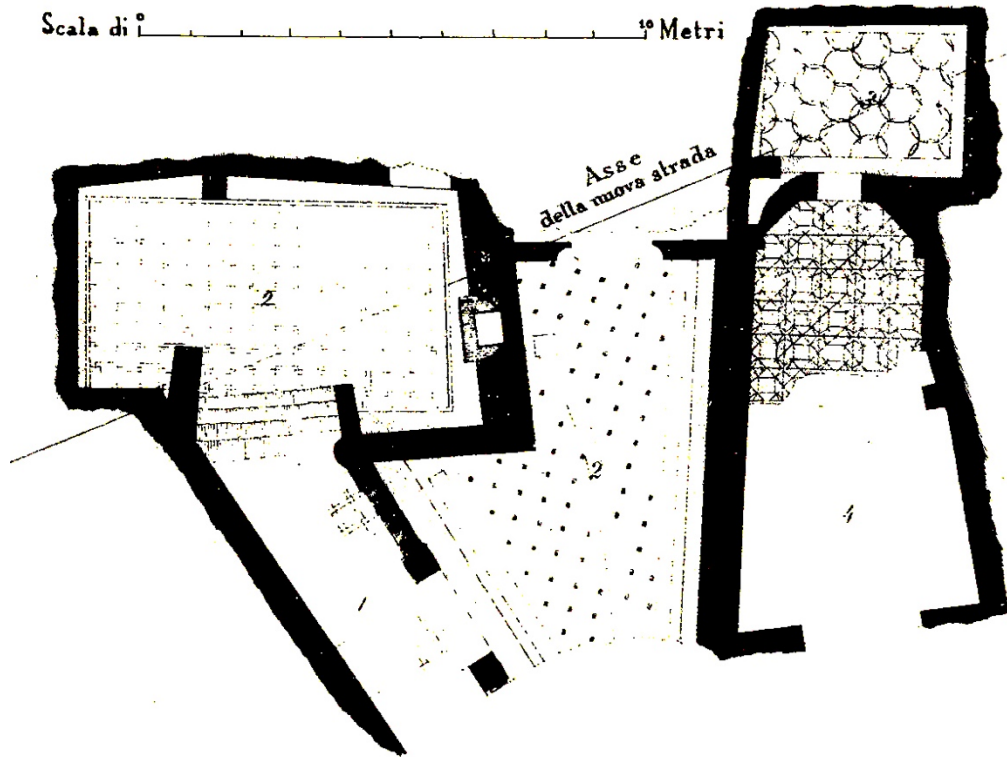


Fig. 9: The *Domus* of Octavius Felix, Rome, a small residence featuring a compressed double-colonnaded portico, a miniature apsidal hall, and opus sectile flooring (Guidobaldi 1986, 222).



Fig. 10: *Tamponatura* of Room 52, site no. 4 – *Villa ai Cavallacci* (Cuccurullo 2020, 194).



Fig. 11: *Tamponatura* of colonnade and mosaic with mixed tesserae at site no. 38 – *Domus* on *via Cesare Battisti* (Excavation Report – SITAR OI 226).



Fig. 12: *Tamponatura* of stairway near Corridor T, site no. 20 – Villa at *Casale Novelli* (Ricciardi 2005, 201).



Fig. 13: Postholes cut into a mosaic floor at the villa at Piano della Civita southeast of Rome (Brouillard and Gadeyne 2016, 307).

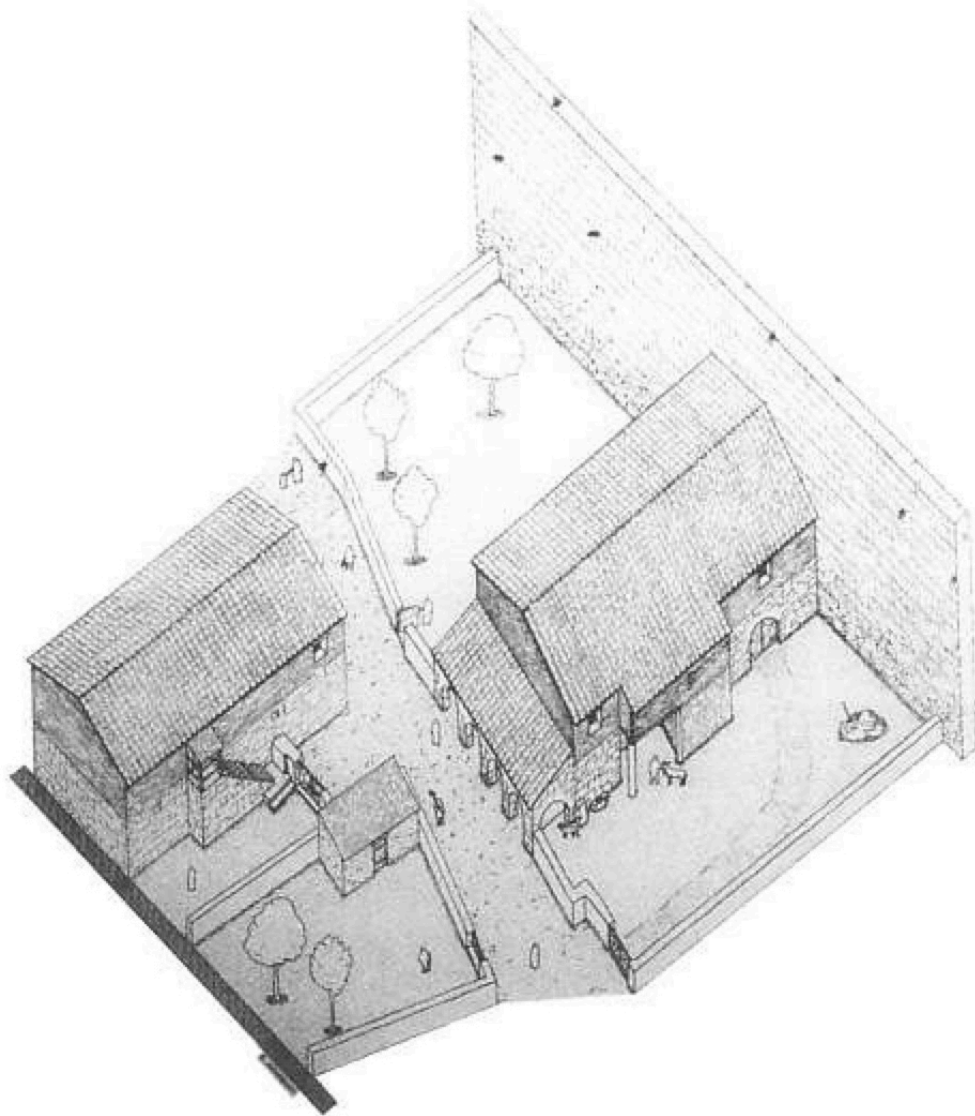


Fig. 14: Reconstruction of the two *domus solarate* excavated at the Forum of Nerva (Santangeli Valenzani 2000, fig. 11).

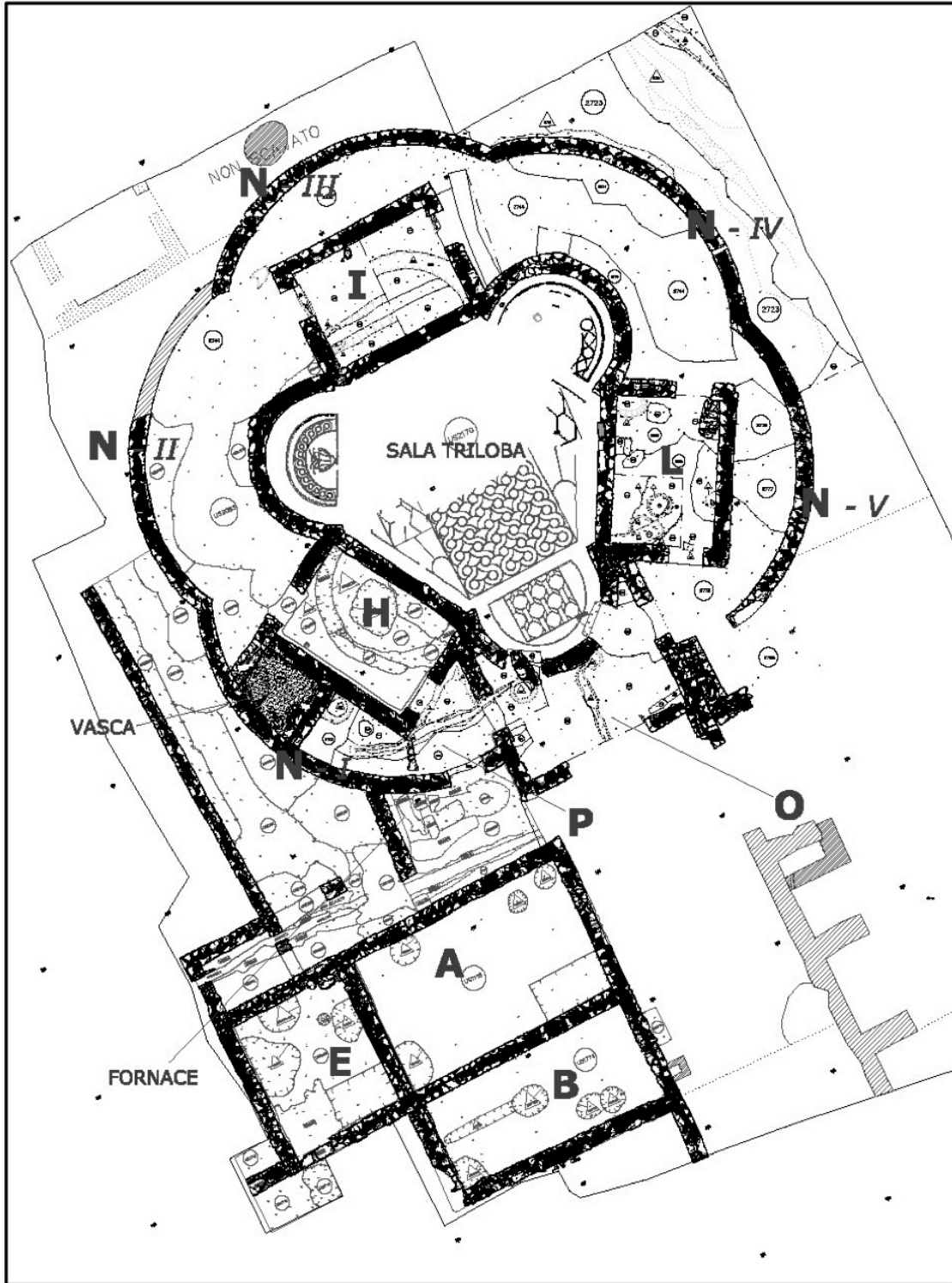


Fig. 15: Plan of the trilobed apsidal hall at the Villa of *Aiano Torracchia di Chiusi*. Ceramic and glass production occurred in different areas of the hall, while metalworking occurred in Room B (Munro 2010, 230).

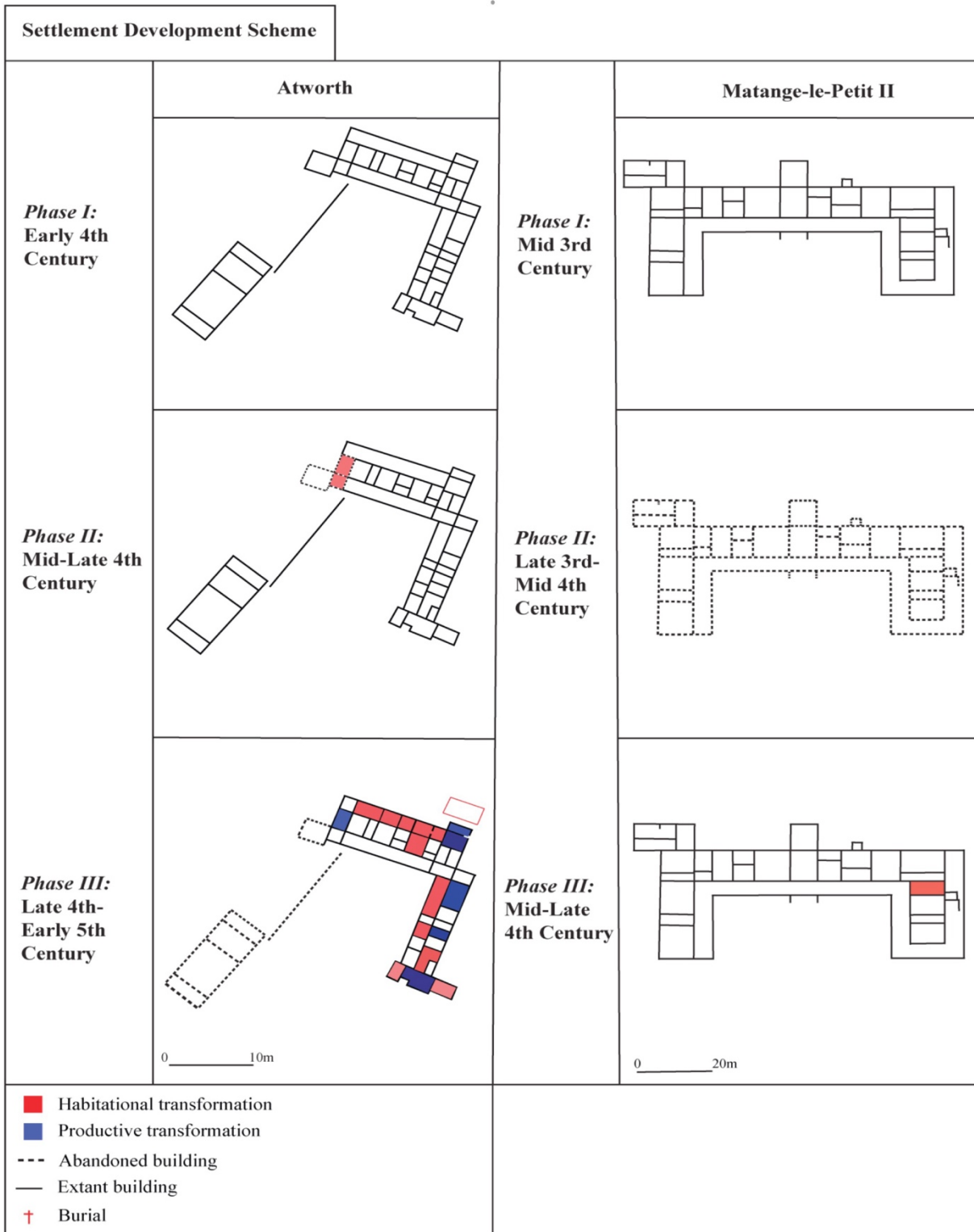


Fig. 16: A “settlement development scheme” created by Dodd in order to track the trajectories or “site biographies” of two villas (Dodd 2019, 39).



Fig. 17: *A cappucina* graves, Tomb 23 (left) and Tomb 34 (right) at site no. 13 – Tincu House (*Gabii Project*).



Fig. 18: Site no. 2 – *Dragoncello* Site A – a *cassone* tomb reusing a basin (left); infant burial in a 3rd-4th-century African *amphora* (right) (Olcese et al 2017, 9).

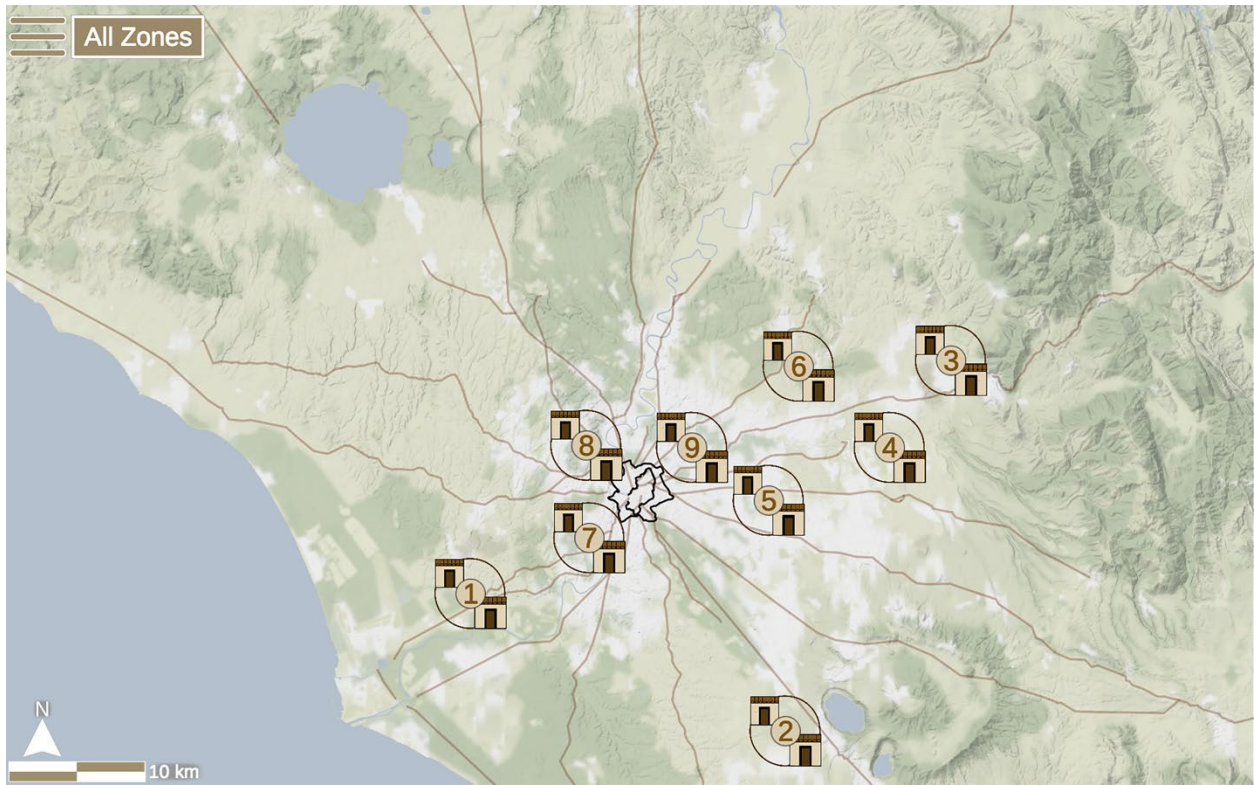


Fig. 19: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the main map.

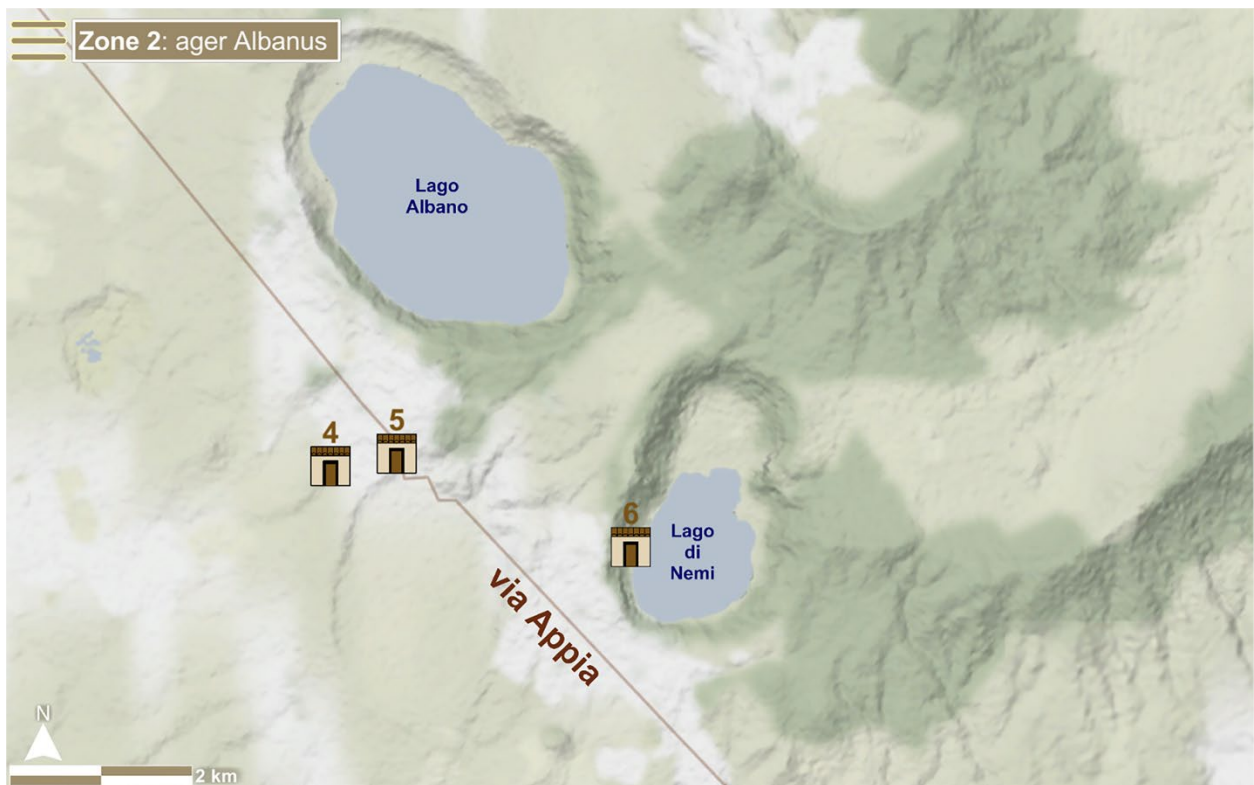


Fig. 20: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the Zone 2 map.

Zone 2: ager Albanus

Site no. 5

Villa of S. Maria della Stella
41.72269504, 12.66304385

Activities:

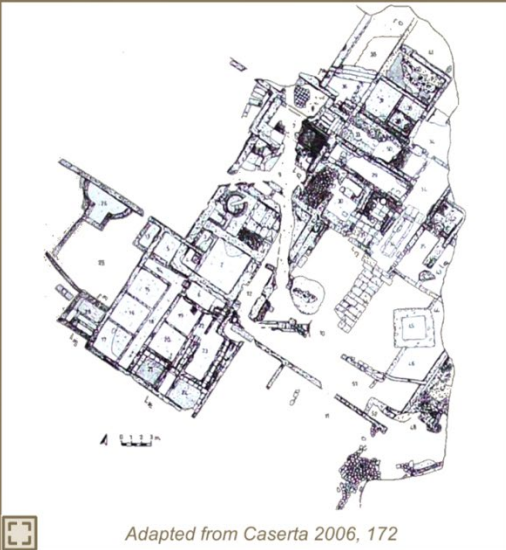
	1st cent.	2nd cent.	3rd cent.	4th cent.	5th cent.	6th cent.	7th cent.	post-7th	not dated
Use									
Dis-use									

1st century Domestic use activities

DECORATIVE INTERVENTIONS

- Mosaic pavements and cocciopesto pavements with marble/stone inserts (1st c. BCE-1st c. CE)
(Caserta 2006, 169-170)
- Decorative niche in room 33 (1st c. BCE-1st c. CE)
(Caserta 2006, 170)
- Addition of decorative bath sector (1st-2nd c. CE)
(Caserta 2006, 173-174)

← Close and return



Adapted from Caserta 2006, 172

N

2 km

Fig. 21: Interactive catalogue – screenshot of the catalogue entry for site no. 5.

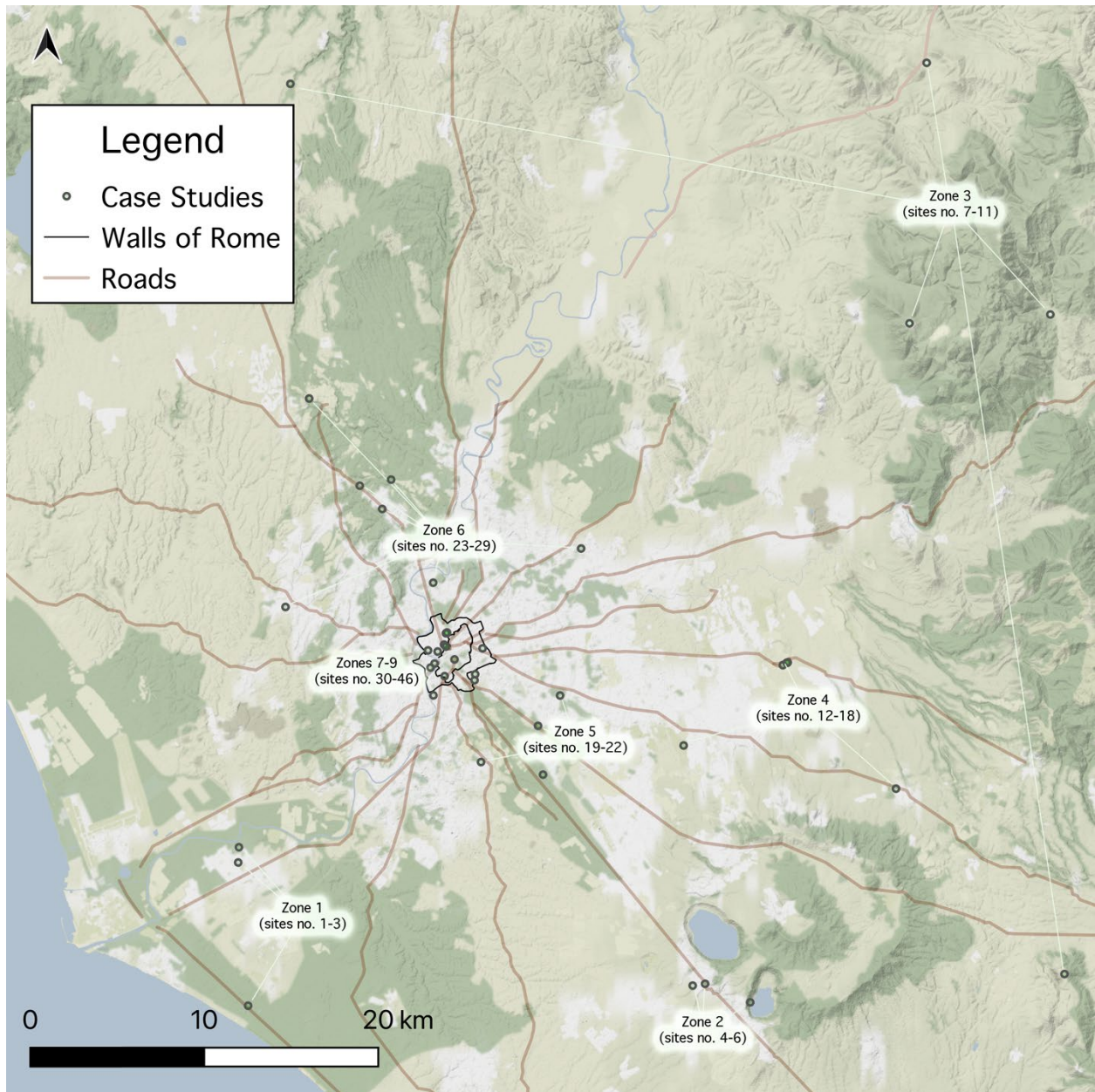


Fig. 22: Zones 1-9 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

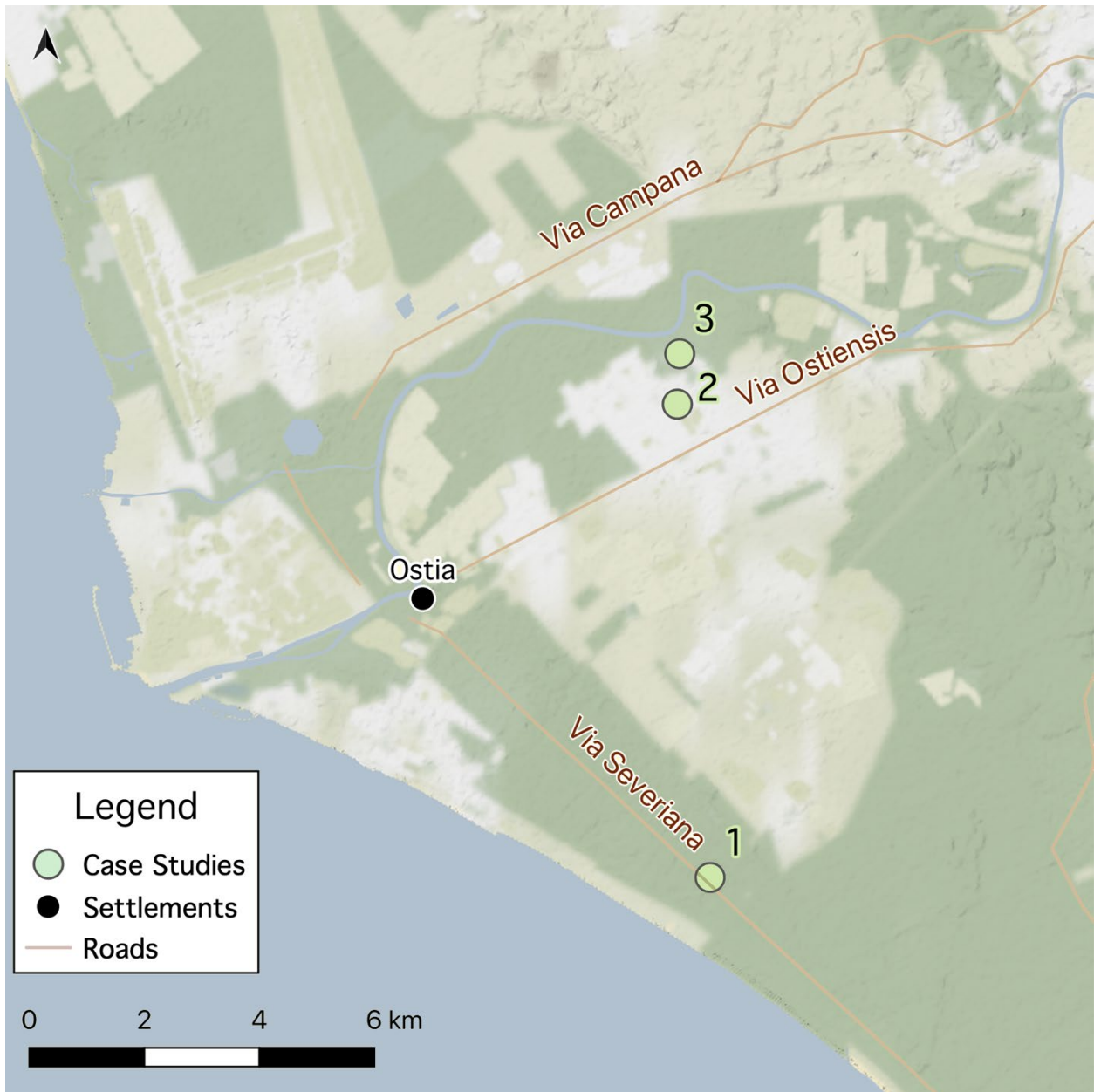


Fig. 23: Zone 1 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

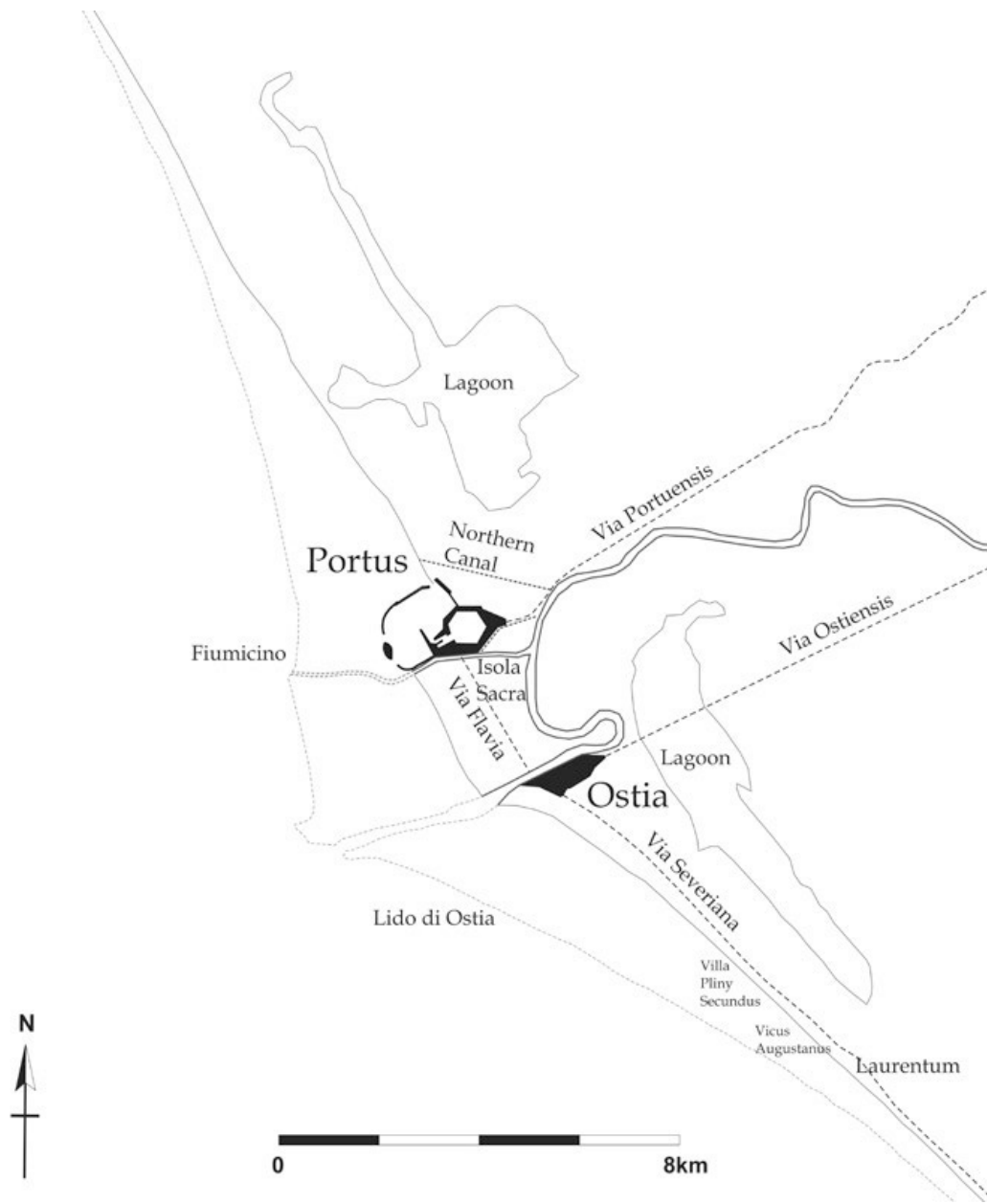


Fig. 24: The landscape surrounding *Ostia* (Marcelli 2019, 34).

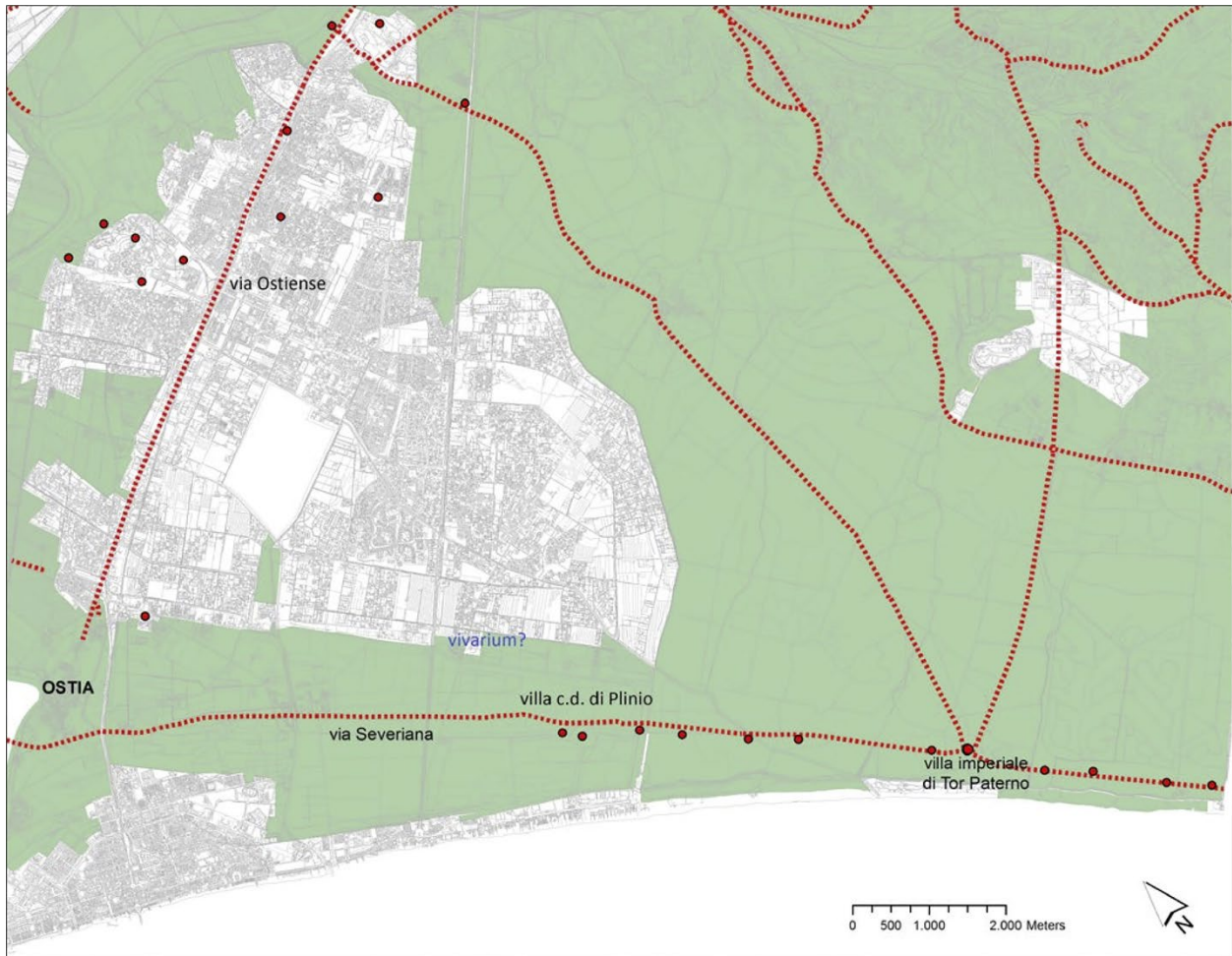


Fig. 25: Known villas in Zone 2 (Marcelli 2019, 36).

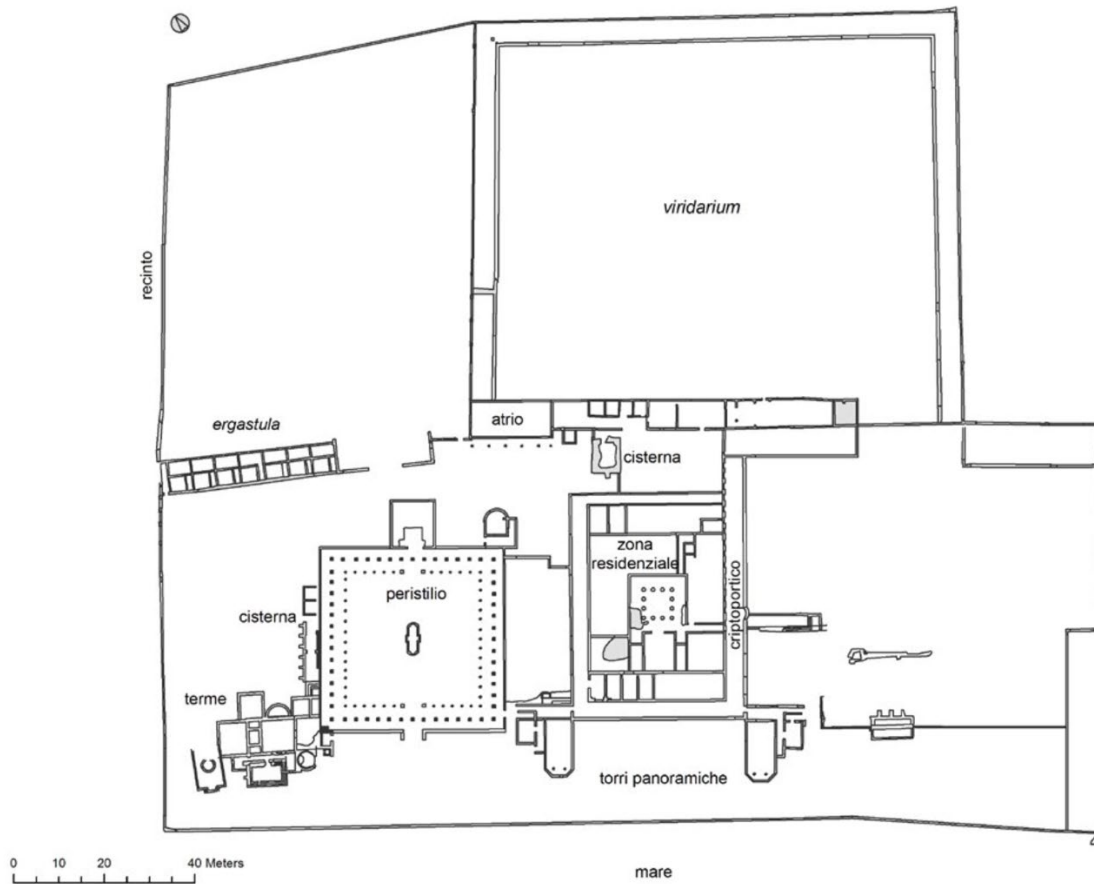


Fig. 26: Site no. 1 – Villa of *Palombara* (adapted from Marcelli 2019, 37).



Fig. 27: The pavement with reused mosaic fragments (left) and the counter (right) in Room B of site no. 1 – Villa of *Palombara* (Buonaguro et al. 2012, 75).

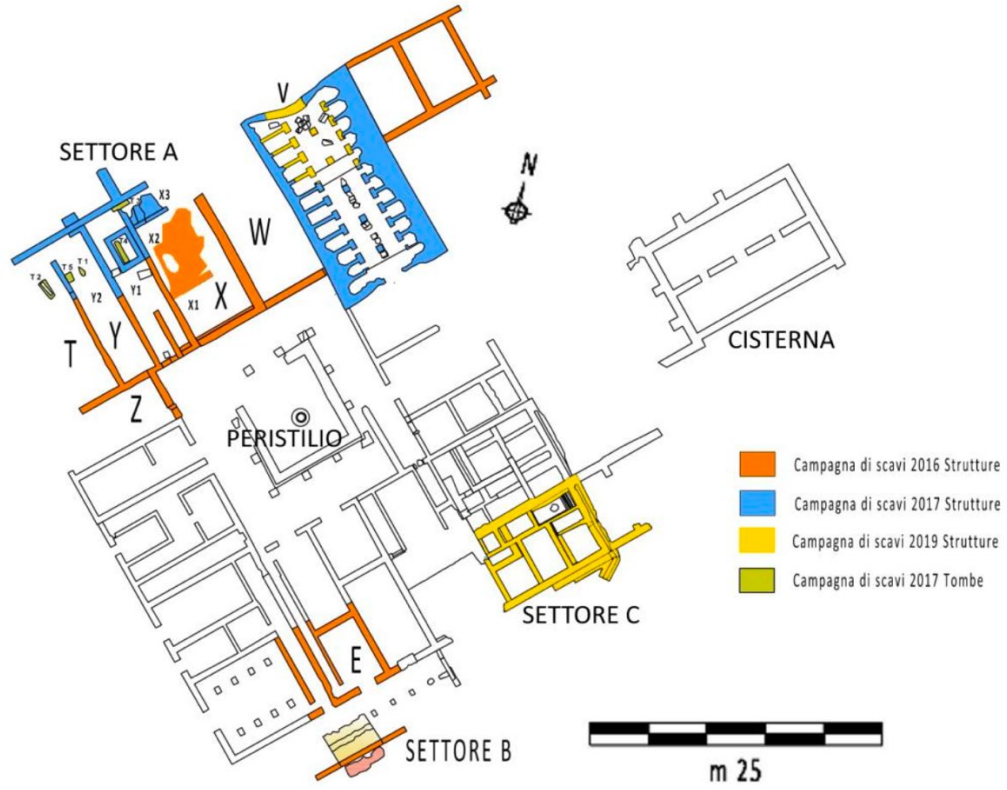


Fig. 28: Site no. 2 – *Dragoncello* Site A (adapted from Olcese et al. 2021, 3).



Fig. 29: Site no. 3 – *Dragoncello* Site C (adapted from Fascitiello 2018, 7).



Fig. 30: Fragments of an *opus scutulatum* floor surface reused in the foundations of a wall, site no. 3 – *Dragoncello* Site C (Fascitiello 2018, 9).

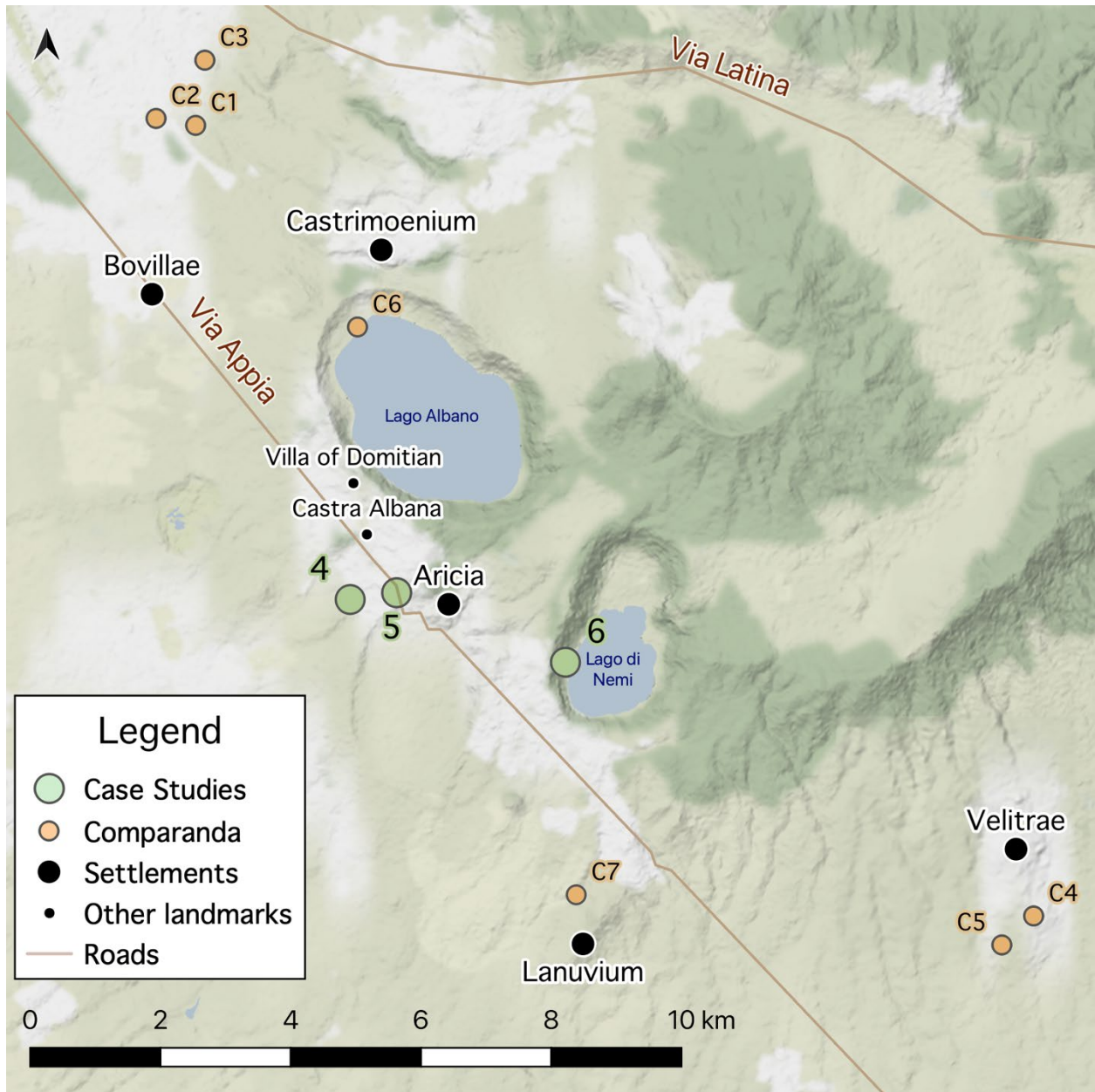


Fig. 31: Zone 2 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

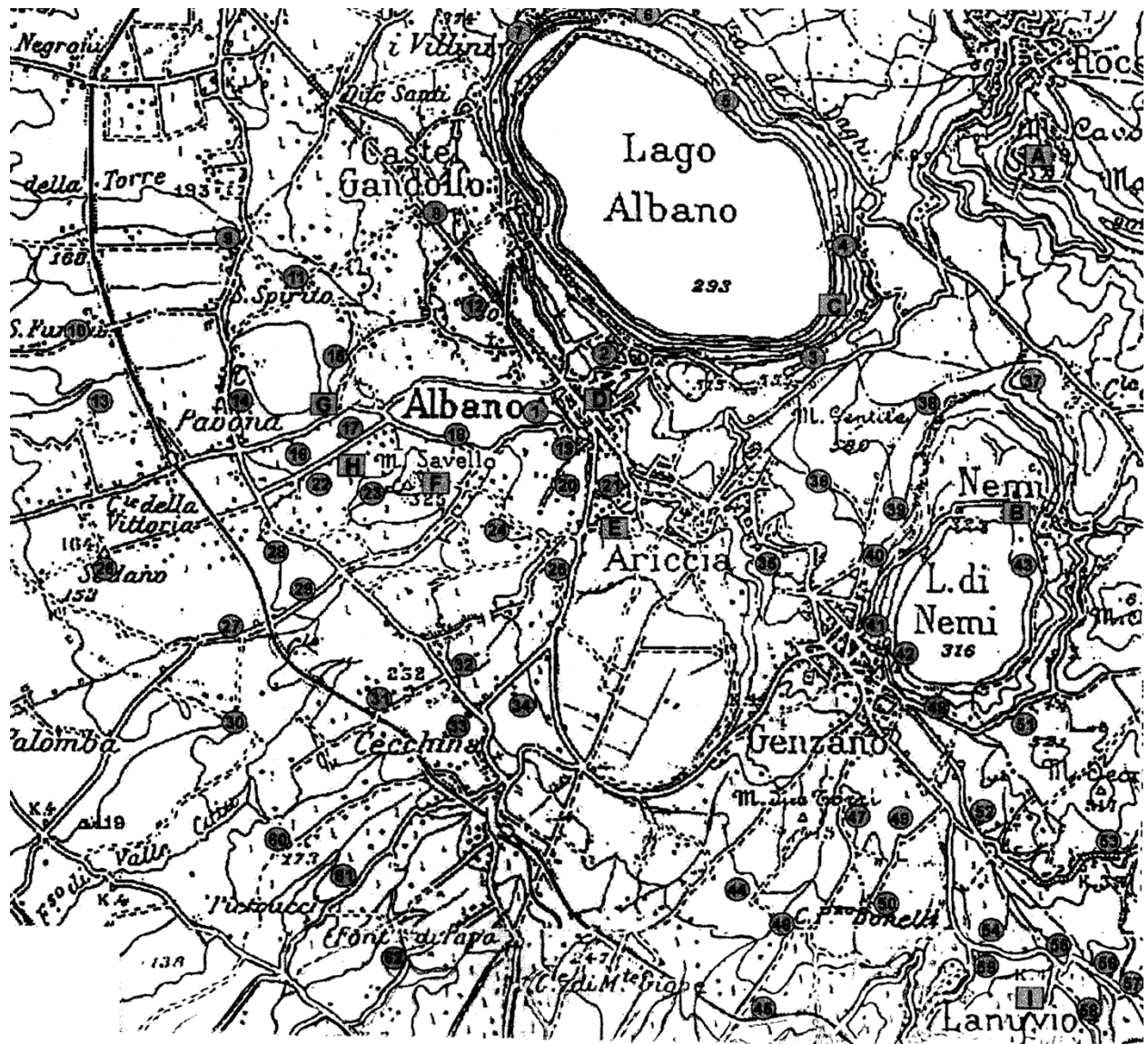


Fig. 32: Villas (circles and numbers) and sanctuaries (squares and letters) around the area of Lago Albano and Nemi (Chiarucci 2000, 180).

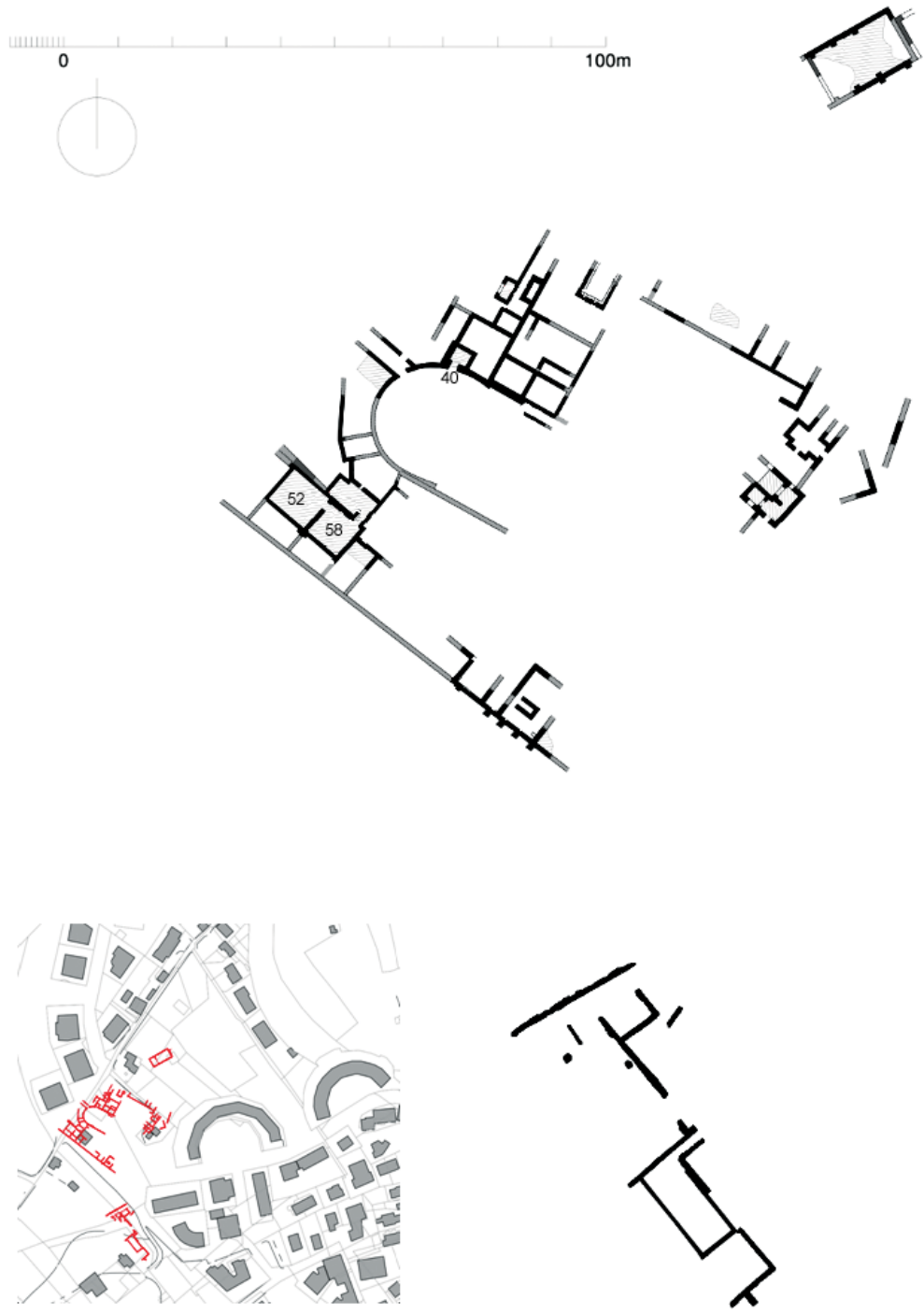


Fig. 33: Site no. 4 – *Villa ai Cavallacci* (adapted from Cuccurullo 2015, 71).

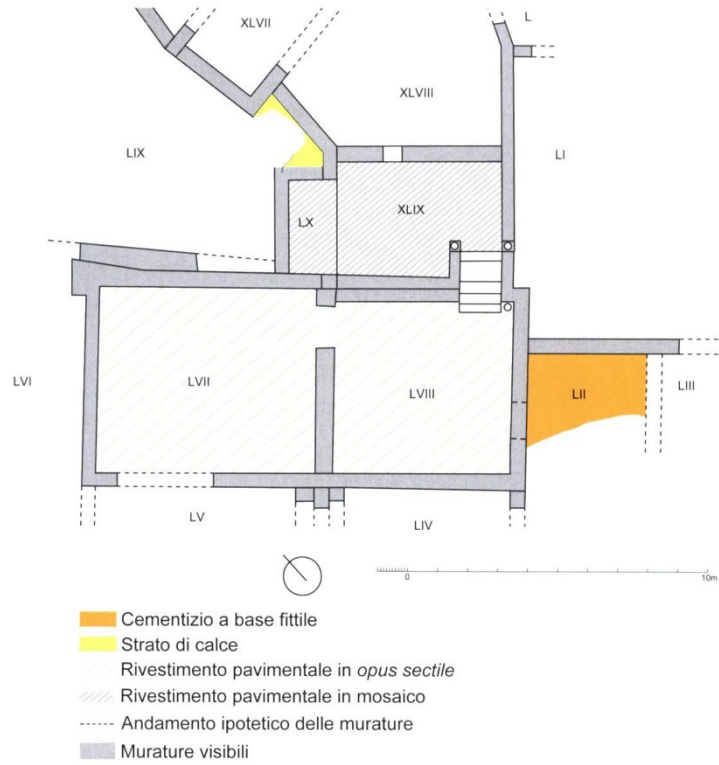


Fig. 34: Southwest sector of site no. 4 – *Villa ai Cavallacci* (Cuccurullo 2020, 194).

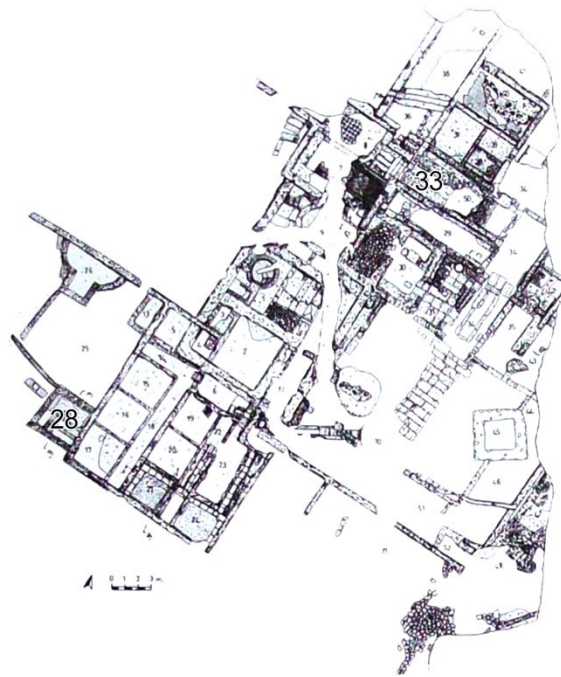


Fig. 35: Site no. 5 – *Villa of S. Maria della Stella* (adapted from Caserta 2006, 172).

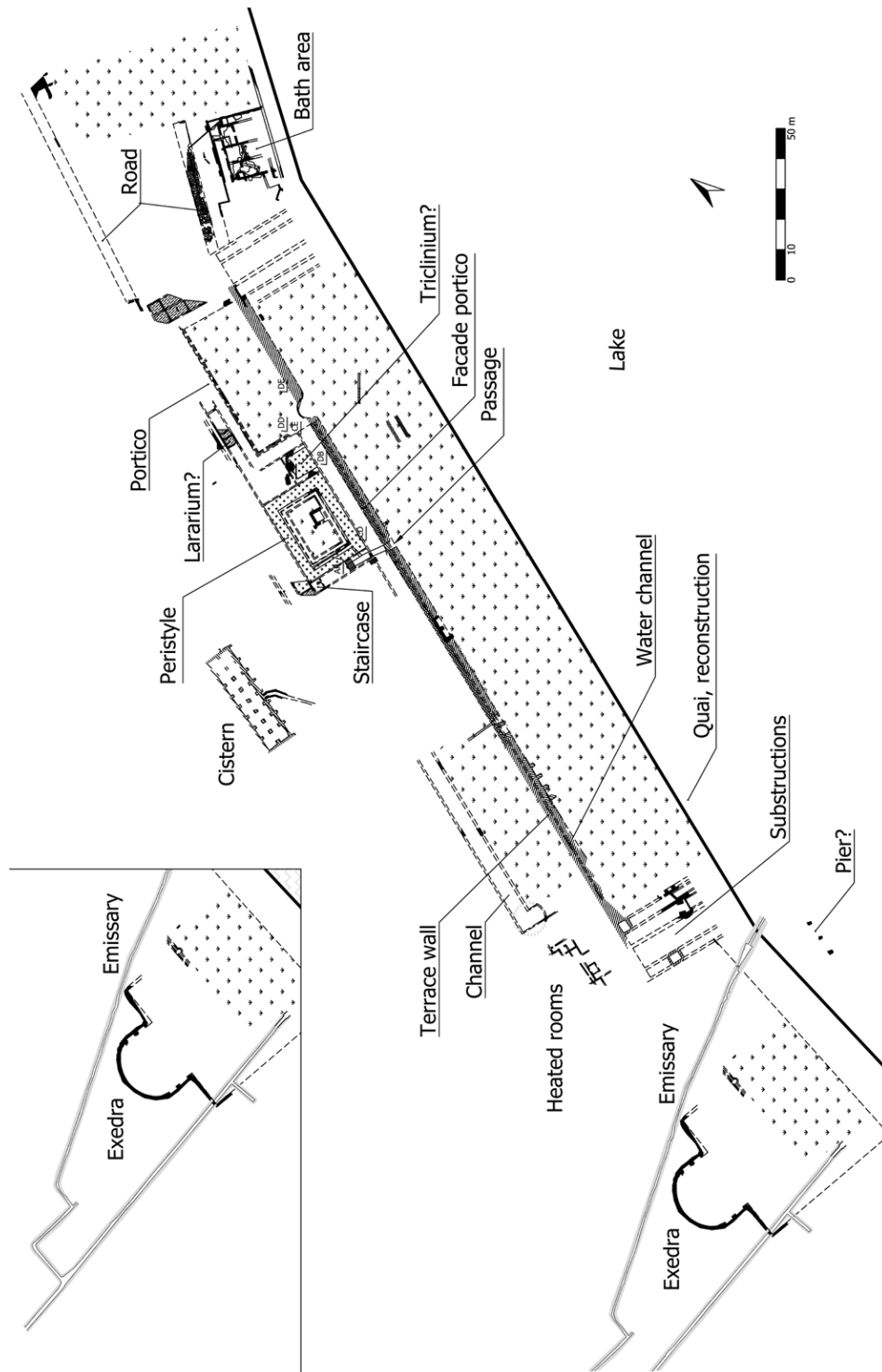


Fig. 36: Site no. 6 – Villa of *S. Maria a Nemi* (adapted from Poulsen 2015, 169).

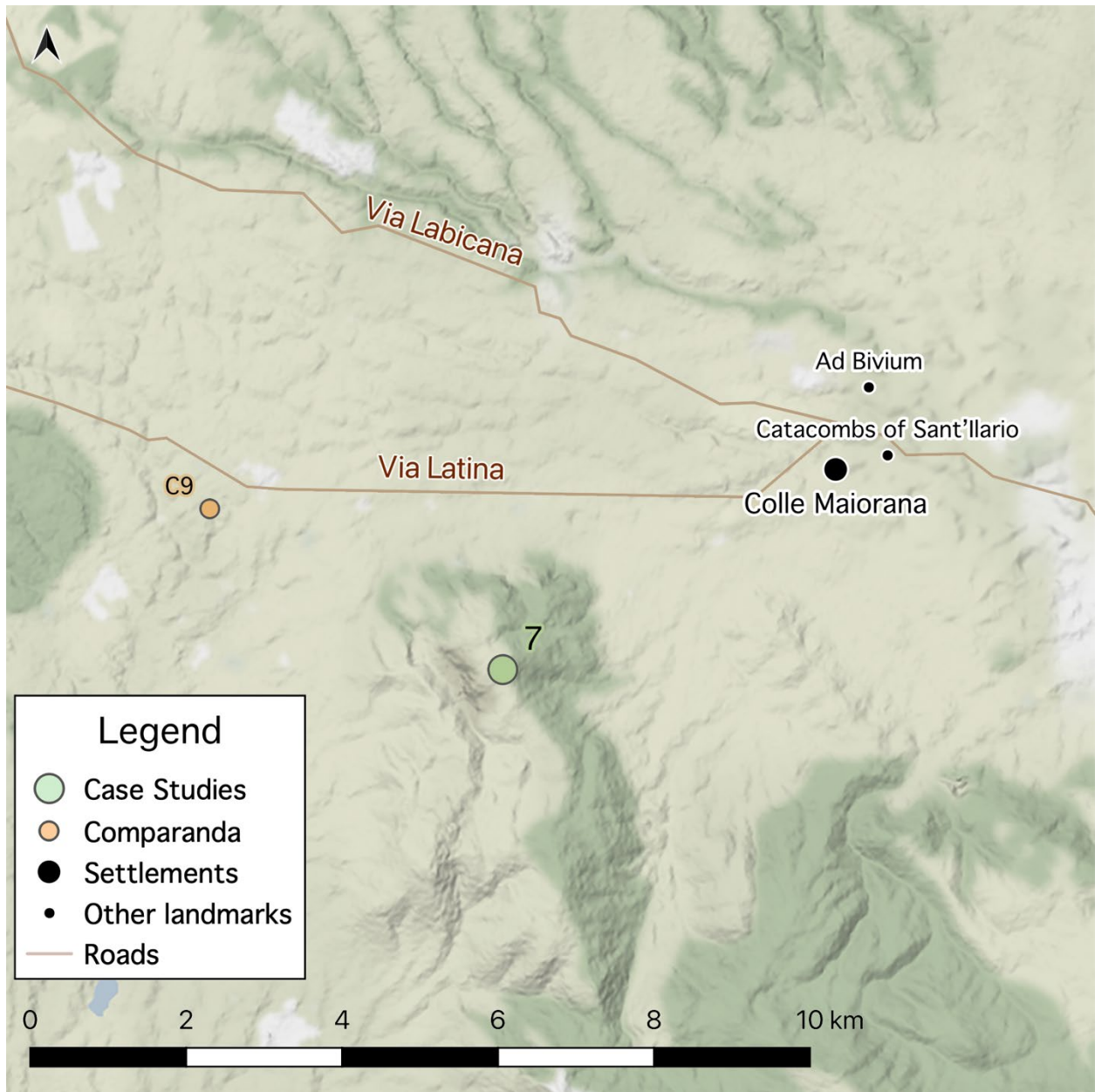


Fig. 37: Zone 3, site no. 7 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

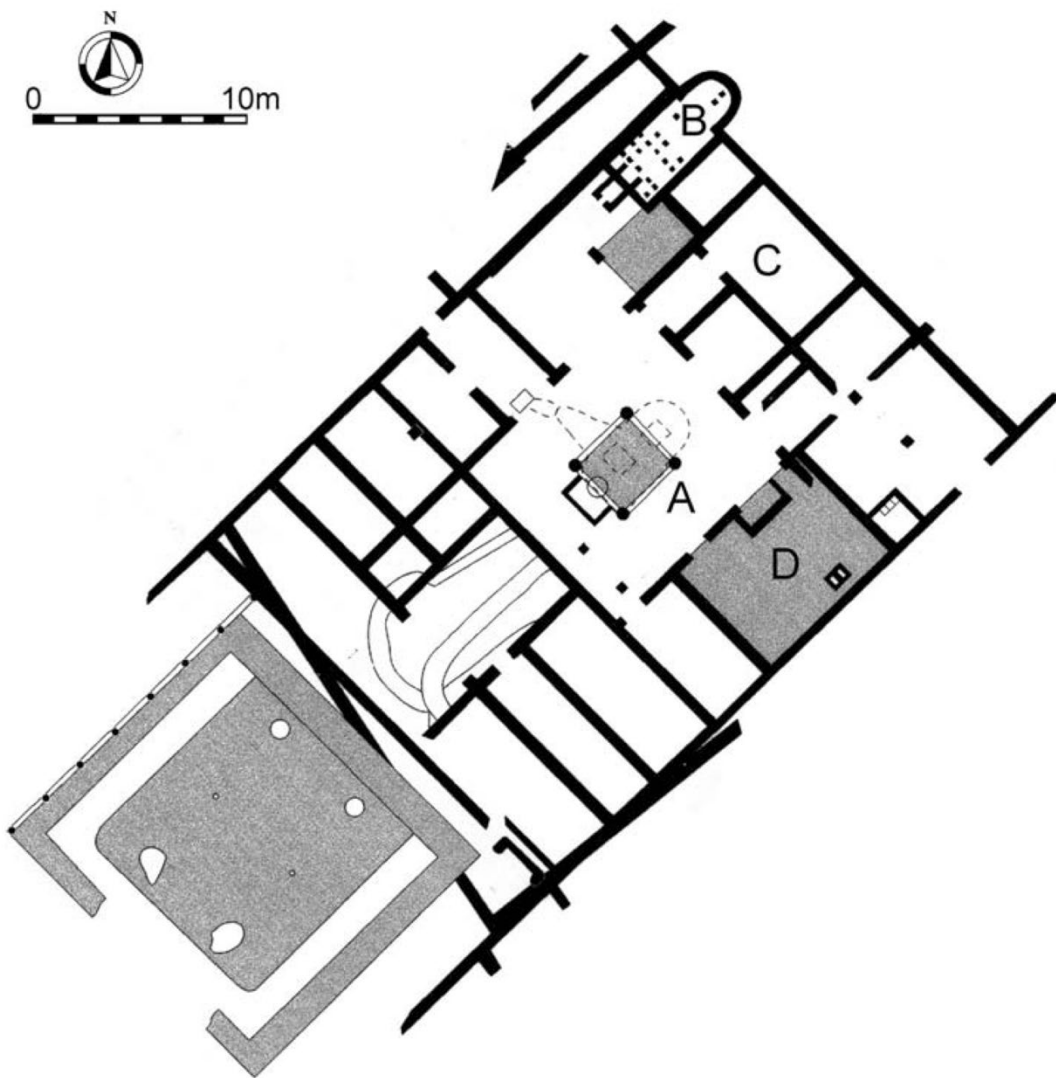


Fig. 38: Site no. 7 – Villa at *Piano della Civita* (adapted from Marzano 2005, 270).

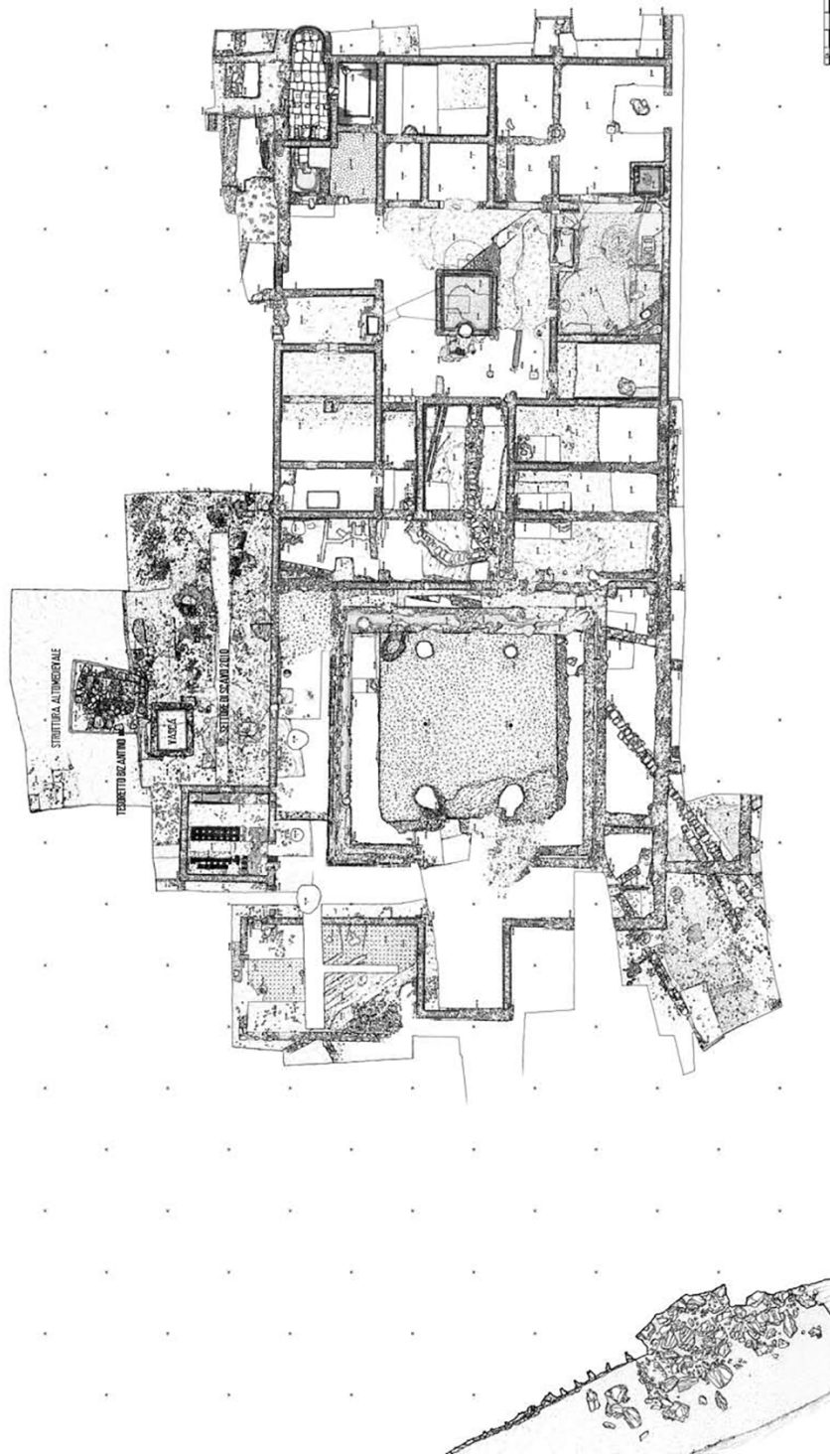


Fig. 39: Site no. 7 (Villa at *Piano della Civita*) state plan (adapted from Brouillard et al 2012, 305).

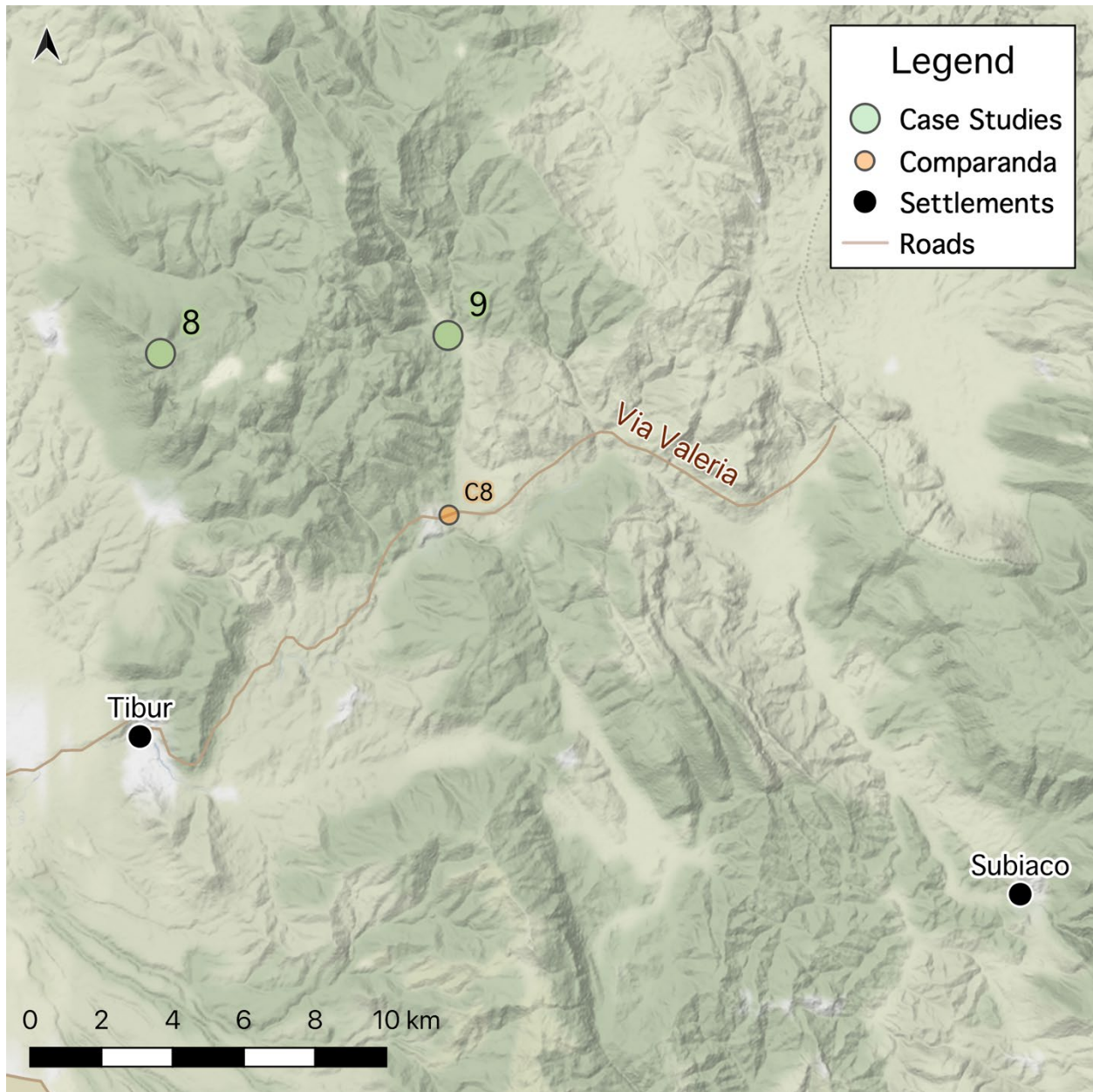


Fig. 40: Zone 3, sites no. 8-9 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

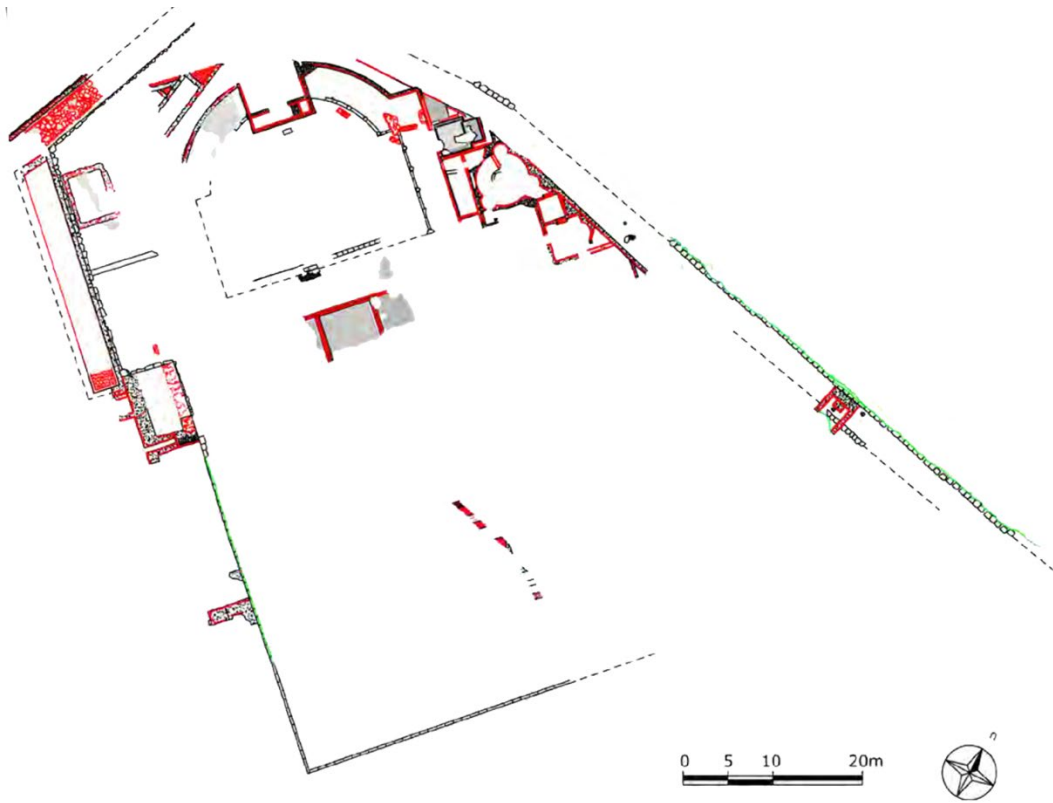


Fig. 41: Site no. 8 – Villa at *Formello (Palombara Sabina)* (adapted from Mari 2013b, 90).

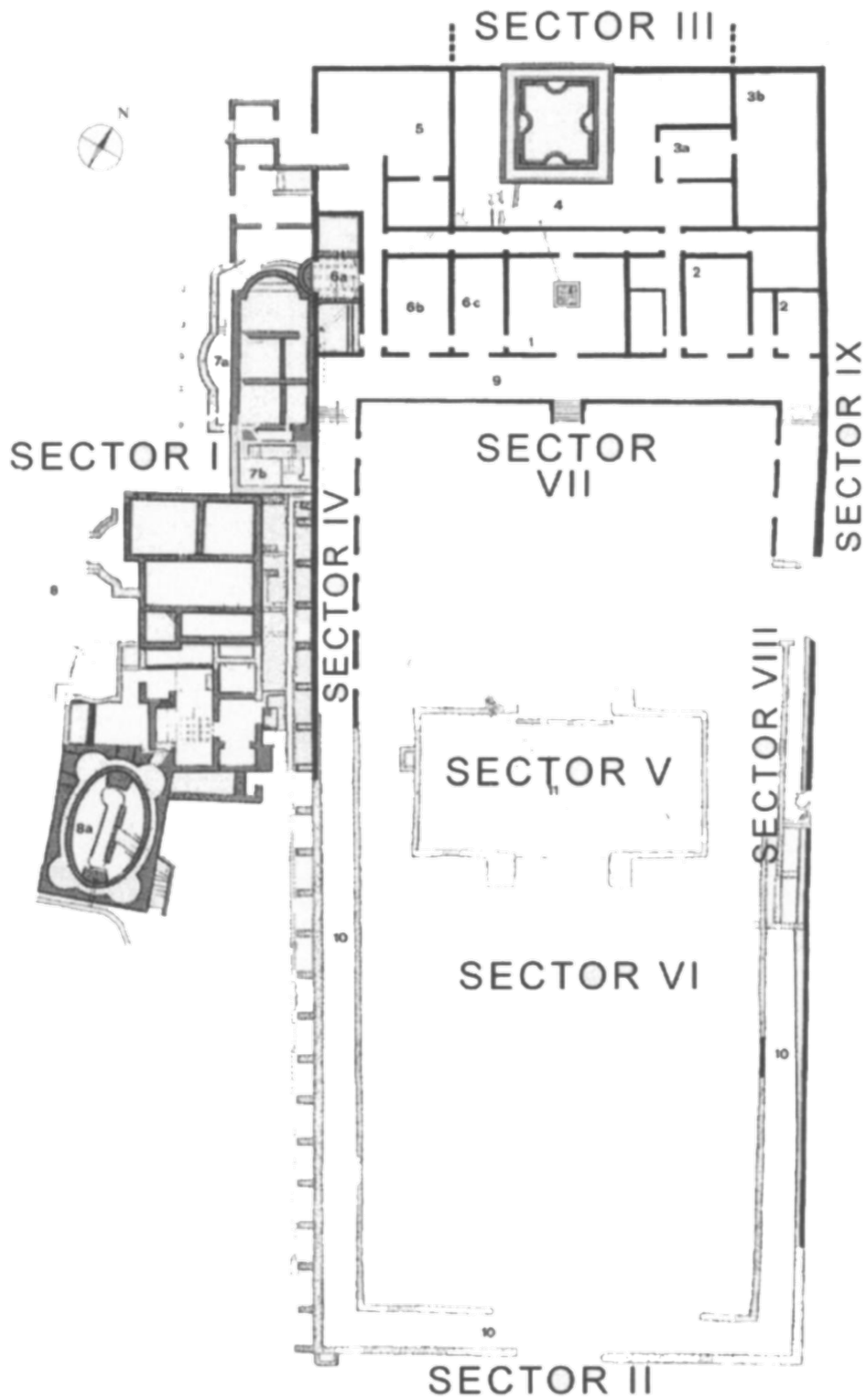


Fig. 43: Site no. 9 – Villa of the *Vigne di San Pietro* (adapted from Frischer et al. 2000, 257).

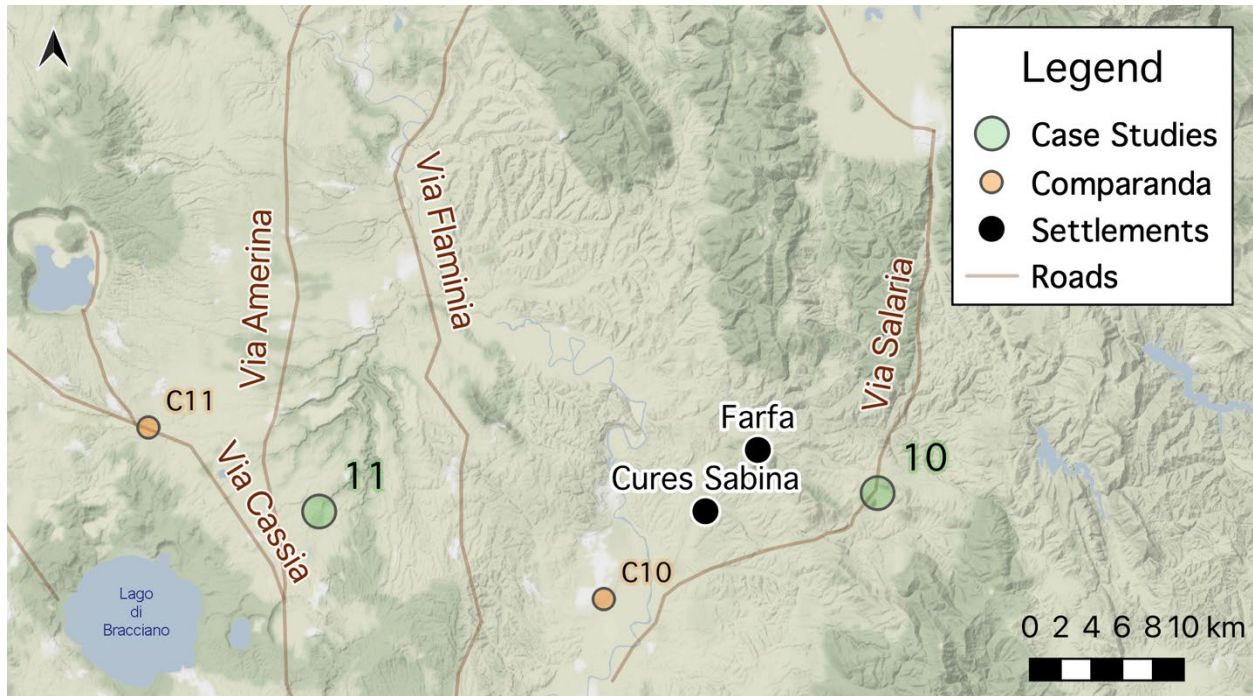


Fig. 44: Zone 3, sites no. 10-11 and surroundings (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

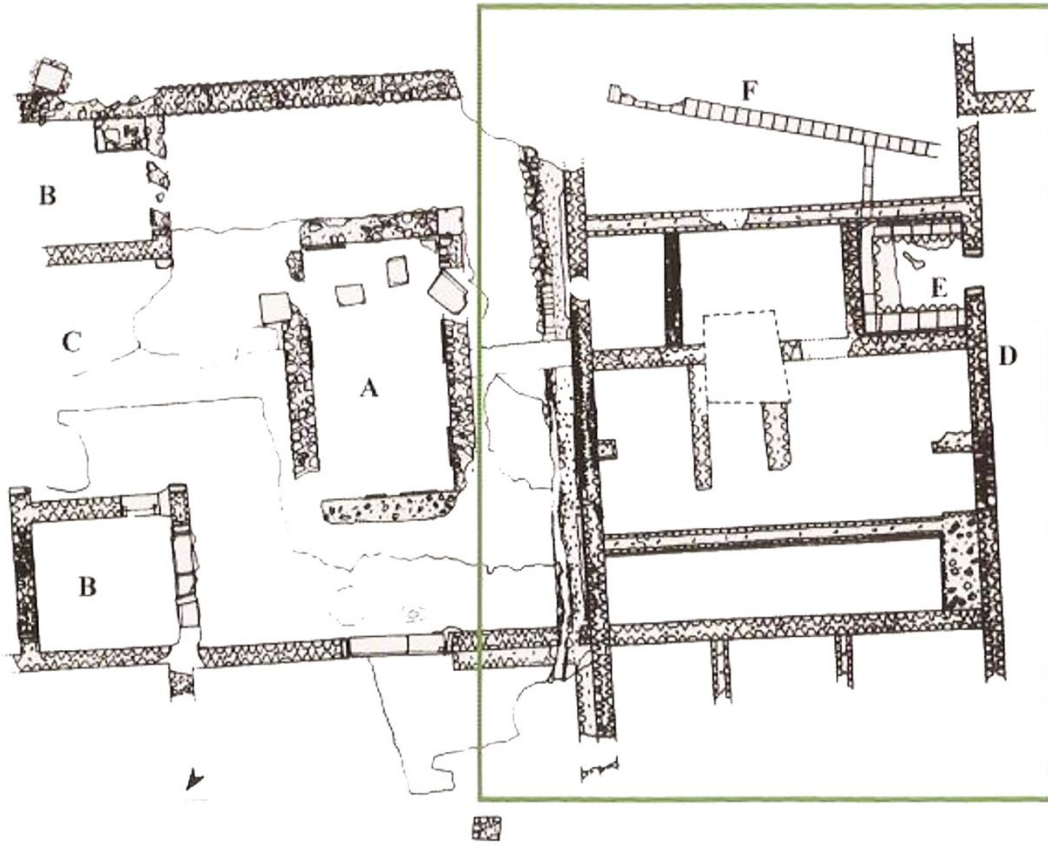


Fig. 45: Site no. 10 – Villa at *Madonna dei Colori* (adapted from Alvino 2003, 9).

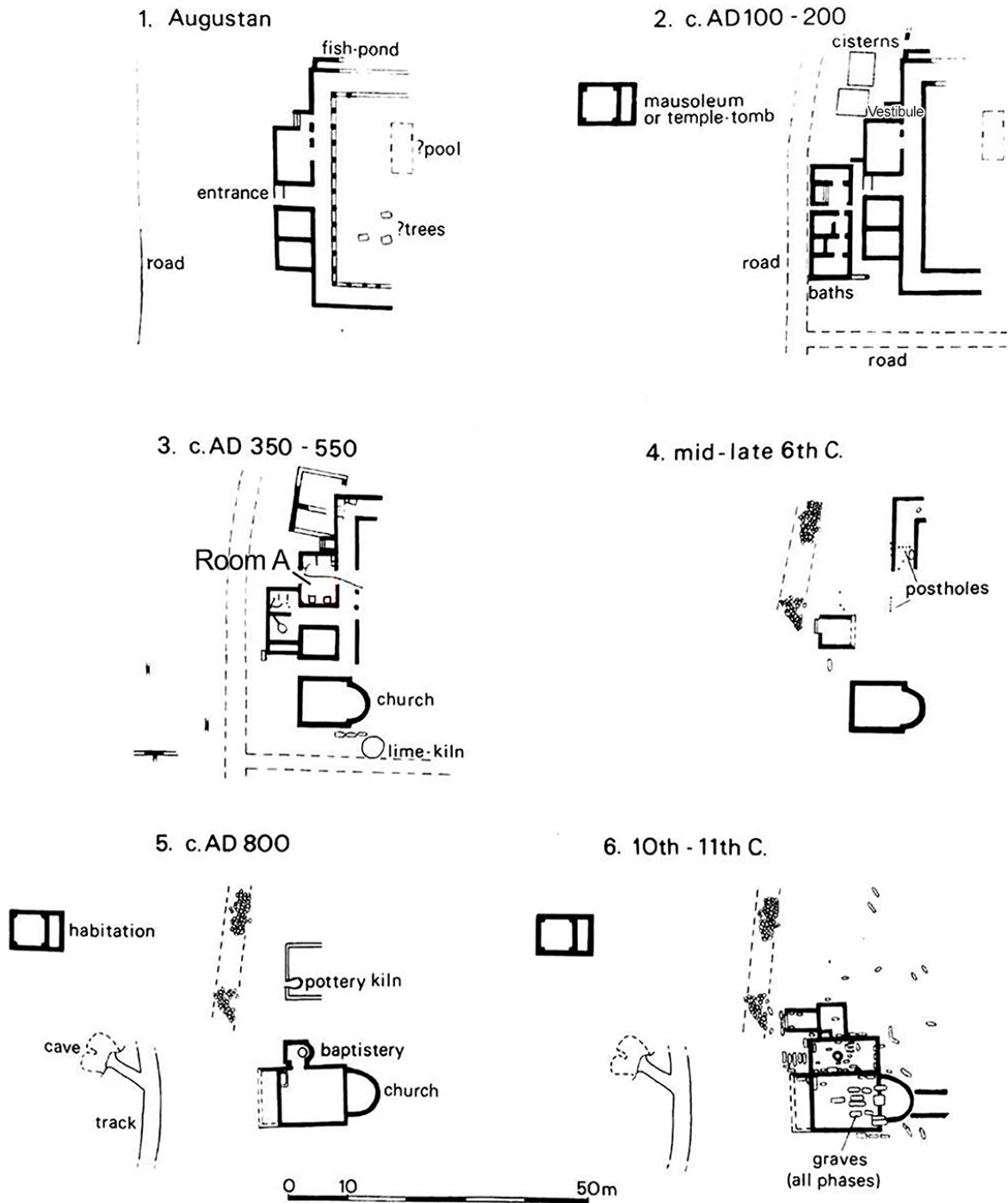


Fig. 46: Site no. 11 – Villa at *Mola di Monte Gelato* (adapted from Potter and King 1997, 21).

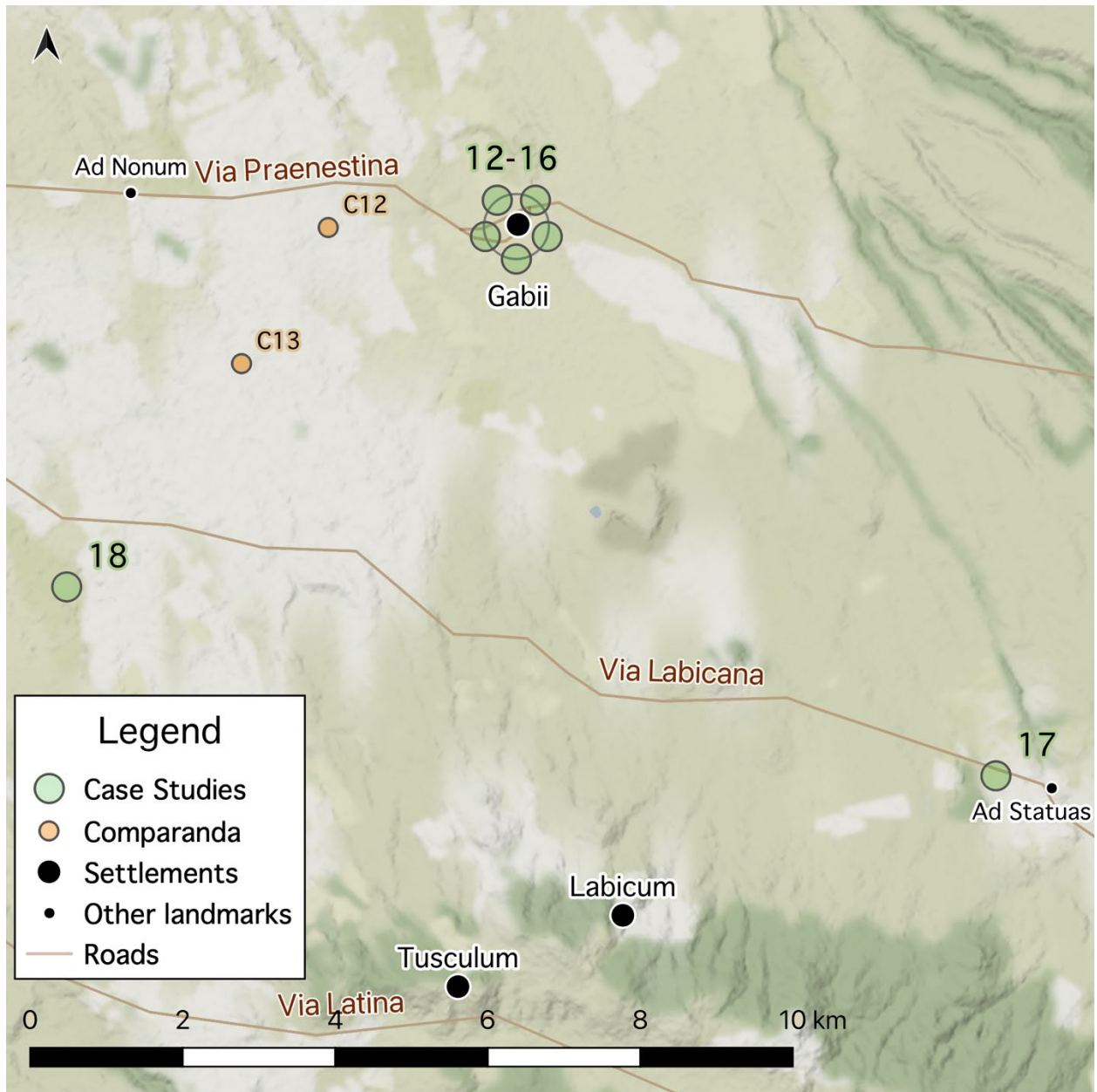


Fig. 47: Zone 4 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

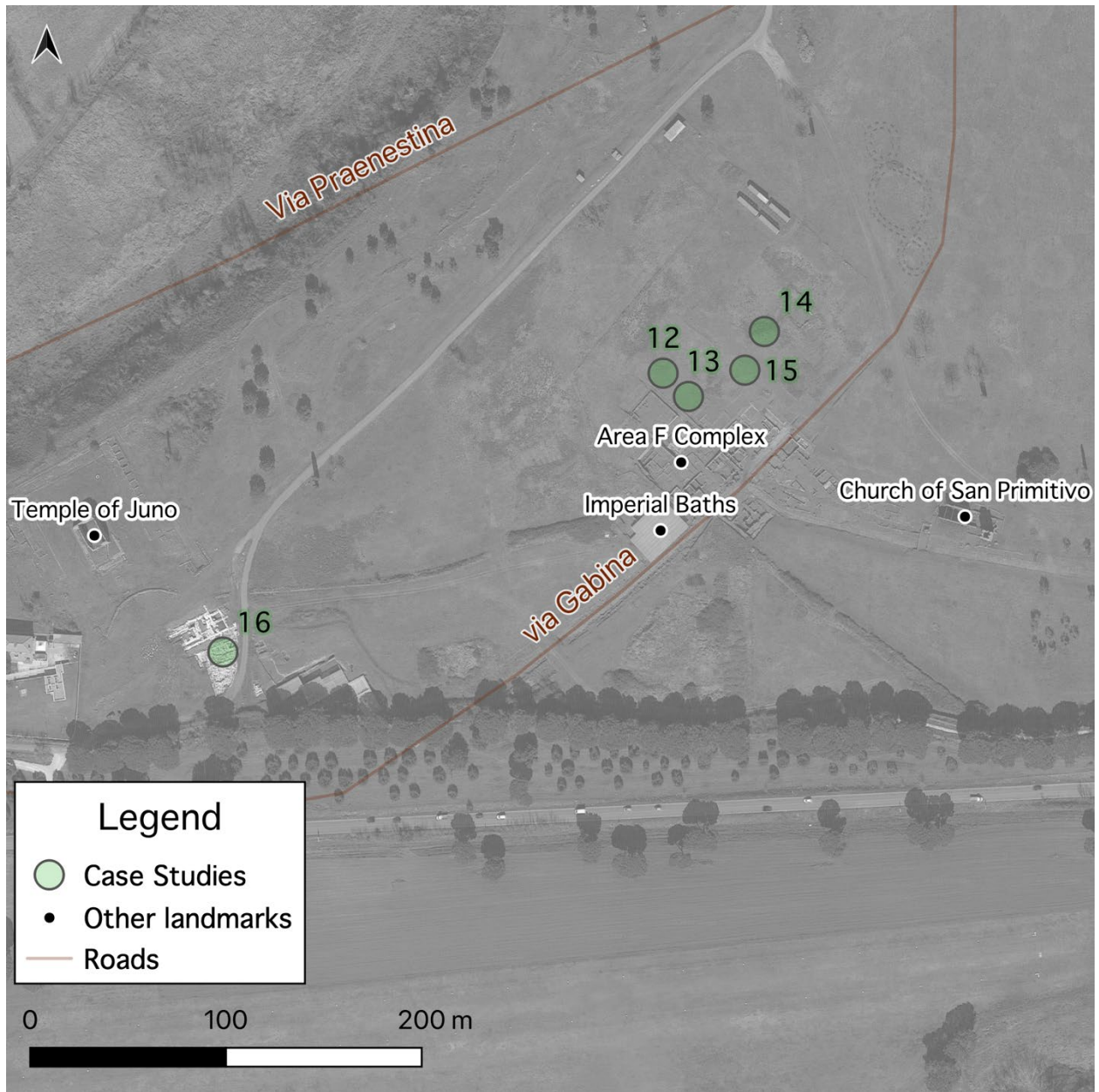


Fig. 48: Position of sites no. 12-15 at Gabii in Zone 4 (map tiles by Google; geodata for Roman roads by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire* and the *Gabii Project*).



Fig. 49: Site no. 12 – Area A House (*Gabii Project*).

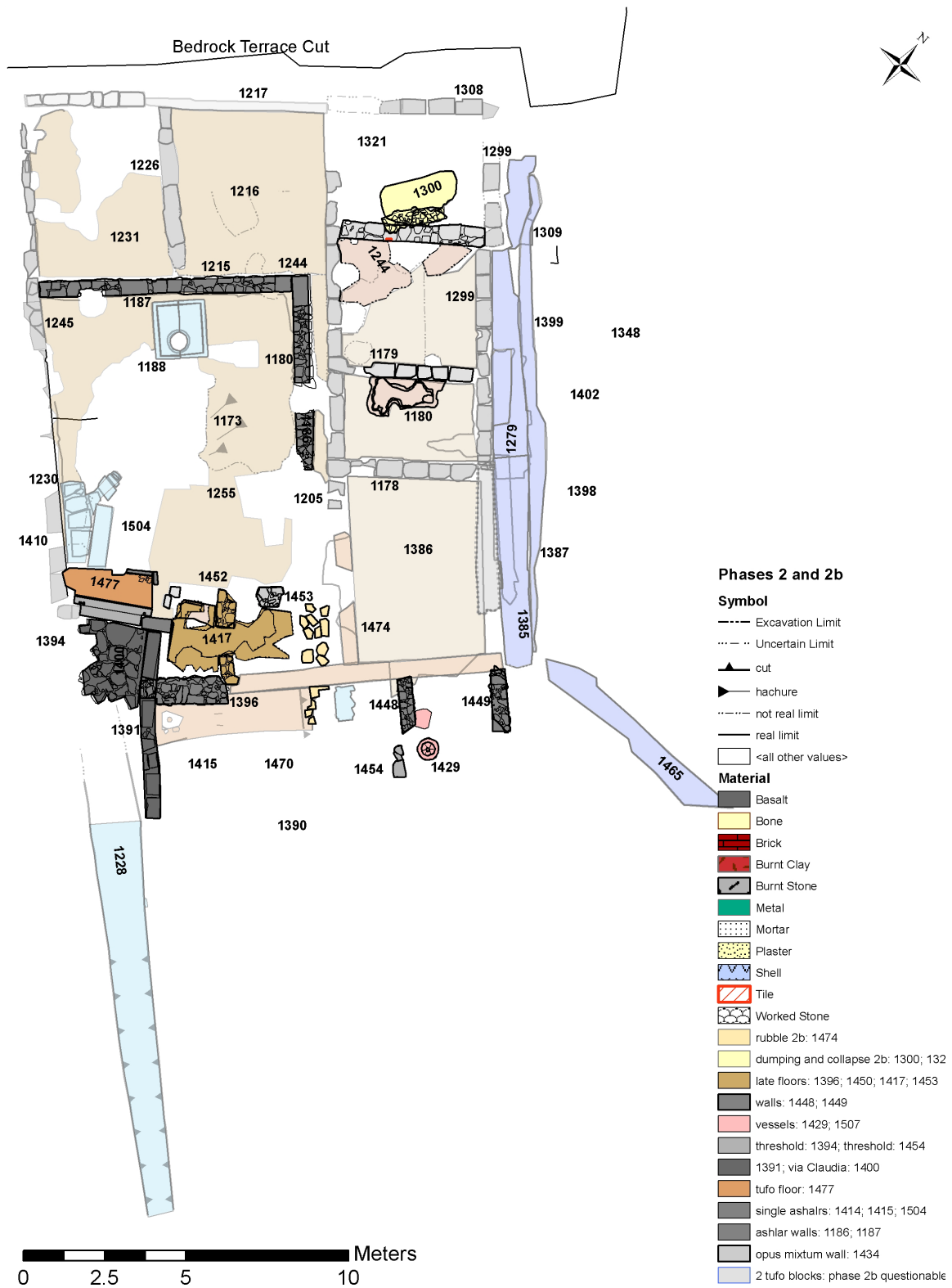


Fig. 50: Site no. 13 – Tincu House (*Gabii Project*).

Area C - Phase 2 House

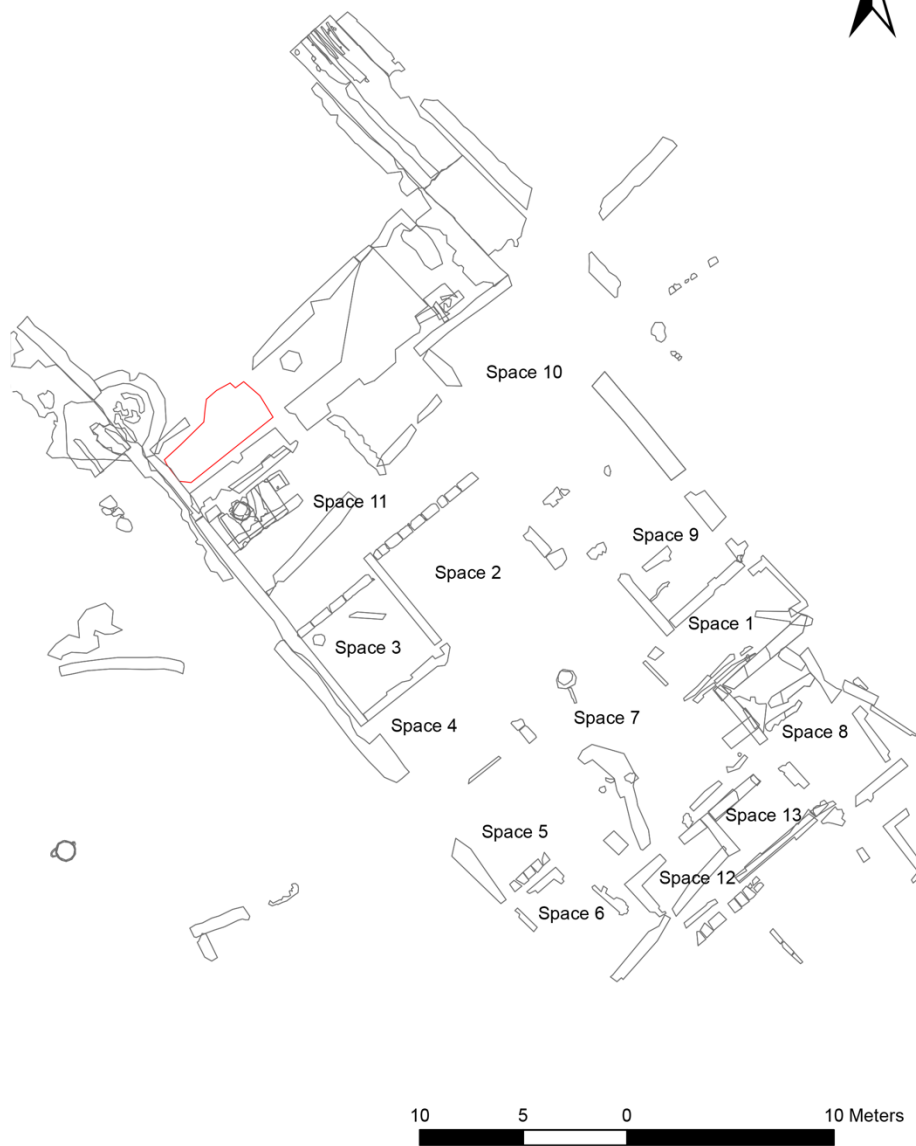


Fig. 51: Site no. 14 – Area C House (*Gabii Project*).

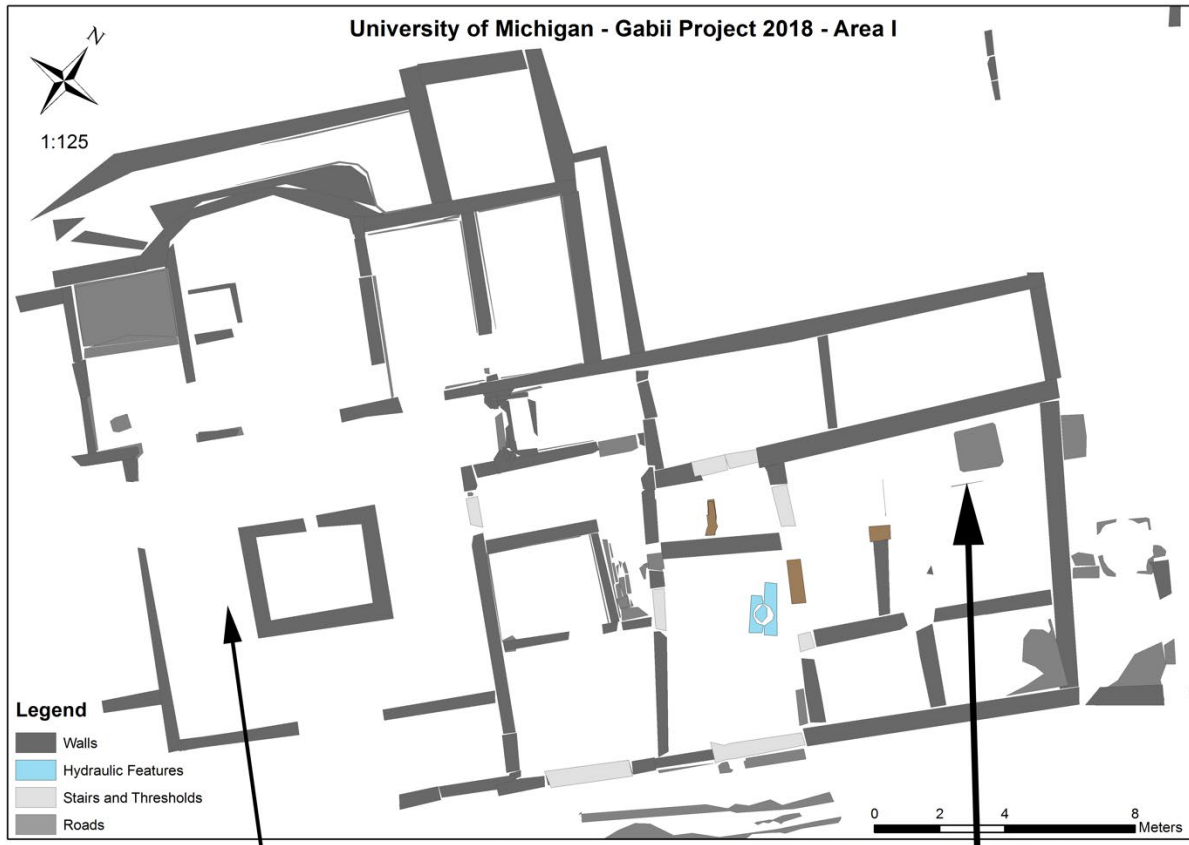
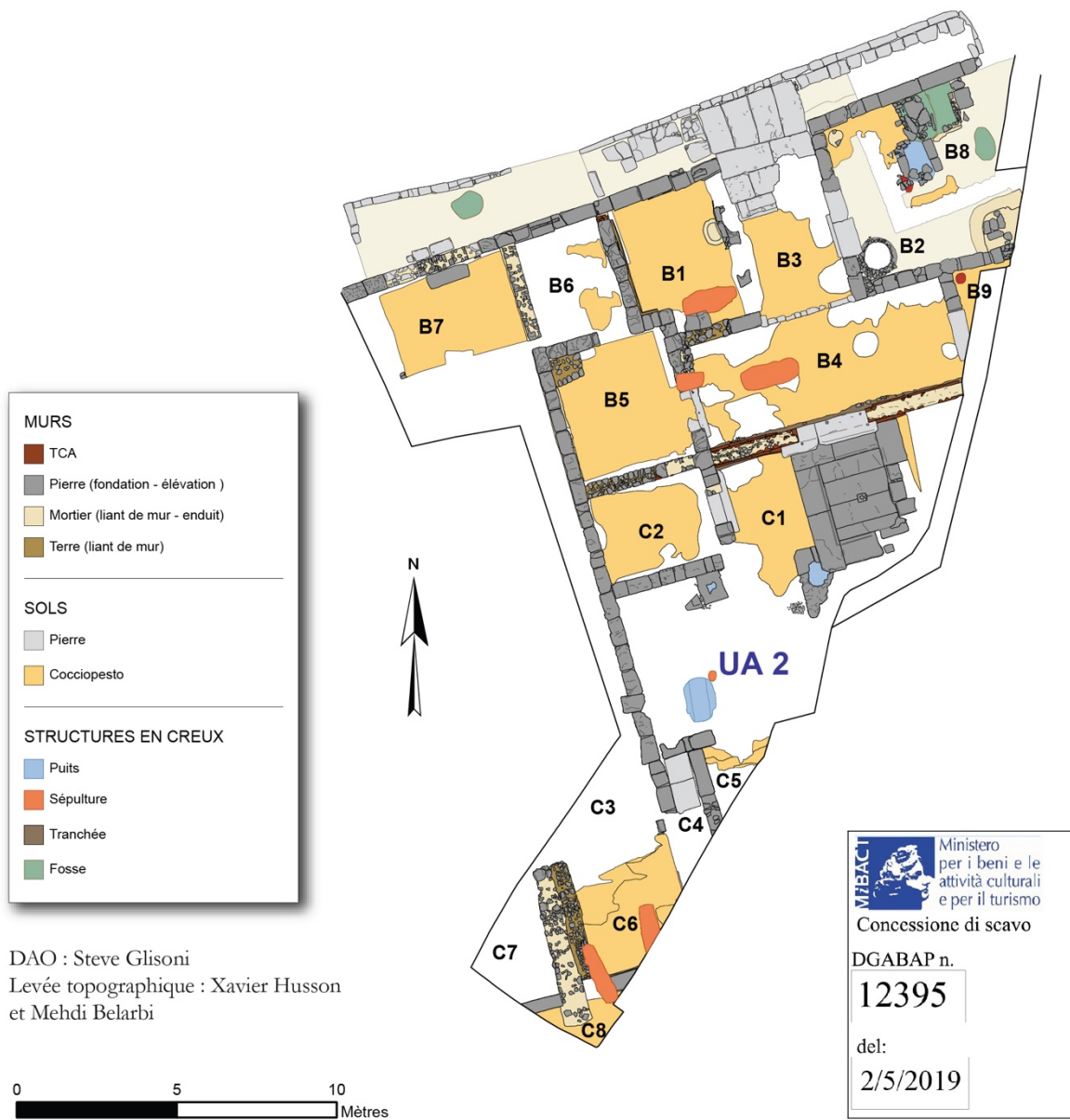


Fig. 52: Site no. 15 – Area I House. Plan of site indicating location of mosaic floors (left) and agricultural basin (right) (*Gabii Project*).



DAO : Steve Glisoni
 Levée topographique : Xavier Husson
 et Mehdi Belarbi

Fig. 53: Site no. 16 – UA2 Domus (adapted from Glisoni 2020, 2).

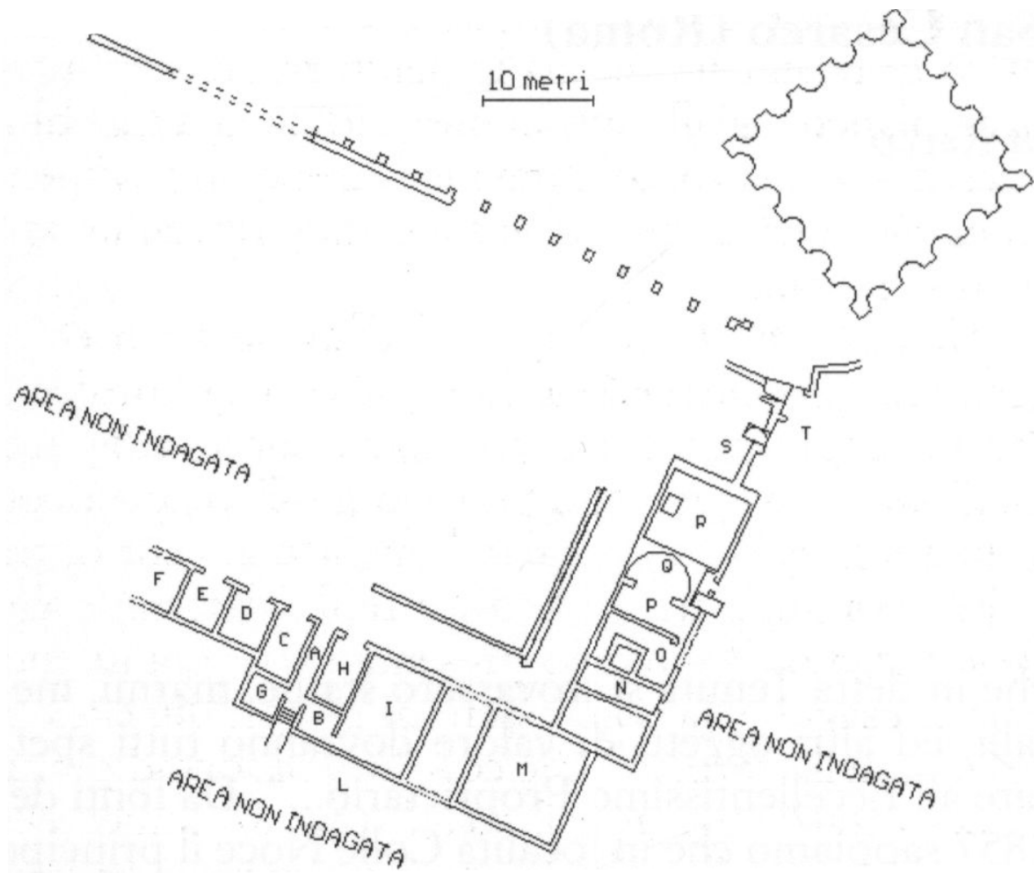


Fig. 54: Site no. 17 – Villa at *Colle La Noce* (adapted from Recco 2011, 404).

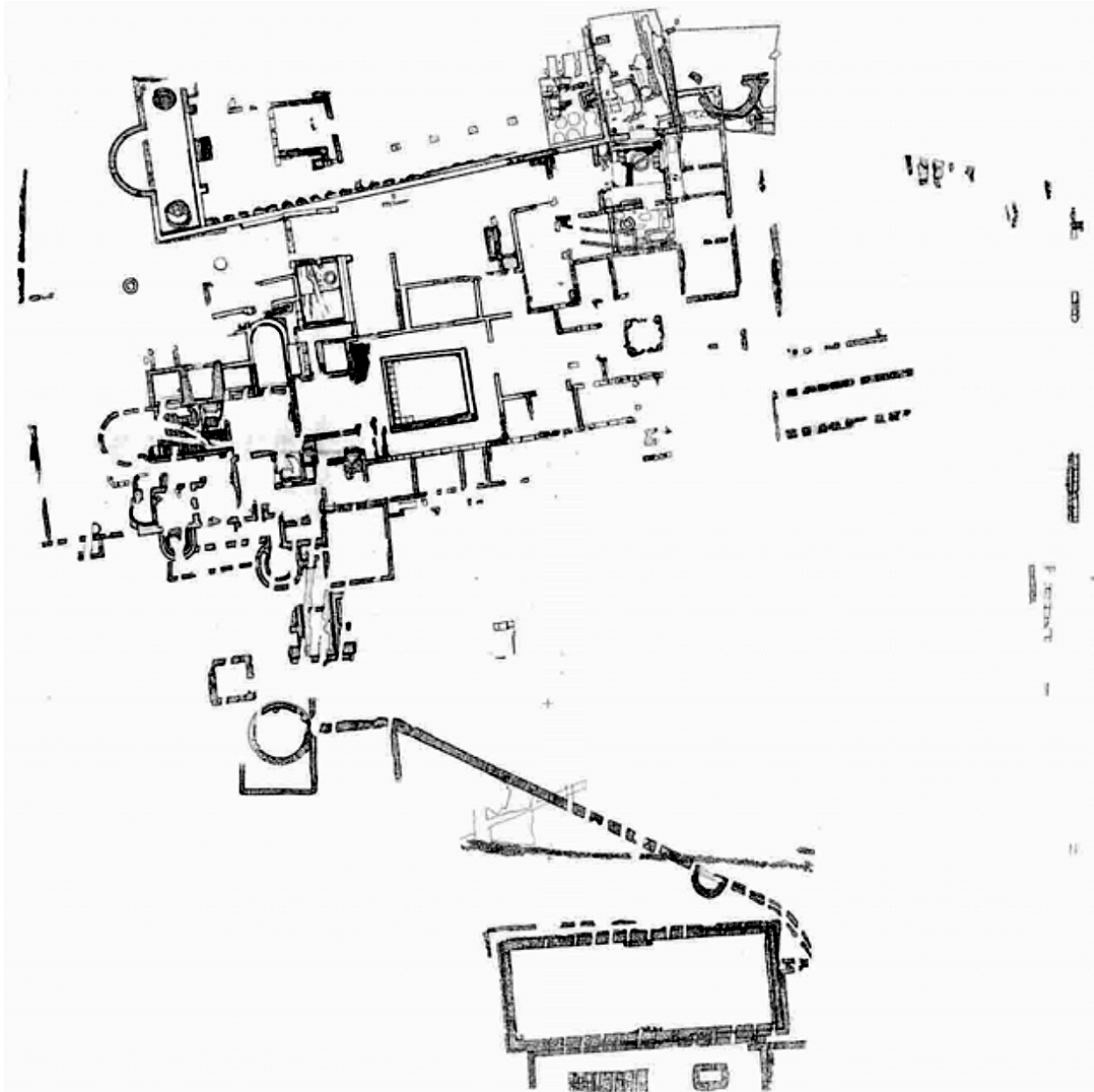


Fig. 55: Site no. 18 – Villa of *Passolombardo* (adapted from Rustici and Tondi 2010, 289).

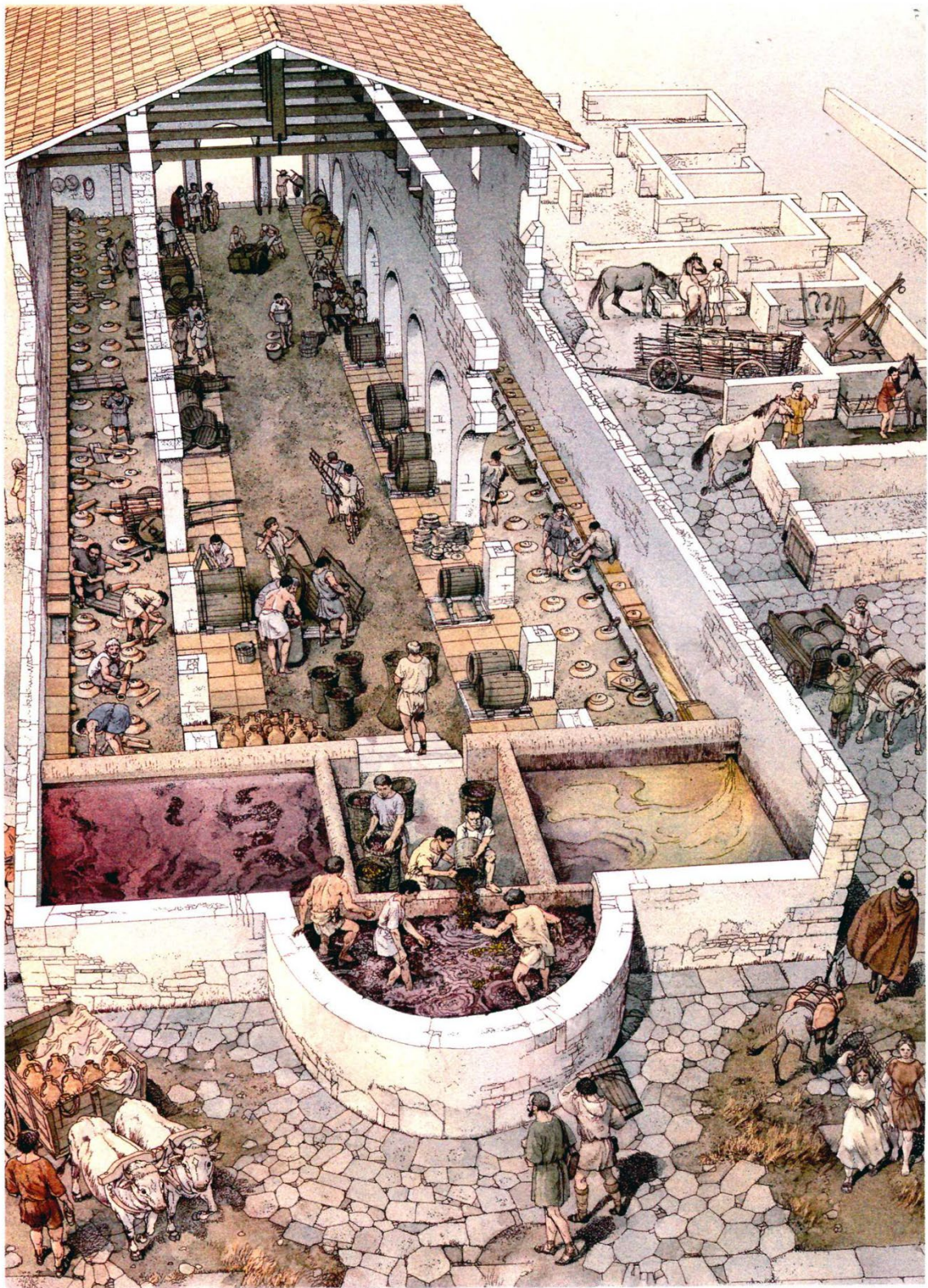


Fig. 56: Reconstruction of the 5th-century wine production facilities uncovered at site no. 18 – Villa of *Passolombardo* (Ricci 2005).

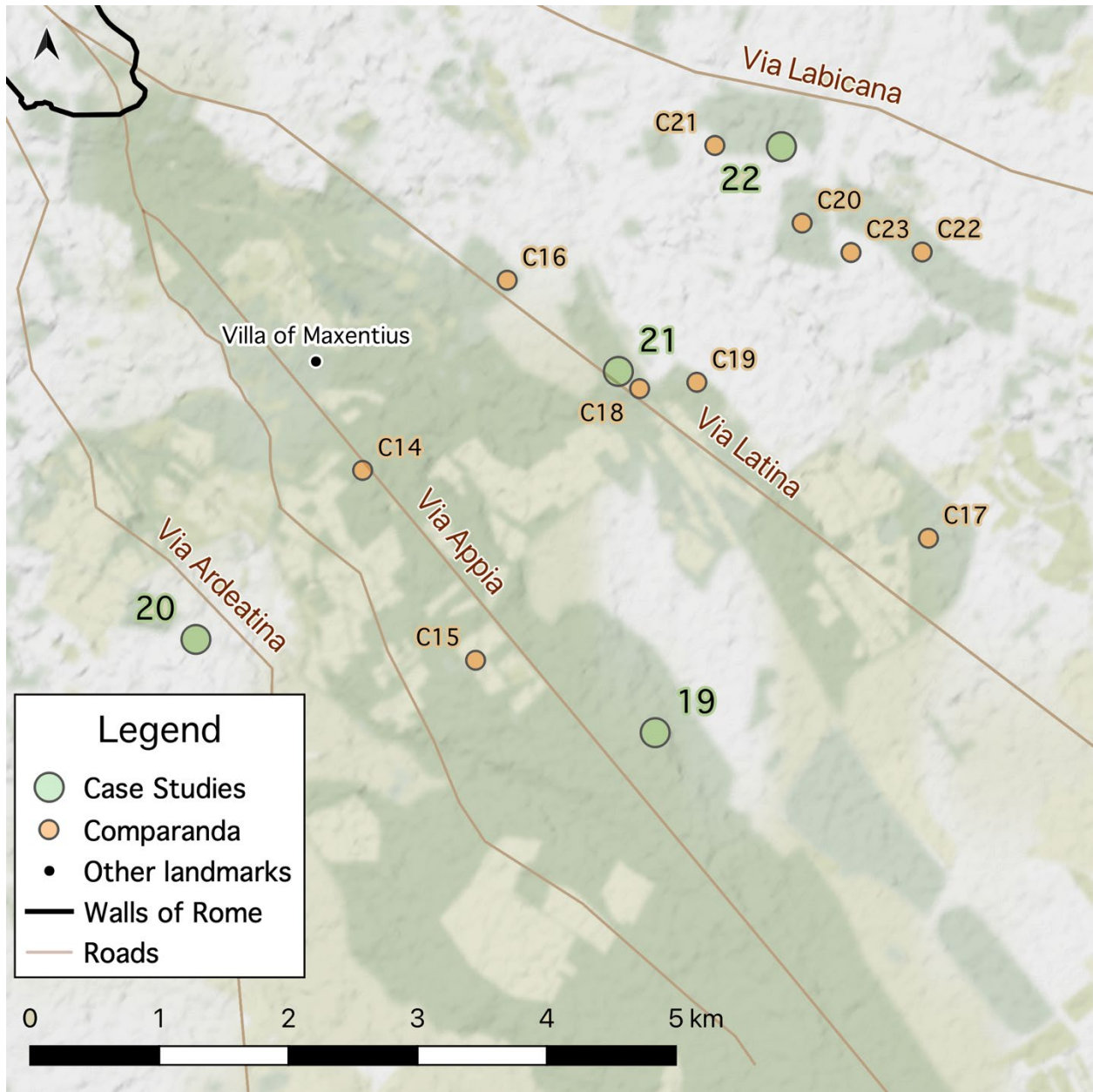


Fig. 57: Zone 5 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

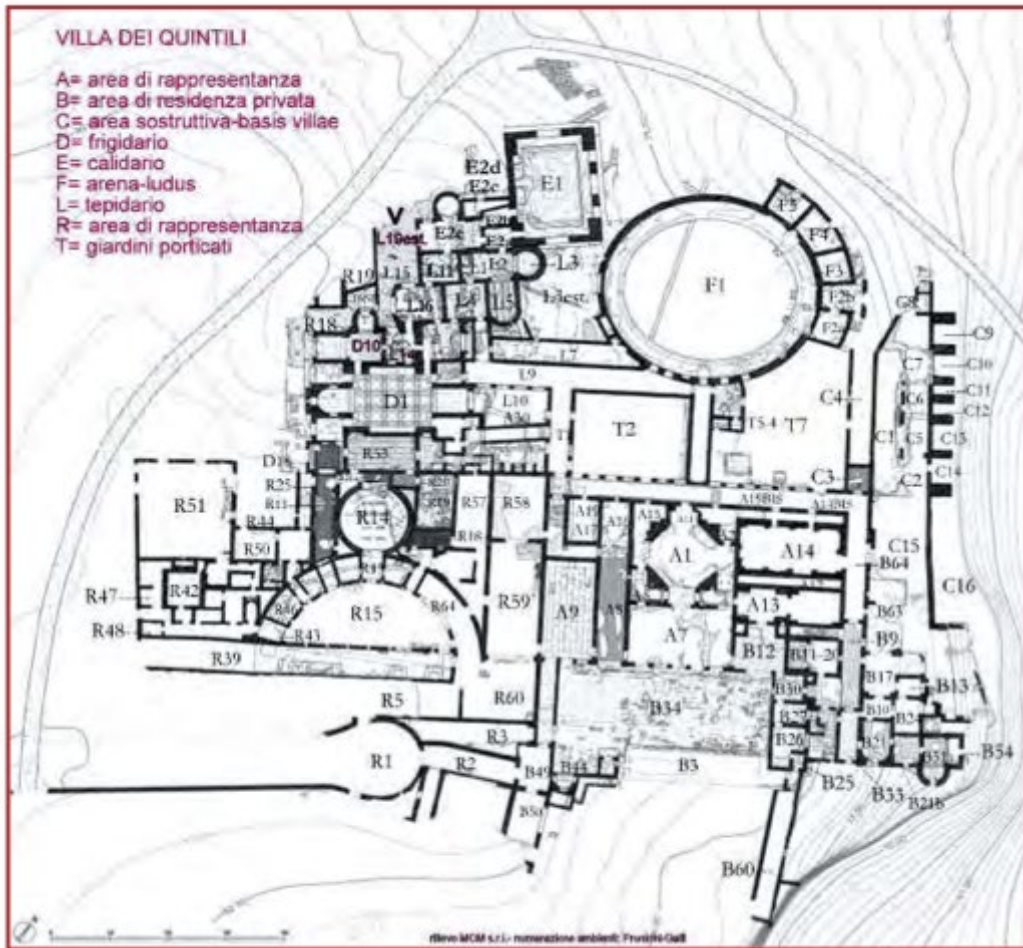


Fig. 58: Site no. 19 – Villa of the *Quintilii* (adapted from Paris et al. 2012, 10).

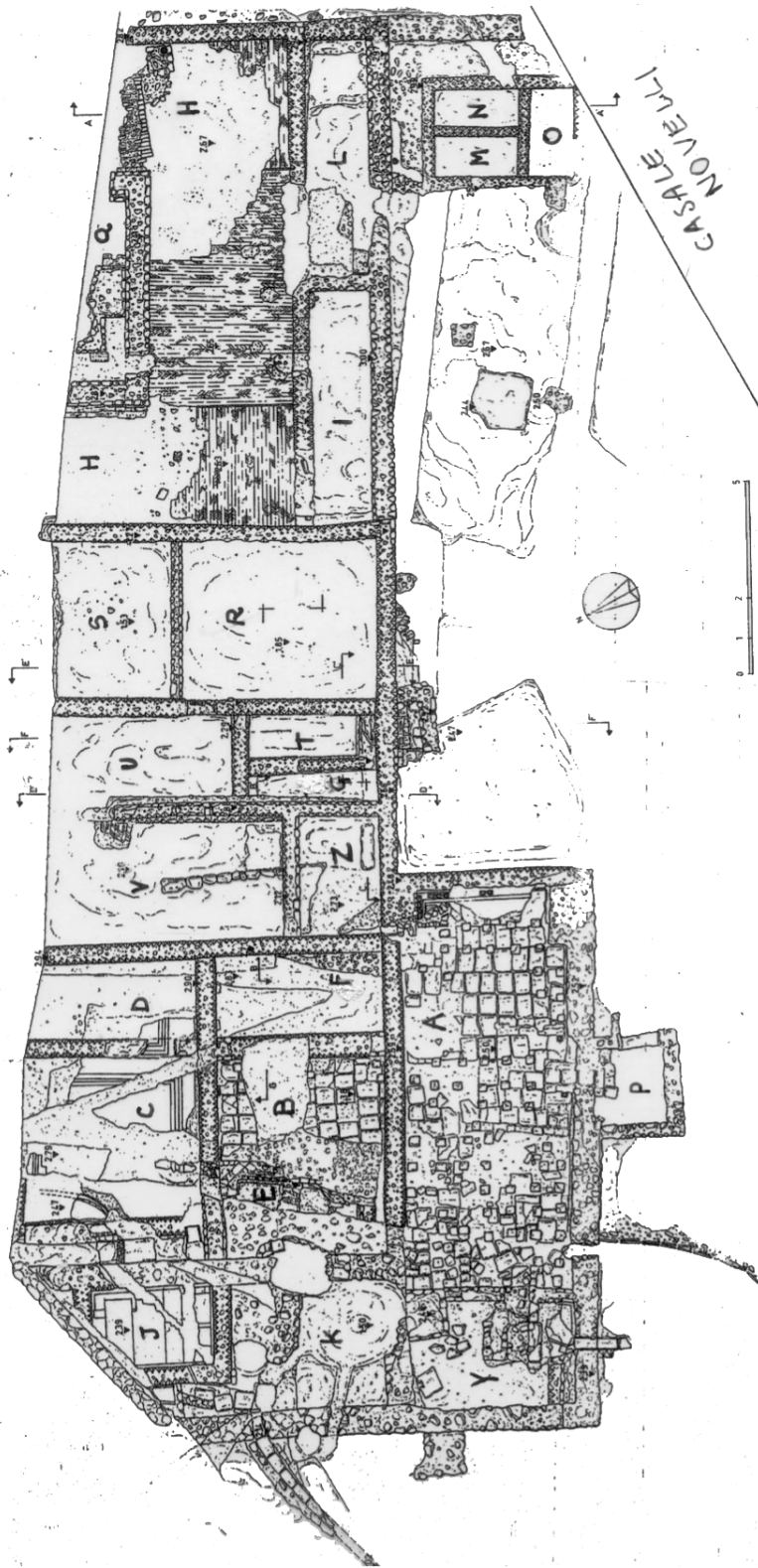


Fig. 59: Site no. 20 – Villa at *Casale Novelli* (adapted from Ricciardi 2005, 199).

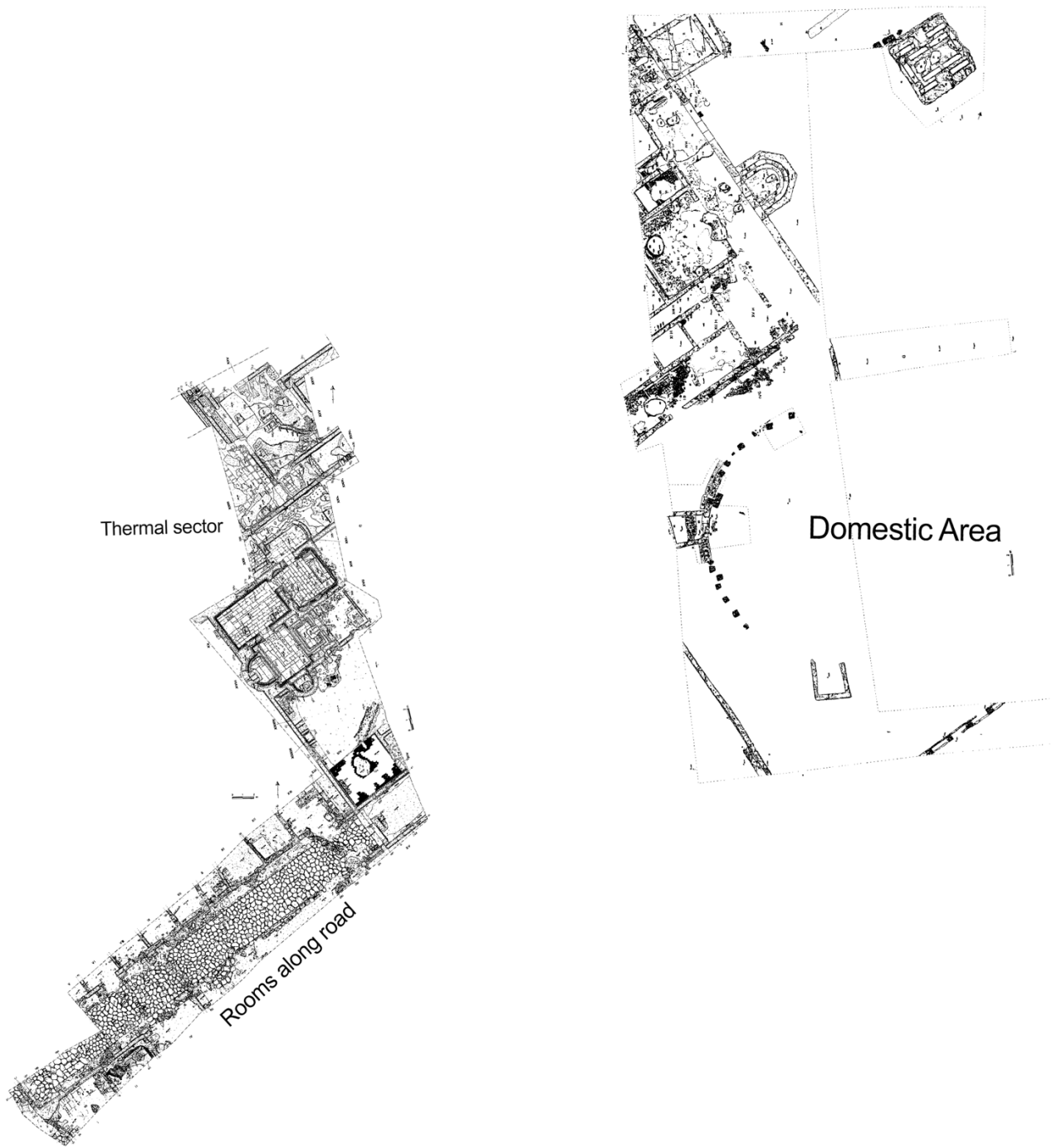


Fig. 60: Site no. 21 – *Villa del Campo Barbarico* (adapted from Rea 2004, 207, 210, 213).



Fig. 61: “Barbarian” masonry blocking the road outside site no. 21 – *Villa del Campo Barbarico* (Rea 2003, 258).

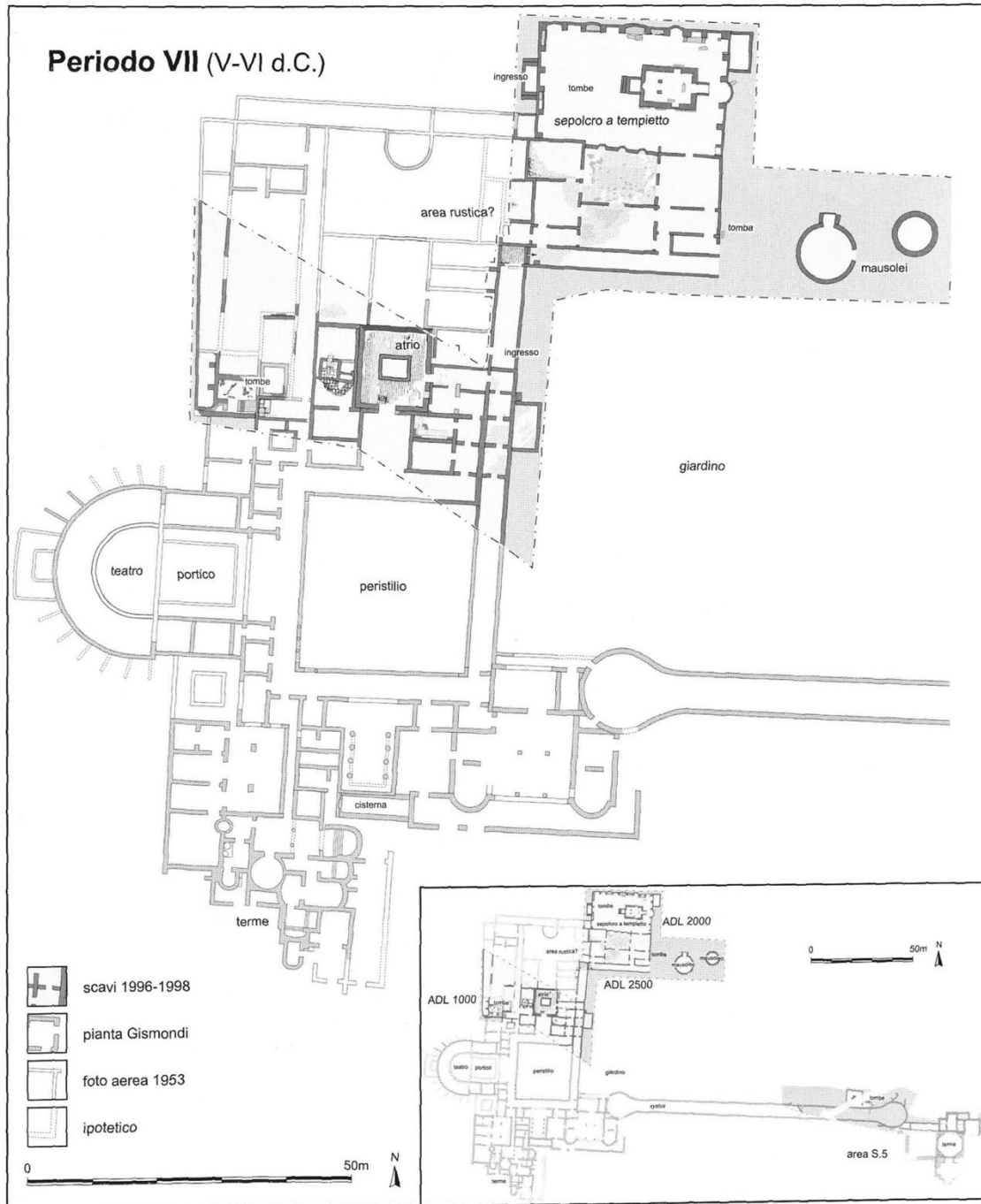


Fig. 62: Site no. 22 – Villa of Centocelle “ad duas Lauros” (adapted from Volpe 2007b, 46).

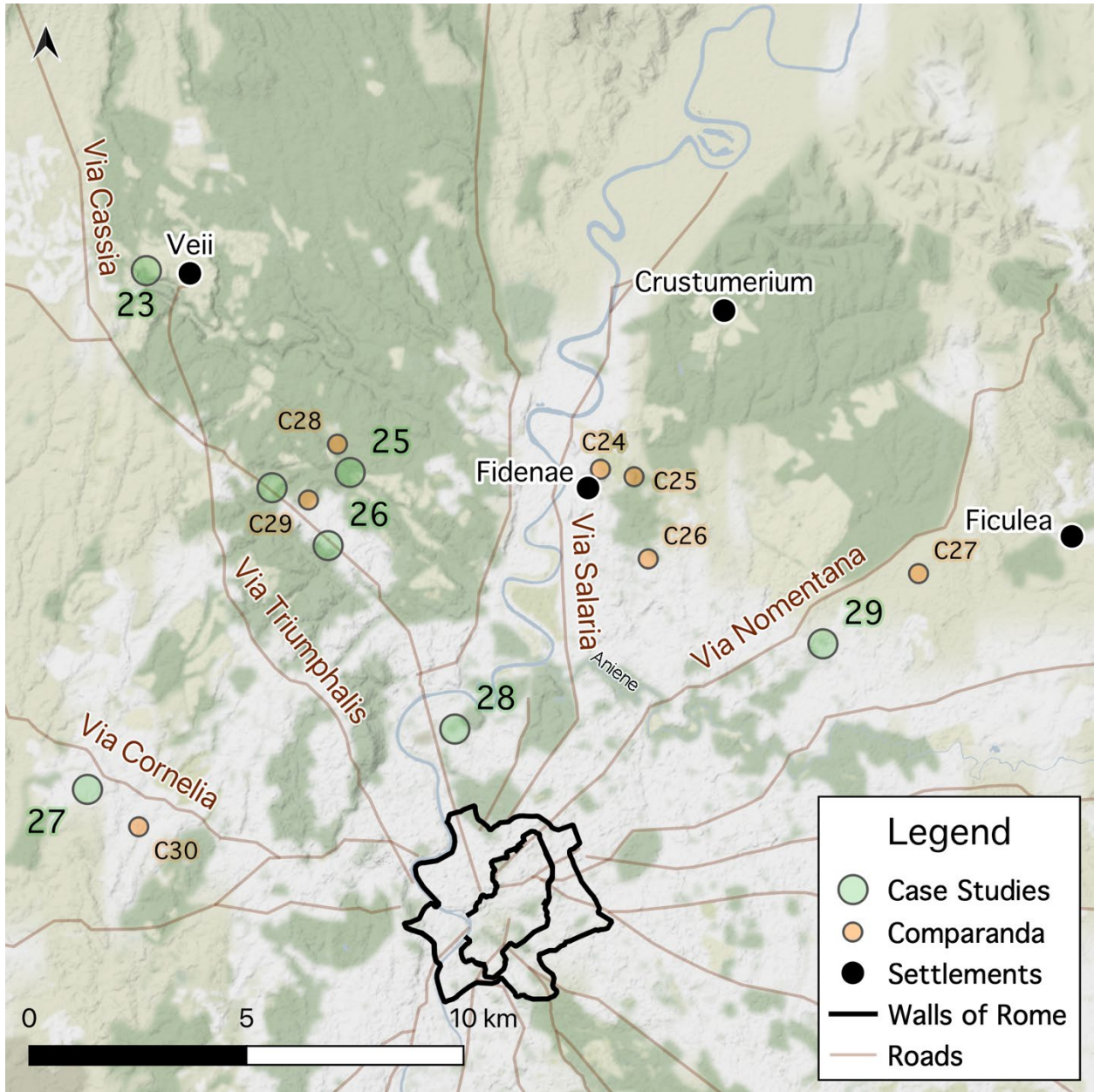


Fig. 63: Zone 7 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

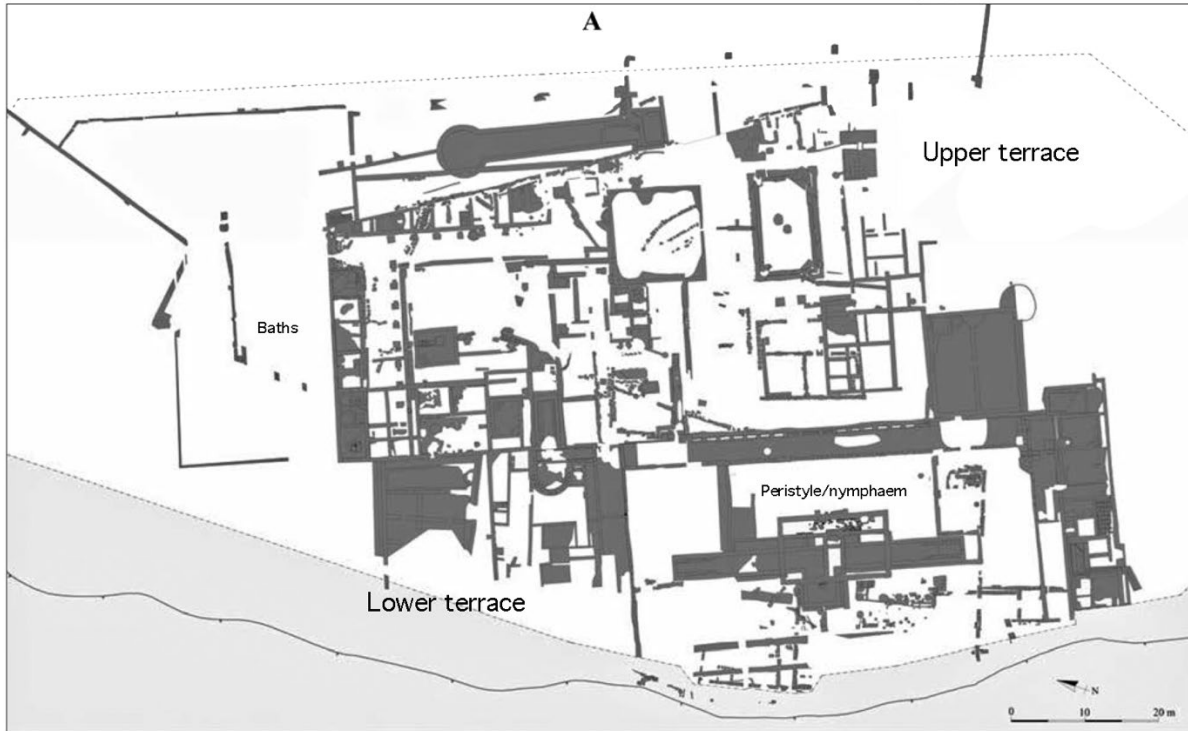


Fig. 64: Site no. 23 – Villa of *Campetti a Veio* (adapted from Fusco and Soriano 2018, 392).

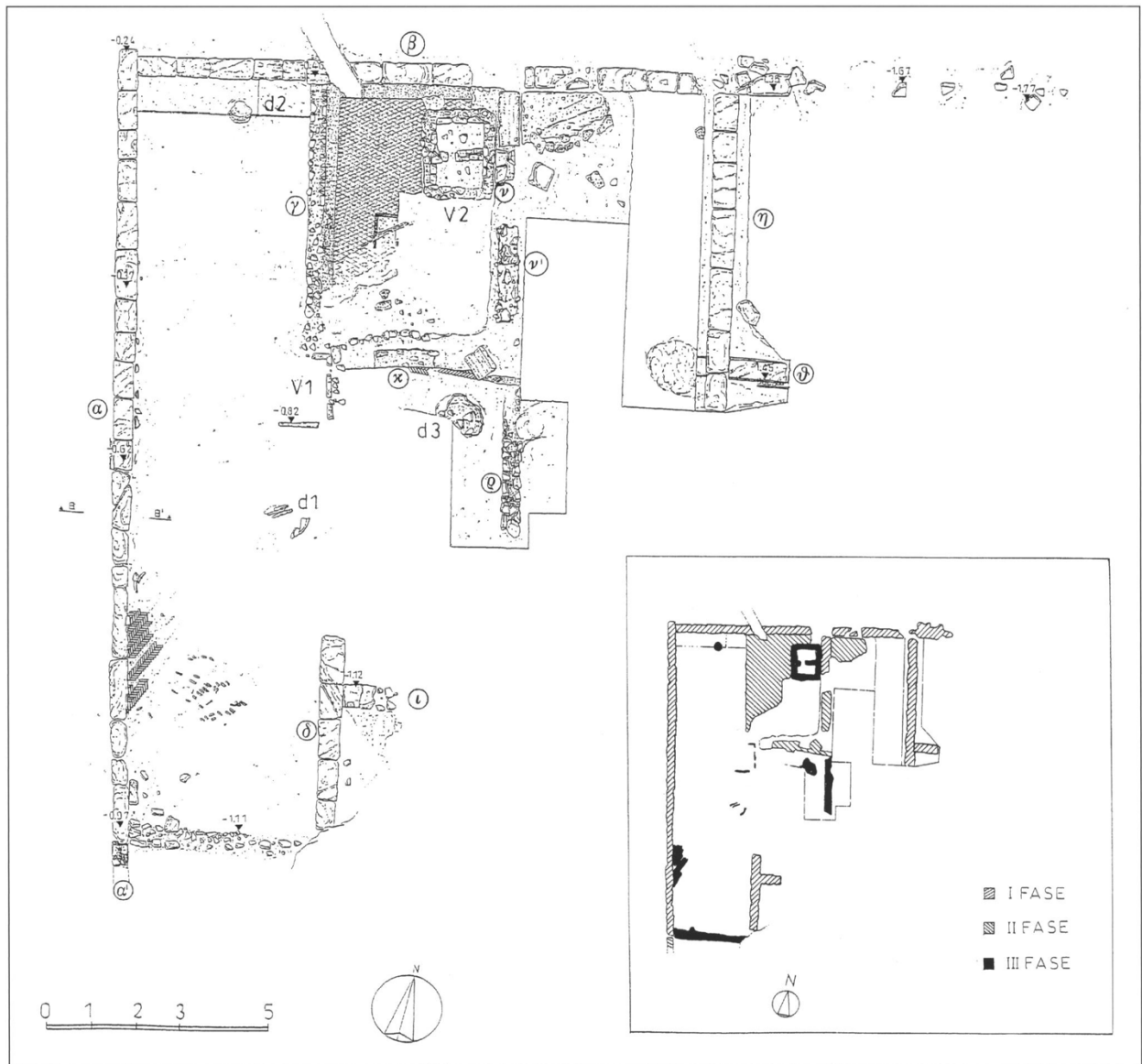


Fig. 65: Site no. 24 – Villa on via Barbarano Romano (adapted from Cerrito et al. 2006, 346).

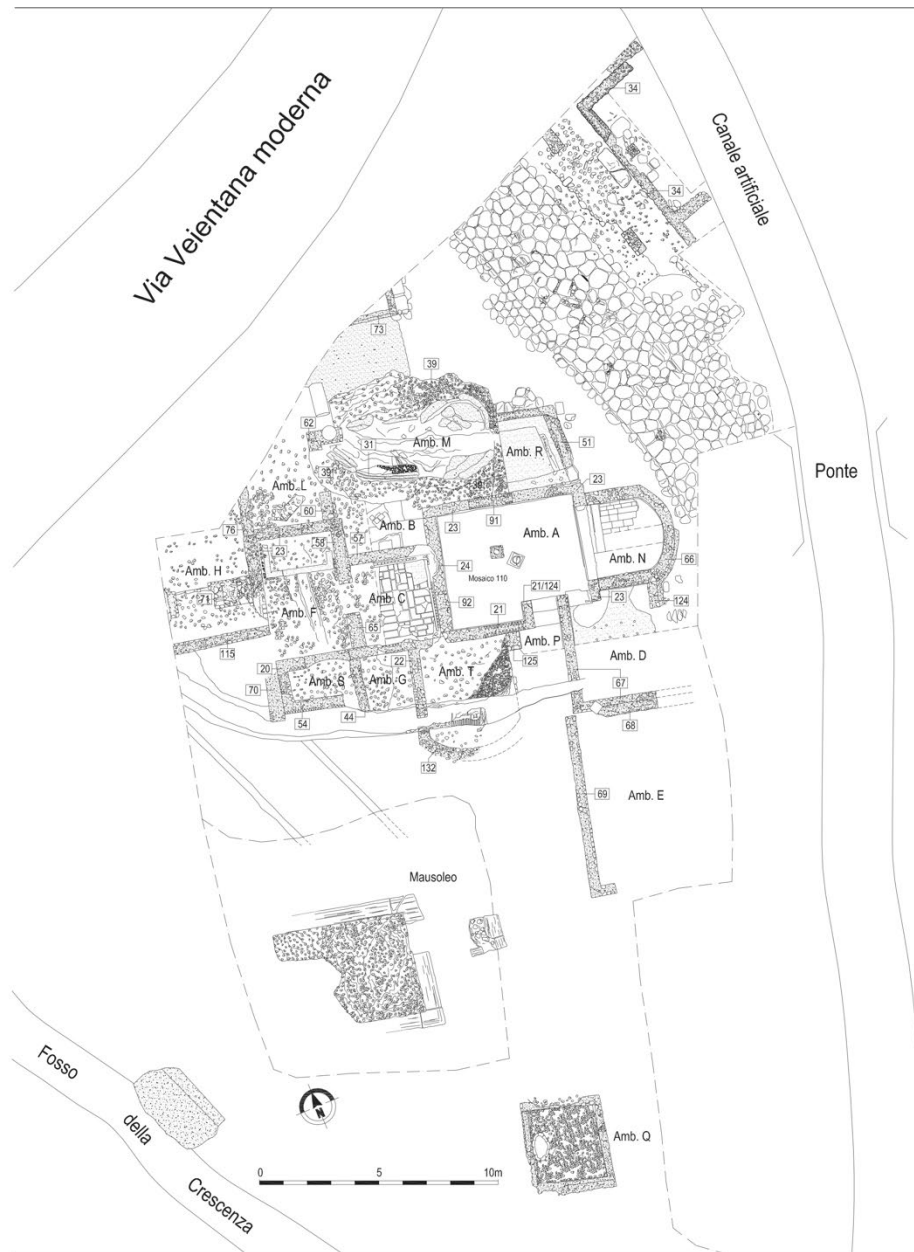


Fig. 66: Site no. 25 – Villa at the *Fosso della Crescenza* (adapted from Sbarra 2009, 239).



Fig. 67: Position of 1959 excavations (A) and 2002-2003 excavations (B) at site no. 26 – Villa at the American Overseas School (Cerrito et al. 2006, 325).

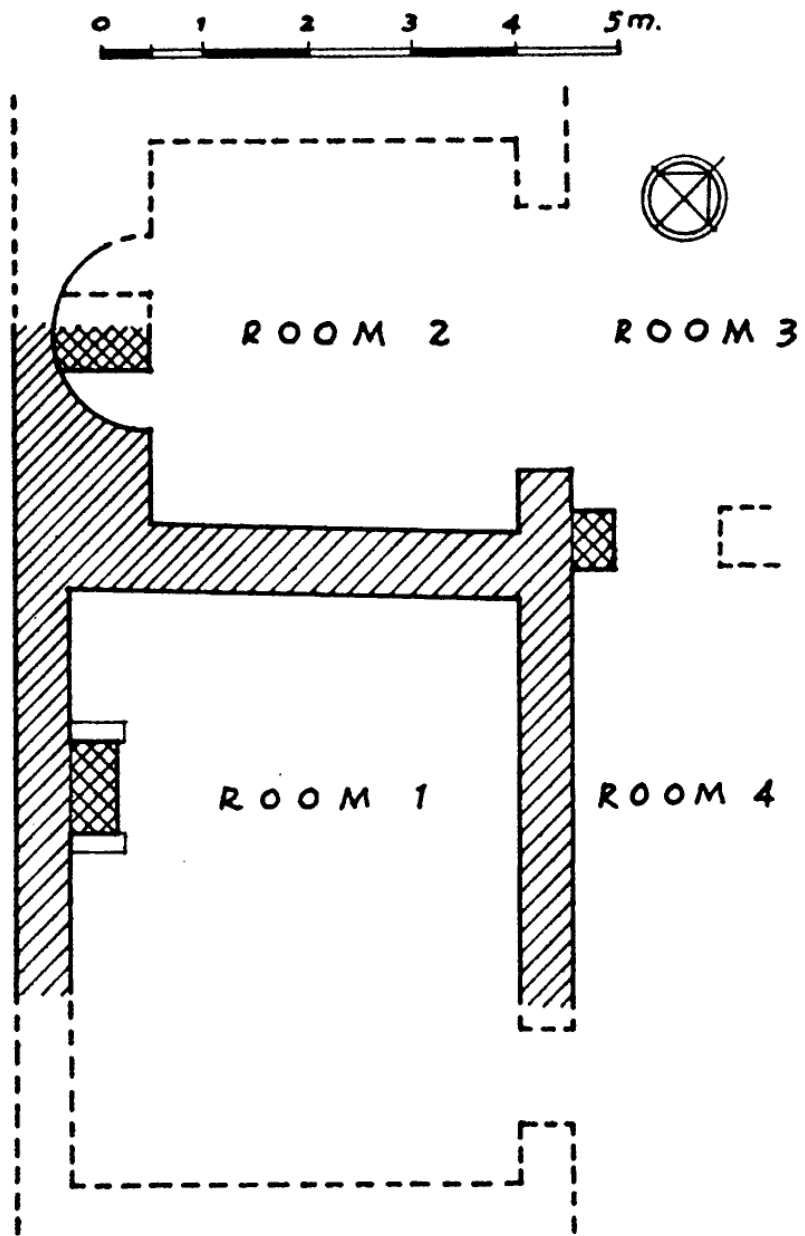


Fig. 68: Portion of site no. 26 (Villa at the American Overseas School) excavated in 1959 (Ward-Perkins 1959, 134).

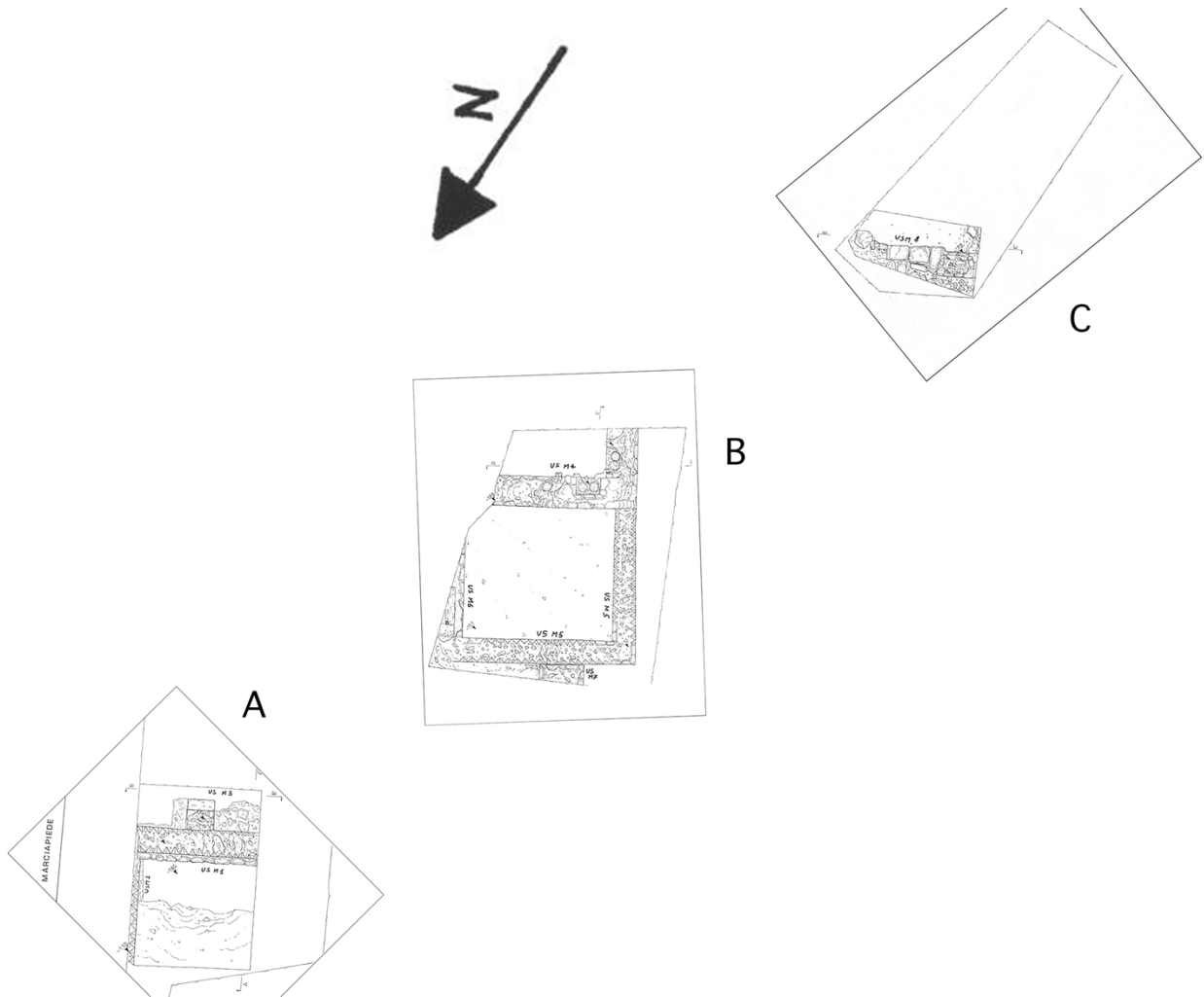
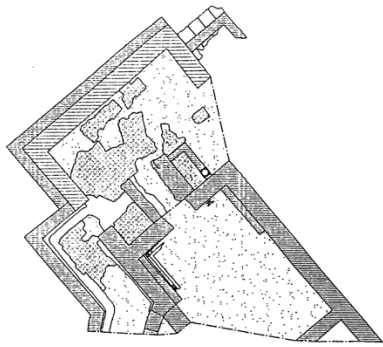


Fig. 69: Site no. 26 – Villa at the American Overseas School; approximate position of trenches A, B, and C, excavated in 2002-2003 (adapted from Cerrito et al. 2006, 327, 329, 331).

NB: The positioning of trenches in relation to one another is approximate.



VIA DI CASALOTTI

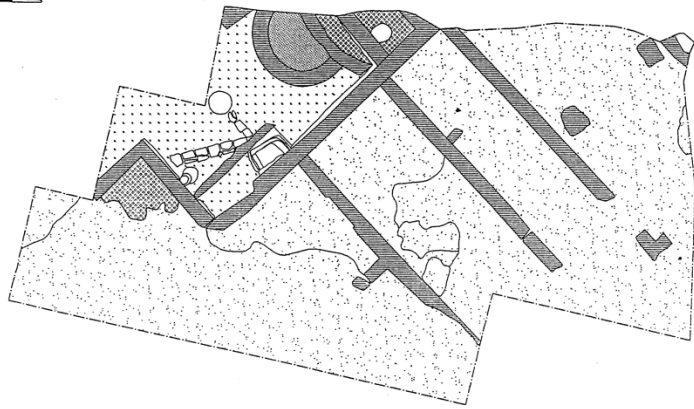
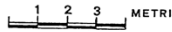


Fig. 70: Site no. 27 – Villa of *Casalotti* (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 7615).



Fig. 71: Site no. 28 – *Villa dell'Auditorium* (adapted from D'Alessio and Di Giuseppe 2005, 178).

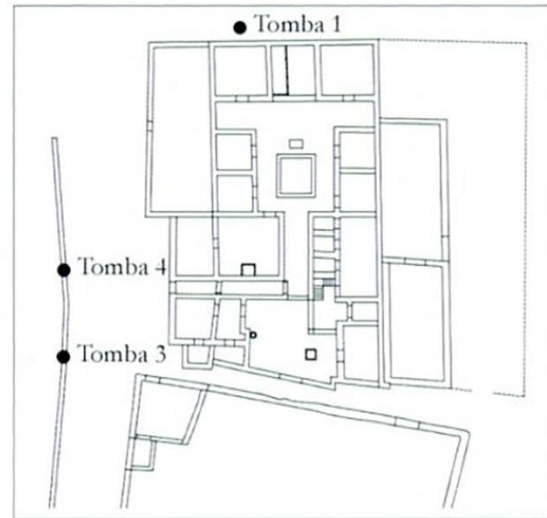
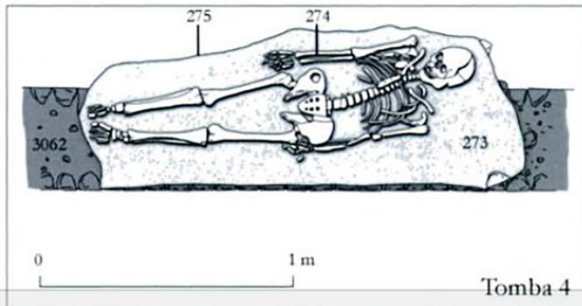
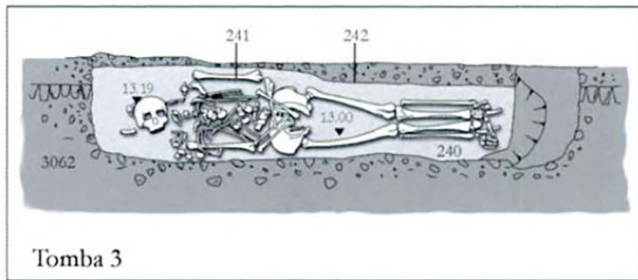
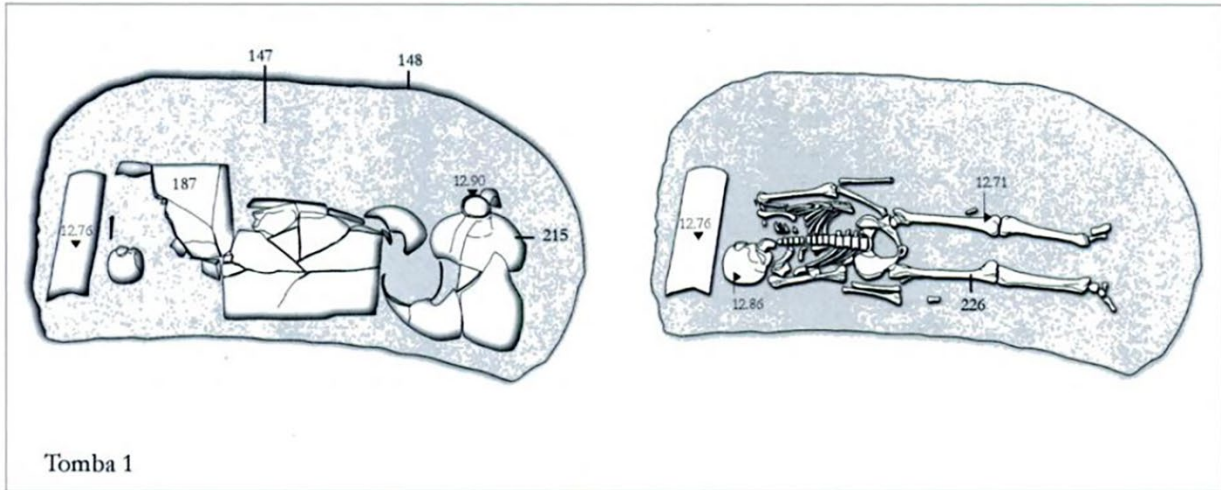


Fig. 72: Details of tombs around the perimeter of site no. 28 – *Villa dell'Auditorium* (Di Santo 2006b, 305).



Fig. 73: Site no. 29 – Villa of *Pollenza* (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 4048).

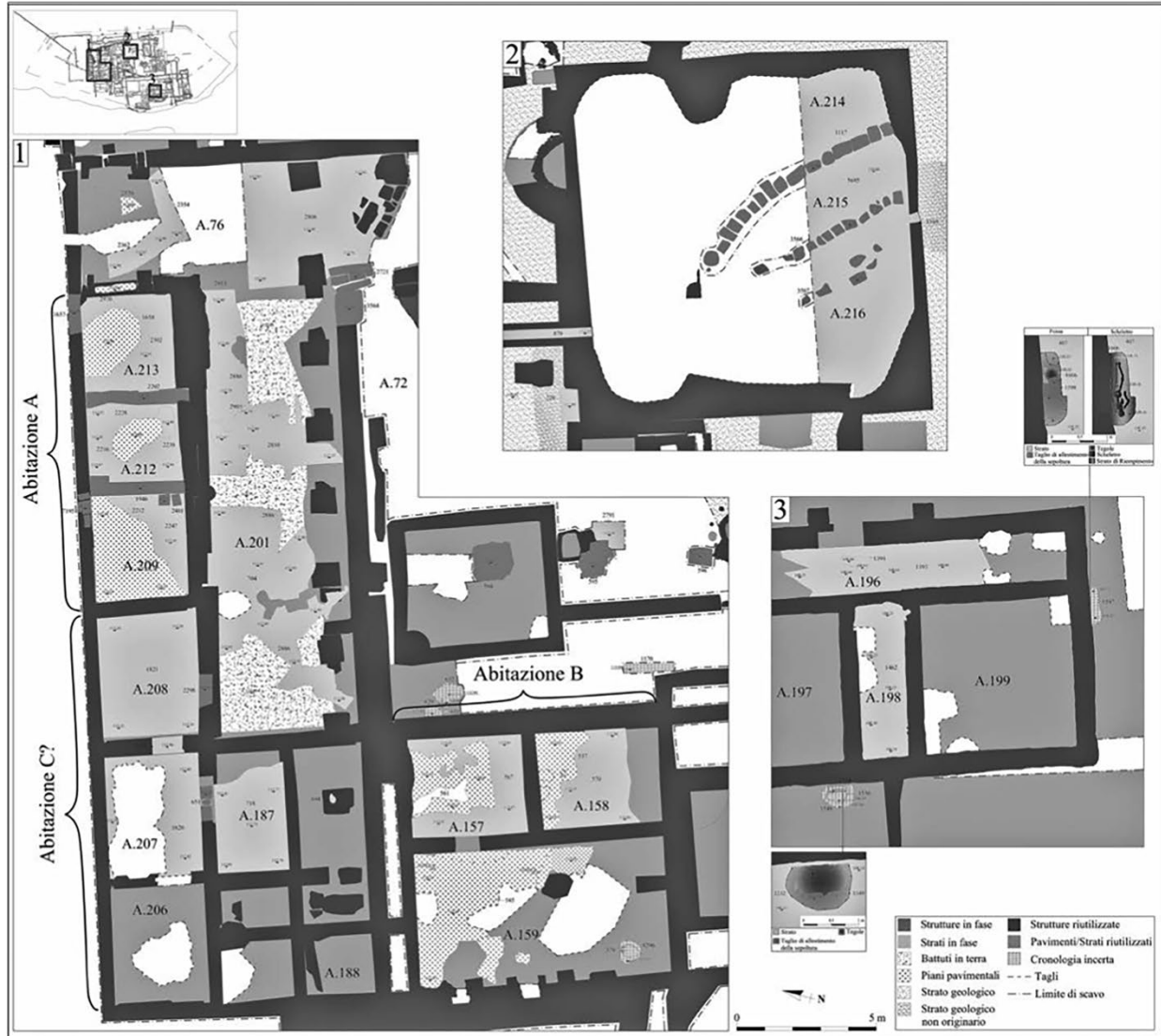


Fig. 74: Supposed multi-familial housing units A, B, and C, site no. 23 – Villa of *Campetti a Veio* (Fusco and Soriano 2018, 394).

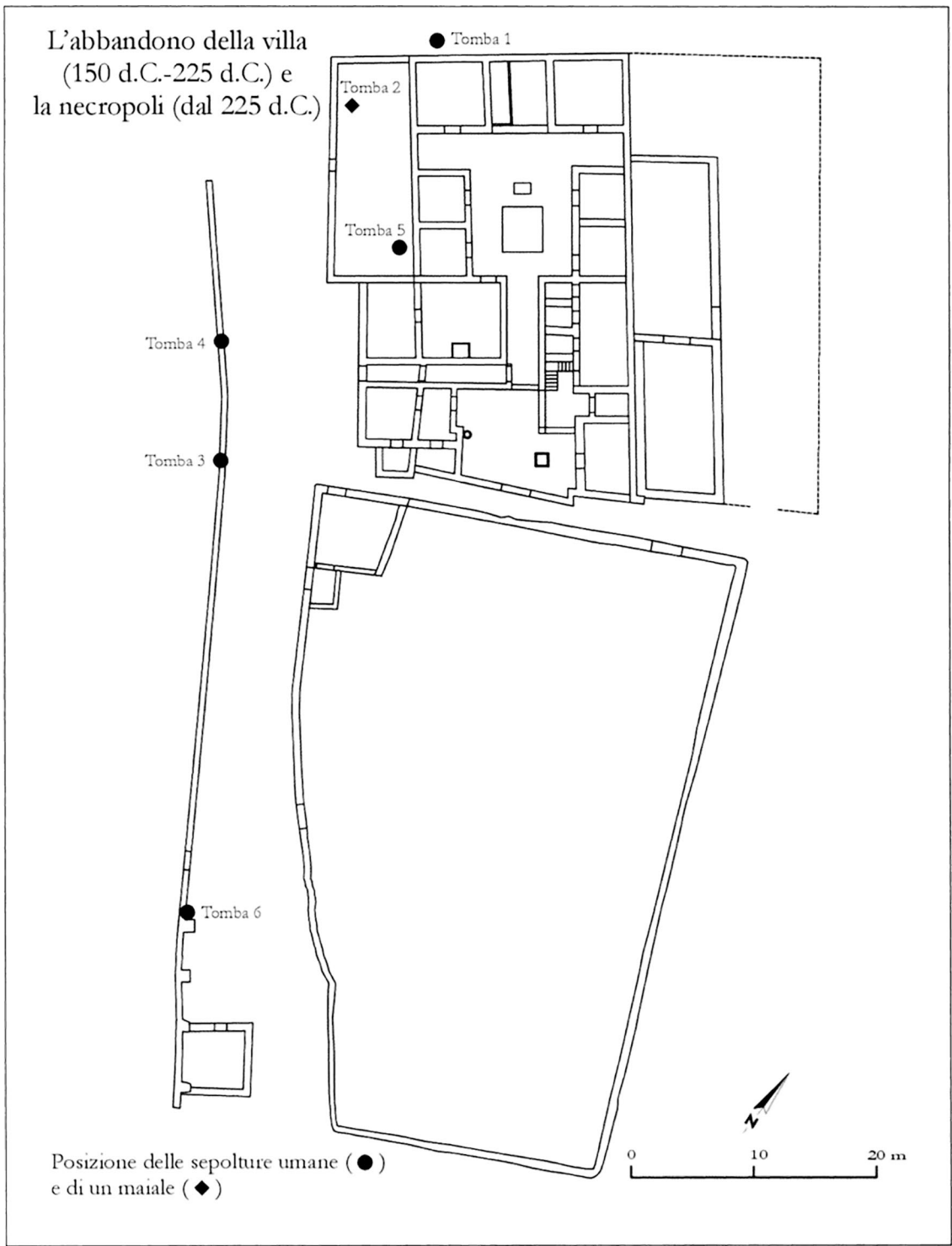


Fig. 75: Position of burials at site no. 28 – Villa dell'Auditorium (Di Santo 2006b, 302).

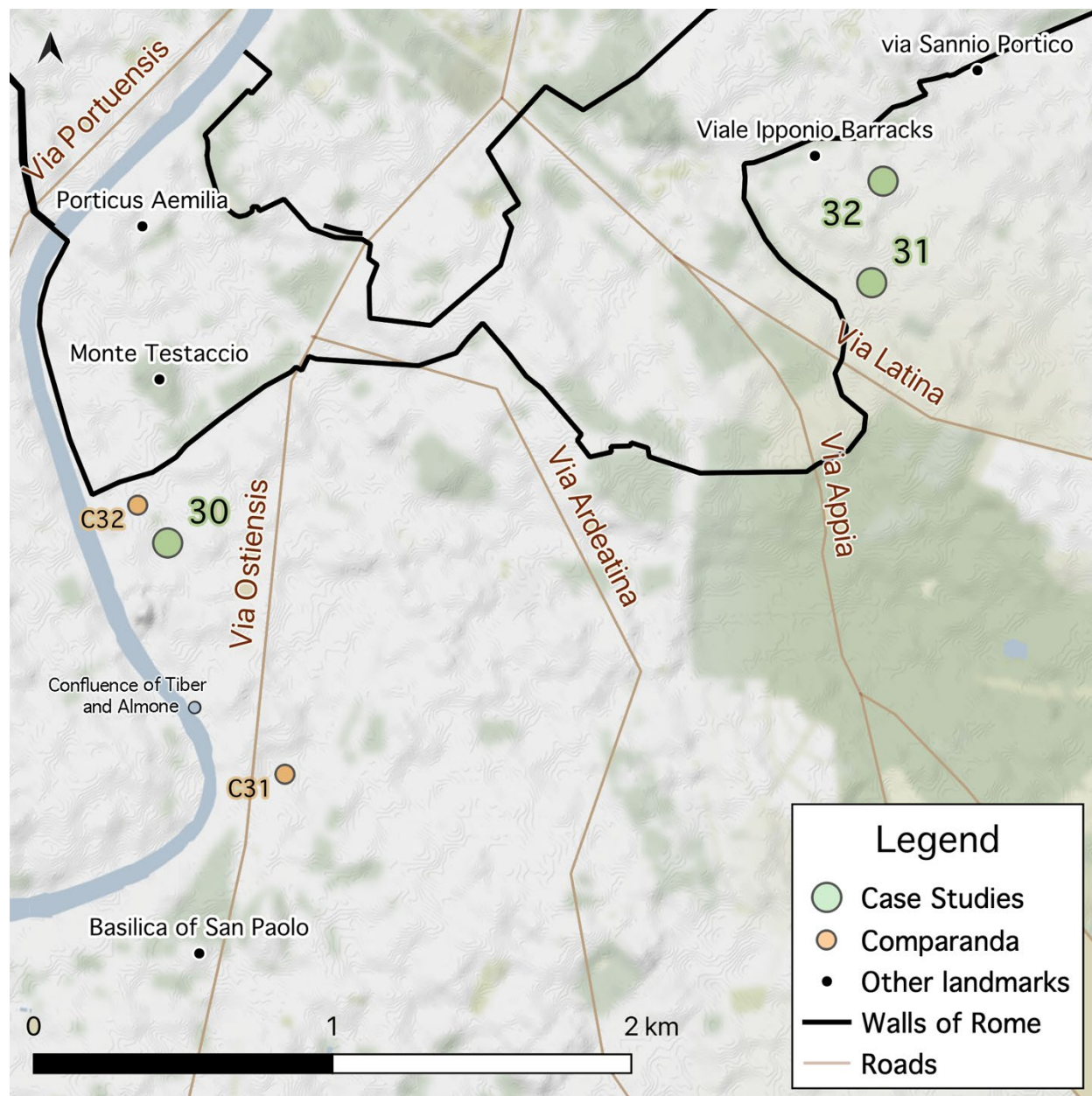


Fig. 76: Zone 7 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

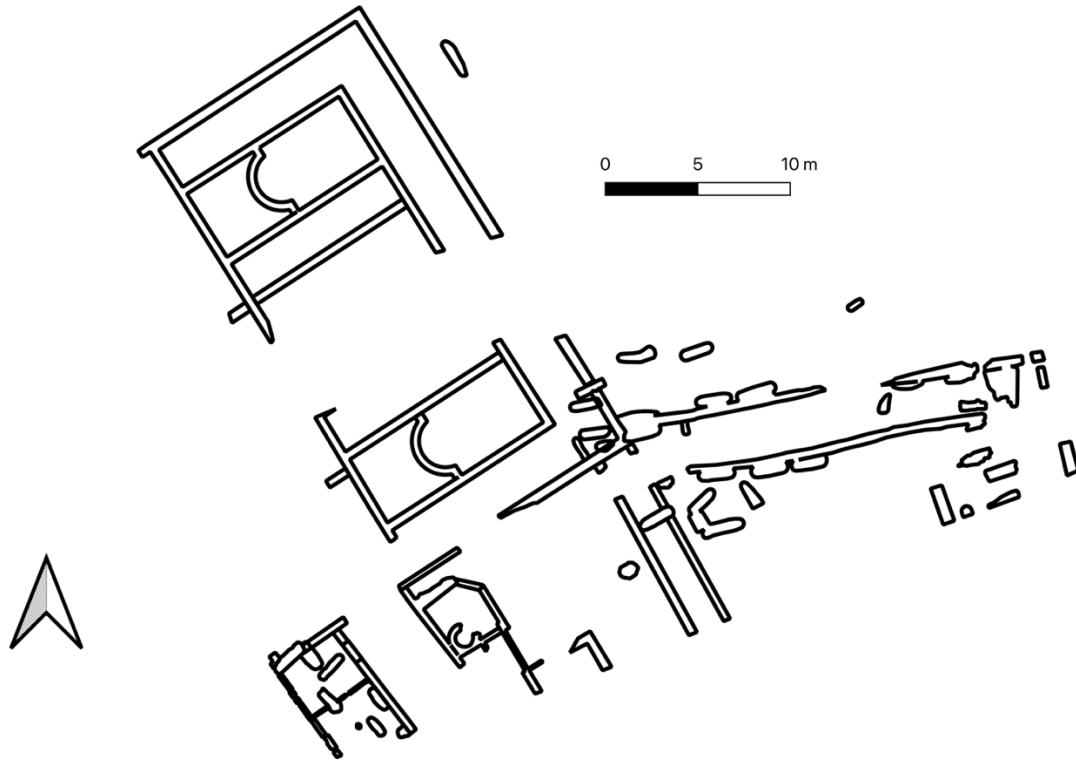


Fig. 77: Site no. 30 – Villa at the *Istituto Superiore Antincendi* (adapted from Excavation Report – SITAR OI 1608).

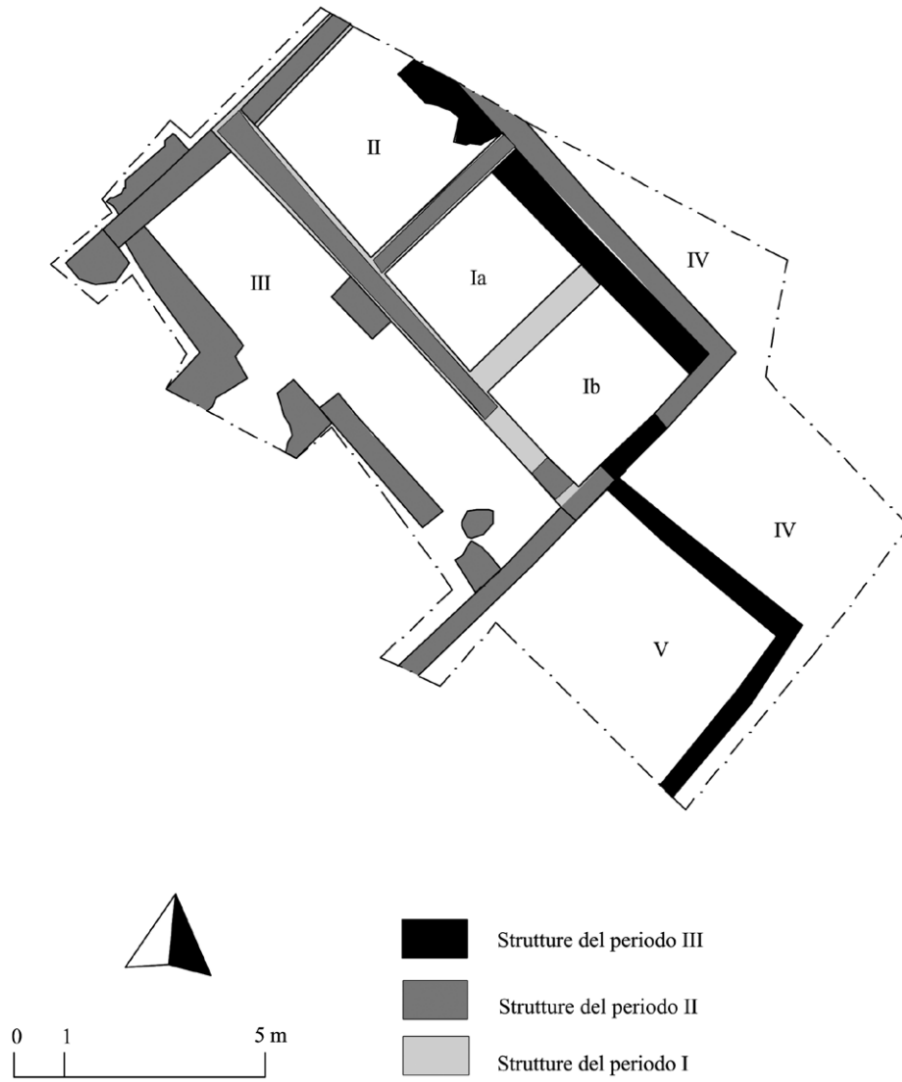


Fig. 78: Site no. 31 – Villa at *Piazza Epiro* (adapted from Montella et al. 2008, 163).

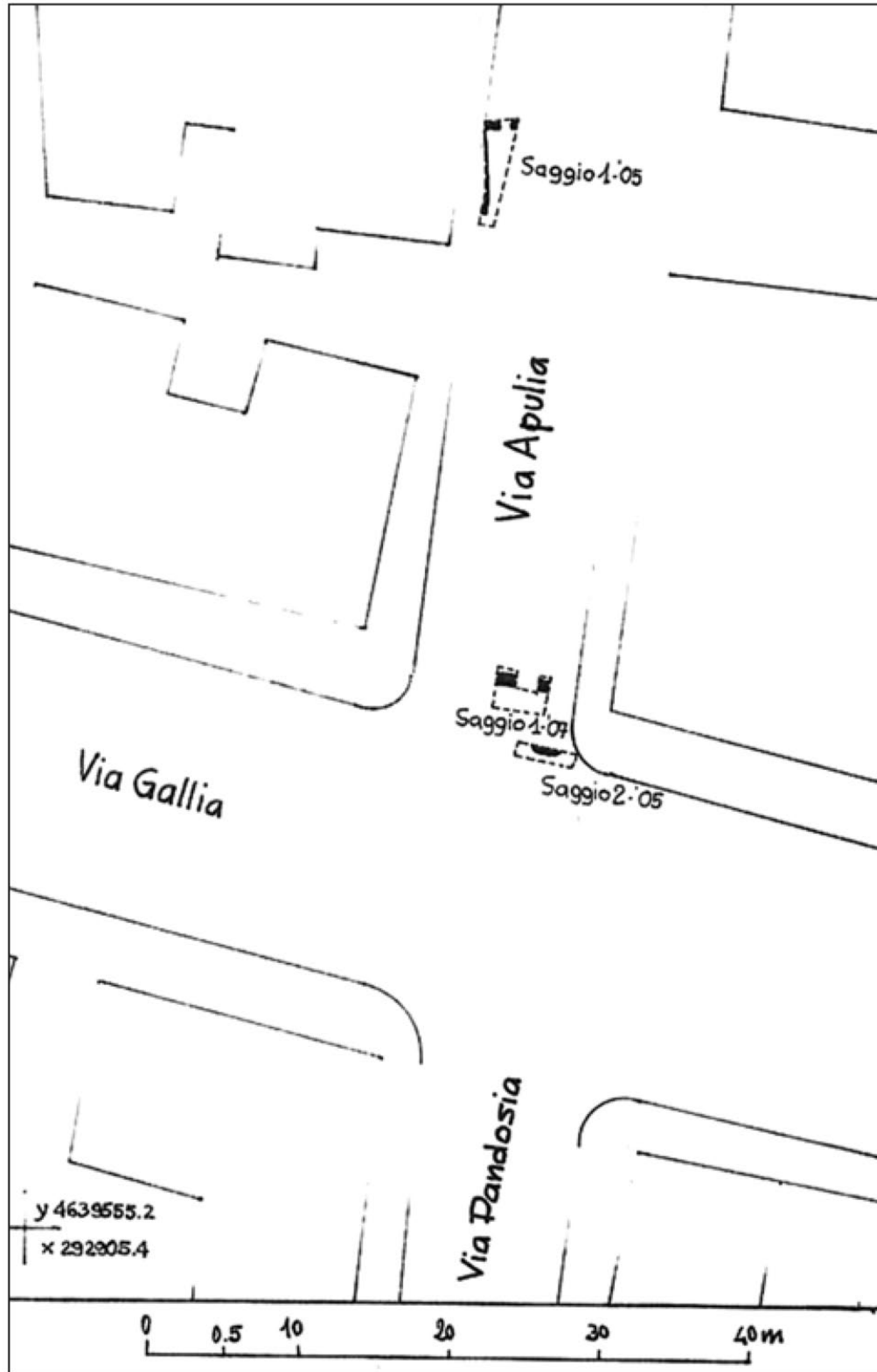


Fig. 79: Site no. 32 – Villa on *via Apulia* (adapted from Montella et al. 2008, 294).

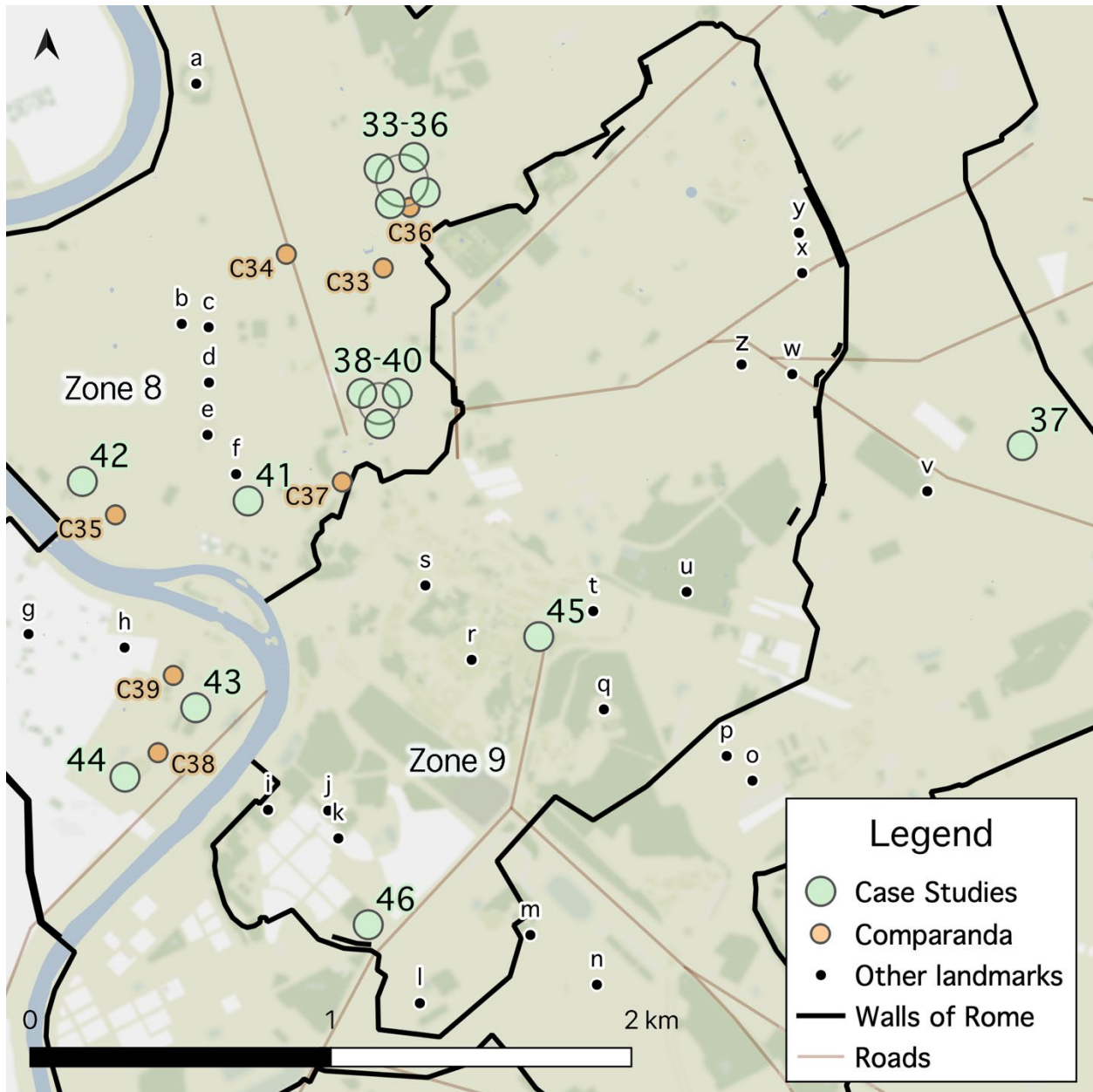


Fig. 80: Zones 8-9 (map tiles by Stamen Design; geodata for Roman roads and walls by the *Digital Atlas of the Roman Empire*).

- a) Mausoleum of Augustus, b) Baths of Nero, c) Pantheon, d) Baths of Agrippa, e) Largo Argentina, f) Theater of Balbus, g) *Santa Maria in Trastevere*, h) *San Crisogono*, i) *Santa Sabina*, j) 7th-century structure, k) Aventine Hill, l) *San Saba*, m) *Santa Balbina*, n) Baths of Caracalla, o) *Domus* of the Valerii, p) *Domus* of Gaudentius, q) Caelian Hill, r) Palatine Hill, s) *Santa Maria Antiqua*, t) Colosseum, v) *Nymphaeum* at *Piazza Vittorio*, w) *Domus* of Iunius Bassus, x) *Santa Maria Maggiore*, y) *Domus* of Octavius Felix, z) *Domus Transitoria*



Fig. 81: Site no. 33 – Domus on via del Tritone (adapted from Saviane 2017, 108).



Fig. 82: Sites no. 34-36 – *via del Tritone* buildings A, D, F (adapted from Buonaguro 2017, 98).

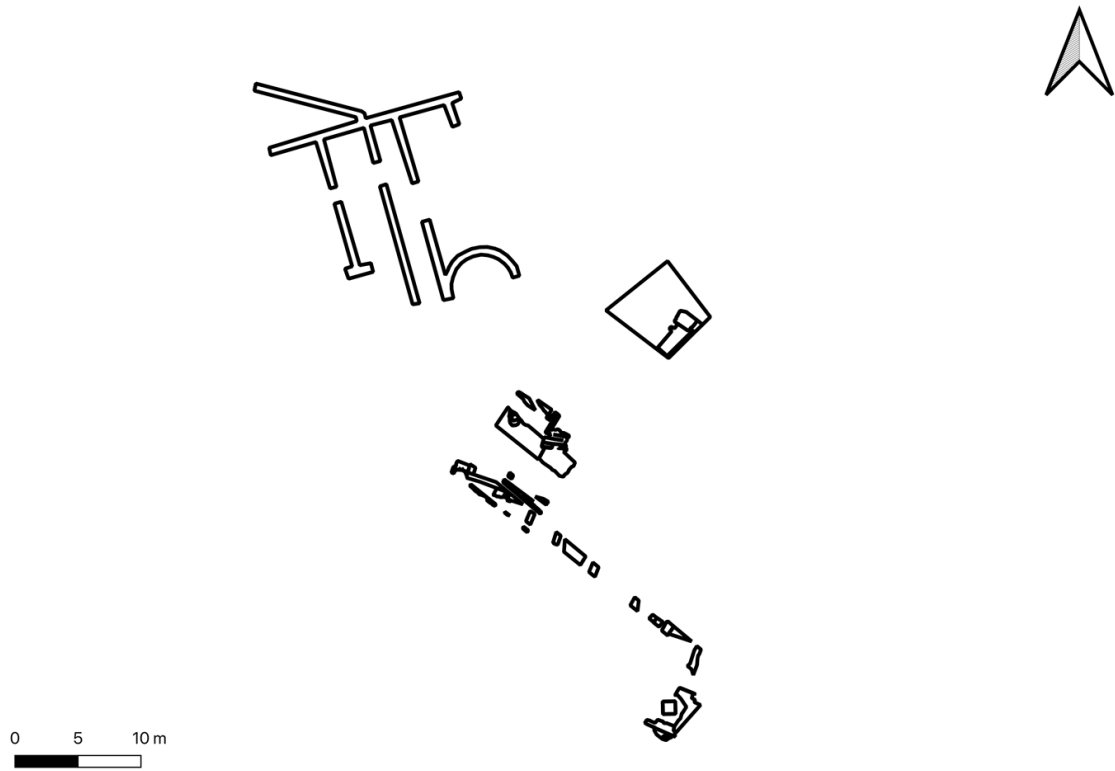


Fig. 83: Site no. 37 – *Domus* on *via Giolitti* (adapted from Serlorenzi et al. 2016, 267).

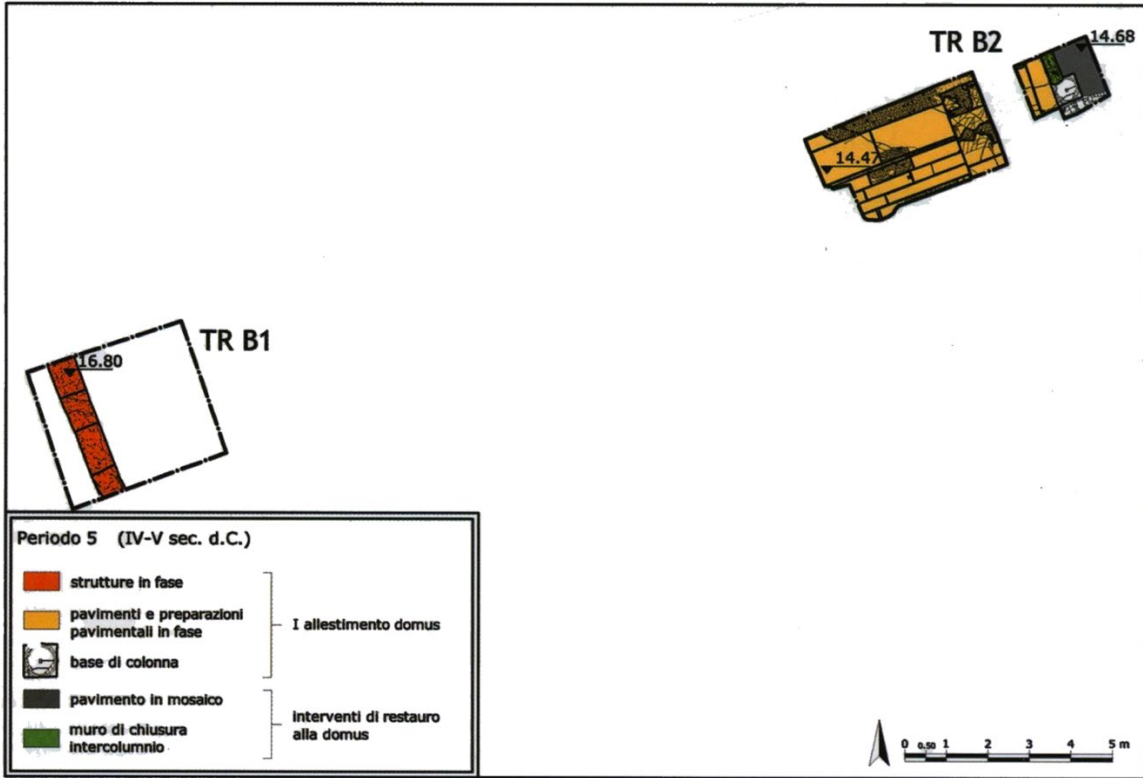


Fig. 84: Site no. 38 – *Domus* on *via Cesare Battisti* (adapted from Egidi 2011, 102).



Fig. 85: Sites no. 39-40 (*Palazzo Valentini Domus A, B*), residential area (adapted from *Parsifal Cooperativa di Archeologia*).

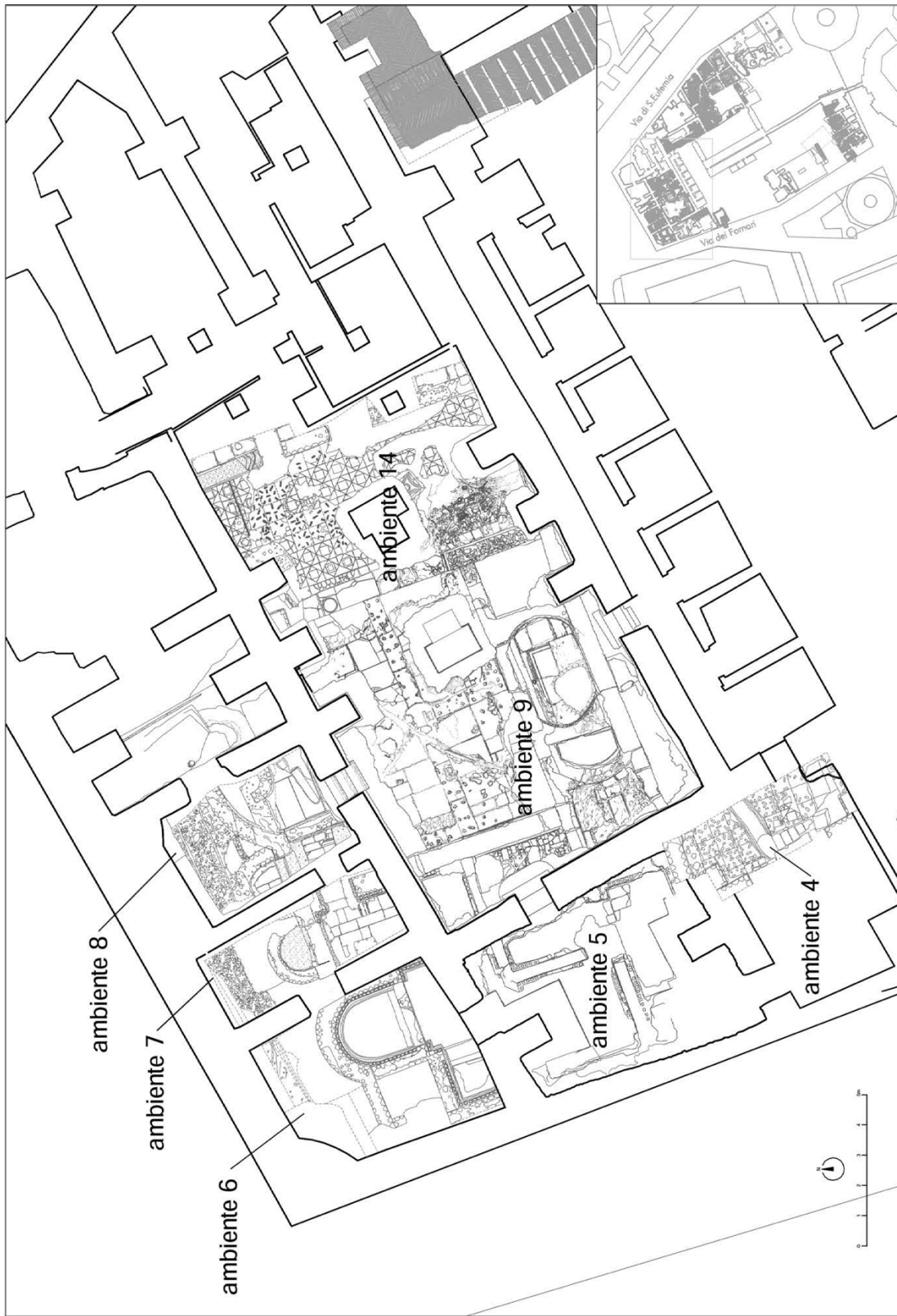


Fig. 86: Sites no. 40 (*Palazzo Valentini Domus B*), thermal sector (Baldassarri 2017, 247).

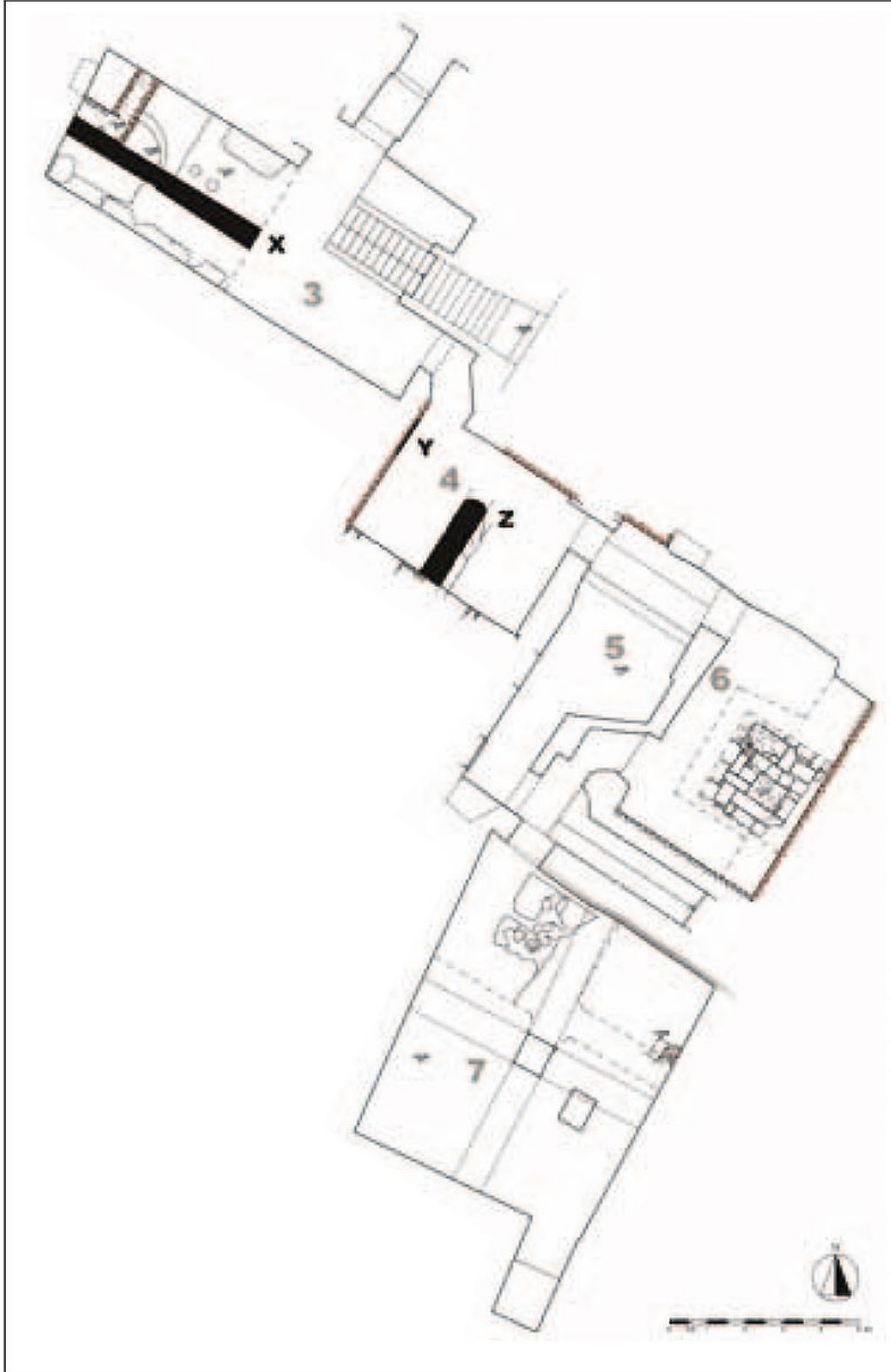


Fig. 87: Site no. 41 – *S. Ambrogio della Massima* (adapted from Agnoli et al. 2014, 306).

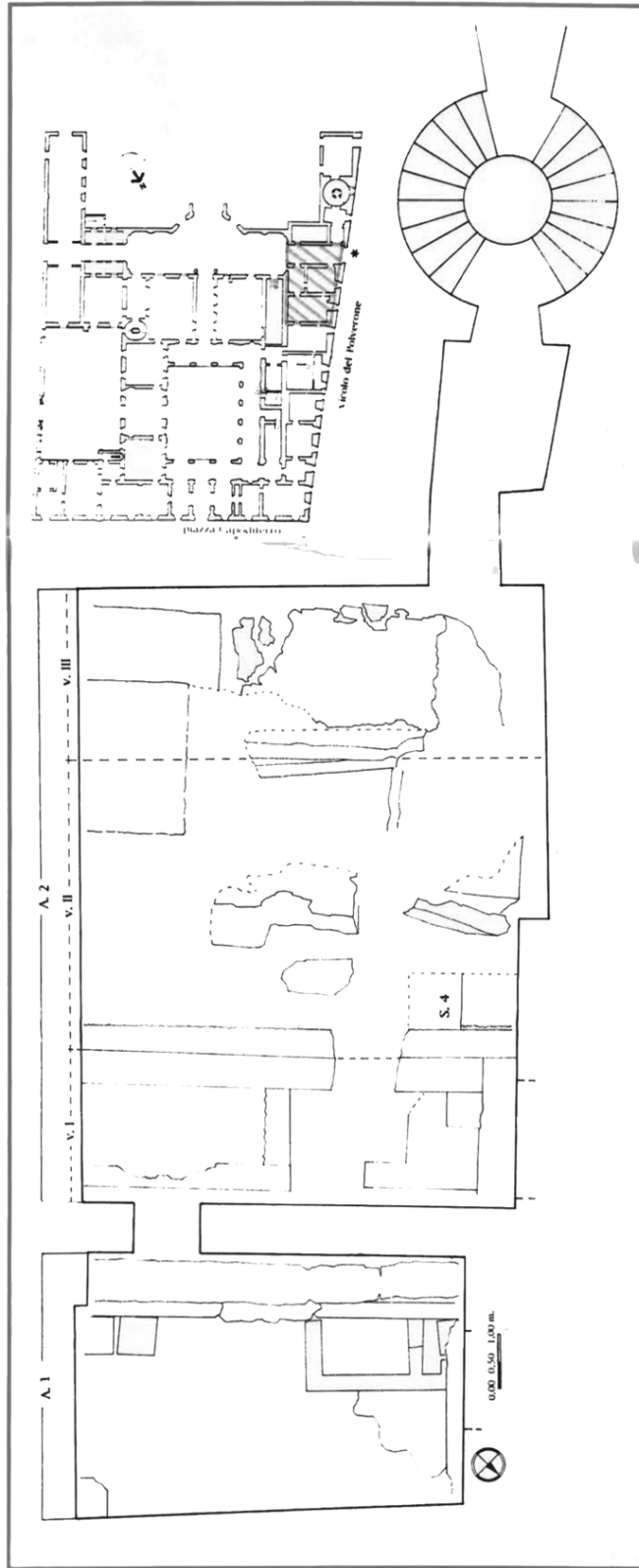


Fig. 88: Site no. 42 – Domus at *Palazzo Spada*, Area 1 (adapted from Rinaldoni and Savi Scarponi 1999, 6-7).

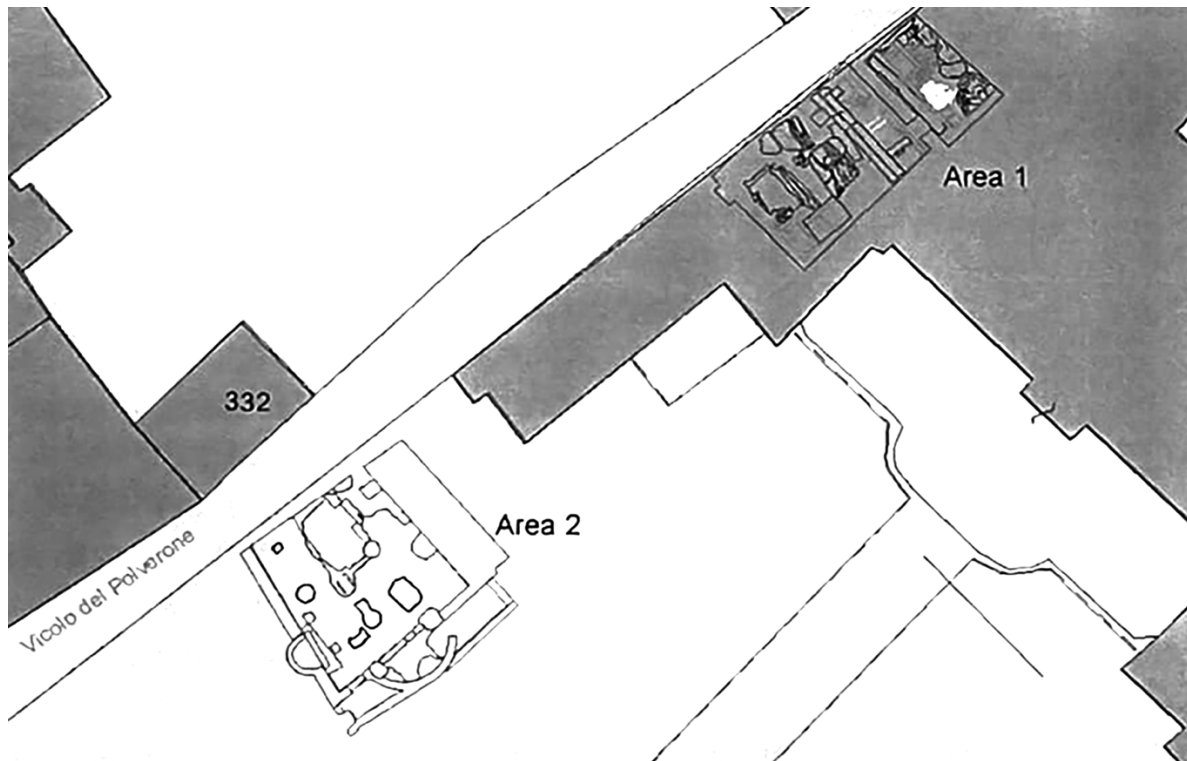


Fig. 89: Site no. 42 – *Domus* at *Palazzo Spada*, Areas 1 and 2 (adapted from Acampora and Baumgartner 2018, 23).

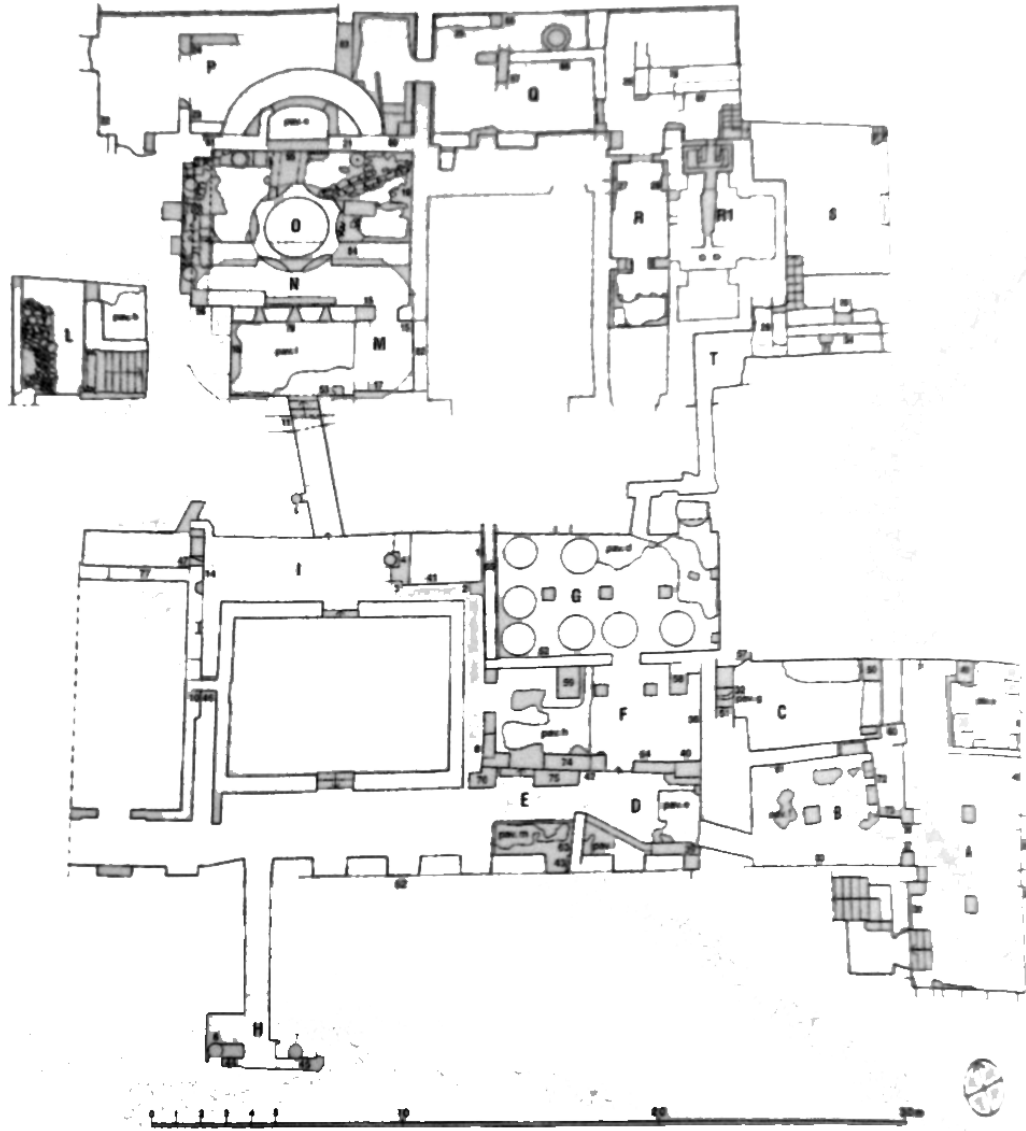


Fig. 90: Site no. 43 – *S. Cecilia in Trastevere* (adapted from Parmegiani and Pronti 2004).

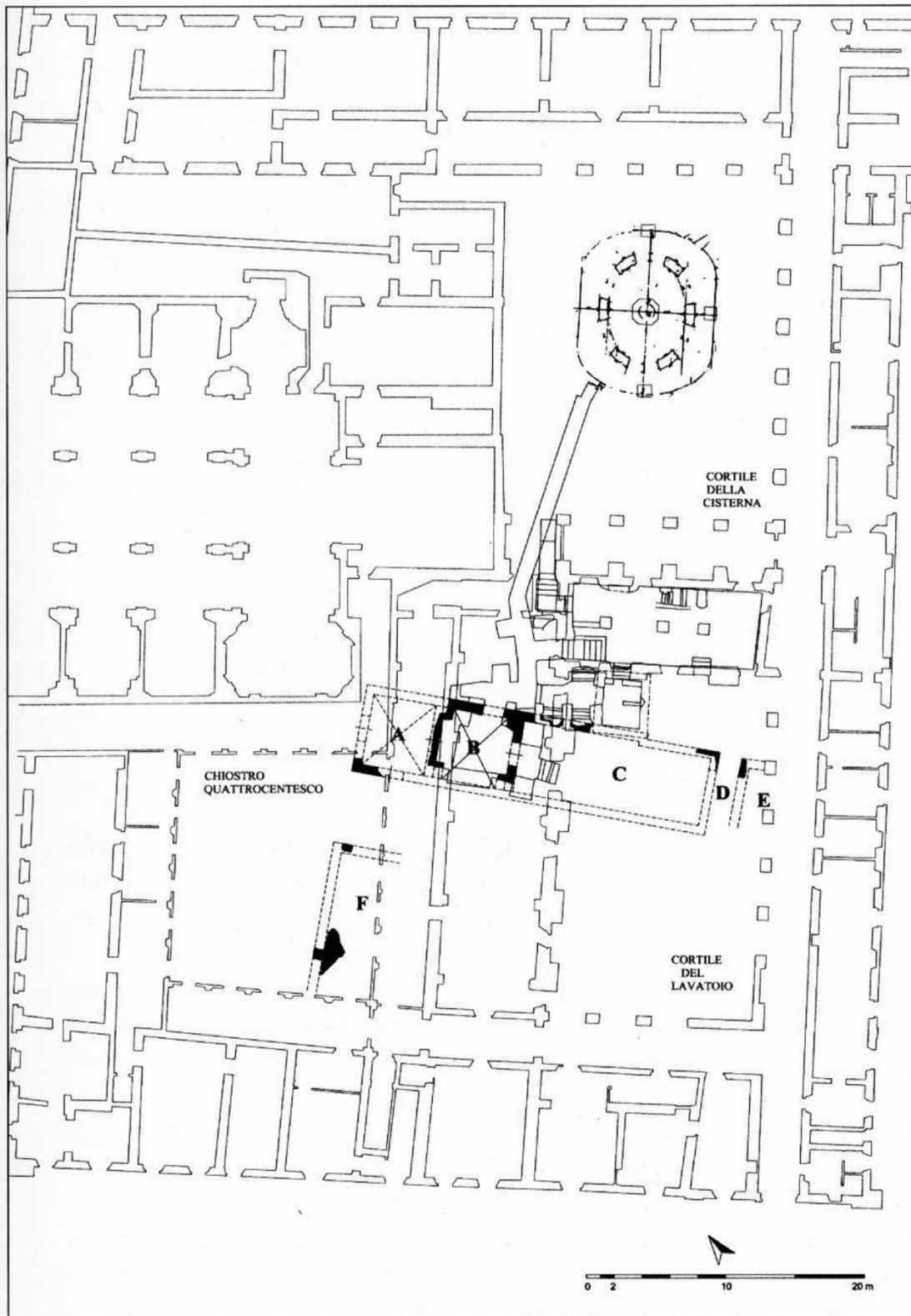


Fig. 91: Site no. 44 – *Convento San Francesco a Ripa* (adapted from Filippi et al. 2011, 152-153).

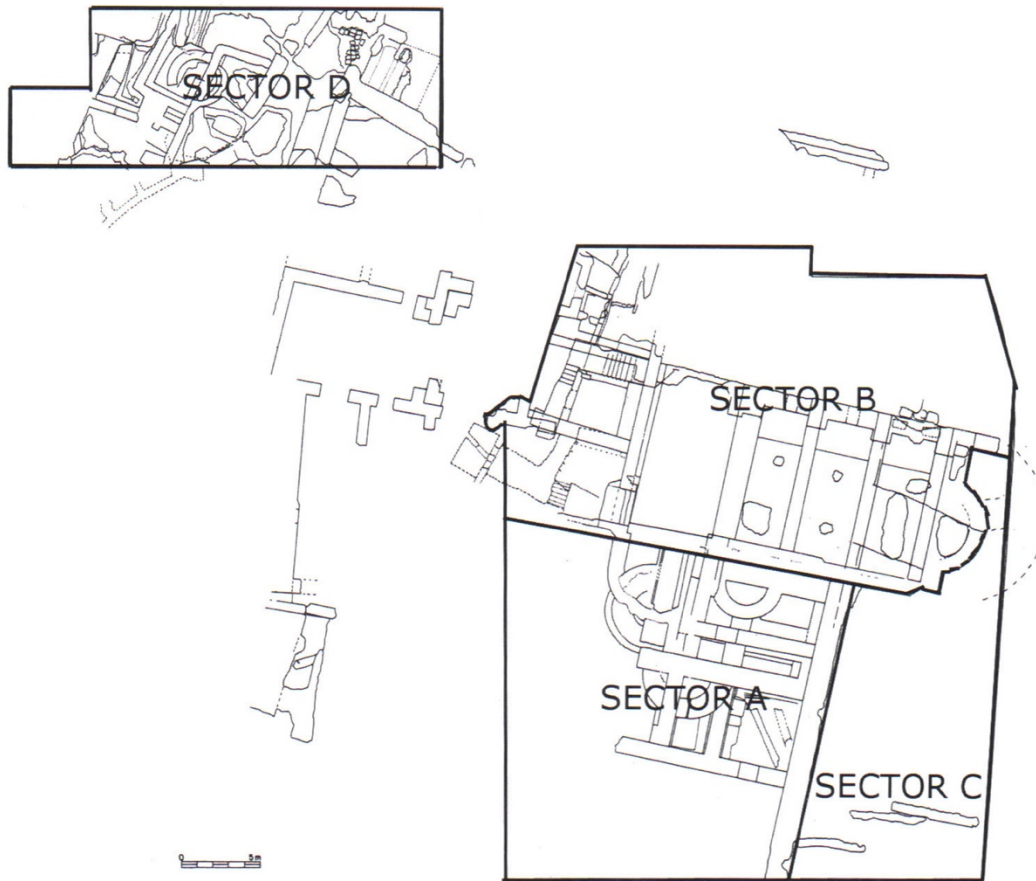


Fig. 92: Site no. 45 – Palatine East *Domus* (adapted from Peña et al. 2018, fig. 6).

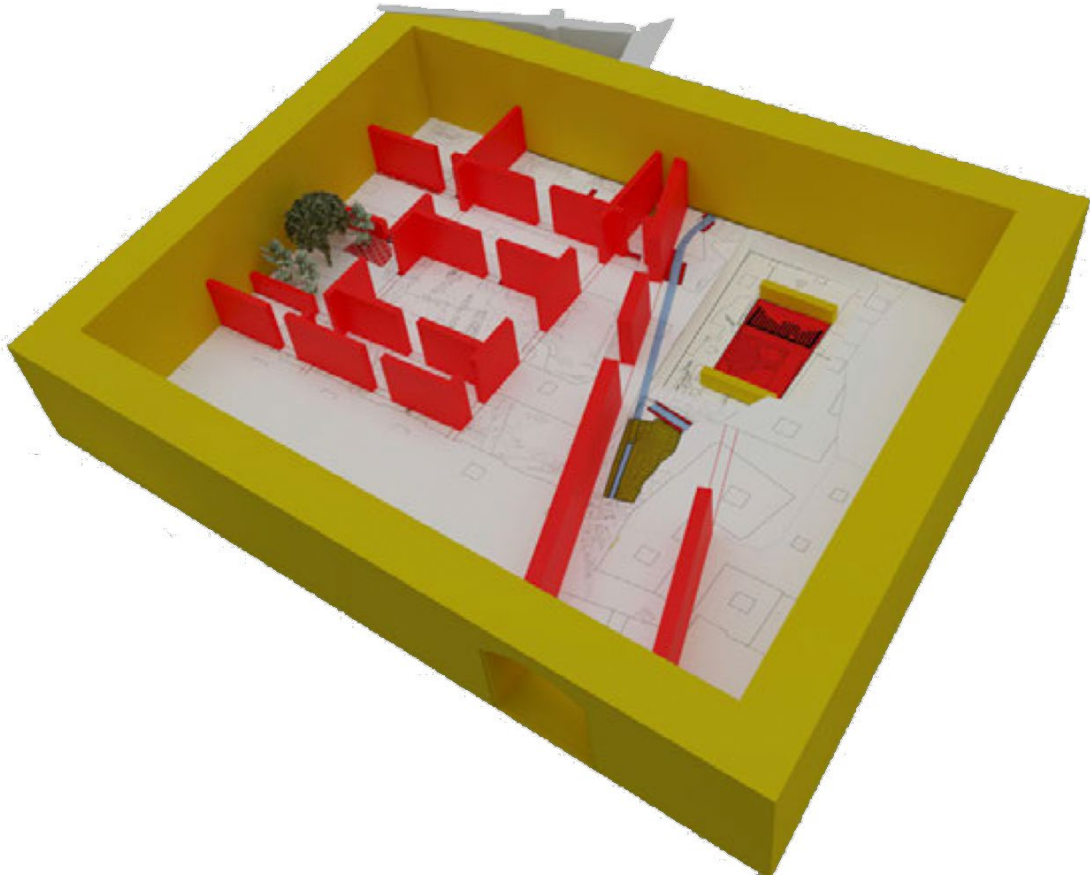


Fig. 93: Site no. 46 – *Domus at Piazza Albania* (adapted from Narducci and Buonaguro 2020, 59).

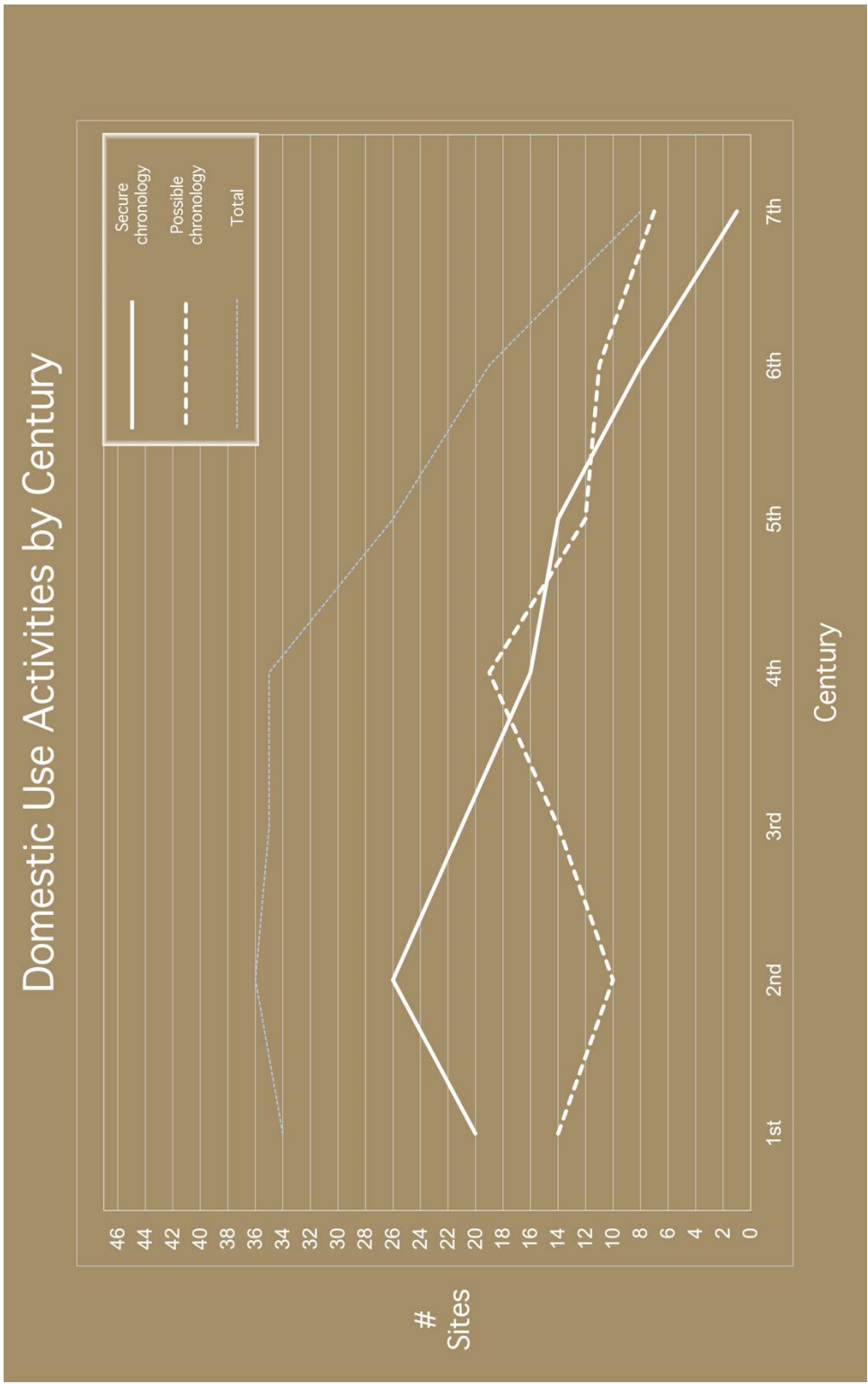


Fig. 94: Number of sites with domestic use activities by century.

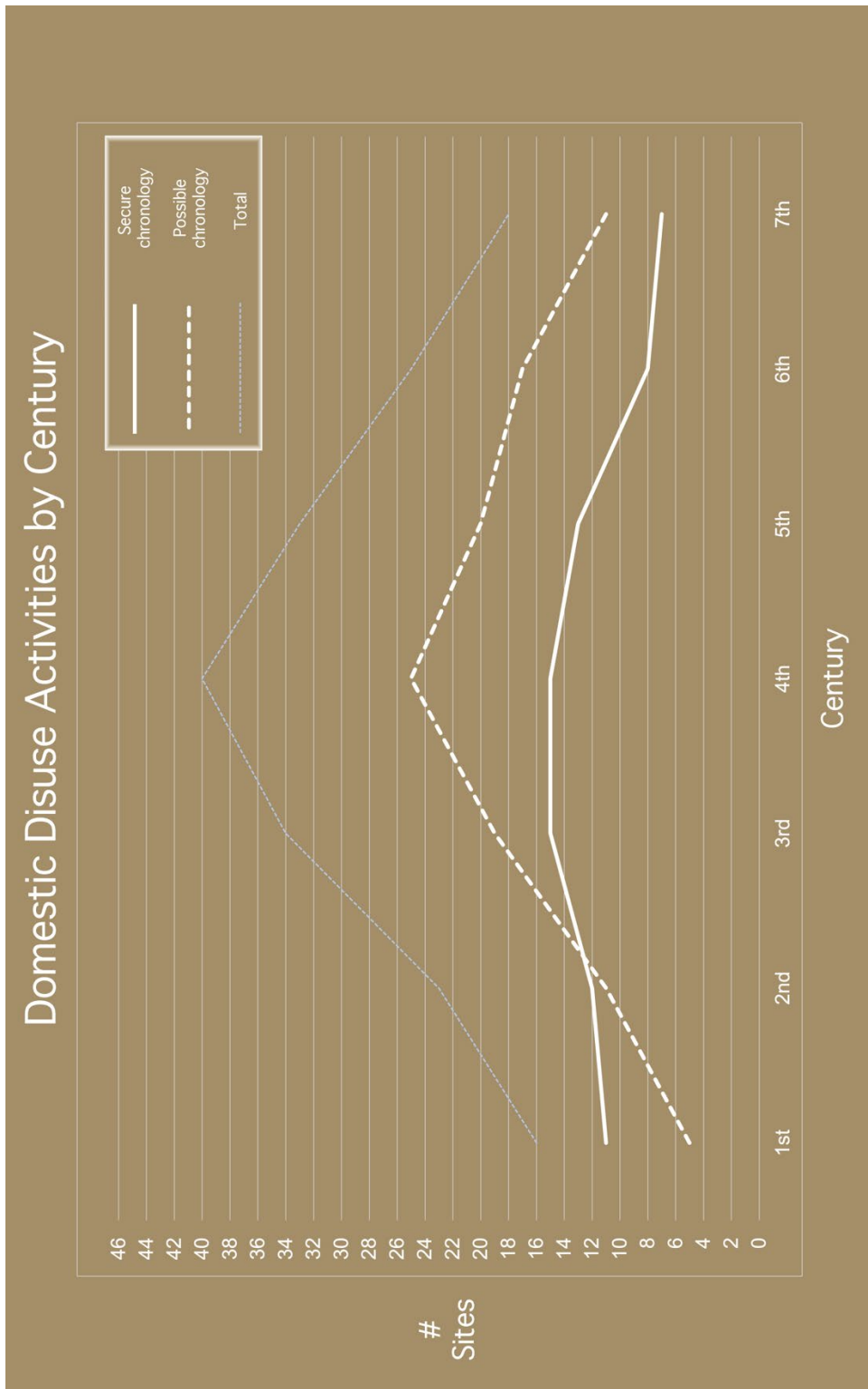


Fig. 95: Number of sites with domestic disuse activities by century.

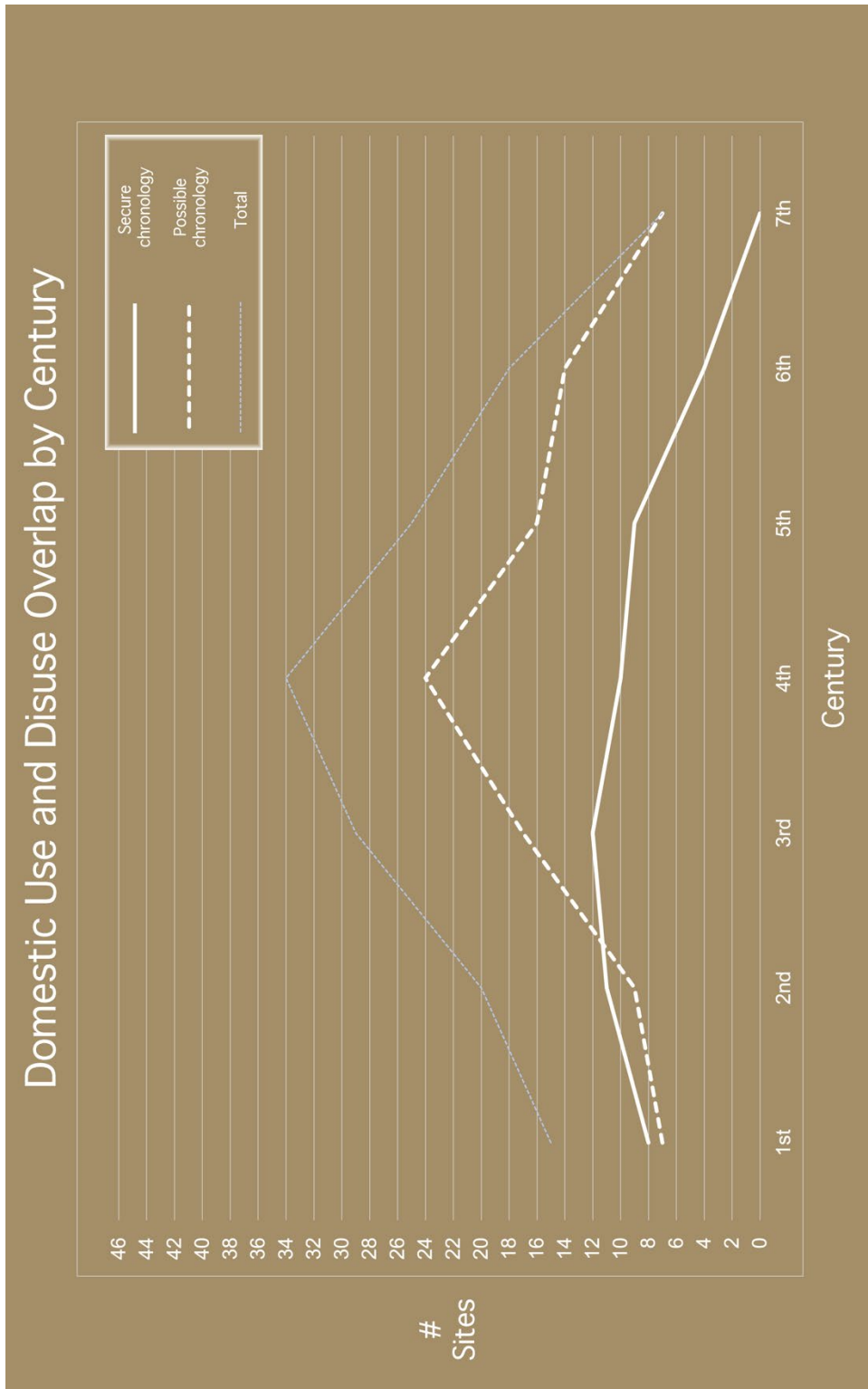


Fig. 96: Number of sites with overlapping domestic use and disuse activities by century.

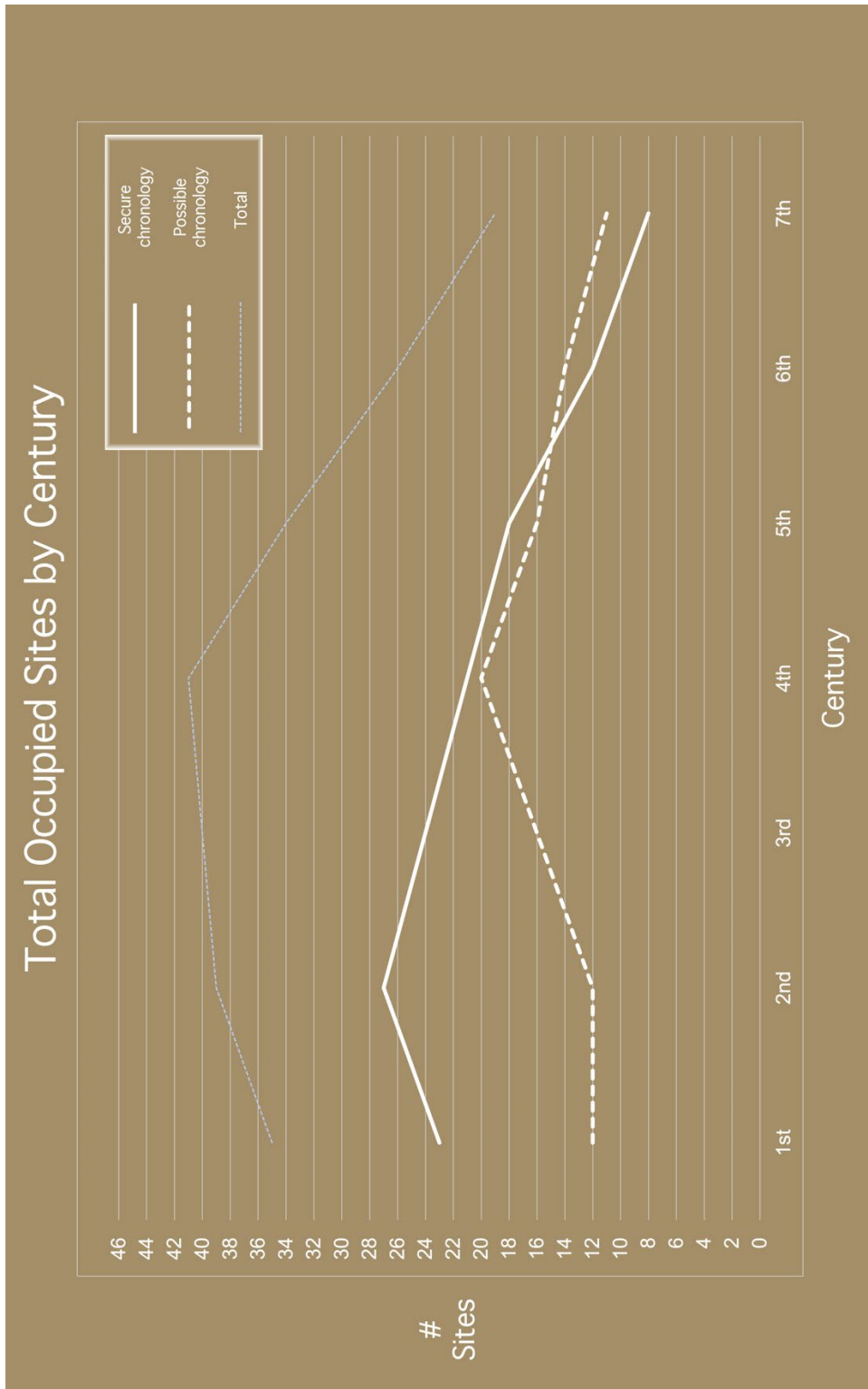


Fig. 97: Number of total occupied sites by century.

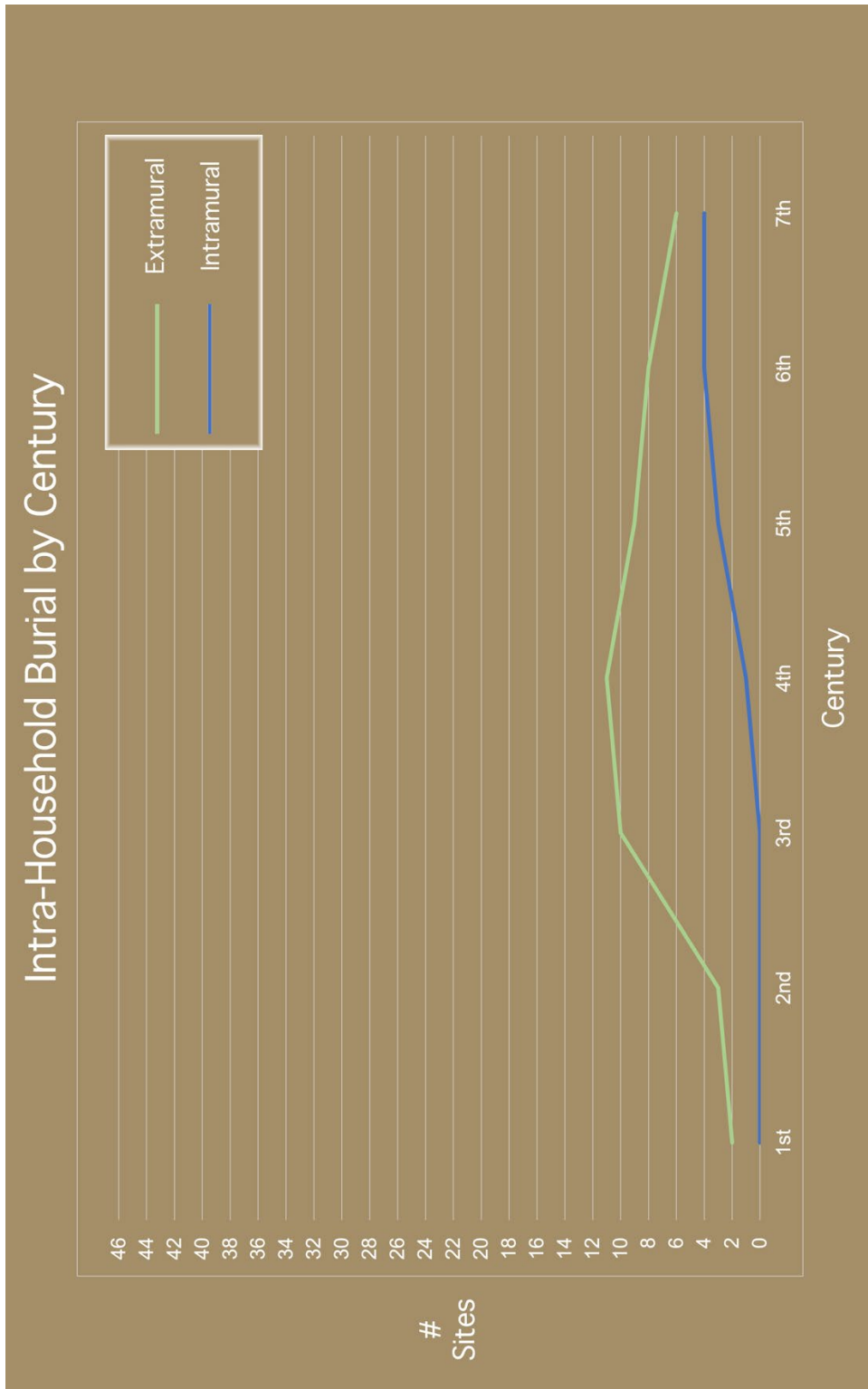


Fig. 98: Number of sites with intra-household burial by century.

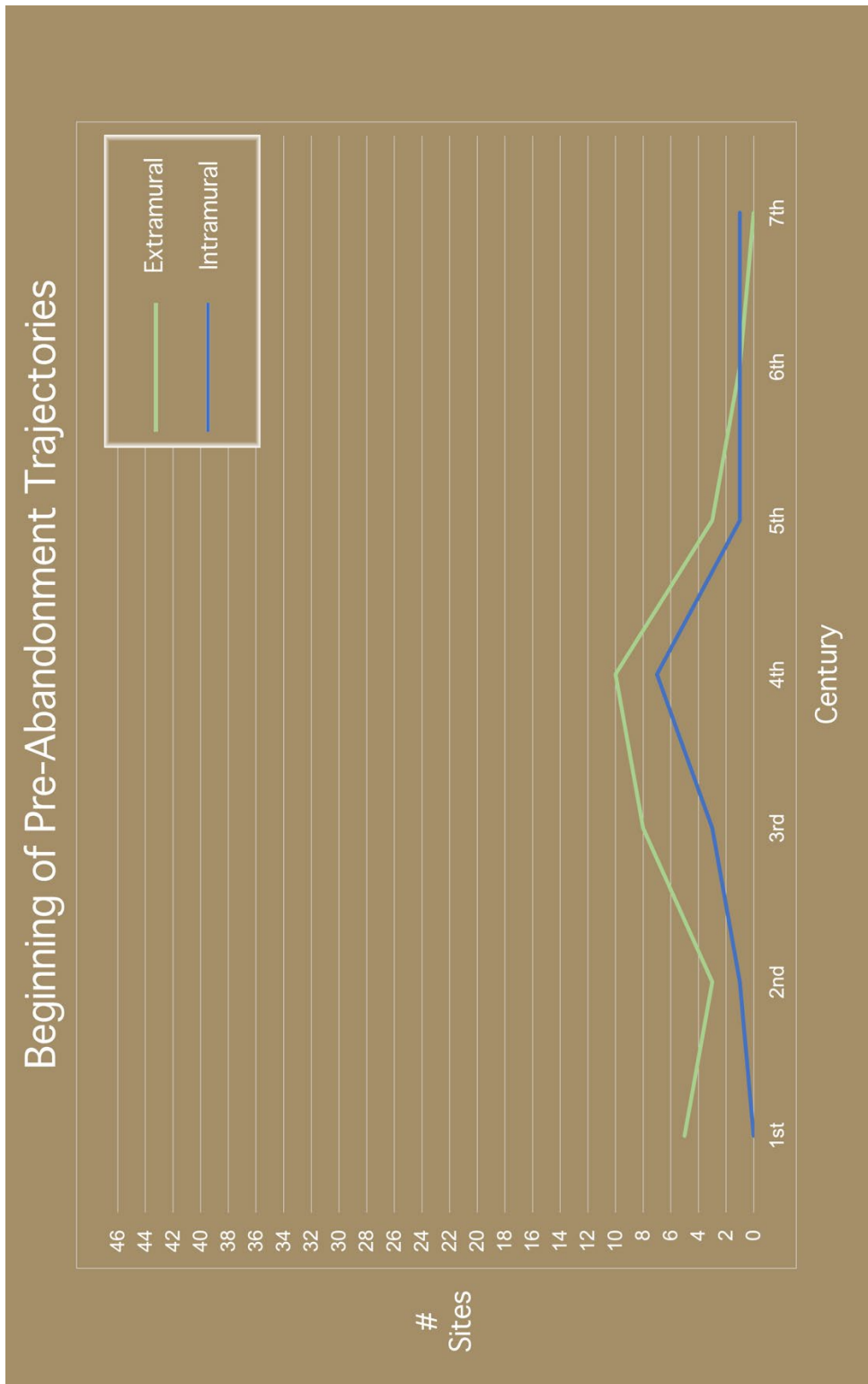


Fig. 99: Number of sites beginning their pre-abandonment trajectories by century.

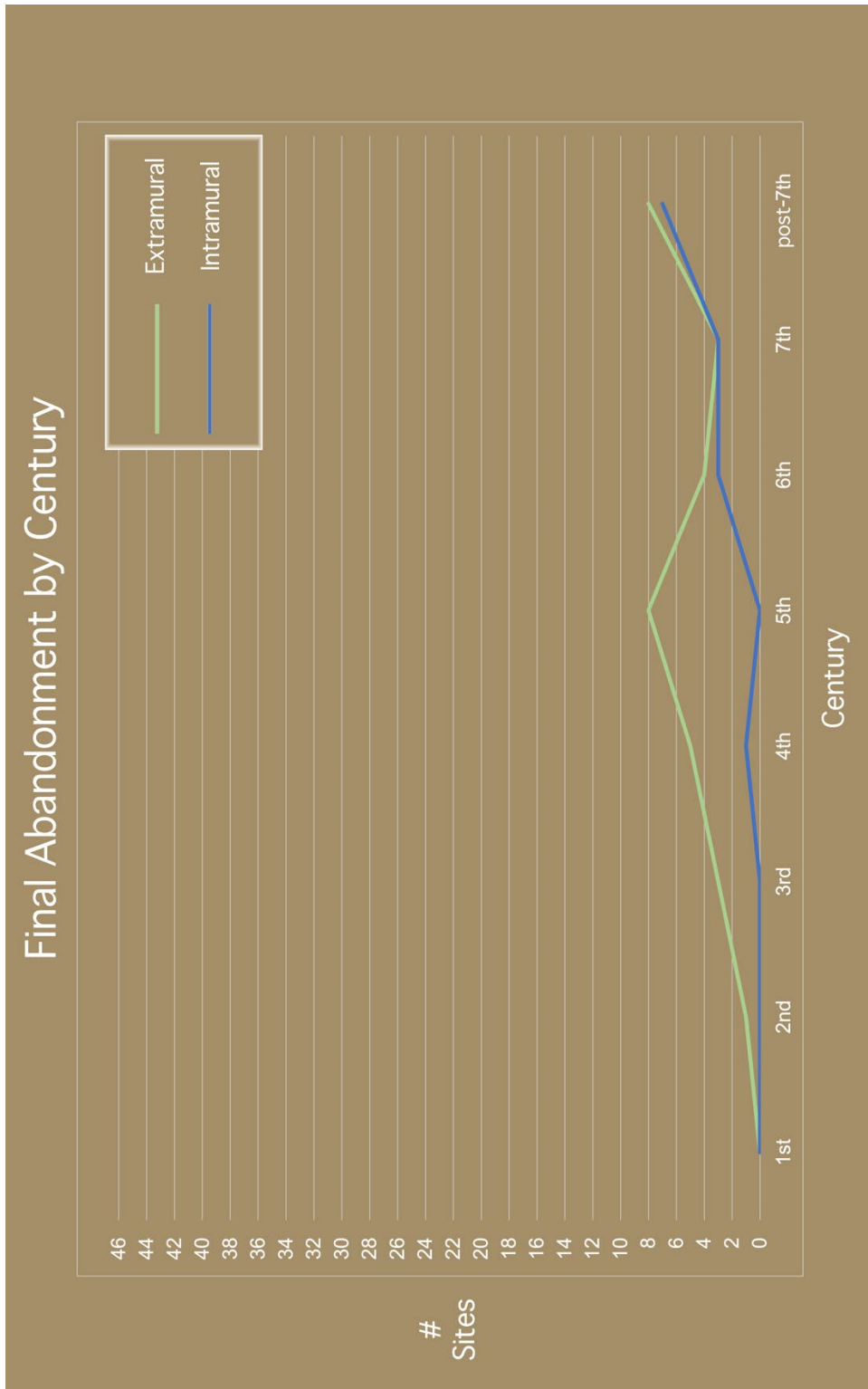


Fig. 100: Number of sites experiencing their final abandonment by century.



Fig. 101: Pavement in mixed reused mosaic floor fragments in Room B of site no. 1 – Villa of *Palombara* (Buonaguro et al. 2012, 74).

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