

Urban Transformations in the Late Antique West

Materials, Agents, and Models

A. Carneiro; N. Christie; P. Diarte-Blasco
(eds.)

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Breve nota curricular sobre os coordenadores do volume

André Carneiro is an assistant professor at the History Department of the University of Évora and an integrated researcher at CHAIA - Centre for Art History and Artistic Research of the University of Évora. He has worked on the themes of rural settlement and road network in Roman times in Alentejo and on the phenomena of transition to Late Antiquity.

Neil Christie is Professor of Medieval Archaeology at the University of Leicester in England. He is closely engaged with the Society for Medieval Archaeology (SMA) and is reviews editor for two UK-based journal. His research focus is on towns and rural development from late Roman to medieval times, especially in Italy, but within Britain also.

Pilar Diarte-Blasco completed her European PhD in 2011 at the Universidad de Zaragoza (Spain) and then held a postdoctoral fellowship in the Spanish School of History and Archaeology in Rome (Italy), before joining the School of Archaeology & Ancient History at the University of Leicester (UK) following the award of a prestigious Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship (2015-2017), funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme. Since 2017, she is developing her research, thanks to prestigious research contracts such as the Juan de la Cierva-Incorporación (MICINN, Gobierno de España) and the Programa de Atracción de Talento (Comunidad de Madrid), in the Universidad de Alcalá (Madrid, Spain). Her main research interests are the late antique and early medieval transformations of landscapes and townscapes of the Western Mediterranean basin and their evidence in the archaeological record.

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URBAN TRANSFORMATIONS IN THE LATE ANTIQUE WEST: MATERIALS, AGENTS, AND MODELS

COORDENADORES EDITORS

A. Carneiro; N. Christie; P. Diarte-Blasco

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ABSTRACT

This volume is the fruit of a highly productive international research gathering academic and professional (field- and museum) colleagues to discuss new results and approaches, recent finds and alternative theoretical assessments of the period of transition and transformation of classical towns in Late Antiquity. Experts from an array of modern countries attended and presented to help compare and contrast critically archaeologies of diverse regions and to debate the qualities of the archaeology and the current modes of study. While a number of papers inevitably focused on evidence available for both Spain and Portugal, we were delighted to have a spread of contributions that extended the picture to other territories in the Late Roman West and Mediterranean. The emphasis was very much on the images presented by archaeology (rescue and research works, recent and past), but textual data were also brought into play by various contributors.

KEYWORDS

Late Antiquity; Urban Archaeology; Agents; urban transformations.

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PREFACE

This volume is the fruit of a highly enjoyable and productive international research gathering held at the University of Évora, Portugal, from 22 to 23 June 2017 on the theme of *'Urban Transformations in the Late Antique West: From Materials to Models'* and numerous meetings and discussions that the editors have had with the authors that present their papers in this volume. This was a collaborative initiative between the Universidade de Évora (Portugal), the University of Leicester (UK) and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie MED-FARWEST Project (hosted at Leicester, but with partnerships in Rome and Madrid), designed to bring together academic and professional (field- and museum) colleagues to discuss new results and approaches, recent finds and alternative theoretical assessments of the period of transition and transformation of classical towns in Late Antiquity. Experts from an array of modern countries attended and presented to help compare and contrast critically archaeologies of diverse regions and to debate the qualities of the archaeology and the current modes of study. While a number of papers inevitably focussed on evidence available for both Spain and Portugal, we were delighted to have a spread of contributions that extended the picture to other territories in the Late Roman West and Mediterranean. The emphasis was very much on the images presented by archaeology (rescue and research works, recent and past), but textual data were also brought into play by various contributors. This volume publishes a majority of the papers presented and has offered scope for many of the talks to be extended in detail to explore facets of the designated research theme.

Évora University and the city of Évora were ideal venues for the event: the stunning architectural setting of the University is matched by the rich and relevant archaeological heritage of the city itself, showing in its very heart a transformation of a Roman monument to a late antique complex. Delegates much appreciated the city tour we undertook, and the reception held in the city hall. We thank warmly the city authorities and especially the University for hosting and supporting our event and this publication.

In particular, we gratefully acknowledge the financial contributions of the Marie Skłodowska-Curie MED-FARWEST Project (No 658045), funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, and of the Project CHAIA/UÉ (Ref. UID/EAT/00112/2013), financed through National Funds through the FCT/Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia; CHAIA funds enabled the translation of a number of Spanish and Portuguese papers.

In addition to the kind assistance of various student helpers during the research meetings and other investigation initiatives, we also must thank all contributors to this volume for their work on submitting papers, responding to editorial and peer reviewer comments (our thanks to those very helpful

Introduction. Exploring Late Antique Urban Changes from Epirus to Hispania...

reviewers too!), submitting revised texts and then being patient in the final, and slightly delayed process of passing all papers material to press. And a final word of acknowledgment goes to the Coimbra University Press for their patience and support.

Andre Carneiro, Neil Christie, Pilar Diarte-Blasco (May 2019)



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NON UNO ITINERE¹. URBAN AND RURAL LANDSCAPES: CONNECTIVITY ACROSS LATE ANTIQUE *LUSITANIA*

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ABSTRACT: In Late Antiquity, the old Roman province of *Lusitania* saw a major process of abandonment in most of the *urbes*. However, a closer look reveals that this was an ongoing process, probably commencing, in some cases, from the 2nd century. Accordingly, we may question the real centrality of most of the urban centres, especially in the *peripheral territories*. In addition, we should recognise several different processes, some with distinctive archaeological materialities.

KEYWORDS: Late Antiquity; *Lusitania*; Urban transformations; Centres and peripheries; monumentality

Thus the Roman Empire has been gradually diminished and become a home for barbarians, or has been reduced to such a depopulated state that the places where the cities used to be cannot be recognized.

Zosimus, 4.59.3.

VITA BUONA FRUAMUR FELICES. We, the fortunate ones, enjoy the pleasures of life. This inscription was engraved on the surface of a small glass bowl made somewhere in the eastern half of the Mediterranean³. Attributed to the second half of the 4th century AD, the caption symbolizes the spirit of an era: after the turbulent events of the 3rd century, the Constantinian *recuperatio* brought a certain stability to the Empire that allowed for some renewed enjoyment of life. However, for those wiser figures, the spirit of that period also meant that seeds of change were underway, dragging the past and present world to new and

¹ Symacchus, *Relatio* 3.8.

² CHAIA/UÉ – Ref. UID/EAT/00112/2013 – (This project was financed by National Funds through FCT/Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia – many thanks go to CHAIA for the translation of the text, and Pilar Diarte-Blasco and Neil Christie for various suggestions and revisions).

³ Corning Museum of Glass, 55.1.1. Comments and framework in Weitzmann, 1979: n° 73, p. 84-85.

troubled transformations, creating an atmosphere of uncertainty. Enjoying the moment was fundamental, as it would not last long: the Empire was entering Late Antiquity, which would be marked by times of profound changes.

1. CONTEXT (“THE GIANT AND THE DWARF”)

By historiographic tradition, the end of the Western Roman Empire is viewed as a moment of sudden collapse or drastic decline in urban life. After a phase of crisis and unreliability motivated by the *barbarian invasions*, combined with Roman civil wars, came the abandonment/destruction of the cities (in part dependent on geographic context) as well as a dispersal of many inhabitants to the countryside, thus creating the *ruralization* of the population. This phenomenon occurred in two stages: one of ‘premonition’, the other of ‘adaptation’. Accordingly, was symbolized first, in the construction of city walls, both in preparation for the *invasions* and in response to a growing insecurity; and, secondly, the emergence of aristocratic *villae* of grand opulence and monumentality, which were manifestations of the late Roman elite’s definitive choice to withdraw to the countryside – a sign that cities had little to offer the elites, now anxious to prolong their codes of power and influence in smaller circuits.

The Roman city at this stage starts to be dismantled, and we will find that the (early) medieval city is a pale shadow of its classical predecessor. Urban life arguably now becomes anaemic, primarily gathered around the bishop’s church; the vibrant daily life of the earlier imperial *urbs*, a component of a monumental and gigantic urban system that widely replicated the functions of the *mater polis*, the *magna urbs*, comes to be replaced by an insipid ruralized, village-like successor, filled with ruins that offer memories of a busier, more ordered and more ambitious past. Church and its agents now form the entrepreneurs within the post-classical townscapes.

However, this vision of “the giant and the dwarf”, a long-held image of *decline and fall* in the Gibbonian tradition, has been challenged by many recent archaeological contributions that, with established chrono-stratigraphic readings and contextual associations, help to re-equate the phenomena of urban dynamics, extending them in time. But, above all, what recent studies have emphasized or revived is the prospect of two fundamental situations prevailing: (a) firstly, that cities suffered multiple and varied phenomena with different regional impacts, whereby in urban clusters within the same territory (or neighbouring territories) completely different situations or outcomes can result, due to internal or external causes; or (b) the urban network did not go into decline in Late Antiquity, but experienced abandonment or decay at an earlier time, but with different durabilities according to the internal dynamics of individual towns.

This second image has resulted from recent, more refined study of traditional ideological prejudices. Such research questions the very concept of *urbs/city*

in its classical sense, instead creating more heterogeneous and deconstructive readings of this phenomenon. The debate has had recent contributions linked to cities and sequences in the Hispania provinces (notably: Diarte-Blasco, 2012; Vaquerizo, Garriguet & León, 2014; Ramallo & Quevedo, 2014; Brassous & Quevedo, 2015; Andreu Pintado, 2017; Ruiz Bueno, 2016), which have certainly enriched our sources and levels of evidence and open up new avenues of analysis and interpretation – as will be explored further below.

2. *VALIDA URBS*

One central problem lies in the very concept of *city*, or how we understand it today in comparison to what it (may have) meant in the Roman world (the *urbs*).

Roman-period urban clusters such as *Olisipo*, *Pax Iulia* and *Salacia* have been shown to be pre-Roman aggregating centres with proto-urban characteristics, long evolving and benefiting from contacts in the Mediterranean orbit, but then gaining extended roles following the peninsula's integration into the Empire, both in terms of legal status as well as through the construction of infrastructures. Places like *Ebora* and *Ammaia*, by contrast, seemingly have no pre-Roman precursors, but their new status under Rome is fully evident in their structured and recognizable *forma urbis*. Analyzing the epigraphic records for their inhabitants, however, we can chart that most were indigenous, descendants of families who occupied large settlements in the vicinities during the Iron Age, but who took advantage of opportunities that these urban installations could offer, rapidly adopting a Roman *modus vivendi* (Mantas, 2000).

However, often the problem lies in understanding the real extent of this urban network, as well as the effective integration and engagement (or not) of the indigenous population. The archaeological mapping of the distribution of towns known from *Lusitania*—reveals areas of thin density, the many voids between urban clusters or other focal locations (for instance, see map in Alarcão, 1990, p. 31) Fig. 1. Some sites might not actually class as urban centres, since many are called *oppida*, and we still lack good material guides to confirm their layouts and contents.

In fact, some locations mentioned in the sources remain untraced: for instance, *Concordia*, referred to as the *Concordiensis* capital and with a legal status of *civitas stipendiaria*⁴, has still not been pinpointed on the ground, as it is true for *Aritiense Oppido veteri* assigned to Casal da Várzea (Abrantes)⁵, and possibly related to the *Aritium Praetorio* mentioned among the road stations of the *Antonine Itinerary* (see the still valid commentary in Alarcão, 1990, pp. 32-34). Yet does this *invisibility* perhaps also mean the absence of an actual urban

⁴ Pliny, *Nat. Hist.* IV, 118; Ptolemy, *Geog.* II.5.6.

⁵ For the inscription, see CIL II, 172; generic description of the land realities in RP 6/46.

ROMAN CITIES IN *LUSITANIA*

- 1 – *Eburobritium*
- 2 – *Scallabis*
- 3 – *Olisipo*
- 4 – *Aritium Vetus?*
- 5 – *Ammaia*
- 6 – *Caetobriga*
- 7 – *Salacia*
- 8? – *Abelterium*
- 9 – *Ebora*
- 10 – *Pax Iulia*
- 11 – *Mirobriga*
- 12? – *Vipasca*
- 13? – *Myrtilis*
- 14 – *Baesuris*
- 15 – *Balsa*
- 16? – *Ossonoba*
- 17? – *Cilpes*
- 18 – *Laccobriga*



Fig. 1. Roman cities in *Lusitania*.

fabric and/or a weak level of monumentality to its urban fabric? At the same time we must recognize how different echelons of clusters could co-exist, not all necessarily fitting the prototypical conception of the classical *urbs*.

Other questions arise: for example, did some centres not look urban because of other settlement foci or sites in the region? How essential were the components of Roman strategic planning: did an ‘urban’ site had to have units of a public nature, such as baths, or entertainment or administrative spaces? Did the new Roman economic centres stimulate or expand the productive activity of the surrounding territories and serve as a driving force for rural development and for the integration of scattered communities, or did some regions feature an autarkic system? Did people really inhabit these towns on a permanent basis, living day-to-day lives integrated in the classical *modus vivendi*? The variations in the urban models are sometimes hard to read archaeologically, but not so hard to understand if we bear in mind that, in the Roman mentality, legal status was granted only to civic communities, not depending on the scale and equipments of the city in which they lived.

Such considerations indicate that, in its own characteristic way, Roman power created distinct gradations, acting in a flexible way according to the regional players and to the strategic resources that it pursued.

This situation is particularly relevant for *Hispania*, where a diversity of forms is evident, connected to its scale, varied landscapes and populations. It is well known that the Roman conquest of the peninsula had encountered different social and settlement organization types that permitted the existence of models that were closer to the "central circle" of the Mediterranean, co-existing with more archaic systems typical of the "peripheral circles" (Terrenato, 2008, p. 238, Fig. 8.1). However, "the expansion process clearly privileges more advanced areas (the opposite of what happened in modern empires), demonstrating that urbanism is a fundamental requirement, allowing a community to become a functional part of the new political entity" (Terrenato, 2008, p. 251). Unlike other historical processes, *romanization* first integrated those philo-Roman groups that had previously sought and developed contact; and in the case of *Lusitania* one can easily recognize that the process progressed gradually, starting from the Mediterranean front towards the Atlantic and the inland territories. To this end, Rome also sought the collaboration of local elites, even in *urbes* that were founded *ex novo*, as for *Ammaia* (Mantas, 2000) and, most probably, *Ebora Liberalitas Iulia*, according to the model of the *civitas peregrina*, urban centres ruled by their own customs and able to elect their own magistrates, within the Roman whole.

For these reasons, the urban network of *Lusitania*, like those of other provinces of the *outer circle*, could encompass very distinct urban images: some *urbes* might have a complete combination of *forma urbis*, urban facilities and administrative spaces; others featured only some of these elements, or perhaps none, being distinguished by their centralizing role for a territory or their management of a strategic resource. This variety is explained either from the viewpoint of territorial organization (large zones without urban clusters) or from that of urban structure and facilities. This diversity, which is perhaps surprising to us, is not just due to levels and quality of archaeological research but is also a mark of the era itself. For example, the site called *Mirobriga* features a forum, a bath building and a circus, and yet it seems not to have had any other public infrastructure. It is obvious that this constructive process would also have depended, to a large extent, on the engagement and promotion of local elites and on their private euergetism, since public resources would be scarce for a majority of these new towns. Therefore, the mapping of public monuments in the cities of *Lusitania* inevitably presents significant gaps, and such gaps must be seen on occasion as reflective of the local communities themselves in terms of input and resources. For example, only two circuses are known to have existed: that at *Olisipo* was to be expected given the city's importance and cosmopolitanism, but that traced at *Mirobriga* is totally unexpected, being sited in a small town lacking any other investment in recreational infrastructure. Perhaps the circus at *Mirobriga* links into an area important for horse breeding (*Lusitania* had a high reputation for producing quality horses), but it does not seem a logical base compared to other, larger towns (Fig. 2).

URBAN EQUIPMENTS IN *LUSITANIA*

- Circus
- Theater
- Urban Walls
- ⤴ Aqueduct

(no Amphitheatre...?)



Fig. 2. Urban equipments in the Roman cities in *Lusitania*.

Thus it might not be surprising therefore that in *Lusitania* we can observe the phenomenon of a fairly early withdrawal from the cities, with several showing no evident continuity into Islamic times nor showing revival within the urban network established after the Reconquest (Fig. 3). Although the chronological data are scarce, most of the urban or proto-urban clusters were progressively abandoned from the 3rd century AD, leading also to a progressive loss of memory of these sites. As Peter Brown suggested (2012, chap. 24 for a global perspective): “In many parts of Gaul, Spain, and Africa, late Roman society was miniaturized [...] a world whose horizons had shrunk and where the opportunities for widespread enrichment [...] had, with very few exceptions, closed down to the level of a single region.” Local connections were prioritized, and to be sited near any local spheres of influence was crucial.

All these mechanisms depended on one major core: in many areas of the Hispanic peninsula, the concept of “city” was a new one brought by Roman rule, and probably *becoming urbanised* was not entirely achieved. Perhaps, therefore, the ‘giant’ was not so *gigantic* here: the Roman city, the *valida urbs*, was manifested in different, not formulaic, ways, dependent fundamentally upon the indigenous matrix of the local communities. Potentially, the cultural patterns that I tried to identify in the rural landscape in the Alto Alentejo (Carneiro, 2014, especially

ROMAN CITIES IN *LUSITANIA*1 – *Eburobritium*2 – *Scallabis*3 – *Olisipo*4 – *Aritium Vetus?*5 – *Ammaia*6 – *Caetobriga*7 – *Salacia*8? – *Abelterium*9 – *Ebora*10 – *Pax Iulia*11 – *Mirobriga*12 ? – *Vipasca*13? – *Myrtilis*14 – *Baesuris*15 – *Balsa*16? – *Ossonoba*17? – *Cilpes*18 – *Laccobriga*

(Continuity during Late Antiquity)

(No continuity at all)

Fig. 3. Roman cities in *Lusitania*: continuities/discontinuities.

Chap. 5.2, vol. I, pp. 152-155) can also be applied to the urban fabric in *Hispania*: in the *central* territories, zones more used to the concept of “urban living” things went well, but in the *peripheral* territories and especially in the *ultra-peripheral* landscapes, cities were ambitious insertions and did not match the local expectations, and were onerous to stimulate and maintain. In these areas, the small urban nuclei never generated sufficient dynamism, possibly because they were created in territories that could not sustain a stable economic basis or adequate demographic. Hence these putative bases fade without the wider push and impetus to endure.

Arguably, however, another dimension needs to be added to our discussion: not only should we debate the *built city* or the material reality, but also the perceptions, both of those residing in the cities, but also of those who have excavated/are excavating in them.

3. PERCEPTIONS

In this regard, a fundamental problem lies in the existence of a constant literary *topos* that pervades studies of the classical world, in which the city is portrayed as a place of vices and degradation, while rural life forges character,

ennobled by contact with nature. In the 5th century BC, Plato observed how the urban aristocracy populated the lands around Athens with “beautiful and spacious mansions”, and for this reason “many citizens no longer traveled to the city, not even on feast days, preferring to live in their private homes”⁶; a similar process would transfer itself to Rome in the period following the Punic Wars. The countryside pictured as a place of retreat and *otium literatum* is abundantly evident in the letters of Pliny the Younger but, above all, in the set of authors who lived and composed between the 4th, 5th and 6th centuries: the words of elite scholars and poets like Ausonius, Symmachus, Sidonius Apollinaris, Rutilius Namatianus and Venantius Fortunatus combine to paint a strongly imbalanced picture where full emphasis goes to residing and reflecting in the countryside, somewhere one can enjoy peace and quiet, unlike in the urban world.

This antagonism is constant in all the authors, and so we find very little real, factual information, in the sense of letting us understand any concrete historical facts or any of the dynamics of change. The author who perhaps best describes the situation of ‘crisis’ in the urban context is Rutilius, whose *De Reddito Suo* recounts his travels between Rome and his native Gaul in 416, looking back at a time of deep upheaval, when Goths had assailed cities and disrupted routes of communication in northern and central Italy. The author devotes a few verses to the crisis affecting coastal towns and ports, particularly at the mouth of the River Tiber, where desolation is complete, as seemingly attested at Cosa, in Etruria. However, Rutilius’ depiction of the countryside is strangely still largely idyllic, describing great prosperous *villae* where agricultural work – fields, vineyards, etc. – continues without interruption. This entire picture leads us to presume the continuation of the noted literary *topoi*. In the way the author writes, the picture outlined is ambivalent: while cities can be scenarios of destruction, life in the countryside can be peaceful. Other writers such as Ausonius and Hydatius, offer the same paradigms, the same paradoxical picture.

Thus we can understand how the classical world used preconceived values, building a qualitatively negative perception of how cities and urban life could be perceived, transferring the seat of virtues and “*deliciae*” (to use the term given by Pliny the Younger⁷) to the countryside where, in contact with nature, Man rediscovers some of his primatial values. Unsurprisingly, Christian ideology extends this reading, which in some way finds resonance in the archaeological evidence: the rural *villae* are always “aulic”, “monumental”, “sumptuous” – qualifiers that are never attributed to the *domus* of late Roman cities.

The traditional image of the collapse of cities across the West during the 4th and 5th centuries is one that, for long, conditioned interpretation of the

⁶ *Republic* IV: I [Adapted translation].

⁷ *Epistol.* I. III.1: *Quid agit Comum, tuae meaque deliciae?*; IV, 6.

archaeological evidences. The words of Mortimer Wheeler are well known (1936, p. 28), describing life in *Verulamium* in Roman Britain during the 4th century: “the town has decayed to slum conditions and even to desolation”; or Collingwood (1936, p. 206) claimed that “the greater part of *Verulamium* was uninhabited, a waste of empty houses. Here and there squatters lived among the ruins” (cited in Sami & Speed, 2010, p. 59). For *Hispania*, much of the urban world had been engulfed in the voracity of the invasions in the 5th century – although, interestingly, due to political constraints, sometimes the destruction of urban life could be attributed to the Muslim armies in 711, whereas the Visigoths were seen by some older scholarship as the “restorers” of the Empire⁸.

One illustrative example for *Lusitania* is the city of *Conimbriga*, whose archaeological reading was long drawn from the well-known references by Hydatius to the city’s capture by Suevi in 464, during which they took hostage the wife and children of Cantaber, the local aristocrat who governed the city at that time⁹. The Suevi returned in 468, destroying houses and part of the city wall, making its citizens flee and causing desolation throughout the region¹⁰. The vision offered by the archaeologist Virgílio Correia, following his campaigns in 1930, was perfectly concordant with this paradigm, with all the excavated structures interpreted in line with Hydatius’ claims, especially when destruction deposits were encountered. This faulty image persisted even in the Portuguese-French excavations of the 1960s, as exemplified in the discussion of finds from the house of the cited Cantaber, where the mortal remains of a resident were found in the house’s main *impluvium* carrying two coins of Honorius (402-408): “It is surely proven that the attack on this house and the death of its unfortunate inhabitant” occurred in 464 (Alarcão, 1999, p. 75 [adapted translation]; the coins, however, do not fit this mid-5th century timeframe). Also we can consider the interpretation of the African terra sigillata fragments found in “couches de destruction attribuables aux attaques des Suèves”, even though these levels were disturbed, often with residual later materials (Delgado, Mayet & Alarcão, 1975, p. 288). Of course, our understanding of the archaeology and closer dating techniques has enabled a re-evaluation of the abandonment (and destruction) processes, seeing that life in *Conimbriga* could continue in some manner, thus part-explaining the establishment of the bishopric here in 561, its first bishop named as Lucentius, who attended the first Council of Braga. Despite the later loss of the bishopric

⁸ See examples in Alba, 2014b, p. 384ss, which provides a strong historiographical framework for Merida.

⁹ FHA, IX, p. 83: *Suevi Conimbricam dolose ingressam familiam nobilem Cantabri spoliante et captivam abducunt matrem cum filiis.*

¹⁰ FHA, IX, p. 97: *Conimbrica in pace decepta diripitur: domus destruuntur cum aliqua parte murorum habitatoribusque captis atque disperses et regio desolatur et civitas.* For the analysis and historical integration, see Tranoy, 1975.

to *Aeminium*, Almansor's campaigns in 986 still referred to the strong walls of *Conimbriga*, signifying their maintenance and value to a site which endured to the times of the Reconquest (De Man, 2011, p. 185, with bibliography).

In the case of *Salacia* (present-day Alcácer do Sal), however, there is an opposing example, where the presumed end of settlement activity suggested by the archaeology seems to be contradicted by literary references: the excavations point to a decay and abandonment of *Salacia* from the 2nd century, coinciding with the rise of *Caetobriga* (nowadays Setúbal), which replaced it as the main estuarine port of the River Sado, essentially due to the progressive silting of the river, which hindered access to the interior. The evidence of the ceramics, notably imports like *terra sigillata*, supports this interpretation (Faria, 2002, pp. 64-65). However, in the Muslim era, *Salacia* appears active as the gateway to *Al-Andalus*, a veritable seaport that was endowed with a powerful defensive enceinte (Coelho, 1989, pp. 53-63; Picard, 2000, pp. 194-196). Is this a case of continuity yet to be traced on the ground, perhaps a nucleation of activity that was revived only in the early Middle Ages?

4. DE-CONSTRUCTIONS

The panorama outlined above for *Lusitania* reveals several symptoms of change within its diverse urban centres (Diarte-Blasco, 2017).

Our understanding of urban dynamics is inevitably hampered by the fact that many clusters were inhabited *in continuum* or, at least, with a wide diachrony (Since Iron Age or Roman period to present days). A few major foci, of historical importance in the Roman imperial era, certainly continued to be prominent in later times, such as in the examples of *Olisipo*/Lisboa, *Ebora*/Évora, *Pax Iulia*/Beja, *Myrtilis*/Mértola and *Ossonoba*/Faro. As a result, we face two problems of analysis: on the one hand, subsequent urban dynamics create difficulties in reading the archaeological processes and sequences, whether in terms of robbing, the reuse of materials, the destruction of structures and contexts, residuality of materials, or recognizing structural forms. On the other hand, in Late Antiquity we suffer from issues of scarce archaeological evidence, and from difficulties in detecting coherently activities in the urban environment due to more ephemeral building and materials types, the landfills/removal of land or post-depositional changes, as well as ongoing uncertainty on the enigmatic "*dark earth*" so characteristic of many post-classical contexts¹¹. Furthermore, close dating of contexts is problematic in the absence of strong ceramic records, coins, texts and without access to scientifically-attained dates (via C14 especially).

¹¹ As Christie (2006, p. 262) has pointed out, the layers of *dark earth*, regardless of its varied formation and composition, should certainly indicate activity, and not abandonment – in other words, people using the intra-urban space.

In contrast, many urban centres saw no continuity and were (generally slowly) abandoned, sometimes even before the end of Roman rule. Places like *Eburobritium*, *Ammaia*, *Mirobriga*, *Baesuris* and *Balsa* faded away (and in the modern Spanish sector of the Lusitanian province, *Capera*, *Nertobriga*, *Ugultania* and *Metellinum* among others), although with likely transfers to new population nuclei that grew up close by. In the case of *Eburobritium*, change was due to the probable silting of the Óbidos Lagoon, cutting off its former direct access to the sea; the village of Óbidos, meanwhile, occupied a more defensive position. For the transfer of *Ammaia* to Marvão, insecurity may have played a part, given its location close to unstable regions along the borders in the Islamic presence. And the shift from *Balsa* to Tavira, 5 km to the north, becomes apparent during the Arab period, the late was to be transformed, in the 13th century, into one of the most important cities of the *Garb*.

However, problems remain, most notably because few of these places have seen any modern, scientific and detailed archaeological scrutiny, and so our understanding of the scale and nature of activity across the Roman centuries and the abandonment mechanisms is limited at best. In any case, the transition into late antique and post-classical phases is harder to trace in the archaeological record, since, in general, archaeologists are dealing with (often thin) stratigraphic units of accumulation, rarely indicative of structures/houses, but rather the deposition of sediment levels, from dumps, hearth debris, kitchen waste, wall collapses, and stores and pits. And we must consider also negative evidence, notably the removal of elements such as building and decorative materials, taken from their original contexts and deposited or incorporated into other buildings, sometimes haphazardly (Alba, 2014b, p. 395). We can recognize now how these problematic data long lacked visibility to archaeologists; yet it could be argued that such data can often still not appear in excavation reports. Below I summarize some of key structural and material transitions in these urban sites.

4.1. Disarticulation of the urban fabric

Too often the scale of archaeological investigation has not been large enough to adequately understand or model the changes to the built fabric and plan in these ancient and late antique urban centres. Nonetheless, sufficient evidence has been gathered to enable some vision of the disarticulation process, notably in terms of the decay of public spaces and structures and their gradual appropriation or 'colonization' by private buildings, whether houses, workshops or both.¹² From such evidence, the words of Isidore of Seville can then make

¹² Diarte-Blasco has exhaustively studied these processes; see, in particular, 2012: 253ss; 2015: 292ss.

more sense: in his *Etymologies*, streets are referred to as "the narrow spaces that exist between the houses"¹³, likely denoting an occupation process of ancient porticoes and entrance-halls, causing a less orderly, more regular or coherent layout. This phenomenon corresponds to the devolution of an old norm, legally documented by the *Tabula Heracleensis*¹⁴, requiring private management or maintenance of the streets, to be kept clean by the owners of the establishments (shops, workshops) and buildings that face onto a public space or street. In the Imperial era this requirement was supervised by the *aediles*, who would act in the event of negligence of duty by the shop- and house-owners. They would also regularly maintain the street pavements and surfaces (*refacere*). By contrast, it seems, from the archaeology at least, that in Late Antiquity these management processes saw little or no supervision, hence encroachments and limited order.

One example is in *Astigi*, where the extension to a *domus* invaded the passage of the *cardo maximus*, causing a significant reduction in the road width, already around the end of the 2nd century (García-Dils, 2015, p. 120). From the 5th century, the Church engaged also in this process: thus we see how the space for the early Christian cemetery at *Astigi* takes over more than 20 m of the city's *cardo maximus* area (García-Dils *et al.*, 2011, p. 269).

In *Lusitania* province, the best documented example is at *Augusta Emerita*, and comprised work by action of the city authorities, constructing a large building (of unknown function, but solidly built) which similarly absorbed part of the *cardo maximus* (Ayerbe, 2005, p. 116; fig. 21). This phenomenon of encroachment generally occurred in smaller streets, and has been interpreted by Miguel Alba as a process that was deemed in the best interest of all the protagonists, to the extent that the municipal authorities benefitted via the granting of licenses, while the private individuals gained added floor space and could benefit from opening up new *tabernae* spaces; this process does start in the 2nd century but peaks from the end of the 3rd century. Furthermore, porticoed spaces come to be closed off in order to build divisions that fill in the columned spaces (Alba, 2014b, p. 404). In this context, it is interesting that one of the most common changes in *Hispania* (Ruiz Bueno, 2016, p. 509) is the appropriation of road space for the construction of small baths buildings, as indeed seen in *Augusta Emerita*, where a *decumanus minor* had its width totally covered (Alba, 2001, p. 413). In *Ammaia*, excavation of the square inside the city's South Gate documented a compartmentalization (for houses/shops) of the old public space; the process is also documented in *Conimbriga* (Alarcão & Étienne, 1977, p. 145).

¹³ Isidorus, *Etymologiae* XV: II.1.

¹⁴ A bronze document found near Heracleia, in Lucania, in 1732, and containing the municipal regulations adapted from the *Lex Iulia Municipalis* (45 BC).

4.2. Spolia

Besides the growing redundancy of various old imperial public spaces and structures, fading through lack of maintenance, we find much evidence for removal of their symbolic and architectural components. This process of robbing expresses one of the most remarkable changes in the late antique period: the loss of urban *dignitas*, and the slow abandonment of the once-core central urban space, the *forum*.

The reuse of architectural and sculptural elements, such as columns, friezes, etc., is frequent in the construction of later walls, such as terraces, foundations or enclosures. One good example of this loss and dispersal is in *Pax Iulia*, where numerous epigraphic remains were recovered in the dismantling of the Roman urban city walls, thanks mainly to the careful attention of then bishop of the city, Friar Manuel do Cenáculo (1724-1814, Friar between 1770 and 1802).

However, the best-known cases, unsurprisingly, are witnessed at *Augusta Emerita*. Clear spoliation is traced in the residential area of Morería (Merida), where an well, in the context of dumped materials thrown into, contained diverse architectural elements deriving from the decorative programme of the public space within the city's colonial *forum*. This monument had been progressively plundered, with not even the paving of the square saved and during the post-Imperial moment the same changes affected also the so-called provincial *forum*, where the archaeological records register a gradual removal of ornamental elements (Alba & Mateos, 2006, pp. 356-364). In the main public buildings, the process progressed piecemeal: Miguel Alba (2004, p. 214) estimates that a first phase came around the 5th century and that, in a non-controlled way, the plunderers took the more valuable raw materials, such as marble, bronze and lead. Subsequent was the gathering up of construction elements that were large in volume and weight, which implies a management on the part of some type of authority (likely the bishop), with cranes perhaps required to extract some materials, concentrating on items such as column shafts, capitals and stone blockwork (which might see reuse in a church or monastery), and *cupae* and steles (for burial grounds). In a final phase, evidences for the taking down of other masonry elements, plus roof tiles for re-use. Throughout this process, and throughout the city, one would undoubtedly have noticed a progressive and continued movement of workers and materials, with an inevitable accumulation of detritus, discarded scaffolding and broken materials, as well as, perhaps, temporary housing and workshops. The scale of materials removed was calculated by Alba (2014b, p. 405), who estimated, merely for the reconstruction of the city wall (5th century), c. 220,000 granite blocks, to which must added many others used in the reconstruction of the Roman bridge.

4.3. Ruralization¹⁵, craft activities and storage silos

In *Hispania* the phenomenon of an ‘invasion’ of intra-urban space by small-scale productive and craft activities, which in earlier, imperial times had operated in peri-urban or suburban areas, is well known. Archaeologically, one of the best-known sites for examples of this industrial activity is again *Augusta Emerita*. However, we can also cite Évora, where excavations conducted by the Deutsche Archäologische Institut in the zone in front of the city’s main Roman temple revealed an important set of silos, probably dating from the Islamic era (Hauschild, 2010). By that date, however, all of the forum’s marble paving had already been removed as *spolia*, after which the square seems to have been turned into a storage area, possibly related to military usage under the Arabs, since it appears to have been set within the defensive wall of the citadel.

4.4. Sanitation

There are extant documents from *Hispania*, notably the famous *Lex Ursonensis* and the *Lex Irnitana*, each containing legal municipal precepts, which highlight how the sewerage network needed to be carefully overseen by municipal magistrates, notably the *duumviri*, and the maintenance work done by specific employees, such as the *stercorarii*. Warnings against the throwing and dumping of human waste on the streets are also recurrent (Vizcaino, 1999, p. 93), which tells us much about how the dictates of hygiene were not usually complied to by some residents, even in the 2nd century (Dupré & Remolà, 2002, p. 49). However, this was not necessarily a common or serious issue: thus, in *Lucus Augusti* at the beginning of the 4th century, the sewerage network benefitted from the construction of a major network of underground cesspools (González Fernández, 2011, p. 301). Nonetheless, by the mid-5th century there seems to have been a complete breakdown of the sanitation system in active cities throughout the whole of *Hispania*; the causes seem varied, from lack of maintenance to the loss of the aqueducts that supplied the urban water supply: in the case of *Augusta Emerita*, out of the four known aqueducts, two went out of use in the late 4th century, and the others failed during the 5th (Alba, 2004, pp. 224-225).

One consequence of the dumping waste on public roads was a changing or restricted traffic circulation, as well as the replacement of paved road surfaces for ones of soil/dirt cover, the so-called *viae terrariae*. Such changes are well attested, for example, in the layering of levels in a *decumanus* in *Carthago Nova*¹⁶, yet for

¹⁵ “Ruralization” is not an ideal term, but has become a conventional one. We might note that signs of presence of ‘rural’ activities in cities are very frequent, even in the earlier Roman era, as evident in examples of extensive vineyards within the walls of *Pompeii*.

¹⁶ Five levels of compacted land that were deposited between the 3rd and 5th century were documented: Vidal, Vizcaino Quevedo, 2006, especially lám. 5.

Lusitania, it is only so far registered in *Augusta Emerita*, where Alba estimated a 1.20–1.50m increase of the quota of traffic circulation (2001, p. 407-410). Limited recognition of such deposits in past/older excavations is probably one main reason for the low number of known instances of road change in later Roman times.

This information draws correspondence with data presented in imperial legislation, from which, already from the second half of the 2nd century, we see subpoenas made to compel private citizens to remove waste out of the urban centre (Ruiz Bueno, 2016, p. 539). Yet from this date, the dumps are generalized as being *in urbe* or of *loci sordentes*, reflecting the failure of those relevant officials to enforce the law (Acero, 2011, p. 180). For *Lusitania*, the scale of such waste is not known, except for some evidence in *Conimbriga* (Reis, De Man & Correia, 2011, p. 196) and in *Olisipo* (Banha, 2011, pp. 209 and 212). Otherwise, the capital, *Augusta Emerita*, again provides a useful guide, with rubbish accumulating in the area of the redundant forum, where we also see the leveling of the provincial forum's staircase, possibly in order to eliminate pestilent smells coming from the waste deposits (Acero, 2011, pp. 177-278). Of later date, an indirect testimony of the extent of the collapse of the classical public sanitation system and removal of waste in *Ebora* comes in the account of the city's pillage under Ordoño II, in 913: the state of disrepair of the town walls, partly collapsed, and the rubbish dumps that had built up outside effectively created a ramp that facilitated the entry of the Christian troops. It was in response to this that, during the Islamic reconquest of 914, the defensive curtain was partially reconfigured, now following the outline of the late antique circuit (Fernandes & Vilar, 2007).

4.5. Abandonment and privatization of classical public areas

More varied are the claimed sequences and natures of loss and change of classical public/monumental spaces in these later Roman towns; here too there are problems of archaeological interpretation, with data restricted, especially where classical monuments have been excavated and restored prior to modern techniques and approaches.

Unsurprisingly, the provincial capital demonstrates higher indicators of vitality and persistence of its classical components, reflecting its status as a seat of the *diocesis Hispaniarum*, which allowed it to retain its honorific function and, above all, to serve as a focus of residence (and participation) for an active elite with a high mobilizing capacity. The forum complexes endure, seemingly in good condition and function until the middle of the 5th century; the theatre is restored between AD 333 and 336 (Durán, 2004, pp. 126-127); and the circus likewise undergoes repairs between 337 and 340 by order of the *comes Hispaniarum*. However, in the following decades a porticoed plaza next to the colonial forum becomes partially 'privatized' with construction of a (small and private?) baths

building (Ayerbe, Barrientos & Palma, 2009, p. 803); then, after the mid-5th century, the signs of change increase: both *fora* are abandoned and begin to suffer a process of *spoliation*, while there is loss and ruination in the entertainment structures (see Alba, 2014b), although the circus seemingly remained in use until the 6th century despite elements of decay. Houses start to be built in those spaces, exploiting walls and structures that are often partitioned up, with residential units usually of small dimensions (c. 20-40 m²). Meanwhile, open spaces are found in common areas, perhaps enclosing cattle or offering (communal?) cultivation space (Alba, 2004, p. 236), reinforcing the image of a growing "ruralization" of the city.

Elsewhere in the province, the data are almost nil, with just two examples: although we lack evidence to help understand the sequence of abandonment of public spaces in *Olisipo*, the arcades of the *vomitoria* came to be divided up and used as domestic spaces (Diogo, 1993, pp. 222-224), matching changes in *Conimbriga*.

4.6. Religious ventures

Key in the transition to Late Antiquity was the progressive transfer of towns from a *classical topography* into a fabric in which Christian authority and experience were imposed and expressed in monuments, burial and cultural display¹⁷.

The earliest Christian presence in our towns is silent in terms of physical form, even if documents such as the famous epistle of Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, addressed to the Bishops of Mérida and León-Astorga in 254, show 'hidden' communities emerging. But from the 5th century especially we witness the growing authority of the *episcopus*, visible in structural form in town centres and suburbs; the bishops could be in place many years, even decades, enabling lasting impacts; their influence also extended to intervening in the election and appointment of municipal magistrates, whose status and role dwindled (Slootjes, 2006, pp. 222f). As a result, we see local elites looking increasingly to enter the ecclesiastical hierarchy (Curchin, 2014, pp. 284-290). While in the 4th century bishops perhaps struggled to ban pagan spectacles and popular participation in the *ludi*, their actions were much more effective in transforming the urban skyline, through condemning (with support from imperial legislation) pagan rituals and festivals¹⁸ and seeking the closure of temples and the removal of

¹⁷ Recent research begins to shade the importance of Christian action in the urban modifications of Late Antiquity: "un elemento di gran rilievo, ma non determinante nel decidere i destini della città" (Brogiolo, 2011, p. 109).

¹⁸ *Codex Theodosianus* XVI, with several measures proclaimed between AD 341 and 407.

statues and ornaments (Lavan, 2011, p. 35) – a process widely felt across the 5th century (Caseau, 2001, pp. 102, 119-122).

However, in *Hispania*, the province of *Lusitania* has a noticeably more dispersed *ratio* of bishoprics by area, indicating a more diffuse influence of the Church (see Bowes, 2005, pp. 235-237). But archaeology does help show the growing development of church structures, typically extending from the urban periphery to the centre of the *urbs*, taking its time to gain centrality. The initial suburban emphasis links to the cult of martyrs, which begins in the middle of the 3rd century. Early examples are evident at *Augusta Emerita*, with three inscriptions dated from the end of the 4th century, and construction of the probable basilical *martyrium* of Santa Eulalia, which would trigger the creation of a Christian necropolis and the building known as the *Xenodochium* – although with a controversial interpretation (for a global reading of the provincial capital's changing topography, see Alba, 2014a).

Only later, with imperial evergetism and the stronger entrepreneurial power of the Church, can we see in *Hispania* the construction of the *ecclesia cathedralis*, the baptistery and residences for the bishop and his staff (Arbeiter, 2010). Such episcopal complexes are not, however, yet documented in *Lusitania*. For *Hispania* this process is very diverse, and a common standard does not exist because these buildings can be situated either in an intra-urban area but not central, such as near the city walls or a gate, or it can be central and close to the old forum area, or else it can be erected in a suburban area (Cantino, 2003, p. 243). Furthermore, as Arbeiter states, "previsiblemente, en la gran mayoría de los casos, la cúpula eclesiástica, durante el s. IV, se conformaba con edificaciones de limitada envergadura y vistosidad, incluso con estructuras preconstantinianas heredadas" (2010, p. 430).

Although evidence is uncertain or fragmentary in most urban clusters of *Lusitania*, finds in *Myrtilis* – modern Mértola, a site famous especially for its Islamic past and heritage – are significant, with traces of two baptisteries in the Acropolis area, probably set close to a large basilica building, sited next to the porticoed gallery of the cryptoporticus. On the city's outskirts, on a lower area, are two other basilicas, of evident suburban character; the epigraphic record of the second, taken from several dozens of graves, reveals the existence of a complex hierarchy of functions¹⁹. The oddity lies in the fact that *Myrtilis* was small as a centre and was not a *cathedra* to any known bishop. Why, then, its early Christian imprint is so prominent – comparable only to *Augusta Emerita* – remains a mystery at present.

¹⁹ For the Christian topography of Mértola, see LOPES, 2014; for its Christian epigraphic record, see Torres & Dias, 1993.

At *Emerita* there is striking growth around the martyrial complex of Santa Eulalia throughout the 5th and 6th century in the form of a necropolis which seems reserved for the highest members of the city's Church. We can highlight the epitaph of the presbyter *Heleuterius* (604), who established a *monasterium* and a monastic school, as well as the monumentalization process of the crypt of Santa Eulalia, which is described in the text of the *Vitae Sanctorum Patrum Emeritensium*, giving indications of the wider entrepreneurial actions and building promotions of a lineage of bishops. So far, this creation of complexes around martyrial spaces finds no parallels in other urban seats in *Lusitania* and yet is well attested elsewhere in *Hispania*, notably *Tarraco*, *Barcino* and *Valentia*.

Meanwhile, we can observe a situation in which the ancient foci of *Augusta Emerita* and *Ebora* were, between the late 6th century and early 7th, losing influence to emergent centres of political power, which were also the main episcopal headquarters – *Toletum* and *Pax Iulia* (see Carneiro & Teixeira, this volume).

Finally, in the Baixo Alentejo region, another interesting phenomenon can be documented: less than 10km distant from each other, two graffiti were found imprinted on *dolia*. That at Monte da Salsa (Serpa), the location of one of the most notable *villae* in the region of Beja, has this wording: *ECLESIAE ESCE MARIE LACALTENSI AGRIPPI*²⁰ (Almeida, 1962, fig. 301), which closely resembles the text found at the Herdade de São Cristovão, next to the urban cluster of Moura: *ECLESIE SANCTE MARIE LACALTENSI AGRIPPI* (Canto, 1997, figs. 111, 112). These two texts seemingly document a direct link between a farm/*villa* and an urban working/processing centre; logically we can assume that ownership was the same – of sites, materials and products. The two graffiti can be dated to the 6th century, and must be referring to the production of olive oil and to the control of this industry (and its presumed trading) by the local church. We must recall that the Church generally became a major landowner from the 4th century and took on the role of benefactor and welfare provider that had once been the State's responsibilities; thus its oversight of productive and economic concerns is a logical one and gives recognition of additional income that came to the Church and its officials.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The urban phenomenon in *Lusitania* is a long way from being understood as something cohesive and/or homogeneous. The end of the Western Roman

²⁰ The news of its discovery is given by Abel Viana, who mentions that “these pots were buried 1.70m or 1.80m deep” in a room shaped like a “long rectangle with a semi-circular apse” (Viana, 1955, pp. 4-5) – interesting information, but not sufficient to clarify the function of the space. Unfortunately, no excavations were made in extension, both in Monte da Salsa and the urban area in Moura, to allow us to understand what kind of sites could have existed.

Empire brought profound changes here, which, in some cases, greatly altered the face of the cities, but allowed some – the most central and/or those at the head of economically stronger territories – to continue to survive, evolve and even to gain new centralities, including in the Christian frame and, later, in the Islamic. For other sites, however, the 5th century marked a stage of struggle, of atrophy or even of extinction, with some populations seeking or forced to seek new homes. Yet none of this should be understood in a linear way because, in reality, the processes of urban change, redefinition and even loss were underway already since the 2nd century in many places²¹. More broadly in *Hispania*, we can recognise increasing difficulties in the management of urban life, with the ability to build to emulate distant Rome falling away²². The progressive atrophy of some of these centres helped to generate open, but also cultivated spaces within the old urban space; though this *ruralization* can be regarded as a mark of continuity of people and place.

Besides those cities falling into decay, we can see in several regions the symptoms of communities that had never truly urbanized. Here, early on, many people had been installed in, or transferred into new urban foundations, in search of the classical *modus vivendi*. But, perhaps like an outfit that is far too large for us to wear, there was always some ‘lack of fit’. The growth of large *villae* is not unique to late Roman *Lusitania*, but it appears more evident in those regions where the urban fabric had never been strong and consistent. If Roman rule in the West had always been a “federation of regions” (Brown, 2012, chap. 24), now the local alliances, the strong basis of identity connections re-emerge again in the scenario where they can best flourish.

Overall, our picture of *Lusitania* in Late Antiquity is becoming clearer, but many aspects remain hazy, with only patchy or fragmentary evidence. We certainly lack in-depth analyses, sufficient urban archaeologies as well as comparative readings, which all make understanding of the scale of the changes and of the processes problematic, but more and more we are able to observe a variety of shifts and reactions. Above all, we can state that change and transformation were not a single, sudden and destructive process prompted by external forces (i.e. “barbarian incursions”), but rather these resulted from ongoing dynamics active since the 2nd century.

²¹ As Javier Andreu Pintado points out (2017, pp. 347-349), the problem is not the human presence, but the decay in daily life and in the administrative frame, marking the start of the process of *civitas intermortua* or *oppida labentia* that defines some urban centres in peripheral areas. He lists some possible explanations from p. 364f.

²² *propter amplitudinem maiestatemque populi Romani, cuius istae coloniae quasi effigies parvae simulacraque esse quaedam videntur*, in the words by Aulus Gellius (*NA XVI.13.9*), albeit referring to *coloniae*.

Significantly, the metal tablets containing the *lex Irnitana* were found inside a dwelling interpreted as a blacksmith's workshop (Fernández Gómez & Del Amo, 1990): based on this find and context alone, already from the 3rd century, the norms enumerated in the *lex* had ceased to make sense.

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