

Historical analysis of a Roman urban center.

‘HisPELLUM’ as a case study

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Abstract: The paper proposes a model of historical-architectural analysis of the urban center of Spello, Italy (Umbria). We intended to extrapolate from the plurality of data, that makes up today's landscape, the first macro-phase that can still be traced and detected on an urban scale, the one relating to the Roman period (from III-II centuries B.C. to IV century A.D.), which contributed to modify the landscape by operating on the environmental and natural framework through the action of man. The stratigraphic methodology, typical of the archeological landscape, was therefore followed, according to which the landscape should be read as the product of history. Among the various architectures that shaped the landscape of the Roman age, the fortification and the city gates built around the second half of the first century B.C. have been brought to light. The same structures have been compared with similar models existing in Umbria and Italy, belonging to approximately the same period. The final aim is to understand the significance that the fortification would have had in the political construction of the Colony of HisPELLUM in ancient times.

Keywords: Spello, cultural landscape, Antiquity, urban design, archeological surveys

The purpose of this study is to propose a comprehensive analytical investigation into the architectural history of a specific territory². Our goal is to create a technical model of study that can be applied to other urban contexts with significant architectural value and is viewed as a product of multiple historical events from a historical and landscape perspective³. This research focuses on the city of Spello and its surrounding countryside, which serves as an excellent example of the urban and architectural stratification of past eras. The transformations of the landscape over time have given shape, layout, and image to the urban center and the surrounding territory, which are experienced by locals and visitors alike daily.

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2. For the definition of territory: CAMBI 2011, pp. 102-103.
3. *Ibidem*, pp. 103-104.

Exploring a landscape requires recognizing its historical origins, shaped by diverse human activities across both territorial and non-territorial spaces⁴. These activities were influenced by political, economic, social, and cultural factors throughout history, which have left a lasting impact on the landscapes we observe today. By examining the territory from an architectural standpoint, we can deepen our understanding of its historical and architectural value. This knowledge can inform future architectural and urban design decisions that align landscape's evolution over time and aim to maintain its present state as much as possible.

The historical analysis of the city of Spello was conducted using the stratigraphic methodology, which is typical of landscape archaeology. This approach was chosen because the city consists of several stratigraphic units. These stratigraphic units are «episodes in the history of a settlement»⁵ that, once examined and correlated, give rise to complex events and medium-term periods or time frames. The current state of Spello allows a clear and distinct examination of its stratigraphic units. This makes it possible to analyze the history of human presence in a specific area by breaking down the episodes that contributed to its formation⁶. In this case, the investigation began with the examination of the oldest stratigraphic unit, which is the Roman settlement⁷. The analysis of subsequent historical phases followed the same procedure, leading to the examination of the most recent architectural presences.

During the Roman period, a list of primary architectural structures was compiled, and in this paper, we present the results. These findings have been summarized in graphical tables, created using GIS – Geographic Information System tools (*fig. 1*). In addition to the examination of the existing literature⁸ and the historical events that contributed to determining the context⁹, the surveys of the main city gates were carried out and these drawings make up the carnet of graphic plates. Finally, some of the monuments that distinguish the urban form of an-

4. *Ibidem*, pp. 111-112 (see also CAMBI-TERRENATO 1994).

5. *Ibidem*, p. 54.

6. *Ibidem*, p. 32.

7. On the Spello configuration during Roman age: BAIOLINI 2002, pp. 63-120. For general historical information about the origins of the city: BRAGAZZI 1864, pp. 75-94; URBINI 1913, pp. 2-58; PEPPOLONI-FRATINI 1978; SOZI 1987.

8. As far as literature about Spello city gates: ROSSINI 1836; FRIGERIO 1935, pp. 147-151; TARCHI 1936, tavv. CLXI- CLXIX; GROS 1996, p. 40; CARBONI 2015, pp. 111-118.

9. For the meaning of the term context: CAMBI 2011, p. 31.

cient Spello¹⁰ have been compared to similar architectures located in neighboring urban areas of equal historical importance. Thanks to these comparisons, new evaluations can be proposed about the historical and architectural heritage of Roman HisPELLum, including whether the relationship with the surrounding landscape has changed or remained unchanged over the centuries.

Considerations on the Roman *facies* of the walls and gates of the Splendidissima Colonia Iulia (definition of *HisPELLum* in some epigraphs) can be advanced by interpreting the fortification as an important work of architecture in the landscape.

The ancient settlement stands on a narrow and elongated hill close to Mount Subasio of about 1 km, oriented in a north-south direction with an almost triangular shape of the slopes, very accentuated to the west and east. The plain below is bathed by the Topino River, its tributary town Clitunno, and the Maroggia stream. Due to its dominant position concerning the plain and the presence of the mountain behind it, the settlement of Spello is part of a recurring typology in the process of formation of other inhabited centers of Umbria, such as Assisi, Trevi, Spoleto, Gubbio.

The archaeological documentation¹¹, collected since the Renaissance in the city and the surrounding rural areas, is essential to reconstruct the historical phases of *HisPELLum*, the ancient center organized as a walled city in the Augustan era. In addition, the presence of places of worship together with the town is evidenced by sporadic findings recovered in the area of Villa Fidelia¹². As early as the VI-V centuries B.C., this area acquired a religious value and remained a structure of considerable significance in the process of modeling the *forma urbis* of Spello, which represents an evident element of continuity over time and which became, with the Rescript of Constantine (333-337 A.D.)¹³.

10. BAIOLINI 2002, pp. 63-120.

11. Archaeological data confirm the presence of the Umbrians in the area, believed according to some historical sources, to be the oldest population among the pre-Roman civilizations (cf. PLIN., *Nat. Hist.*, III, 112-113). The location of some necropolises along the main communication routes or the main access roads to the town has led to the hypothesis of the existence of various pre-Roman settlements (cf. BONACCI-GUIDUCCI 2009, p. 56). For an in-depth investigation of the archaeological documentation: MANCA 2020-2021, pp. 135-146; SABATINI-ANGELELLI 2019; BARBANERA 2018, pp. 613-642; CAMERIERI-MANCONI 2012a, pp. 63-80; CAMERIERI-MANCONI 2012b, pp. 293-294; CAMERIERI-MANCONI 2010, pp. 15-39; MANCONI 2007, pp. 159-165; MANCONI *et alii* 1993, pp. 145-155.

12. Famous suburban residential complex of the late sixteenth century consisting of a villa and the surrounding park, built on the remains of a Roman sanctuary of the first century B.C.

13. The Constantinian Rescript (CIL, X, 5265) is an epigraphic document on a marble slab and its most probable dating is between 333 and 337 A.D. (MANCONI 1997, pp. 354-356).

The religious and administrative center of Umbria, despite the unification of the Regio with Etruria, was created with the previous regulation of Diocletian (290-300 A.D.) as *Provincia Tuscia et Umbria*. The passage through the entire Umbrian territory and therefore also through *Hispellum*, under Roman hegemony, took place towards the end of the fourth century B.C., when all the centers of Umbria were included in Rome's expansionist aims towards the Adriatic area¹⁴. The first real urban layout of Spello can be dated back to the III-II centuries B.C. and consists of the construction of the Forum, which can be traced at today's Piazza della Repubblica, nowadays still the center of the town, even though the forensic substructures present a stratification that suggests the existence of a fortification dating back to the VII-VI centuries B.C. The Forum is organized as a long-terraced slab, arranged adjacent to the *Cardo*, the north-south oriented road axis, with substructures in limestone blocks in square work, which in many cases became the basis for subsequent constructions¹⁵.

The lack of sources does not allow us to reconstruct a detailed historical picture, but we can deduce from the *Lex Iulia de Civitate* (90 B.C.) that *Hispellum* was transformed from an autonomous community into a *Municipium*, registered into the *Lemonia* Tribe and governed by a college of *quattuorviri*. Thus, immediately after the triumvirate conflict, taking possession of the land confiscated from the neighboring municipalities, *Hispellum* became a vast colony of the Umbrian Valley enriched by two extra colonial possessions, the "ancient Arna" and the "Fonti del Clitunno"¹⁶. The territory was neatly divided into lots, according to a precise centuriation scheme, which can still be traced today in some points of the neighboring countryside and by the orientation of some road layouts.

14. The main historical events are listed below. An example of the progressive contacts that the Romans established with the Umbrians is the pact of equal conditions, the *Foedus Aequum* of 310 B.C., stipulated between Rome and the inhabitants of the Umbrian center of Camerti, in an anti-Gallic function. The Battle of Mevania dates back to 308 B.C. (cf. LIV., IX, 41) in which Rome came into contact with the territory of the Umbrians and made a treaty of *amicitia* with the center of *Oriculum*, a border city between Umbria and Sabina and, after the opening of the Via Flaminia (220 B.C.), a point of exchange between the river and land roads. With the conquest of *Nequinum* (today's Narni) in 299 B.C., the Romanization of the Umbrian territory began, the city was renamed Narnia and became an important *Municipium*, crossed by the Via Flaminia. After the battle of Sentino in 295 B.C., *Mevania* and *Nuceria* came under the control of Rome, which began to regulate relations with the subject centers through *Foedera* (bilateral treaties). The process of Romanization of Umbria was completed with the foundation of the colony of *Spoletium*, which took place in 241 B.C., and then with the opening of the Via Amerina and the Via Flaminia.

15. On primitive urbanization: MANCONI 1997, p. 438.

16. PLIN. IUN., *Epistolae*, VIII, 8.

On the occasion of the foundation of the colony, a grandiose project was carried out, conceived with the desire to trace an indelible mark on the environment of the valley, designed down to the smallest architectural details to be perfectly integrated into the natural landscape. A wall with a refined building technique was built directly on the rocky slope, in whose perimeter, 1800 meters long, there are doors of large apparatus and posterns; the previous substructures that made up the base of the hole undergo alterations. An important aqueduct was built. Thanks to a spring located on the mountain about 5km away, it provided water to the whole city, and to the surrounding public area and, with the help of cisterns, could also serve the parts of the town located at higher altitudes. Finally, a road system was built inside the walls¹⁷.

The most important urban transformation of *HisPELLUM* took place in the first century B.C. when the center was elevated from *Municipium* to the rank of colony, administered by *duoviri*. This process is part of an even greater phenomenon that sees the entire area of central Umbria to the left of the Tiber affected by a renewed political arrangement. The date of foundation of the colony dates back to the triumvirate era after the military episode of the *Bellum Perusinum*¹⁸ but before 27 B.C., the year in which Octavian received from the Senate the title of Augustus, a title that from then on is present in the name of all the new colonies which, instead of Spello, were called *Splendidissima Colonia Iulia*.

At the same time as the town, to the north-west of the urban area, on a pre-existing sacred area, an important sanctuary was founded, near the road that connected Spello with Assisi and Perugia, in a large foothill area, a hinge to the city, architecturally predisposed to welcome and open to the municipalities' neighbors. The construction of the sanctuary complex, organized on hilly terraces, was part of the architectural program of the *Colonia Iulia* and was configured as an operation of the Augustan policy aimed at the recovery of local religious traditions¹⁹. The public area with a sacred character was completed by a theatre, bu-

17. MANCONI 1997, p. 438; CAMERIERI-MANCONI-CRUCIANI 1997, p. 377.

18. The *Bellum Perusinum* was fought in Perugia and the surrounding territories between 41 and 40 B.C. and saw Lucius Antony and Octavian deployed. During the war, *HisPELLUM*, unlike *Asisium* and other municipalities, had supported Octavian, and the triumvir, immediately after emerging victorious from the conflict, promoted the foundation of a *Colonia Iulia*.

19. The only cult practiced inside the sanctuary of which we have certainty today is that one of Venus, to whom a chapel placed in an eccentric position on one of the highest terraces was dedicated, but the main deity was certainly an Iuppiter associated with ceremonies of a triumphal nature. The shrine dedicated to Iuppiter must have been probably symmetrical to that of Venus.

ilt on the plain following the axis of symmetry of the terraced sanctuary and, later in the first century A.D., it was equipped with an amphitheater (fig. 2), located closer to the town²⁰.

The colonial walls²¹ are currently one of the best-preserved examples of ancient fortification in Italy (fig. 3). The wall is composed of an inner core in *opus caementicium* arranged in well-compacted layers and bedded one on top of the other. It is externally covered with a face in *opus vittatum*²², consisting of blocks of local limestone, pinkish in color, parallelepipeds, and organized in horizontal rows adjusted to height. To emphasize the uniqueness of the fortification, the millimetric layer of mortar between the blocks even presents, like the limestone ashlar it binds, a pink-beige tint and is installed with a fine pink and white crushed stone. Finally, the foundations anchored to the underlying rock are also made of concrete work²³.

The architect Sebastiano Serlio (c.1475-c.1554)²⁴ was the first in modern times to bring to the attention of his contemporaries, evoking the controversy over the dating, Porta Venere²⁵ (figs. 4-5), the element of the city walls of Spello that stands out the most, more than the other monumental city gates, such as Porta Consolare (fig. 6), Porta Urbica (fig. 7) and Porta dell'Arce (fig. 8): a dichotomy that existed in antiquity between the world *intra muros* and the world *extra muros*, recurring in *Hispellum*

20. The case of Spello is one of the Italic terraced sanctuaries, architectural complexes rebuilt between the second and first centuries B.C. due to the systematic use of cement. For the reference models for this type of sacred architecture, including the best known the sanctuary of Fortuna Primigenia in Palestrina and the sanctuary of Ercole Vincitore in Tivoli: D'ALESSIO 2008, p. 21.

21. The chronology of the city walls ranges between 40 and 20 B.C. There are no reliable sources for a precise dating of the fortifications, just as the precise date of the foundation of the colony of *Hispellum* is not known. A widely accepted hypothesis is that of two distinct phases in the construction of the city walls: the first, datable to around 40 B.C., immediately after the *Bellum Perusinum*, consists of the exclusive construction of the Consular Gate, a monument that is off-center and jutting out from the edge of the circle. The second phase, a few decades later, saw the construction of the other gates and the wall circuit and could coincide with the restoration works of the Via Flaminia promoted by Augustus and begun in 27 B.C.

22. In the construction of the walls of Spello of the first century B.C., entirely covered with an *opus vittatum* (small ashlar of limestone from Subasio arranged in horizontal rows), a unique solution was implemented for the time, which strengthened the hypothesis of a well-structured architectural project by the architects working at the court of Octavian. The use of the *opus vittatum* is an innovation of the late Republican age; starting from the Augustan age, in fact, this technique «was widely used in the provinces, from Spain to Gaul (where it was the “prince” technique until the second century A.D.), from Africa to Asia Minor» (ZANFORLINI 2015, p. 8).

23. For a detailed description of the city walls of Spello: FONTAINE 1990, pp. 245-303.

24. SERLIO 1544, p. LXX.

25. The accuracy of the reliefs of Porta Venere produced by Serlio has been discussed in MORETTI 2014, p. 229.

as in all the colonies built in *Imago Romae*²⁶. Together with the defensive function, an important need fulfilled by urban fortification and conceived since the archaic age is represented by the need to distinguish *urbs* and *ager*, where the walls symbolize the materialization of a magical line aimed at concretely delimiting, but also symbolically separating the city and what is not a city²⁷.

Looking at the composition of walls and gates, many aspects can be brought to support a hypothesis, already strongly accredited, according to which the fortification of Spello would represent «the last manifestation of Hellenistic architecture in Italy»²⁸. First of all, the tendency, typical of the Augustan or Julio-Claudian era, which sees the city walls as a projection of the city towards the outside, that is a structure intended to define the urban space and to give the city prestige and autonomy, rather than a work designed for defensive needs²⁹. The design idea of the *HisPELLum* colony is functional to the visual effect that the entire wall structure must have on the external observer: on the one hand a peaceful and welcoming impact and on the other a signal of the prosperity, wealth, and defensive capabilities of a founded city. Thanks to this observation, it is possible to highlight that Spello, immediately after Perugia, would be among the first examples in central Italy, in which the change of the wall's conception in the urban design is evident, and the walls pass from a defense function to be the image of the city³⁰. It is not a coincidence that the most monumental Roman gates, *Porta Venere*, *Porta Consolare*, and *Porta di San Ventura*, are in the western and southern part of the town, along the portion of the walls overlooking the plain of the Umbrian Valley where the *Colonia Iulia* could be most seen and appreciated, a stretch that is still perfectly preserved today for a length of about 800 meters.

In general, the walls of the colony of *HisPELLum* represent the culmination of a process of transformation that concerns the conception of the

26. VARR, *De Ling Lat.*, V-143 (TRAGLIA 1974, p. 145).

27. GROS 1996, p. 28.

28. *Ibidem*, p. 42.

29. GROS 1992, p. 211.

30. TORELLI 2008, p. 277. This concept was perpetuated throughout the early imperial age, a period in which in the Roman colonies in Italy and the Provinces walls were built to meet aesthetic rather than defensive needs, creating a landmark in the territory. A striking example is the renovations of the main entrances to Verona during the Claudian period, the *Porta Borsari* and the *Porta dei Leoni*, where the decorative aspect of the entrance arches and loggias on the upper floors prevails over the engineering-military layout of the access (GROS 1996, pp. 43-58). Outside Italy, on the other hand, the example that best expresses the dual defensive and representative function of the city walls is the walls of Nîmes, aimed at communicating the prestige of Rome in Narbonne Gaul (for further information: VARÈNE 1992, p. 179).

walled city in the Roman world, a process that had affected Etruscan and Italic constructions since the fourth century B.C. and had seen the progressive introduction of Hellenistic fortification techniques in our peninsula³¹.

Concerning the idea of classifying the gates of Spello into two distinct architectural series, the oldest building type, the one that has been experimented with for the longest time, refers to those entrances characterized by a single arch with a full arch vault of less than three meters: the Porta dell'Arce and the Porta Urbica. The two arches are almost equal in span (10 feet) and height (about 16 feet that of Porta San Ventura and about 16 feet that of Porta dell'Arce, considering the part of the monument now underground) and open simply in the alignment of the fortification. The two gates, however, have a different function: Porta dell'Arce still retains the signs of the defensive system, a factor that together with the presence of the travertine cladding (visible only in a small portion) creates a connection with Porta Venere³². Porta Urbica, on the other hand, lacked the entire locking system and, like Porta Consolare, it is positioned at the end of a straight axis that conditions the centuriation of the land³³.

Certainly, the most innovative solution of the accesses is represented in Spello by the typology of the gate with the courtyard (*cavaedium*) to which belong the two most imposing entrances, Porta Consolare and Porta Venere, which both had a double façade and in both the only façade that remains today, the one towards the outside, preserves the three original openings, with the central one larger. Porta Consolare is located on the road coming from Rome and connecting to the Via Flaminia, in a place where the fortification descends to the plain, clearly demonstrating the desire to abandon the needs of defense³⁴. The contrast that emerges from the analysis of the masonry between the bare appearance of the façade, obtained with the use of reused blocks on the façade³⁵,

31. BÉRARD-BROISE-JOLIVET 2000, pp. 69-80; TORELLI 2008, p. 271.

32. Among all the openings in the Roman walls of Spello, only in Porta Venere and Porta dell'Arce can a crack be found to house the cataract. However, in the three-arched structure of this door, the crack is present only in the central arch, so much so that it can be deduced that it would seem to have been built to express a symbolic meaning rather than to perform a defensive function. The absence of locking systems also characterizes other city gates built immediately after the so-called Pax Augusti of 29 B.C., such as the Arch of Augustus in Rimini (27 B.C.) and the Arch of Augustus in Fano (9 A.D.).

33. CAMERIERI-MANCONI-CRUCIANI 1997, pp. 406-408.

34. For a survey of the monument: BIGI 2016, pp. 10-11.

35. Blocks positioned above the white limestone door of Subasio with the holes of the ferrei forfices in view would seem to have been recovered from previous construction and reworked before being put back in place.

and the more decorated character of the other entrances leads us to think that Porta Consolare must have been associated with the establishment of the colony and is, therefore, the first work built on the walls; this is also demonstrated by the fact that the structure composed of façades and courtyard is independent of the wall fortifications that lean against it. In addition, the location of the territory at the beginning of the uphill road determines a change that has already taken place in the political organization of the city.

The best-known features of Porta Consolare are found in Porta Praetoria in Aosta (*fig. 9 - colony Augusta Praetoria Salassorum*) founded in 25 B.C.: a rectangular courtyard arranged in width and without an internal compartment for minor passages, a sturdy pseudo-isodomic masonry in ashlar leveled in correspondence with the arches, a flat frieze at the crown. Except for the side bastions, the Aosta gate has the same plan as Spello gate, but with doubled internal dimensions.

If the construction of Porta Consolare can be attested in a time frame in which the programs for the reorganization of the city are not yet definitively fixed, this assumption does not apply to the construction of Porta Venere a few decades later³⁶, whose design is studied and adapted precisely to the rugged morphology of the terrain on which the monumental entrance stands³⁷.

It is interesting to study the size of the gate about the presence of the large, terraced sanctuary not far from the North. Porta Venere, which opens in the direction of the extra-urban sacred area identified under Villa Fidelia, compared to the other doors is designed according to more rigid proportion criteria. The span of the central opening is twice as long as the span of the side openings, and the same module is repeated for the height of the entrances. In addition, the towers are also built according to a precise modular ratio, resulting from the measurement of the side of the base dodecagon, six feet long, which is exactly one-tenth of the height of the elevation of about 60 feet. It can therefore be deduced that in the construction of Porta Venere, the architectural complex that still identifies the skyline of the city of Spello in the Umbrian landscape, the reference to the use of a proportional scheme could also be motivated by the privi-

36. The presence of two phases of construction of the wall could be further confirmed by the observations, which emerged from the surveys: the courtyard of Porta Consolare occupies an area of 37 feet wide and 20 feet deep. On the contrary, the shaft of Porta Venere is doubled in depth (40 feet) and wider in width (45.5 feet).

37. The hypothesis on the works of adaptation of the land to allow the construction of the elaborate plant of Porta Venere is put forward by Giuseppe Moretti (MORETTI 2014, p. 233; MARRONI 2005).

leged position of hinge between city and countryside that the monument assumes on the sacred area of Villa Fidelia. The architectural structure seems to emphasize a direct contact between the fertile countryside and the city from which the procession starts in the direction of the Sanctuary, under whose protection the entire community is placed. Thus the Gate, also crossed on the occasion of the religious itinerary, is emphasized by the use of materials, ashlar of white travertine on the façade and the same masonry apparatus of the walls in the covering of the towers, and in the almost triumphal structure, open towards the sacred area. Not to be overlooked, finally, is the competitive aspect that the center of *Hispe-lum* supported with the nearby *Asisium* and *Perusia*, which had probably played an important role in the construction of a more majestic gate than all. In the imposing and grandiose complex, the architecture of the two towers certainly has a significant weight in conveying the image of the colony to the outside. Their polygonal shape makes the towers a type that can be found, beyond Spello, in other city gates in northern Italy, for example, the towers of Porta dei Leoni in Verona (fig. 10), Porta Palatina in Turin, and Porta Praetoria in Como. In these buildings, the presence of the shaft, the polygonal shape of the architectural body, and the development in the height of the towers³⁸ led to theorizing a model experimented on one of the first times in Spello and then exported to Northern Italy as part of an all-Augustan architectural program. In addition, Porta dei Leoni in Verona, dated to the Caesarian age, has the layout of the façade with a gallery framed by towers³⁹, while Porta Palatina in Turin, built on the foundation of the colony *Iulia Augusta Taurinorum* in 27 B.C., seems to be the closest model to the case of Spello⁴⁰.

Thanks to the polygonal shape, the towers would be close to the provisions that Vitruvius wrote in the same years as the construction of Porta Venere⁴¹. The Roman treaty writer argued that the towers must have a round or polygonal plan, to avoid easy damage due to the blows of war machines⁴². Finally, the Hellenistic-Roman matrix of the entire structure is evident: the towers of Porta Venere are inseparable

38. The development in height of the towers cannot concern the cases of Como and Verona, of whose structures only traces remain in the foundations.

39. GROS 1996, p. 45.

40. RICHMOND 1930.

41. As is well known, the chronology of *De architectura* has always been much discussed by philologists (FERRI 1966, p. 250). It is thought, however, that most of the texts were composed around 27 B.C.

42. VITR., *De arch.*, I-5, 5.

from the walls of which they are part and have the same building technique that makes up the external cladding of the wall, an *opus vittatum* technique in squared blocks of pink limestone from Subasio Mount.

To fully understand the significance of the architecture that made up the ancient walls of *Hispellum*, designed according to a Hellenistic ancestry⁴³, comparisons are now proposed with the Etruscan fortification of Perugia, datable between the fourth and third centuries B.C.⁴⁴. It is also strongly Hellenistic in style⁴⁵. The comparisons concern Porta Venere, the so-called Arco Etrusco, Porta Consolare, and Porta Marzia, even though there is a temporal distance of about a century and a half. Porta Venere, facing north-west, open-closed towards Perugia and Assisi (cities with which there was a competitive relationship), has an imposing appearance, is located on a high ground compared to the other two monumental gates of Spello and is outlined as an architecture with a majestic and tight character, but at the same time triumphant. Like the *Arco Etrusco* in Perugia⁴⁶, open in the direction of Gubbio, the monumental entrance is marked by two towers. On the other hand, Porta Consolare is conceived as a triumphal arch with three arches for the friendly welcome of those coming from Rome, in the same way as Porta Marzia in Perugia, which even welcomes visitors from Rome⁴⁷ with the high-relief sculptures of the Gods Zeus-Tinia and the Dioscuri-Tiniasclenar, positioned on the upper part of the façade and facing outwards from a *coenaculum*. In further substantiating the thesis that in Spello the city walls have a more symbolic rather than military significance, both Porta Consolare and Porta Venere are in the overall project not functional to the principles of the Scaean Gates⁴⁸ (whose entrances, as is known, are located on the left of those who access) and therefore contrary to Vitruvius's provisions about poliorcetics⁴⁹.

43. On the Hellenistic influence in the fortifications' design in Italy: BÉRARD-BROISE-JOLIVET 2000, pp. 69-80.

44. For the dating of the Etruscan walls of Perugia to the 4th-3rd century B.C.: RONCALLI DI MONTORIO 1989, pp. 11-49. On the other hand, in TORELLI 2008, p. 274, the fortification is dated between the end of the third and the beginning of the second century B.C.

45. TORELLI 2008, p.276.

46. The Etruscan Arch or Arch of Augustus dates back to the second century B.C. and is later than the city walls of which it is part (RONCALLI DI MONTORIO 1989, pp. 11-49).

47. TORELLI 2008, p. 275.

48. The Scaean Gate (cf. HOM., *The. XXII*, 6). See also BIGI 2016, p. 20, footnote 58.

49. VITR., *De arch.*, 1-5, 2.

The walls of Spello, unlike the Etruscan walls of Perugia, do not have housings for war machines or other polyorctic devices. To tell the truth, the two so-called Propertius's towers⁵⁰ of the Porta Venere complex seem to perfectly follow the Vitruvian principle, according to which the towers must be protruding to allow the enemy to be hit more easily⁵¹. There is, however, a substantial difference between the towers of the two gates of Spello and Perugia. In Spello, the towers are incorporated into the fortification and allow communication between the two floors of the gate as they are internally hollow⁵², while in Perugia the two towers that flank the Arco Etrusco are solid and leaning against the masonry for purely defensive purposes.

In conclusion, we can confirm the theoretical concept already expressed during Antiquity (VII century A.D.) by Isidore of Seville who emphasizes precisely the very close connection of identity between walls and city: «Urbs ipsa moenia sunt»⁵³. The city coincides with its walls. The walls of Spello, an important work of landscape architecture about the Roman phase, are designed more as a landmark than to fulfill defensive purposes. Thanks to the peace reached under Octavian, the political purpose of the architecture was to demonstrate the new status of 'colony' achieved by the city.

50. This name derives from the famous verse of the Elegies of Propertius (PROP., IV-1, vv. 124-125).

51. VITR., *De arch.*, I-5, 2.

52. FONTAINE 1990, p. 288.

53. ISID., *Etym.*, I, XV, 2.1.

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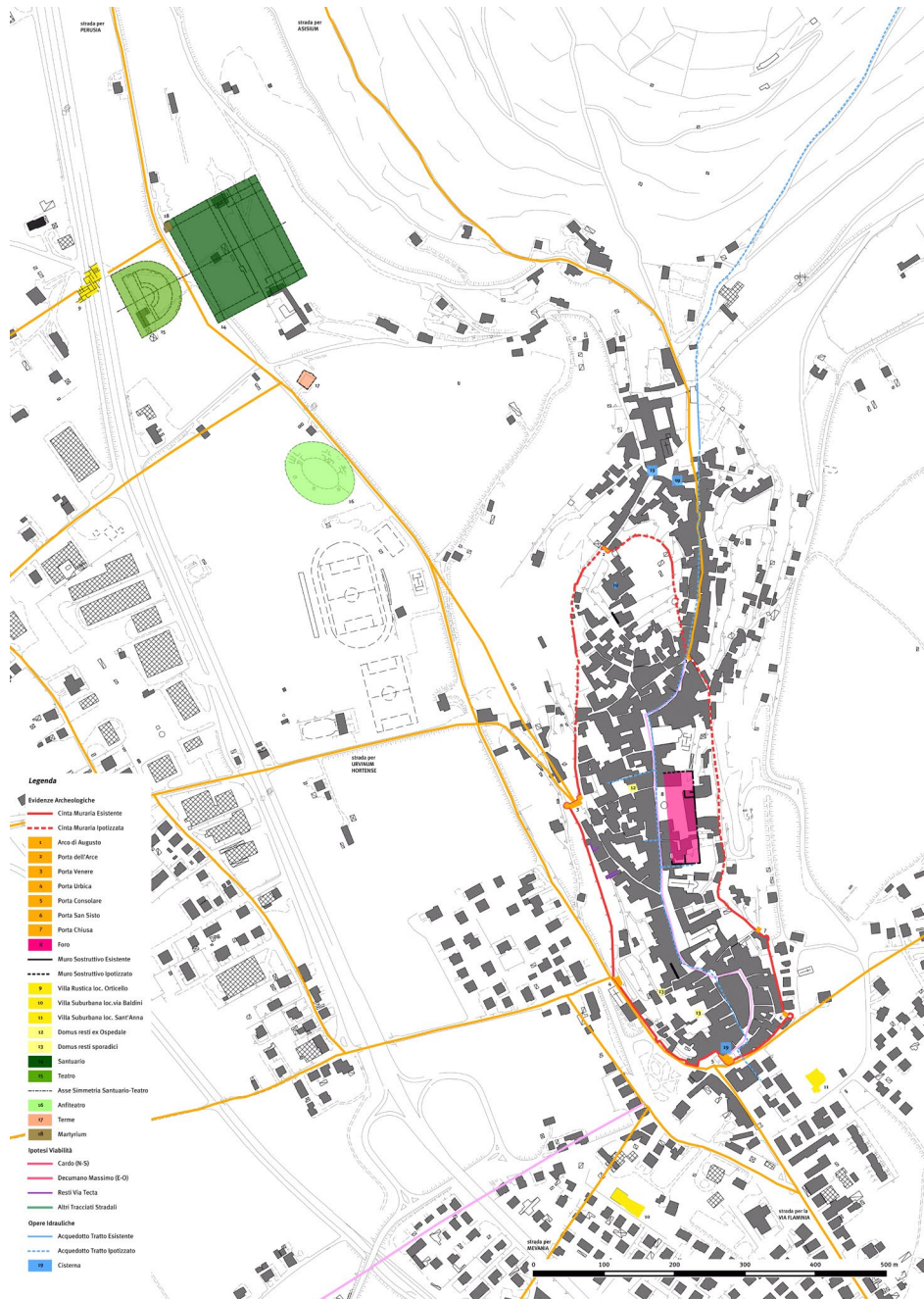


Fig. 1 – Analysis of the main archaeological evidence related to the Roman phase (GIS).



Fig. 2 – Area of the Roman sanctuary (in red) in respect to the center of Hispellum (GIS applied on an orthophoto).

Fig. 3 – Northwest view of the city walls of Hispellum (photo, 2023).

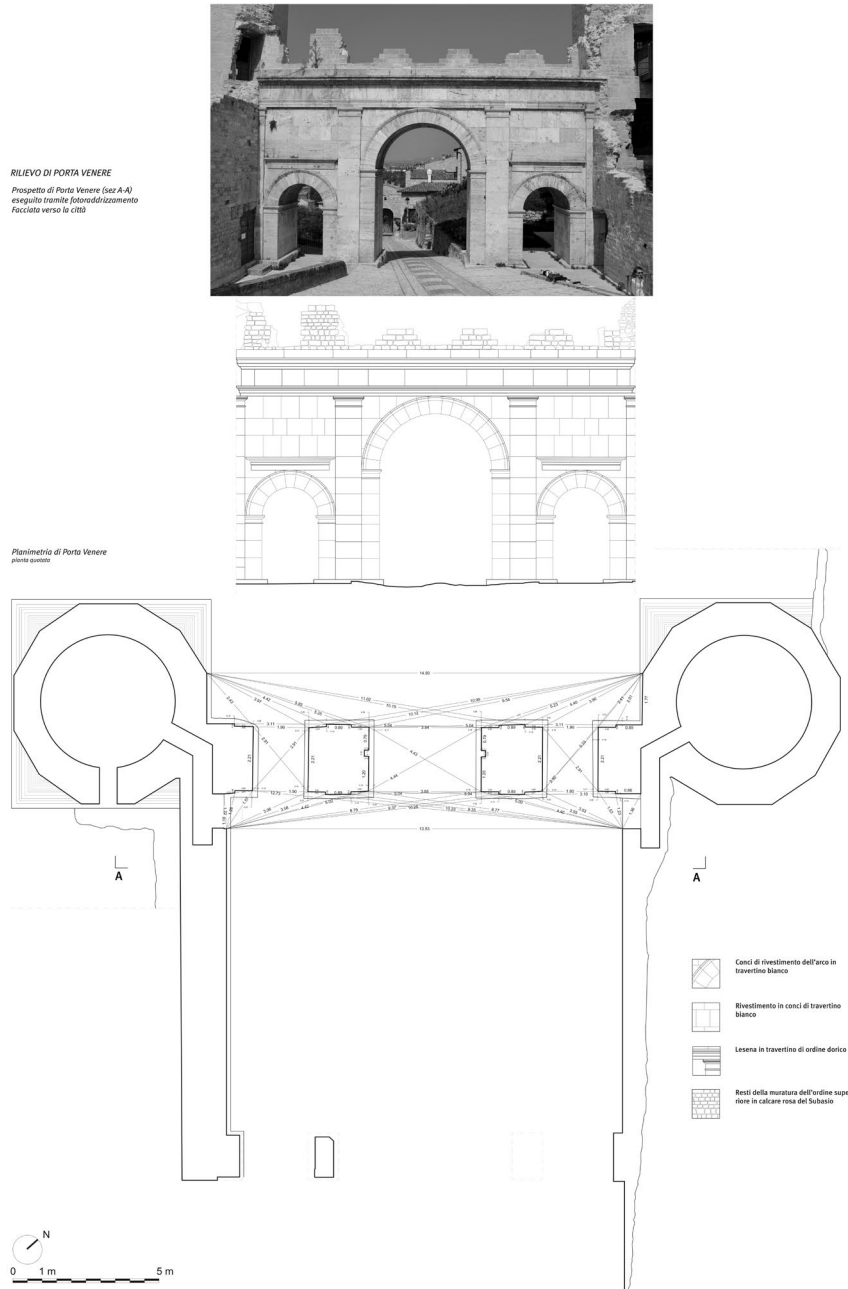


Fig. 4 – Archaeological survey of the internal façade of Porta Venere (Author's elaboration).

RILIEVO DI PORTA VENERE
 Prospetto di Porta Venera
 eseguito tramite fotoraddrizzamento
 facciata verso la campagna

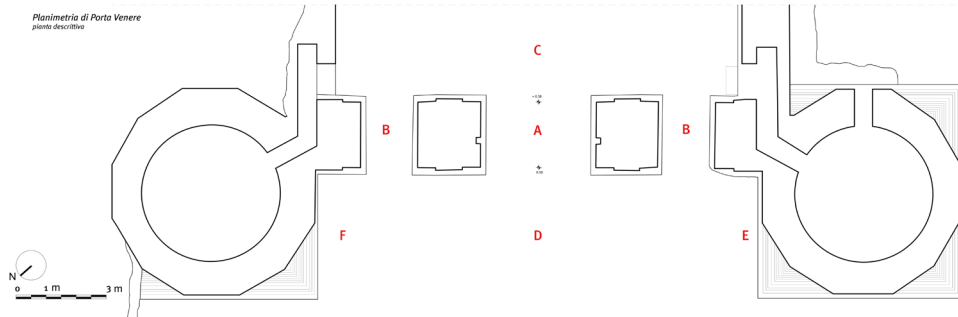
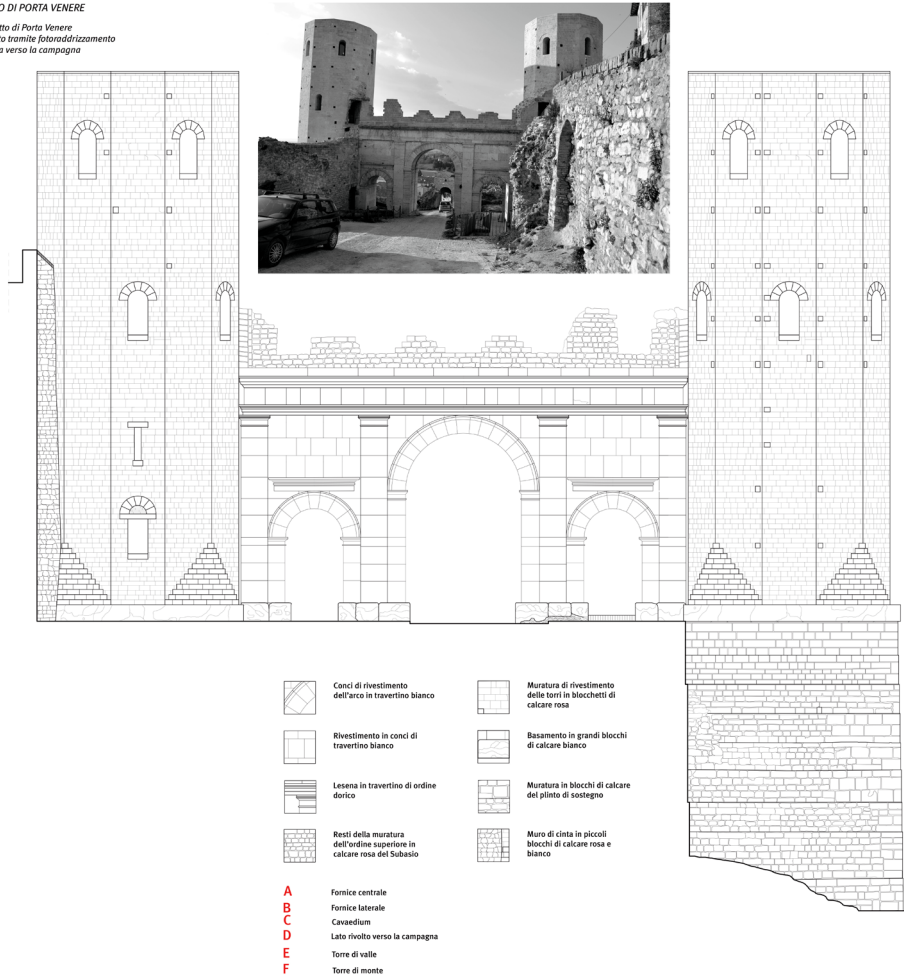


Fig. 5 – Archaeological survey of the external façade of Porta Venera (Author's elaboration).

RILIEVO di PORTA CONSOLARE

Prospetto di Porta Consolare
eseguito tramite
fotografizzamento

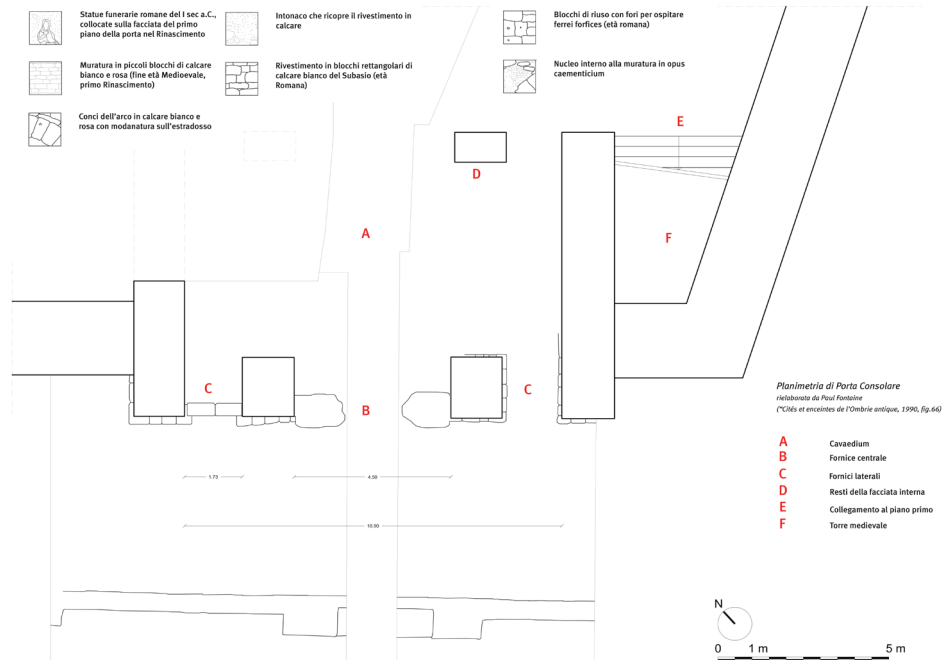
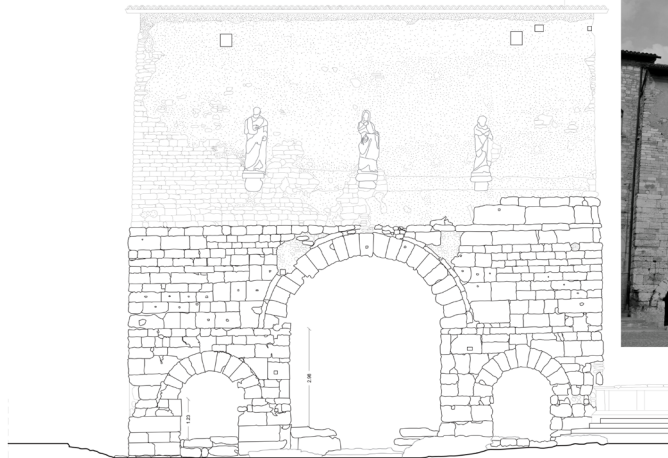
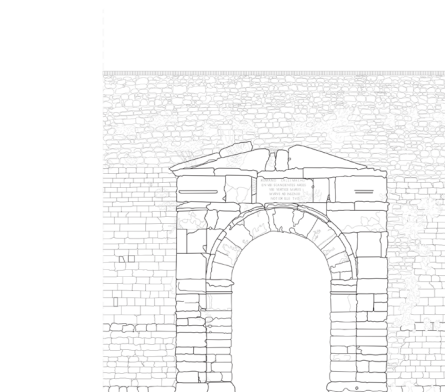


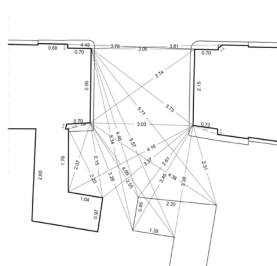
Fig. 6 – Archaeological survey of Porta Consolare (Author's elaboration).

RILIEVO DI PORTA URBICA o di SAN VENTURA

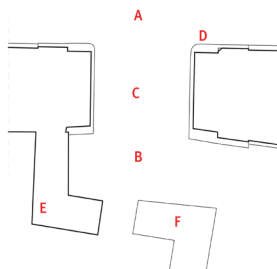
Prospetto di Porta San Ventura
eseguito tramite
fotoriduzione










Planimetria di Porta Urbica
pianta quotata



Planimetria di Porta Urbica
pianta descrittiva



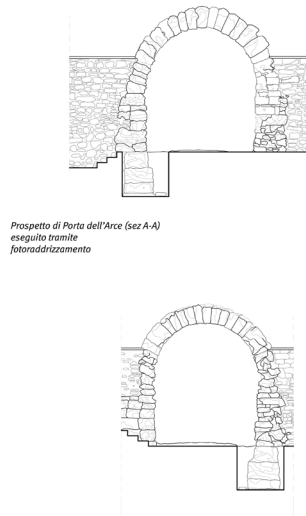
-  Muratura in piccoli blocchi di calcare bianco
-  Presenze erbacee nella muratura
-  Blocchi rettangolari di calcare bianco del Subesio
-  Parti della muratura costituite da pietre disposte in modo irregolare
-  Filare di laterizio che culmina il muro di cinta
-  Conci dell'arco in calcare bianco e resti della modanatura sull'estradosso
-  Iscrizione collocata nel XVIII: riporta un verso del poeta Propertio

- A** Lato rivolto verso la campagna
- B** Lato rivolto verso la città
- C** Fornice d'accesso
- D** Basamento del muro
- E** Muro di costruzione
- F** Traccia di muro romano

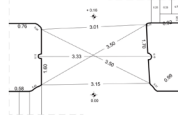


Fig. 7 – Archaeological survey of Porta Urbica (Author's elaboration).

RILIEVO DI PORTA DELL'ARCE o ARCO DEI CAPPUCCINI

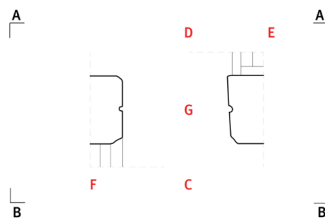


Prospetto di Porta dell'Arce (sez B-B) eseguito tramite fotoraddrizzamento



Planimetria di Porta dell'Arce pianta quotata

-  Blocchi di calcare bianco
-  Rivestimento in calcare bianco e rosa dei blocchi dell'Arco
-  Muratura in blocchetti di calcare e malta
-  Conci della ghiera dell'arco
-  Cornice in muratura che culmina il muro di rifianco



- C** Lato rivolto verso la campagna
- D** Lato rivolto verso la città
- E** gradini verso valle
- F** gradini abitazione
- G** spazio per la saracinesca

Planimetria di Porta dell'Arce pianta descrittiva



Fig. 8 – Archaeological survey of Porta dell'Arce (Author's elaboration).



Fig. 9 – Aosta, Porta Praetoria, external façade (photo, 2017).



Fig. 10 – Verona, Porta dei Leoni, external façade (photo, 2017).