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The Ancient City and Huizinga's Homo Ludens

19 February 2013

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Hanna Stöger is lecturer and postdoctoral researcher at the University of Leiden where she obtained her doctorate in 2011. She has been involved in fieldwork in Germany, Greece, Italy, Malta and The Netherlands. Her expertise lies in ancient urbanism combined with today's insights into urban planning. Her research has been mainly focussed on Ostia, the port-town of Rome. She has published on aspects on urban neighbourhood development (in Paliou, Lieberwirth and Polla 2013), the ancient 'movement economy', and Ostia's *collegia* (in Laurence and Newsome 2011). Her publication 'Rethinking Ostia' (2011) presents a spatial approach to Roman urbanism.

Leiden Open Access Link to

"Rethinking Ostia: a spatial enquiry into the urban society of Rome's imperial port-town":
<https://openaccess.leidenuniv.nl/handle/1887/18192>

Reviewed in BMCR:

<http://bmcr.brynmawr.edu/2012/2012-10-39.html>

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Taking inspiration from Huizinga's work on play, this study presents a new view on the ancient city, concentrating on the playful use of urban space and the visual structure of cities. In emphasising the city's 'playability' the paper reacts to the slightly overused interpretation of Roman cities as a political arena for the construction of imperial power. In turning away from 'imperial theme-parks' the discussion will focus on informal spaces within the ancient city, investigating spaces available for non-instrumental social interaction, or simply *play*. To identify the urban playgrounds of the ancient '*Homo Ludens*', the study will combine insights from empirical studies of today's cities (Stevens

2007), archaeological evidence and the results of spatial analyses (Space Syntax's visibility graph analysis). Ostia, the port city of Rome will serve as a case study.