

# Chapter 6

## Ancient cities in new worlds: Neo-Latin views and classical ideals in the sixteenth century

*Javier Martínez Jiménez and Sam Ottewill-Soulsby*

### Introduction

The discovery of the Americas in 1492 shook the way in which Europeans understood the world. Every ship that returned brought news about an entire new continent that had not been foreseen in the scriptures and was at best a hypothetical in the classical corpus with which they were familiar.<sup>1</sup> Columbus, however, was quick to find a Latin prophecy that bathed the discovery in the light of antiquity:

*Venient annis saecula seris  
quibus Oceanus vincula rerum  
laxet novosque Tiphis delegat orbes  
atque ingens pateat Tellus.  
Neque sit terris Ultima Thule.*

Centuries will come in later years in  
Which the ocean shall  
release the chains  
That constrain all things, and the Earth  
shall expand greatly, and Tiphis shall  
Name new worlds, and  
Thule shall not  
Be the last of the lands.

Columbus purposefully misquoted Seneca,<sup>2</sup> removing the goddess Tethys and substituting her with Tiphys, the pilot of the *Argo* and a navigator like himself, underlining human agency compared to the divine.<sup>3</sup> But this was only one of

<sup>1</sup> Gerbi, *Nature in the New World*; Pagden, *The Fall of Natural Man*; Haase and Meyer, *The Classical Tradition and the Americas*; Grafton, *New Worlds, Ancient Texts*.

<sup>2</sup> Seneca, *Medea*, 375–379: ‘Venient annis saecula seris/ quibus Oceanus vincula rerum/ laxet et ingens pateat Tellus/ Tethysque novos delegat orbes./ Neque sit terris ultima Thule’.

<sup>3</sup> Clay, ‘Columbus’ Senecan prophecy’.

many attempted ways to see the New World through a classical lens linked to the hypothesised *Antipodes*.<sup>4</sup>

The first encounters in the Caribbean were with peoples who lived in an apparently blissful Arcadian Golden Age suitable for conversion and civilisation, for which purpose new cities would be founded. Such encounters were already familiar to the Spaniards, as they resembled the situation they had found in the Canary Islands a generation earlier. The foundation of the cities of Isabela and Santo Domingo on Hispaniola followed the examples of Santa Cruz on Tenerife and Las Palmas on Gran Canaria.

But these new lands acquired a new importance a few decades later, when urban civilisations such as the Aztecs and the Mayas were found on the American mainland. Cities were significant because of the wealth and potential they suggested for kings and conquerors back home.<sup>5</sup> But these cities also mattered for the Spaniards who encountered them and the Europeans who read the reports. They were symbols of culture and civilisation which possessed structures and social organisations recognisable to the newcomers with corresponding implications about the nature of their builders and inhabitants, potentially placing them in a tradition that went back to Greece and Rome. These cities also meant that if the New World was to be remade in Spain's image, new cities would have to be placed within with a pre-existing urban landscape.

The discovery of the Americas took place during a period when humanists in Europe celebrated knowledge of the classics and mastery of Latin letters as the foundation of learning. In what follows, we will examine the way in which the cities of the New World were considered in the light of this education through the Latin works of two humanists: Peter Martyr d'Anghiera (1457–1526) and Francisco Cervantes de Salazar (c. 1515–1575). The works of these two writers provide a limited but highly revealing corpus of Latin writings by figures connected to Spain. We consider the extent to which the use of Latin influenced views of New World cities, as well as offering examples of the adaptation of Roman terms to describe of early modern cities with all the associated cultural baggage that came with them.<sup>6</sup>

Peter Martyr's translation of the reports that arrived from the Americas was essential in the distribution of news to the educated elites of Europe using Latin as a common language. His education prompted him to re-interpret the reports he translated, commenting extensively on what he read, making the New World understandable in classicising terms. Unlike Peter Martyr, who never crossed the Atlantic, Cervantes de Salazar was an eyewitness to the Americas, living in Mexico. His writings were aimed at a local audience and in his writings the classical references were part of his Renaissance, neo-Latin education. Whereas Peter Martyr used the resources of the classical past to make indigenous cities more visible to his readers,

<sup>4</sup> Moretti, 'The Other World'; Feile Tomes, 'Synecdoche in reverse'.

<sup>5</sup> Mundy, 'Mapping the Aztec capital', 26–28.

<sup>6</sup> On this, see the pioneering work of Lupher, *Romans in a New World* and MacCormack, *On the Wings of Time*.

Cervantes de Salazar's use of humanistic Latin was designed to obscure the American context, turning Mexico City into a conventional Spanish settlement, albeit a grand and glorious one where learning thrived.

This chapter will begin by introducing the two writers who are our subjects before we consider their varied approaches to the indigenous settlements of the Caribbean and Mesoamerica. Their accounts of these villages and cities will then be contrasted with their depictions of Spanish urban foundations. This examination reveals how the Roman colonial city could be used to understand the cities of the New World and to model Spanish imperialism in these lands. This in turn demonstrates the usefulness of the ancient city as a tool for thinking about colonial cities in later centuries.

### Two neo-Latin Humanist authors

The career of Peter Martyr d'Anghiera demonstrates that the Habsburg enterprise of empire was a European phenomenon as much as a Spanish one. Peter Martyr was born in northern Italy in 1457, and received a superb education from Pomponius Laetus in Rome which attracted the attention of the Spanish ambassador. He arrived in Spain in 1487, where he turned down a chair at the University of Salamanca. He was present at the conquest of Granada and became a canon of the cathedral there in 1492. In 1501 Queen Isabella I appointed him royal chaplain and tutor to the court. There he completed the majority of the work that resulted in the collection known as the *De orbe novo Decades*. This began as a series of letters to former patron in Rome Cardinal Ascanio Sforza in 1493 and 1494, which detailed the discoveries of Columbus. At the prompting of Cardinal Luigi d'Aragona, Peter Martyr expanded these letters into eight reports on affairs in the New World, with the first published in Latin in 1511 and the last in 1525. The first collection of all eight was made in 1530. The word *decades* was a reference to the history of Livy, attesting to Peter Martyr's growing ambition and conviction that the New World needed an accounting that could equal the status of those of the Old.<sup>7</sup>

The *De orbe novo Decades* has rightly received a great deal of attention over the years, as the first great history of European encounters with the Americas. Peter Martyr was heir to a Greco-Roman tradition, which he brought to bear on the New World. There are a number of challenges involved with working with the *De orbe novo Decades*. To begin with, Peter Martyr updated it continually with new *Decades* with the passing of time and new information. As a result, looking for coherent themes may be misleading. Further, Peter Martyr never travelled to the New World. He was personally acquainted with Columbus and other key figures in the exploration of the Americas, and had access to letters and reports in his role as court historian, but his perceptions of the cities of the New World are ultimately mediated by the eyes of those who saw them.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>7</sup> De Franchis, 'Livian manuscript tradition', 4.

<sup>8</sup> On Peter Martyr's strategies for mitigating this, Beagon, 'Peter Martyr's use of Pliny', 236–240.

Nonetheless, Peter Martyr should be taken seriously as someone who shaped European understandings of the Americas. His non-Spanish background ensured that he communicated with a wide network of contacts. Much of learned Christendom encountered the Americas through Peter Martyr's writings. From the beginning, the *Decades* were an exercise in communicating with the rest of Europe, having started as a set of letters to one Cardinal, and being expanded at the request of another. Pope Leo X was accustomed to reading the *Decades* aloud after dinner for the amusement and instruction of his guests. By writing in Latin, Peter Martyr made the New World accessible to educated readers across Europe. Editions of all or some of the Latin *Decades* were published in the sixteenth century in Alcalá de Henares, Basel, Cologne and Paris.<sup>9</sup> Parts or all of the text were translated into Italian, German, English and French, and became core parts of volumes concerning the Americas. For these readers throughout the continent, Peter Martyr offered an essential guide to the extraordinary happenings across the Atlantic, rendering it clear and comprehensible.

Whereas in the late fifteenth century the Crown of Castile had to recruit its humanist talent abroad, by the sixteenth century it could grow its own. A case in point is Francisco Cervantes de Salazar, who was born in the 1510s in Toledo, one of the richest and most powerful cities of Castile. He went to university in Salamanca and, after graduating, he travelled as part of the entourage of one of his family's patrons to Flanders in 1539, where he came into contact with the Iberian Humanists that had flocked around Erasmus, including Luis Vives. During the 1540s he taught Latin and Rhetoric in Alcalá and Osuna. Like Peter Martyr, he made his career by travelling west across the sea, but his journey took him considerably further, as he moved to the New World in 1551, where the colonial administration required skilled and learned men like Cervantes.<sup>10</sup> There he taught Latin at a school in Mexico City before joining the newly founded university there, where he was Lecturer in Latin, Professor of Rhetoric and, eventually, Rector. In his later years he tried his best to join the higher echelons of the Novohispanic clergy, but local political intrigues (and ongoing issues with his relatives in Mexico) kept him from any such position. He died in 1575.<sup>11</sup>

Cervantes de Salazar was an avid translator from Castilian into Latin and vice versa. During his time in Alcalá, for example,<sup>12</sup> he worked closely with the continuators of the school that had produced the Complutensian *Polyglot Bible* and where Nebrija wrote his Castilian grammar and his Latin dictionary (both 1492).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>9</sup> Brennan, 'The texts of Peter Martyr's *De orbe novo Decades*'.

<sup>10</sup> On the spread of classical culture to New Spain, see Maillard Álvarez, 'The early circulation of classical books'; Guibovich Pérez, 'Books, readers and reading experiences'; Laird, 'Classical learning and indigenous legacies'.

<sup>11</sup> García Fernández, *Americanismos*; Nuttall, 'Francisco Cervantes de Salazar'.

<sup>12</sup> It is possible that he was relative of the Cervantes from Alcalá and related to Miguel de Cervantes, author of *Don Quixote*.

<sup>13</sup> García Fernández, *Americanismos*, 11.

Before moving to the New World, his literary production had been confined to translations and commentaries of coeval philosophical and theological writings rather than classical texts, and this relationship with neo-Latin writing is visible in his *Dialogues*.<sup>14</sup> These *Dialogues* (*Aliquot Dialogi*) were printed in Mexico in 1554 as an appendix to Cervantes de Salazar's translations of and commentaries on four texts by Luis Vives, and were dedicated to Alonso de Montúfar, Archbishop of Mexico.<sup>15</sup> The first dialogue, *Academia Mexicana*, is a description of the newly founded university. Cervantes framed this description as the dialogue between two academics, one local (Mesa) and one recently arrived from Spain (Guterrius). The two other dialogues give us an insight into the daily life of Mexico in the 1550s. These two introduce again a recent arrival (*advena*) from the Peninsula called Alfarus and two locals (*incolae*), Zuazus and Zamora. In *Civitas Mexicus interior*, the two guides lead their visitor 'like a second Ulysses, so he may admire the greatness of the city'.<sup>16</sup> In *Mexicus Exterior*, the trio walks out of the city to admire both the countryside of the Mexico Valley and the city itself from one of the abandoned Aztec temples. Two other of works his have survived, his 1560 *Túmulo Imperial*, a Latin and Spanish description of the funerary monument and obsequies of Charles I, and the *Chronicle of New Spain* (written between 1560 and 1566), a Spanish report of the conquest of Mexico and the history of the settlement.

Both Peter Martyr and Cervantes de Salazar attempted to make sense of the existing cities of the Americas and the new foundations of Spain, but their works (and, for our current purposes, their Latin prose) offered two different perspectives. Peter Martyr paid particular attention to the myths and history of the classical past, which his mastery of Latin granted him access to.<sup>17</sup> As we will explore in this chapter, he introduced ancient allegories and comparisons in his translations in order to make sense and further explain the reports he got from the New World. Cervantes de Salazar, on the other hand, used his writings as a didactic exercise to teach Latin, rather than classics *per se*, using his Mexican surroundings as exempla. He described a landscape he had witnessed first-hand in a plain and direct style that reflected the neo-Latin prose of his contemporaries. He belonged, after all, to a long Castilian tradition of vernacular and Latin translators that went back to the thirteenth century, and if he was aware of broader Humanist discussions of classical themes he did not include them in his urban descriptions.<sup>18</sup> But the differences in their approach to these cities

<sup>14</sup> The *Dialogues* fit within a long Humanist tradition of dialectic writings: see Burke, 'The Renaissance dialogue'.

<sup>15</sup> García Icazbalceta, *México en 1554*.

<sup>16</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 84: 'Plane tempus est, Zamora, ut Alfarum nostrum, Ulysses alterum, quod tam anxie appetit, per Mexicum deducamus, tantam urbis magnitudinem contemplaturum' = 'it is indeed time, Zamora, for us to lead our [dear] Alfarus, who is so very eager, around Mexico like a second Ulysses, so he may admire the greatness of the city'. This is probably in reference to *Odyssey*, 6.144 and 6.178.

<sup>17</sup> Maynard, 'Peter Martyr', 435–448.

<sup>18</sup> Cortijo Ocaña and Jiménez Calvente, 'Humanismo español latino'; di Camillo, 'Humanism in Spain'; compare the Toledo School of translators, Bsoul, *Translation Movement and Acculturation*, 141–180;

was shaped as much by their aims as by their times and places. Peter Martyr sought to make the cities of the Americas more legible by turning them into classical cities. Cervantes de Salazar used his classical education to make those cities more legible by turning them into Spanish cities, especially México, which he could recognise thirty years after its foundation as he could any other Castilian city. A useful place to begin is with the indigenous cities of the Americas.

### Native cities

European explorers of the New World were quick to turn to analogies from the Old World in order to describe and understand the cities they found. Temples were frequently described as mosques, evoking both an alien religion and new fields for Christian conquest.<sup>19</sup> The ancient city was also drawn upon another imaginative resource. In some places, such as Mérida in the Yucatán peninsula, the ruins of a previous Maya city suggested to conquistadors largely drawn from Extremadura the remains of the great Roman city of that name. The Roman city served to suggest grandeur and sophistication, pointing to the size and quality of the buildings that had been found. Yet even in an age inclined to read the cities of the Americas through the lens of Greece and Rome, there were few who went so far as Peter Martyr.

The importance of the ancient city to Peter Martyr's approach to the New World is first seen where the city was apparently most absent, in the islands of the Caribbean.<sup>20</sup> Although he noted the existence of settlements, including 'numerous villages, composed of twenty or thirty houses each' built in wood and arranged in circles around a public square, these did not rise to the status of cities in his view.<sup>21</sup> The peoples of Hispaniola were portrayed as technologically and politically primitive, 'devoid of civilisation and religion', and Peter Martyr compared them to the warring tribes found by Aeneas in Latium.<sup>22</sup> Such a comparison cast the Spanish as the Trojans, come to bring civilisation by founding cities.<sup>23</sup> But Peter Martyr also saw value in the state of the inhabitants of the Caribbean, which he discussed in a celebrated passage:

It is proven that amongst them the land belongs to everybody, just as does the sun or the water. They know no difference between *meum* and *tuum*, that source of all evils. It requires so little to satisfy them, that in that vast region there is always more land to cultivate than is needed. For them it is indeed a golden age [*Aetas est illis aurea*], neither ditches, nor hedges, nor walls to enclose their domains; they live

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Vélez León, 'Sobre la noción'.

<sup>19</sup> Beck, *Transforming the Enemy in Spanish Culture*. For descriptions of mosques in the period in North Africa, Urquizar-Herrera, 'Las arquitecturas del norte de África'.

<sup>20</sup> Eatough, 'Peter Martyr's account of the first contacts with Mexico'.

<sup>21</sup> *Decades*, 1.2, fol.5r: 'peregrantes innumeros, sed XX tantum XXX domorum singulos vicos'.

<sup>22</sup> *Decades*, 1.2, fol.6v: 'eo die quo trium regum solennia celebramus, divina nostro ritu, in alio potest dici orbe tam extero, tam ab omni cultu et religione alieno', fol.7r.

<sup>23</sup> Compare with contemporary illustrations of the Aeneid featuring Spanish caravels, Wilson-Okamura, 'Virgilian models'.

in gardens open to all, without laws and without judges; their conduct is naturally equitable, and whoever injures his neighbour is considered a criminal and an outlaw.<sup>24</sup>

This is one of several places where Peter Martyr makes observations like the one above.<sup>25</sup> While European observers of the Caribbean before Peter Martyr occasionally remarked on the ‘innocence’ of the peoples there, few did so with such sympathy or connected it to the functioning of their society. In his reference to a ‘golden age’, consisting of gardens rather than cities, Peter Martyr made sense of the people of the Caribbean by use of classical ideas of a paradisiacal state of nature before civilisation, devoid of property and coercion, even if elsewhere he refers to warring kings.<sup>26</sup> Thus Virgil and Ovid served to place the inhabitants of Hispaniola in a context familiar to a Renaissance humanist.<sup>27</sup> Peter Martyr did not make such an allusion naively. There is surely irony in his account of how the Taíno people weep and abase themselves at hearing of ‘how great were the cities and how strong the fortresses’ of Spain, ‘repeatedly asking if the country which produced such men and in such numbers was not indeed heaven’.<sup>28</sup> In more advanced Jamaica, where the inhabitants ‘have a keener intelligence and are cleverer in mechanical arts’, violence and war were common.<sup>29</sup>

The indigenous settlements of Hispaniola were more populous than the first cities founded by Columbus (on which see below). Despite this, Peter Martyr did not dignify them with the title of city. Peter Martyr offers a suggestion of the way in which the settlements of Mesoamerica could be identified by his summary of a report from a *praetor urbanus* (on which title, also see below) named Corales, based at Darién, who met a fugitive from further inland. In addition to being familiar with the concepts of literacy and books, the fugitive:

said that in his country the cities [*urbes*] were walled and the citizens [*cives*] wore clothing and were governed by laws. I have not learned the nature of their religion, but it is known from examining this fugitive, and from his speech, that they are circumcised.<sup>30</sup>

<sup>24</sup> *Decades*, 1.3, fol.10r: ‘Compertum est apud eos velut solem et aquam terram esse comunem, necque meum aut tuum, malorum omnium semina, cadere inter ipsos, sunt enim adeo paruo contenti, quod in ea ampla tellure magis agri super sint, que quicquam desit. Aetas est illis aurea, necque follis, necque parietibus aut sepibus predia sepiunt. Apertis vivunt hortis, sine legibus, sine libris, sine iudicibus sua natura rectum colunt, malum ac scelestum eum iudicant, qui inferre cuique iniuriam delectatur’; Eatough, ‘Peter Martyr’s account of the first contacts with Mexico’, 406.

<sup>25</sup> *Decades* 1.2, fol.7r : ‘Sed Hispaniolos nostros insulares illis beatiores esse sentio, modo religionem imbuant, quia nudi, sine ponderibus, sine mensura, sine mortifera denique pecunia, aurea aetate viventes, sine legibus, sine calumniosis iudicibus, sine libris, natura contenti, vitam agunt, de futuro minime solliciti’.

<sup>26</sup> Lovejoy and Boas, *Primitivism*, 27–28, 32–33, 38–40; Cro, ‘Classical Antiquity’, 379–419.

<sup>27</sup> Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, 1.120–121.

<sup>28</sup> *Decades*, 1.3, fol.10r: ‘quantae urbes, qualia oppida’, ‘iterum atque iterum an coelom esset ea terra, quae tales tantosque viros gigneret interrogans’.

<sup>29</sup> *Decades*, 1.3, fol.8v: ‘ingenio acutiores ac mechanicis artibus magis deditos’.

<sup>30</sup> *Decades*, 3.10, fol.54r–v: ‘moenibus septas urbes et vestiri cives aiebat suos, legibusque gubernari, sed quid colant non didici, recutiri [sic] tamen dispraeparique ab exemplo et sermone fugitiui

All of these characteristics would have suggested a level of civilisation to Peter Martyr unmatched by the inhabitants of the Caribbean. But they would also have fitted together as a natural extension of living in a city. A walled city inhabited by citizens with a shared code of laws fulfils the criteria of an Aristotelian *polis* or Ciceronian *civitas* pretty precisely.<sup>31</sup> As the inhabitants were participants in a civic community, education sufficient for literacy, a sense of morality sufficient for modest clothing and a sense of religion sufficient for circumcision would naturally have followed. This news was fascinating to Peter Martyr not just because of the inherent interest of more people, but because it was the first suggestion of the existence of a *res publica* in the Americas, a polity that might be recognisable as such, since the societies encountered in the Caribbean had kings but no civic order.

Few settlements were more obvious a city than Tenochtitlán. Peter Martyr had Cortés' report of the city. He also saw a native map of the city which was to form the basis of the 1524 Nuremberg map.<sup>32</sup> His resulting depiction is of a spectacular city of wonders, defined by its extraordinary physical layout. Tenochtitlán is a city of water, built on and defended by its lagoon in a manner that demands comparison to Venice.<sup>33</sup> Its wealth comes from the salt of that lagoon, and said wealth and the architectural skill and ambition of the city is demonstrated by its provision of water by an 'aqueduct' from which 'the whole city drinks'.<sup>34</sup> Although the description is ultimately from Cortés' second letter, the Latin vocabulary used by Peter Martyr invites comparison with the Roman past. His Tenochtitlán has broad streets (*ingentes plateae*), porticoes (*porticibus*) and central squares (*fora*).<sup>35</sup>

Cortés wanted to astonish his European readers.<sup>36</sup> Peter Martyr was suitably impressed, and sought to convey that impressiveness in his Latin. These descriptions can be compared to Cervantes de Salazar's Latin account of the later city of Mexico. Although his Spanish chronicle drew on Cortés' letter, the Mexico City that emerges in his *Dialogues* is one where the pre-Spanish past has virtually no role. Far from seeking to impress his reader with the remaining great Aztec buildings, Cervantes de Salazar obscures them. Although aqueduct, streets and markets all appear, any connection they possess to Tenochtitlán is ignored. Where the Aztecs feature, it is as the people who raised the pagan temple-towers (*templariae turres*) upon which human sacrifice was conducted, now thankfully disused and so covered in trees that they can be mistaken for 'artificial hills ... whose top, which was flat, was ascended via

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conpererunt'.

<sup>31</sup> Shaw, "'Eaters of Flesh, Drinkers of Milk'", 5–31; Wiedemann, 'Between men and beasts', 189–201.

<sup>32</sup> Mundy, 'Mapping the Aztec capital', 25.

<sup>33</sup> *Decades*, 5.3, fol.64; fol.70: 'uti liquet videre in insigni nostra Venetiarum respublica ... tum in aquis ipsis fundatas civitates ad Venetiarum similitudinem'.

<sup>34</sup> *Decades*, 5.3, fol.64: 'urbem aquaeductus ... universa civitas inde potum sumit'.

<sup>35</sup> *Decades*, 5.3, fol.70: 'sunt in ea ingentes plateae, sed una praecipue porticibus undique circumvallata ... numerare posse in foris et nundinis quotodie vendentium'.

<sup>36</sup> Sanchis Amat, 'La primera *laus urbs*', 43–50.

stone steps'.<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, neither writer described the temples as pyramids, a word which was used by writers such as Bernardino de Sahagún.<sup>38</sup> Peter Martyr had visited those in Egypt, and had seen the images of the temples in maps of Tenochtitlán, but as Cortés described them as mosques and as oratories, it is understandable that he called them temples.<sup>39</sup> Cervantes de Salazar was physically present, but a pyramid might have implied usage as a tomb to his mind. Alternatively, he may have preferred the word temple to emphasise the paganism of their previous use as buildings, while also evoking Roman and Jewish precedents.

If the spectre of Moctezuma was a peripheral figure for Cervantes de Salazar's Mexico City, he is the sun around which Peter Martyr's Tenochtitlán orbits. It is the *civitas* from which the Aztec emperor rules the *urbes* of his empire, his seat and domicile, ordered by his officials.<sup>40</sup> Said officials hint at the way Peter Martyr interpreted Cortés' letters to cast Tenochtitlán in a more classical aspect. The conquistador wrote that the main square of the city contained:

a very large building like a courthouse where ten or twelve persons sit as judges. They preside over all that happens in the markets, and sentence criminals. There are in this square other persons who walk among the people to see what they are selling and the measures they are using; and they have been seen to break some that were false.<sup>41</sup>

Peter Martyr puts a slightly different spin on this passage, rendering it as:

the great senatorial house. There ten or twelve elderly men sit perpetually with authority to judge as jurists of the matters that occur. Lictor ministers assist them with their sceptres to carry out what they command; there are also the *aediles*, who take care of the numbers and the measures.<sup>42</sup>

Although on the surface this is a similar picture, by translating Cortés' courthouse (*audiencia*) as a *domus senatoria*, Peter Martyr would have suggested a rather more

<sup>37</sup> For pyramids as temple-towers, *Decades*, 4.2, fol.57r, 4.3, fol.68r and 5.6, fol.76v; for the pyramids as artificial hills, *Mexicus Exterior*, 276–278: 'sublimiora manufacta promontoria assurgere, quorum ad hoc temporis exstant aliquot; ad eorumque fastigia, quae in planiciem desinebant, per scalas lapideas ascensus erat'.

<sup>38</sup> Miller, 'The temple pyramids', 19.

<sup>39</sup> *Legatio Babylonica*, 69.1–74.7, 296–302; Mundy, 'Mapping the Aztec capital', 25; Cortés, *Cartas 2*, 'mezquitas', 66, 68, 76, 77, 88, 96, 97, 118, 121, 123, 142; 'oratorios', 76, 88.

<sup>40</sup> *Decades*, 5.1, fol.63; 5.3, fol.63, fol.64.

<sup>41</sup> Cortés, *Cartas 2*: 'una gran casa como de audiencia, donde están siempre sentadas diez o doce personas, que son jueces y libran todos los casos y cosas que en el dicho mercado acaecen, y mandan castigar los delinquentes. Hay en la dicha plaza otras personas que andan continuo entre la gente, mirando lo que se vende y las medidas con que miden lo que venden; y se ha visto quebrar alguna que estaba falsa', 96. Trans. 115.

<sup>42</sup> *Decades*, 5.4, fol.71: 'Domus est in maioris plateae lato capo senatoria inges. Ibi perpetuo sedent autorati longaevi decem aut duodecim viri, ut iureconsulti de rebus emergentibus iudicaturi. Astant illis scoeprati lictores ministri, qui iussa illorum exequantur. Assunt et aediles, qui numeris et mensuris praesint'.

Roman institution to his European readers. This is reinforced by the reference to lictors with sceptres (although not *fasces*), not present in Cortés' original, and by the formalising of the market inspectors, Cortés's *personas*, as *aediles*, the Roman officials who were responsible for the markets there. This description would seem to represent a deliberate attempt to present Tenochtitlán as a city whose municipal government was reminiscent of that of Rome.

Peter Martyr's description of Tlaxcala goes still farther in this habit of interpreting Mesoamerican polities in classical terms. His basic information about the city was taken from Cortés, but his analysis of the political system of Tlaxcala through the lens of the classical city seems to be his observation alone. Although Cortés remarked that Tlaxcala reminded him of Venice or Genoa, this seems to be as much a description of an urbanised landscape as a comment on a network of city-states. It was left to Peter Martyr to interpret the meaning of the information he was given. Tlaxcala is described as a republic throughout his account. Peter Martyr emphasises Tlaxcalan resistance to monarchy:

In this city they say that there are many champions, lords of the towns, whose services the Tlaxcalan republic uses as leaders in the war. They do not want to have lords, and woe to anyone who had the desire to raise his head!<sup>43</sup>

Peter Martyr compares them to the Swiss, citing Orgetorix's failed attempt to seize control of the Helvetians, recorded by Caesar.<sup>44</sup> He judges the Tlaxcalans to be 'just and upright'.<sup>45</sup> Their politics are 'partly democratic and partly aristocratic, like the Roman republic at some time before it became a violent monarchy, '[it] admits heroes ... but resists lords'.<sup>46</sup> This image of a mixed constitution maintained by old-fashioned republican virtue and martial valour would be extremely appealing to anyone familiar with Aristotle, Polybius and Cicero.<sup>47</sup> The idea of the mixed constitution had become increasingly important in late medieval thought, and Peter Martyr was influenced by these trends.<sup>48</sup>

While comparing the classical city-states of Greece and Rome to those of Mesoamerica conceals much of great importance, there are obvious points of similarity that make it a useful starting point for deeper comprehension.<sup>49</sup> Indeed, Peter Martyr's

<sup>43</sup> *Decades*, 5.1, fol.68v: 'In hac in urbe multos inesse proceres aiunt, villarum dominos quorum veluti ducum opera, Tascalteca republica utitur in re bellica. Dominos recusant ven si cui animo surgeret, velle caput erigere in deterius exitium conciuem eum traheret'.

<sup>44</sup> *Decades*, 5.1, fol.68v; Caesar, *Bello Gallico*, 1.2–4.

<sup>45</sup> *Decades*, 5.1, fol.68v: 'iusti et recti sunt cultores Tascaltecani'.

<sup>46</sup> *Decades*, 5.2, fol.66r: 'Democratice partim, partim vero aristocraticae uti aliquando respublica Romana, priusque ad violentiam monarchiam deveniret, patitur proceres dominos fugiunt'.

<sup>47</sup> von Fritz, *The Theory of the Mixed Constitution*; Wood, *Cicero's Social and Political Thought*, 159–175; Nippel, 'Ancient and modern republicanism', 6–26.

<sup>48</sup> Blythe, *Ideal Government*.

<sup>49</sup> On the benefits of comparing city-states in different eras, Mohlo *et al.*, *City States*; Nichols and Charlton, *The Archaeology of City-States*.

account of Tlaxcalan political organisation resembles that of scholars working today.<sup>50</sup> The case of Tlaxcala offers an example of the way in which the Greco-Roman city could be used to think about the cities of the New World in a sympathetic manner. Descriptions like those of Peter Martyr were to be very important in later debates concerning the humanity or intelligence of the inhabitants of the Americas, with Tlaxcala serving as a standard counterargument to those who claimed that the Indians had no true polities of their own.

## Spanish colonies

Peter Martyr's interest in the cities of the New World was not confined to indigenous ones. When he reported the first years of the colonisation of the Caribbean, he noted the foundation of Villa Isabela in Hispaniola, the first city (*civitas*) of the Americas. The foundation of this city in 1494 had been one of the main objectives of his second trip: '[Columbus] ordered every workman [to load] all of their trade's tools which they would in time use in building a new city in foreign regions.'<sup>51</sup> This new city, the *Isabellica Civitas* on Hispaniola,<sup>52</sup> was meant to substitute the preliminary settlement that had been built on the return of his first trip and consolidate Castilian rule by establishing a municipality on the island.

Villa Isabela was a central stop in the early days of the exploration and colonisation of the Caribbean. It was described by Peter Martyr as the one city amongst the many colonies established in Hispaniola ('ex Hispaniola, in qua urbem et colonias construxisse hispanos diximus').<sup>53</sup> From very early on it was stated that King Ferdinand's policy was to set foot and establish fortifications in those lands ('in his terris figere pedem arcesque ibi condere et animus regis [Ferdinandi]').<sup>54</sup> Even if the occupation of Villa Isabela was short-lived,<sup>55</sup> Hispaniola as an island was conceived and ruled as any of the other European possessions of the King of Castille and, as such, it needed a city with a municipal order and an ecclesiastical hierarchy, and Santo Domingo soon became the primary city ('ad Sanctum Dominicum urbem primariam metropolitanam') of the Spanish Caribbean.<sup>56</sup>

Peter Martyr was an innovator when he used word *colonia* in a context that involved the settlement of foreigners in a new territory. Until his day, exclaves, distant territories, possessions in Outremer and trading entrepôts had not been termed colonies.<sup>57</sup> But in underlining the connection between these new settlements

<sup>50</sup> Fargher *et al.*, 'Egalitarian ideology and political power', 227–251.

<sup>51</sup> *Decades*, 1.1, fol.4v: 'Instrumenta omnia fabrilia, ac demum alia cuncta quae ad novam civitatem in alienis regionibus condendam faciunt, unicuique artifice imperat'.

<sup>52</sup> *Decades*, 1.6, fol.10.

<sup>53</sup> *Decades*, 2.1, fol.32.

<sup>54</sup> *Decades*, 1.10, fol.31.

<sup>55</sup> Deagan, 'La Isabela'.

<sup>56</sup> *Decades*, 3.4, fol.43.

<sup>57</sup> Modern scholarship would call them colonies, though. Cf. Finley, 'Colonies'.

and the Crown of Castile, and the working of the fields (*colere, cultio*), Peter Martyr was consciously invoking the old Roman Republican system. A colony is presented, therefore, as a newly founded city, not a territory or a dominion, or even a settlement's legal status.<sup>58</sup>

In the years that followed, the Spaniards developed a way of establishing *coloniae* (i.e., cities) in Hispaniola, Puerto Rico, Darién and Cuba, but the exact process is best explained in his reporting of Cortés' foundation of Veracruz:

[Cortés' men] held a council on the issue of founding a colony [*de colonia deducenda*] without consulting the Governor of Cuba Diego Velázquez ... They elected Cortés himself as their overall governor ... [and] he appointed others as magistrates to establish the government of the city [*urbis regimen*].<sup>59</sup>

This is also seen in the foundation of a new colony in Jamaica:

After consulting the captains, he carried out the pointless charade of founding a government and distributing the magistracies ... He appointed as councilmen of that shade of a colony [*umbratilis coloniae rectores*] ... He appointed a mayor [*praetorem vero urbanum*] ... Out of the people he also appointed sheriffs [*milites executores*] which the Spaniards call 'alguaciles', and aediles to regulate weights and measures.<sup>60</sup>

The essence of creating a colony was, therefore, to establish a municipality; an administrative and civic community from which Castilian and Christian law could be exercised.<sup>61</sup> In that sense, Castilian colonisation mirrored early Roman practices.<sup>62</sup> Cortés had an ulterior motive to underline the process he followed, since he was technically contravening the orders of the governor of Cuba, but in order to justify his later actions against the Aztecs he needed to underline that he was not an enfranchised 'neighbour' (*vecino*) of Cuba anymore because he held a municipal position elsewhere. Castilian municipalities had two chambers, an assembly of commoners (*cabildo*) and a council of burghers (*regimiento*), which corresponded to the two main urban ranks: the labourers (*labradores*) and the citizens (*ciudadanos*), which included also the lower gentry (*hijosdalgo*). All of them would be enfranchised neighbours (*vecinos*) by right of

<sup>58</sup> Cf. Nebrija's *Vocabulario*, who translates 'colonia' as 'ciudad poblada de extranjeros' ('city populated by foreigners').

<sup>59</sup> *Decades*, 4.7, fol.60r: 'De colonia deducenda, progubernatore Cubae Dieco Velasquez inconsulto consilium ineunt ... Generalem eligunt gubernatorem ipsum Cortesium ... is magistratus alios creat, ad condendae urbis regimen'.

<sup>60</sup> *Decades*, 8.1, fol.104r: 'Centurionum animis indagatis, condendae reipublicae inane simulachrum exercuit, magistratus divisit ... Umbratilis coloniae rectores creat ... Praetorem vero urbanum erexit ... Creavit e populo et milites executores quos Hispanus alguaziles nuncupat, ac ponderum et mensuram correctores aediles'.

<sup>61</sup> Cf. the later laws of Philip II: *Laws of Indies*, 4.5.6 (That the municipal grant for ordinary mayors and councillors shall be done according to this law) and 4.7.19 (That Justices and councillors are elected out of the settlers, and that the incomes are registered [by the settlers]).

<sup>62</sup> Guillamón Álvarez, 'Algunas reflexiones'.

residence and protected by municipal statutes.<sup>63</sup> This complex post-Medieval system did not translate well into Latin, and the use of Latin civic terminology in this period seems to have lost most of its original Roman meanings.

In Cervantes de Salazar's *Dialogues* we are given a detailed Latin description of the municipal order of Mexico.<sup>64</sup> We find a reference to a municipal *curia* and *senatores* (rather than *curiales*), in one case specifying that there are senators of the *curia* and of the city (*curiae et urbis senatores*), perhaps referring to members of the council (*regidores*) and the assembly (*concejales*). This contrasts with Peter Martyr, who used *curia*, *senatus* and *senatores* as translations for royal officials and councils (including the Council of Indies).<sup>65</sup> Cervantes still used *praetores* to signify *alcaldes*, the highest magistrates of the council who were elected 'every year by the councilmen, and they have power of life and death'.<sup>66</sup> In the same way that Peter Martyr had to use *militēs executores* for *alguacil*, an Arabic word without a clear Roman equivalent, Cervantes had to use a convoluted periphrasis: *praetorii summi officiales*.

From their phrasing Peter Martyr and Cervantes de Salazar only used these terms as translations of Castilian equivalents. This is more evident when we look at the first Castilian-Latin dictionary, edited by Antonio de Nebrija in 1495, which directly equates *alcalde maior de justicia* with *prætor*.<sup>67</sup> That same dictionary gives *officialis præfecti vel executor* for *alguacil*, and *senator* for *regidor de ciudad*.<sup>68</sup> There is no rhetoric in the descriptions of the civic order aimed at implanting a Roman meaning to these offices, no reference of *duumviri* or *curiales*; simply a neo-Latin translation of early modern terminology.

The same applies for civic language. Nebrija gives *civis* for *ciudadano desta ciudad* (i.e., local citizen) and *civitas* for *ciudad e ayuntamiento de ciudadanos* (city and assembly of citizens).<sup>69</sup> Both Cervantes de Salazar and Peter Martyr use *civis* to mean 'local citizen', akin to the Castilian *vecino*, or enfranchised neighbour because of residence. The municipal status of residents is one of the reasons behind the rebellion against the Columbus brothers, who mistreated the Indians of Hispaniola and free Castilians living in Villa Isabela.<sup>70</sup> Local citizenship, in this sense, remained as important in the metropolis (e.g., *Petrus Arias Abulensis, civis autem Segoviensis*)<sup>71</sup> and the New World (*Hispaniolae cives*).<sup>72</sup>

<sup>63</sup> Goicolea Julián, 'La ciudad de Nájera'; Oliva Herrero, '¿Qué es la comunidad?'; Palencia Herrejón, *Ciudad y oligarquía*.

<sup>64</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 108; *Mexicus Exterior*, 264.

<sup>65</sup> *Decades*, 7.3, fol.92v: 'Lucas Vazquez ... civis Toletanus et ex Hispaniolae senatoribus unus ... ad rerum Indicarum Senatuum ab Hispaniola missus procurator'.

<sup>66</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 108: 'ibi duo consident praetores, ab urbis senatoribus quotannis creati, necis vitaeque potestatem habentes'.

<sup>67</sup> *Vocabulario*, fol.10r.

<sup>68</sup> *Vocabulario*, fol.10v and 88r.

<sup>69</sup> *Vocabulario*, fol. 35v.

<sup>70</sup> Moreta Castillo, 'Primeros pleitos'.

<sup>71</sup> *Decades*, 2.7, fol.31.

<sup>72</sup> *Decades*, 7.3, fol.92v.

In the *Dialogues*, the use of *civis* similarly presupposes a citizen of Mexico, especially when it comes to participation in communal events, like religious and civic processions.<sup>73</sup> Cervantes also has his fictional tourist use the wealth of the *cives* as an indicator of the wealth of the city.<sup>74</sup> The inhabitants of Mexico were also credited in his *Túmulo Imperial* with the dedication of the Cenotaph of Emperor Charles V. The exhortative inscription begins by saying ‘You, who are by far below to the deeds of Caesar [Charles], behold in wonder the superb Monument, which the Mexican citizens [*mexicani cives*] in accordance to their means [*pro facultate*] dedicated to him out of gratitude and piety’.<sup>75</sup> The *cives* who dedicate the monument and the *cives* who participate in the parade of Saint Hippolytus’ day are the same group of city dwellers, and it is implied that this is the urban population, not only those with the rank of citizen because in these contexts we should understand that *civis* is used to translate *vecino* not *ciudadano*. In his Spanish *Chronicle of New Spain*, Cervantes de Salazar uses *vecino* in the Castilian sense where enfranchisement comes with residence, and the *vecinos* are the Spaniards and the Indians.<sup>76</sup> In his Latin description of Mexico, he describes the two communities living together, and the city itself is a representation of the world, a microcosm.<sup>77</sup>

It is with great reason that I dare affirm that both worlds are summarised and contained in this place; and it can be said that Mexico is a small world, what the Greeks call a *microcosmon* ... The superb and tall buildings of the Spaniards (which occupy most of the land and are decorated with high towers and sublime churches) are surrounded and enclosed everywhere by the Indians’ dwellings in the suburbs, which are jumbled and arranged with minimal order.<sup>78</sup>

This view of the city underlines the dual nature of the community, but it also highlights the physical differences between *aedificia superba et sublimia* of the Spaniards and the *confusa et minime ordine distributa* dwellings of the Mexicans. Both groups might have lived together as part of a community, but they were clearly not the same. The microcosm allegory, however, should not distract us from the fact that the passage was describing an actual city, and it is in the depiction of the physical aspects of these new colonies that ancient Roman ideas appear again.

<sup>73</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 122; *Mexicus Exterior*, 264.

<sup>74</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 114.

<sup>75</sup> *Túmulo*, 8: ‘Gestis Caesaris longe inferior, qui mirabundus Tumulum spectas, quem mexicani cives pro facultate superbum, ex gratitudine & pietate ei posuere’.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. *Chronicle*, 1.4; 3.49, 50, 51; 4.25.

<sup>77</sup> On medieval understandings of cities as microcosms, see Lilley, *City and Cosmos*, 12, 132; cf. Robertson, ‘Scaling Nature’.

<sup>78</sup> *Mexicus Exterior*, 278–280: ‘ut summa cum ratione affirmare ausim orbem utrumque hoc loco circumscriptum et circumductum esse; et quod de homine graeci tradunt, Microcosmon id est, parvum mundum, ipsum appellantes, idem de Mexico dici posse ... Hispanorum aedificia superba et sublimia, et quas magnam soli partem occupant, altissimis turribus et surgentibus templis praestantissima, indorum domicilia suburbiorum loco, confusa et minime ordine distributa’.

In the *Decades* we get a glimpse of the nature of the first Spanish urban foundations in the New World. The construction of Villa Isabela implied erecting houses and a chapel, which the settlers did in a few days (*intra paucos dies domibus ... sacello erectis*), and the new city was consecrated in time to celebrate the feast of the Magi (*Trium Regum solemnia celebramus*),<sup>79</sup> although in Peter Martyr's writings it only became a city when it was enclosed by a ditch and ramparts (*fossis et aggeribus urbe circumvallata*).<sup>80</sup> Dwellings, limits and communal hubs are the three common elements that constitute a city in these first descriptions. Later on, more standardised ways of establishing colonies would develop, with urban grids, a central square and other public buildings, yet keeping those three core elements.<sup>81</sup> This pattern would eventually be enshrined in a law of 1523.<sup>82</sup>

Despite the classical regularity that comes with the grid, city building in the Americas was a direct continuation of late medieval city-building patterns. This was a tradition that the Castilians had cultivated in the Peninsula, from the gridded foundations of thirteenth-century Biscay to the foundations of the War of Granada, and then taken to the Canary Islands.<sup>83</sup> In this same spirit, the description of Mexico in the *Dialogues* underlines how it is a new, modern city that seeks validation in opposition to coeval European cities, as we will discuss below. Ancient Rome is mentioned, but always as a surpassed point of comparison; Mexico looks towards the future, despite the classicising language. That Mexico wants to break with the past is clear in the way the city is presented; not a refoundation of old pagan Tenochtitlán, whose blood-thirsty idols had been long razed and burnt,<sup>84</sup> but a new foundation that only shares with the previous city the location. The legend written above the painting of the city that presided the Imperial cenotaph clearly expresses this feeling: 'beneficio [sic] Caesaris novam incolimus urbem'.<sup>85</sup>

Mexico is presented as the epitome of the ideal Renaissance city. The *via Tacubensis* is the main avenue, which leads in a straight line to the main square ('*quae et celebrior est, et recta nos in foro perducet*').<sup>86</sup> This avenue is wide, flat and paved, and it has a central gutter; for all that it is of great public use:

<sup>79</sup> *Decades*, 1.2, fol.7.

<sup>80</sup> *Decades*, 1.3, fol.8.

<sup>81</sup> Martínez Lemoine, 'The classical model'; Smith, 'Colonial towns'.

<sup>82</sup> *Laws of Indies*, 4.7.1: That the new settlements might be founded according to the qualities of this law.

<sup>83</sup> Martínez Lemoine, 'The classical model'.

<sup>84</sup> *Túmulo*, 7. A panel in the cenotaph is described as depicting 'la ciudad de Mexico sobre una laguna con muchos ydolos quemados y quebrados arrojados del templo y al otro lado muchos yndios hincados de rodillas adorando una cruz ... dando gracias a Dios porque en el tiempo de Cesar ... fueron alumbrados de la ceguera en que estaban' = 'the city of Mexico, over a lake, with many idols burnt and broken, thrown from the temple and, on the other side, there were many Indians on their knees, worshipping a cross ... thanking God because in the time of Caesar [i.e., Charles] they were enlightened about the blindness in which they lived'.

<sup>85</sup> *Túmulo*, 12. This phrasing also underlines the dual nature of the community that establishes the new city.

<sup>86</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 86.

How the sight of this street lifts the spirits and restores the sight! So long and wide! So straight! How rightfully flat! ... And lest it get muddy and dirty in the wintertime, it is all paved with stones; and down the middle runs an open gutter in which, for greater pleasure, the water runs, which adds to the street's beauty and serves a public purpose [*civium utilitatem*].<sup>87</sup>

The avenue is flanked by porticoes that house all sorts of traders and businesses, and secondary streets branch off it (hinting at a grid),<sup>88</sup> but it is the alignment and the width that make a difference:

It is proper, for that reason, not only that the streets were wide and lofty ... to make the city healthier by not having tall buildings that blocked the flows and reflows of the winds that, with the sun, dissipate and carry away the plague-ridden fumes generated by the nearby swamp.<sup>89</sup>

This correlation between street orientation and salubriousness is taken from Vitruvius,<sup>90</sup> who had been 'rediscovered' a few decades ago, and whose wind theory applied to urbanism had been embraced by the learned community of the time.<sup>91</sup> The lofty avenues make Mexico stand out above the old, unplanned cities of Europe. This reference to Vitruvian planning is embedded in the sixteenth-century urban theory that Cervantes de Salazar may be familiar with, but it is in his description of the main square where Vitruvius is mentioned explicitly. The architect recommends the columns of the porticoes to be rounded, rather than square, and here Vitruvius is named directly ('nam quadrangulas ... non perindet commendat Vitruvius').<sup>92</sup> The fact that he uses *epystilium* for architrave a few lines later only confirms that Cervantes was familiar with the text.

While Vitruvius is used as an authority, Mexico is not presented as imitating antiquity. The main square (*forum*) is a perfect example of the modernity of Mexico:

Similarly, I cannot remember a square like this, nor do I think you could find a comparable one in either [the Old or the New] World. Good God! How flat and wide it is! How lively! How it is everywhere adorned with magnificent buildings and wonderful surroundings!<sup>93</sup>

<sup>87</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 88: 'Quam exhilarat animum et visum reficit viae huius conspectus! quam et extensa et ampla! quam recta! quanta ius planicies! ... et ne hiberno tempore lutescat et obscena sit, tota lapidibus strata; per cuius medium, quod etiam facit ad eius ornatum et civium utilitatem, intra suum canalem, aperta, ut magis delectet, aqua decurrit'.

<sup>88</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 92 ('Ab hac via quae, uti vides, in latum Tacubensem dividit, omnis generis mechanicarum et illiberalium artium operarii et artifices') and 118 ('transversas obiter ornatissimas vias inspecturi').

<sup>89</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 90: 'Decuit etiam et ea ratione, non solum, ut vides, amplissimas et spatiosas esse vias ... salubrior ut esset civitas, non impediens editissimis aedificiis flantibus et reflantibus ventis, qui una cum sole, pestiferos quos palus, quae in proximo est, vapores emittit, discutiunt longeque arcent'.

<sup>90</sup> Vitruvius, *De Architectura*, 1.6.

<sup>91</sup> Nova, 'The role of the winds'.

<sup>92</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 96.

<sup>93</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 94: 'Equidem quod meminerim, nullum [forum]: nec censeo in utroque orbe aequale inveniri posse. Bone Deus! quam et planum et capax est! quam hilare! quam undique ambientibus superbis et magnificis aedificiis illustratum!'

The square is impressive because of its size, and this enables it to gather ‘markets and auctions’ and merchandise from across the province,<sup>94</sup> in a way that not even ancient Rome could. Ancient Rome needed nine different squares for so many markets (and here Cervantes gives an eclectic selection of *fora*: *Suarium*, *Olitorium*, *Boarium*, *Livium*, *Julium*, *Aurelium et Cupedinis*) but Mexico needs only one (‘hoc unum pro cunctis Mexici est’). Something similar happens with tribunals (*fora iudiciaria*) of which Mexico, as Rome, has three.<sup>95</sup> Ancient comparanda add panache, especially when the main square of Mexico is far superior to the Roman *fora*, but the cities of Europe are the ones that Mexico is competing with: Cervantes’ alma mater, Salamanca, is the point of comparison for Mexico’s university,<sup>96</sup> in the same way that Seville and Toledo are for its cathedral<sup>97</sup> and Venice for its canals.<sup>98</sup> Even where the square is a *forum* and the cathedral a *templum*, when Cervantes has his tour guides mention the aqueducts of the *fons Chapultepecum*, there is no mention to the conduits of ancient Rome, but rather the irrigation systems of Spain.<sup>99</sup>

## Conclusions

Peter Martyr was very conscious that he was attempting to write about a new world in a new age with a vocabulary gleaned from ancient texts. He explained his use of ‘the vulgar tongue’ when distinguishing between ship types:

I do this that I may be more clearly understood, regardless of the teeth of critics who rend the works of authors. Each day new wants arise, impossible to translate with the vocabulary left us by the venerable majesty of antiquity.<sup>100</sup>

Despite these challenges, he found in Latin the words he needed not just to translate the reports he read for wider consumption, but also to explain and analyse the information he was given. In both the wildernesses and cities of the New World he saw the classical past reborn, giving the incredible reports of the Spaniards a Roman veneer of legitimacy and validity. The learned men of Europe could thus slot the New World into categories they could understand and accept. The conquistadors

<sup>94</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 96: ‘sunt nundinae ... auctiones; ad hoc totius provinciae mercatores suas merces adferunt et important’.

<sup>95</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 108.

<sup>96</sup> *Academia Mexicana*, 28.

<sup>97</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 114: ‘in Hispania nihil tam illustret Toletum, urbem alioqui nobilissimam, quam ditissimum juxta et speciosissimum templum. Hispalim, opulentissimam civitatem, sublimis et longe opulentior sacra domus nobilitat’.

<sup>98</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 140: ‘Quanta est ibi lintrium copia, quam multae onerarie trabes, importantisque mercibus optimae, venetias ut non sit cur desideres’.

<sup>99</sup> *Mexicus Interior*, 124; *Mexicus Exterior*, 266: ‘Quod est in Hispania spectaculum [= aqueductus], quod cum hoc aut aequari aut comparari possit?’

<sup>100</sup> *Decades*, 2.1, fol.23v: ‘Ut apertius quid velim intelligatur, neglectis tetricorum mordendi causas in scriptores quaerentium genuinis. Emergunt naquis non pauca cotidie, quibus vera nomina relinquere non potuit vetustatis veneranda maiestas’.

became Greek and Roman colonists, expanding the bounds of civilisation through their courage and their cities. Peter Martyr was one of the pioneers (if not the first) who brought the Republican meaning of *colonia* into modern use,<sup>101</sup> popularising the term in a way that most likely set the foundations of our current understanding of colonies and colonialism.

The enduring popularity of Peter Martyr's work suggests that this was a vision shared by many others. Like Peter Martyr, Cervantes de Salazar also wished to show off the cities of the Americas and the impact of Spanish colonial urbanism. In his case, however, the language he employed was designed not to recreate the ancient world, but to make Mexico City an exemplar of modern European patterns of learning and urbanism. The ideas of the Roman city were useful, even when separated from their context and applied to a city without a Roman past. The ancient city and Vitruvius were valuable to him precisely because they made the colonial city comparable (if not equal) to a European one. For both, in fundamentally different ways, the Roman past provided a means to understand the colonial city in the face of the new wants arising from the new days they lived in.

## Acknowledgements

This chapter has been written within the 'Impact of the Ancient City' Project led by Prof. Andrew Wallace-Hadrill (Faculty of Classics, University of Cambridge). This project has received funding from the European Research Council (ERC) under the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme (grant agreement no. 693418). The authors would like to thank the other members of the project for sharing their thoughts on a first draft with us, and Felipe Fernández-Armesto for his useful comments.

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<sup>101</sup> Cf. Finley, 'Colonies.'

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