

Some of us live in the suburbs. But do we think about the role they play in life of the city or in our social life? Suburbs may have various character – from dangerous districts, harbour districts, through colourful districts of minorities, up to residential quarters of the richest people. Undoubtedly, it was the same in Antiquity.

But how it was in the suburbs of military bases and towns along the frontiers of the Roman Empire, neighbouring the countries which were considered as barbarian lands? Such suburbs played twofold role – not only places inhabited by civilians accompanying the army, but also settlements which serviced the military – by trading and making business with soldiers, or providing them entertainment.

The settlements attached to the legionary bases and suburbs of frontier towns had another important feature: they were places where cultures, languages, traditions merged, and people of various origin lived together, forming new values and making new discoveries.

The aim of the project is to explore one of such districts placed near the legionary fortress at Novae (present northern Bulgaria) on the Lower Danube. This district in the late Antiquity was treated in a special way: it was surrounded by defensive walls and included into the main fortress. We would like to find out why it happened, who lived there and what occupations had, and what was the fate of this part of the town. Such suburbs, which at the certain moment were surrounded with defensive walls, are present both in the Lower Danubian region and the whole Empire. Thus, it is not without grounds to claim that we have to deal with some general phenomenon – possibly related with permanent danger of barbarian attacks or maybe with the need of creation the additional space for the new military units or allies of Rome. And finally, it is possible that – as it is nowadays – such districts hosted immigrants from the evacuated provinces, which the Romans had to abandon. We will try to answer these questions, which are so important now for Europe and even for the World. We believe that it will help us to understand the mechanisms which act in such fascinating places, and what is their fate during difficult times.