THE NUCLEAR FACTORY AS A REGENERATIVE PARADIGM OF INDUSTRIAL ABANDONMENT /

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Abstract. An analysis of contemporary cities' satellite images reveals large industrial agglomerations within and near urban centers. The traditional industrial antinomy between operational structures and abandoned sites has led to the clear separation between productive functionality and urban "waste". The current climate emergency necessitates an evaluation of this active-passive distinction as a potentially high-risk factor, while also presenting a strategic opportunity for reconfiguring industrial heritage. From this second scenario, the research analyses a borderline case of this possibility within the panorama of industrial heritage: nuclear power plants. From this perspective, nuclear factories are plants that incorporate the principle of planned obsolescence from the outset, necessitating an inherently circular design and meticulous end-of-life planning. The highly significant environmental and infrastructural impact of the plants, combined with the inherent dangers of the sector, prevents their uncontrolled abandonment, which is widespread and marginally controlled by other types of production. Through a comparative analysis, the research identifies case studies of practical application of these strategies to outline best practices and replicable design models. Examples such as those of the Yankee Rowe NPP (USA) and the HDR Großwelzheim NPP (Germany) emerge as representative of post-production environmental recovery processes – "greenfield" regeneration – while cases as the NPP of Fort St. Vrain and Rancho Seco 1 (USA), are exemplary for the post-production reconversion project, where power plants continued to maintain their energy production function trough different technologies. The analysis of the mandatory post-operational planning applied to this architectural typology demonstrates the possibilities of transforming the fate of abandoned factories, even in the case of highly complex industries. These strategies applied to nuclear power plants suggest a project replicability oriented towards the circular management of industrial space, excluding the possibility of abandonment.

Introduction. The analysis of contemporary cities reveals the presence of post-industrial reminiscences not only within their urban spaces, but also in their surroundings. The causes that led to industrial abandonment are well documented in the literature, from the oil crisis of the 1970s, the expulsion of factories from the city center to the outskirts, the relocation of production to emerging and more economical markets, to the reduction in demand for goods due to the economic crises of recent years (Aymonino, 1975; Spanedda, 2023; van Neuss, 2018).

This condition represents today the industrial antinomy between operational structures and abandoned sites, visible in contemporary geographies and identified by agglomerations that involve the urban, peri-urban and rural areas, extending up to the territorial scale (Dansero & Vanolo, 2006). Large available spaces, the distance from settlements and the better economic conditions have led to the concentration of the largest, most complex and impactful industrial architecture in the area outside the city. The landscape and territory that host them are therefore altered, and with them their relationship with the people who inhabit them:

> [...] *It seems that human action is no longer possible in the face of the industry's primary and prevailing concern, which is to produce, to transform nature, to which end it introduces into the territory, without regard for the resulting effects, its smoke screens, its foul-smelling debris, its anonymous scenery, producing the machine instead of man.* (*Turri, 1998, p. 110*)

While much attention has been paid to abandoned buildings within urban areas, the focus on extensive industrial plants outside them offers further opportunities to meet sustainability goals and stringent international policies – e.g., Agenda 2030 and the European Green Deal – through understanding and implementing their revaluation and redevelopment.

To analyze these possibilities, this paper focuses on one exemplary case study of complexity and impact, but also with a predetermined fate: the nuclear power plant. Unlike other industries, the nuclear power plant possesses two closely related and relevant characteristics: 1) the causes leading to the end of its operating cycle are primarily determined by the plant's obsolescence, not by reasons of production relocation or declining demand; 2) complex and restrictive safety requirements today require nuclear plants at the end of their life to plan and realize their decommissioning, thus avoiding the possibility of uncontrolled abandonment.

Based on these considerations, this paper aims to analyze the elements that identify the peculiarities and grades of complexity of nuclear power plants, highlighting post-operational needs and alternative solutions to abandonment. Six case studies are used to compare different possible outcomes for nuclear power plants at the end of their life cycle, which are helpful for investigating the possibility of scaling up and replicating these practices – whether mandatory and/or possible for nuclear power plants – in other complex, extensive industries.

The potential of end-of-life: avoiding abandonment. Literature and professional practice offer a wide range of projects that have interrogated abandoned urban industrial architectures/sites – e.g., the FIAT Lingotto industry in Turin (IT) and the Bankside Power Station in London (UK) – extending the scope to examples on a territorial scale, such as the Ruhr industrial area in Germany. These examples, although different from each other, are linked by the cessation of production activities and the activation of reuse, regeneration, and redevelopment processes that have transformed them over time: the Lingotto factory, designed by engineer Giacomo Matté-Trucco, was transformed into a multifunctional center in Renzo Piano's celebrated project; the Bankside Power Station was redesigned by Herzog & De Meuron to become the current Tate Modern; a full-fledged plan was developed for the Ruhr industrial district – the International Building Exhibition Emscher Park – with the aim of comprehensively transforming the area and featuring several flagship projects such as Peter Latz's Duisburg Nord Landscape Park.

The examples presented, however, also highlight some specific and sig-

nificant characteristics that oriented reuse and prevented post-operative abandonment: geography, central to large urban settlements or enough extensive to encompass entire landscapes; the economic value of the architecture and the land on which it stands; the heritage value as a lever for the conservation – albeit through adaptation – of the architecture; the memorial value of the nation's industrial history.

However, these conditions are not always present or common to all types of industries present in the territories, raising some questions: is it possible to imagine to apply the principles of industrial requalification and the actions underlying adaptive reuse – e.g., alteration, conversion, reconstruction, rehabilitation, renovation, adaptation (Wong, 2016) – also to extensive architectures located in economically less relevant contexts? What are the possible destinies and opportunities for industrial architecture characterized by higher levels of economic, technical, and safety complexity?

Complexity and possibilities of nuclear decommissioning. It is precisely from these questions that examining a particularly significant borderline case, namely, nuclear power plant decommissioning, becomes helpful. This sector presents a unique challenge in terms of the industrial end-of-life issue, both on its technical and infrastructural scale and the necessary transformation processes it entails. Analyzing it allows a broader view beyond traditional examples of reuse, exploring how the principles of redevelopment can be applied to highly complex conditions. While the issue of nuclear decommissioning is highly complex and would require a more extensive discussion to examine all the elements involved in this practice thoroughly, this paper focuses on analyzing this energy factory with regard to the necessity and possibility of decommissioning, reprogramming, and reusing it, in order to highlight possible scalability with other industries with similar levels of complexity.

In this sector, the need to address the issue of decommissioning arises from the complexities linked to the intrinsic radiological risks and its technological obsolescence which predestines the end of the operational phase – currently on average around 30 years of production, with cases of extension of the operating license of around 40 years (Magaldi, 2025). However, it is important to note a substantial difference between the nuclear power plants built at the dawn of the discovery and application of this technology for energy production – mainly in the context of Generation I and II – and those of today. In the first case, regulations concerning the post-operational phase did not require the concrete implementation of end-of-life programs – which must now be drawn up as soon as the decommissioning phase begins for plants of these generations – while today, international organizations such as the IAEA require that the decommissioning plan not only be updated throughout the plant's lifetime, but also be drawn up even before its construction (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2014).

In this perspective, it is essential to clarify what is meant by decommissioning and, consequently, how today's nuclear power plants cannot be abandoned in an uncontrolled manner: «Administrative and technical actions taken to allow the removal of some or all of the regulatory controls from a facility. [...] Actions for decommissioning are taken at the end of the operating lifetime of a facility to retire it from service with due regard for the health and safety of workers and members of the public and protection of the environment.» (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2022). Furthermore, the same definition in the IAEA glossary also offers different opportunities regarding this phase of the plant: «A facility could, for example, be decommissioned without dismantling and the existing structures subsequently put to another use (after decontamination). [...] a facility (or its remaining parts) may also be considered decommissioned if it is incorporated into a new or existing facility» (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2022). Decommissioning is therefore a key phase in the life cycle of a power plant – along with the other five main phases of siting, design, construction, commissioning, and operation – representing both the importance of planning for the post-operational phase of the industry and proving to be an opportunity for the transformation of the plant itself.

While experience in the construction of nuclear power plants is currently significantly greater than that in decommissioning, the end of the operational life of first and second generation nuclear reactors is prompting politicians to consider new possibilities, ranging from requests for license extensions to the actual implementation of decommissioning (Invernizzi et al., 2020) – Figure 1. In fact, there are currently 407 nuclear power plants in operation, specifically those dedicated to electricity production, while 219 have already been completely shut down (WNISR, 2025). While about half of the reactors have already reached the post-operational phase and are undergoing decommissioning, only 23, about 10.5% of them, have been fully decommissioned. Of these, only nine have been released from regulatory oversight as greenfield sites (Magaldi, 2025), leaving the panorama still open to possible post-operational transformations in this industry. (Figure 1)

Therefore, if restoring the environment to the highest possible standard – return to greenfield – is a solution that appears to be a possible outcome of nuclear power plants (Lochbaum, 2014), at the same time there are also alternative outcomes, determined by the different conditions surrounding the post-operational phase: timing of action, privatization or not of operations, risks related to operators and the environment in which nuclear power plants are located, regulations, costs, public opposition and fear, scale of the industrial complex, waste storage, location – to give an example, this last element is due to the fact that power plants are generally built in locations far from populated areas, which are heavily infrastructured for their construction, undermining the economic interest of natural restoration on the one hand but offering opportunities for reuse on the other (Invernizzi et al., 2020; Laraia, 2019; Wimmers et al., 2023).

If this set of characteristics – except for very specific ones such as radioactivity – can also be found in other complex, extensive industries - e.g., processing/extraction plants, the steel industry/heavy industrial sites, and the energy industry – what are the possible alternatives offered by the post-operational nuclear phase that can also be applied to other industries?

Alternatives to abandonment: greenfield, revamping, reuse

Starting from the decommissioning phase, however, the outcome of this stage of the nuclear project may lead to different possibilities for the area concerned, depending on factors such as land value, the possibility of

reusing existing buildings, socio-economic and financial considerations, safety and environmental protection, technical feasibility, and asset value. These possibilities include: 1) release for unrestricted use and redeployment, comparable to the restoration of land to greenfield status; 2) release for new nuclear construction, comparable to revamping, although requiring decontamination; 3) release as brownfield for new industrial use, therefore connected to the possibility of reusing the space and/or existing architecture; 4) release for other reuse, in this sense comparable to adaptive reuse for solutions such as museums or heritage preservation, but requiring extensive and careful work for the release of the land (Xerri, 2019).

Based on these complexities and options, and given the imminent and future need to address the issue of nuclear decommissioning, what concrete experiences in terms of reuse, ecosystem restoration, and reactivation have already been implemented internationally? What are the architectural and landscape results of these operations? A comparative analysis of six case studies attempts to represent some of these solutions.

Starting from the option of greater attention to environmental restoration, from the list of experiences of returning nuclear sites to greenfield status – e.g. in the USA Shippingport, Big Rock Point, and Shoreham, and in Europe Niederaichbach and José Cabrera, to name only a few – the case of the Yankee Rowe nuclear power plant in the USA is unique, particularly due to the natural context in which it was built. Completed in 1960 and operational since 1970, the American plant in the state of Massachusetts operated and produced more than 1 million GWh of energy per year (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2025d). Having reached the end of its life after approximately 29 years of operation, the plant was permanently shut down in 1991, while the decommissioning processes and actions began with the drafting of the decommissioning plan in 1994, reaching completion in 2007 (Lochbaum, 2014). The plant, located within a large natural area on the banks of the Deerfield River – a common location for nuclear power plants given the large amount of water required for cooling – has been completely dismantled and the buildings demolished. The decommissioning operations followed a very complex process involving both the physical operators and the previous and future owners of the area (Laraia, 2019), with the aim of restoring the production area to a state of complete renaturalization – except for the waste storage facility, which is still present – Figure 2. Over the years of operation, the nuclear power plant produced almost 24 million GWh of energy, before disappearing, regenerating almost completely the natural layout of the space that existed prior to production over the course of 14 years. (Figure 2)

Similar environmental redevelopment can be found at the VAL Kahl nuclear power plant and the adjacent HDR Grosswelzheim in Germany. Here, decommissioning operations lasted about 25 years for each of the two reactors, compared to an activity of approximately the same duration for the first but only one year for the second (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2025a, 2025b; Magaldi, 2025). In this case, these are two experimental reactors of particular interest for three reasons: 1) VAL Kahl was the first reactor built by Germany; 2) the reactors are surrounded by areas dedicated to industrial and urban settlements; 3) the greenfield environmental restoration operations have been comprehensively completed (Wealer et al., 2015). In this case too, the industrial landscape with the distinctive characteristics of the nuclear power plant has once again given way to a context that is not only renaturalized but also fully reusable for any purpose. The decommissioning and demolition works covered the entire sites, eliminating any waste and without the creation of a specific on-site storage facility. It is also important to note the connection between these decommissioning operations and the country's recent decisions regarding the use of nuclear energy. In 2023, Germany, unlike many other countries, opted to completely shut down all its nuclear power plants completely, thus defining a new destiny and new possible prospects for all 31 sites of interest in the country.

While these greenfield redevelopment projects are characteristic of the highest level of sustainable regeneration of what could potentially have become industrial skeletons within the territory, it is also important to note that the significant economic impacts and operational difficulties of this strategy, as illustrated above, could also lead to different results. In this sense, the architectures already present on the production site can be reused, in whole or in part, and after the necessary decontamination procedures, to accommodate new production activities. This action contributes to a circular economy that aims at redevelopment as the beginning of a new phase in the life of the nuclear power plant, rather than complete cancellation – which has been introduced in recent years as a possibility for the plant as demonstrated by the IAEA definition of decommissioning illustrated above – (Laraia, 2019; NUREG, 2025).

The concept of circular economy, therefore, extends to reducing environmental impact, reusing part of the architecture, recycling uncontaminated material, and repurposing the logistics and energy infrastructure already present on site (Gillin, 2018). This set of elements can encourage the reuse of post-operational nuclear architectures and can lead to two possibilities: reuse for other purposes – based on the conditions of release of the land after decommissioning – or reuse for new nuclear power plant. In this sense, revamping and reuse operations are examples of measures capable of mitigating the economic impact in favor of redesigning and reprogramming architecture and territories and avoiding industrial abandonment.

Starting with the second scenario, examples of nuclear revamping include recent programs to reactivate shutdown power plants and thus reuse areas already equipped for the construction of new plants, such as those at the Palisades nuclear power plant in the US and Wylfa in North Wales.

The Palisades nuclear power plant in Michigan represents a turning point for the industry in the US, as for the first time the plant is moving from complete shutdown back to the production reopening phase (Pasqualetti & Solomon, 2025). After more than 45 years of production (1974-2022), the nuclear plant reached complete shutdown in 2022 and is now undergoing a transformation phase – through the necessary maintenance, technological, and administrative upgrades – in order to resume production (U.S.NRC, 2025). Through these operations, the nation's oldest power plant is now undergoing the necessary verification processes for the restoration of operations, becoming an exemplary case of the possibility

offered by revamping as a new possible future for the entire industry in terms of technical and economic feasibility (Magaldi, 2025).

Similar to this experience, especially in terms of the timing that is affecting precisely the present day, the Wylfa power plant in Wales could instead find a post-operational rebirth through technological innovations. After approximately 44 years of operation, the plant was completely shut down in December 2015 (International Atomic Energy Agency, 2025c) and new operational possibilities are emerging in 2025 – Figure 3. The revamping/reuse project should lead to the construction of eight Small Modular Reactors – nuclear reactors that are smaller than those built in conventional nuclear power plants (European Commission, 2024) – which will replace the now decommissioned nuclear power plant and should lead to the resumption of electricity production at the former nuclear site already in the mid-2030s (GOV.UK, 2025).(Figure 3)

Instead, analyzing the reuse option, this strategy may involve the establishment of new types of industries, while also aiming to reuse logistics and energy infrastructure as the cornerstone of restoring the same production. In this sense, interested operators can develop new energy production units in the same locations (Raimi, 2017).

The case of Fort St. Vrain nuclear power plant is exemplary in this regard. After its period of operation, the former US nuclear power plant was the first commercial plant to be decommissioned without opting for complete dismantling of the facilities or a change in production purpose but instead choosing only a different production technology. Operational since 1976, it was closed in 1989 and by 1992 the decommissioning and safety procedures for the plant had been completed. After the remediation of the land and radioactive structures, the turbine and auxiliary buildings were reused as part of a new power plant – this time a gas plant – reaching a production of 701 MW in 2001 through the construction of a second turbine (Laraia, 2009). In this sense, the decontamination and dismantling processes of the affected areas become helpful in identifying opportunities, not only environmental but also economic, that differ from a complete tabula rasa and return to greenfield status. Circular economy processes are therefore implemented through the reuse of architecture and/or equipment already present on site.

A similar experience can be found at the Rancho Seco I power plant in California. In this case, the former power plant does not limit energy production but aims for an even more sustainable solution. Spanning 87 acres of land, it began operations in 1975 but ceased operations permanently in 1989 following a public referendum, with decommissioning work completed in 2016 (SMUD, 2023). In this case, the long decommissioning phase was not only marked by its realization, but also by the development of actions to reuse the factory. While the production machines and radioactive components have been removed, the iconic cooling towers still represent a landmark within an area that has also maintained its energy production vocation: a gas power plant has reused the existing infrastructure to find a new location, while a 0.25 km² solar plant with approximately 100,000 solar cells has been built on the site of the former nuclear power plant (Laraia, 2019) – Figure 4. The redesign of the territory and the reprogramming of the architecture through reuse and repowering is also included in the Rancho Seco Recreational Park, partly on the areas belonging to the decommissioned power plant, now a hub capable of attracting the tourism sector in the surrounding area. (Figure 4)

In the context of reuse, it is important to note that some specific cases have found an alternative to end-of-life in patrimonialization – e.g. the former nuclear power plants of Trawsfynydd in the UK, Chinon in France, and Garigliano in Italy, to name a few examples. Those cases are not specifically addressed in this paper to focus attention on the aspects and results most closely related to complete decommissioning or reuse for productive purposes.

Conclusion. If it is true that a return to greenfield status is the most effective solution both from an environmental point of view and in terms of restoring the natural landscape, it is also true that it is the solution with the highest levels of complexity and the lowest level of possible economic return from the operations necessary for its realization. For this reason, projects focusing on the reactivation of previously closed plants or the reuse of existing areas and buildings have attracted considerable interest from the operators involved, especially in confirming the type production – e.g., photovoltaic, gas power plants, SMR – (Pasqualetti & Solomon, 2025).

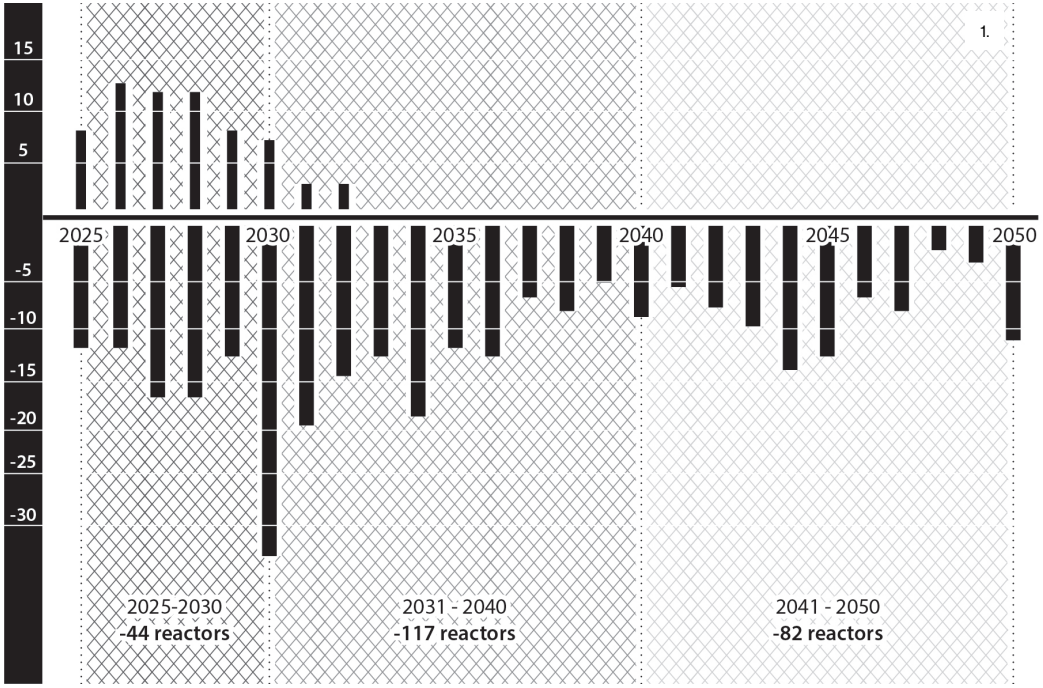
Excluding, therefore, the highly unique elements of nuclear power plants as what concern the decontamination, in terms of redevelopment and reuse the nuclear industry is not dissimilar from other industries since the general functions of the primary and auxiliary buildings are very similar to non-nuclear industrial facilities (Laraia, 2019). In this respect, the fact that the decommissioning phase of a nuclear power plant is an inevitable process within the life cycle of this industrial facility leads to the definition of alternative strategies that preclude its actual abandonment, offering a possible operating model for other industries with similar degrees of complexity and impact. Thanks to its predetermined fate, the nuclear plant can therefore embody operational strategies for the sustainable regeneration of industrial legacy and natural environment in which it is located, such as reuse, revamping, and return to greenfield status. The importance of looking at nuclear architecture in the post-operational phase is therefore twofold: on the one hand, the urgency dictated by the retirement of a significant portion of the global nuclear fleet offers the opportunity to study alternative end-of-life strategies; on the other hand, exploiting these strategies can structure practical alternatives for other high-impact and complex factories, reducing the risk of abandonment and promoting processes of reuse, redevelopment, and restoration of the environmental structure.

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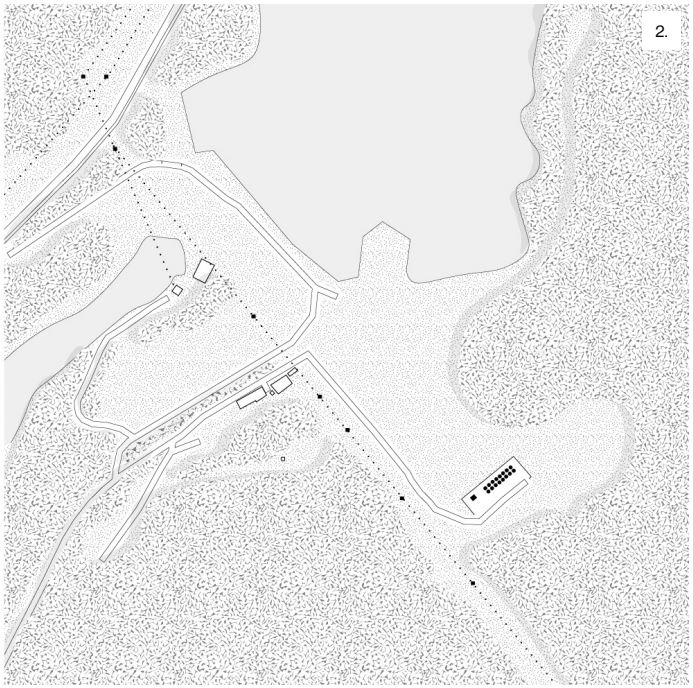
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Figures.

FIGURE 1 – 2025-2050 projection of nuclear reactors worldwide in terms of start-ups and closures (graphic reworking by the author, source: Magaldi, 2025).
FIGURE 2 – Yankee Rowe nuclear power plant layout before decommissioning - left - and after almost complete return to greenfield status - right - (drawing by the author, 2025).
FIGURE 3 – Left: Wylfa nuclear power plant (Wales) current status layout (drawing by the author, 2025); Right: The plant into its natural environment during decommissioning (MrCranky83, 2020).
FIGURE 4 – Rancho Seco I nuclear power plant layout (USA) before decommissioning and after reuse as energy hub (drawing by the author, 2025).


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ARCHITECTURE AS CULTURAL INFRASTRUCTURE. NEW DESIGN APPROACHES FOR ARCHAEOLOGICAL HERITAGE /

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Abstract. In contemporary landscapes and cities, archaeological sites have become places of discontinuity where architecture struggles to assert itself. Current operational models, more focused on conservation, are insufficient to overcome this disconnect; indeed, they amplify the sites' isolation.

These considerations prompted the research *Building social value beyond conservation: A wider approach to Historical and Cultural Heritage* (1) of which the workshop *Building Social Value beyond conservation in the Archaeological Parks of Paestum and Velia* was an integral and significant part.

By recognising heritage as a factor of social cohesion (as well as a potential catalyst also for the just transition), the aim is to reactivate latent synergies – overlaid within historical stratification – capable of recomposing the antinomy between context and object. This is achieved by working with the intrinsic tools of architecture and reasserting the role of contemporary design into valorisation processes. This process formed the basis of colonisation in Magna Graecia: establishing mnemonic links between humans and the environment and defining a precise cultural identity through the construction and care of places as an analogue to the motherland; this also led to the development of new languages and forms of expression.

The loss of authority of the 'new' within archaeological contexts stems from the progressive 'lightening' – both conceptually and physically – to which architectural design has been relegated over the years. In the pursuit of reversibility – which is often largely theoretical – it has become accepted that the only mode of intervention in these areas is conservation, disregarding the process of sedimentation of forms over time that has, in fact, defined these very places. Instead, the project seeks to find the right balance of transformation, without mystifying either the old or the new.

This workshop aimed to bring together a small *intellighenzia* who have been working on these themes for many years, in various ways. Milan, Naples, Bucharest, Valencia, and Valladolid: an elective rather than arbitrary selection, a kind of 'genealogy' towards intervention on the antique that reflects differing approaches and gradients. For this reason, from the outset, we did not define precise areas of intervention, allowing each group free interpretation of the common theme in relation to their personal reading of the context. More than the comparison of final outcomes, we believed that the best result of this work would be the comparison of methodologies, because this experience is, in effect, a scientific and research endeavour and as such, operates on a dual level of in-depth study: hic et nunc, but above all, more generally, as a discipline.

Genius Loci Paestum. Historically, the Sele River represented the geographic boundary of the Sele plain: a subtle line of physical and symbolic demarcation *"between Greeks and non-Greeks... between the civilized Greek city of Poseidonia and the world of the indigenous Oenotrians, and to the north, the Etruscans of Pontecagnano"*. (Stefanile, 2017)

Today, the Archaeological Park, as formally and administratively defined, occupies only a limited portion of the ancient settlement consolidated during the Greek colonial phase and further developed in the Roman era. The Roman reorganization introduced a significant urban reform – also implemented through additions – which also superimposed a different orientation on the minute and widespread fabric of the domus, not immediately perceptible in situ if only because of the poor volumetric consistency of the remains in elevation, with the exception of the temples, confirmed and converted to the cult of Romanism.

This discrepancy corresponds to approximately 6° North and is mainly attributable to the Romans' ability to read and interpret the topography and soil conditions in relation to the needs of water management, demonstrating the efficiency of their engineering. The adaptation to the course of the waterways that crossed the Sele Plain – used for irrigation as well as for the needs of the town – and the consequent rotation imposed on the urban plan were designed to achieve better drainage, counteracting possible swamping. In addition to this, the use of the cardo-decumanus military grid (different from the orientation pursued by the Greek colonists in relation to topographical or celestial landmarks) and the desire to respect the pre-existing complexes, perhaps the walls and certainly the religious buildings, all preserved and perfectly integrated into the new urban plan, probably also influenced the definition of this rotation. This slight rotation allowed the Forum and its related structures – such as the *Curia* and the *Comitium* – to be placed in a different position with respect to the Agorà, rationalizing the urban space between the Doric temples to the benefit of the residential fabric. In short, this rotation reflects Roman pragmatic construction, a delicate combination of urban planning, the application of engineering solutions, and a vision ahead of its time of the concept of sustainability (which today is exclusively biased towards technological contributions), which also includes an early and rational sensitivity towards the existing environment.

Despite some gaps, the perimeter wall(2) is still perfectly recognizable today in its characteristic pentagonal shape: a precise 'resistant urban form' which, nevertheless, has lost its original function as a threshold between the town, enclosed within the fortified area, and the countryside, dotted with buildings used to control agricultural land, as well as necropolises(3) and shrines.(4)

Unlike Pompeii and Herculaneum, which were destroyed by the catastrophic eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, the decline of Paestum was essentially due to a series of interrelated anthropogenic factors, all linked to changes in the settlement patterns of its population. At the dawn of the ancient world, a slow and progressive decline began, leading to the definitive abandonment of the town in the VIII-IX-centuries AD: *"When the Romans disappeared, these delights disappeared, and these buildings remained in the hands of time, thus consigned to oblivion so that they could be ruined or buried"* (Celano, 1856). It was precisely the economic and political crisis of the