

ARCHITECTURE AS TEMPORAL REWINDING AND SPATIAL RESTITCHING. A PROJECT FOR THE ANCIENT CITY OF SUESSOLA IN THE PIANA CAMPANA/

Bruna Di Palma - *University of Naples "Federico II"*

Mariano Nuzzo - *Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Metropolitan Area of Naples, Italy*

Serena Borea - *Superintendency of Archaeology, Fine Arts and Landscape for the Metropolitan Area of Naples, Italy*

Marianna Varchetta - *University of Naples "Federico II"*

bruna.dipalma@unina.it

Abstract. In the historical territories of the inland countryside, the 'synchronic rediscovery' of different types of heritage is an opportunity to outline development prospects that rethink architecture and archaeology, for instance, as inseparable from the multi-dimensional and stratified environment in which they are inserted, in terms of temporal rewinding and spatial restitching.

Among the declinations of the contemporary project for the enhancement of the entire historical and territorial phenomenon, an interesting reflection concerns two innovative aspects in particular: on the one hand, the capacity to incorporate in synthetic configurations the evolving evolution of the different phases of the archaeological discovery, and, on the other hand, the possibility of interconnecting different types of heritage in integrated redevelopment strategies, as demonstrated by the experiments conducted by Toni Gironès, Luigi Franciosini and Carles Enrich, to name but a few architects who constantly measure themselves with these themes.

With these premises, as part of an Agreement for scientific collaboration between the Soprintendenza Archeologia, Belle Arti e Paesaggio for the metropolitan area of Naples and the Department of Architecture of University Federico II of Naples (Italy) aimed at the knowledge and enhancement of the architectural, archaeological and landscape heritage of the Piana Campana, the Suessola area in Acerra was studied, within the urban park of the ancient Roman city in which the eighteenth-century Casina Spinelli, a historic monumental residence, also falls.

The main innovation of this experience concerns a project implementation that proceeds synchronously with the progress of archaeological excavations. In fact, the aim of the work concerned the definition of a strategy of accessibility, narration and usability that looks at the different times and spaces of which the palimpsest is composed, interpreting the progressive phases of discovery and development of the area in unitary and interconnected terms. The system of new architectural devices is addressed to the interpretation and enhancement of the ruins, as well as to the fruition in support of the archaeological excavation site, and at the same time, it stands as a plot of contemporary and reversible signs on the historical, anthropic and natural traces of the entire Piana Campana.

Introduction. The consolidated territories of the Italian context are characterised by the presence of a widespread cultural heritage deeply connected with the natural environment in which it is embedded and of which it is an inseparable part. The Piana Campana, a predominantly flat area extending north of the city of Naples, is a portion of this stratified territory that has undergone important transformations over the centuries. It was the site of settlements from the Roman times, leaving the imprint of the *centuriatio* on its soil furrowed by the passage of important territorial connection roads. It was then fertile land for hunting and fishing in the Bourbon era and then reclaimed through hydraulic works, the infrastructural value of which remains to this day. In recent centuries, a rural use of its land has prevailed and the pattern of fields now characterizes this landscape punctuated by a constellation of urban centres. In the connecting space between the centres, traces of various kinds have been stratified, constituting an important archaeological, architectural and landscape heritage that is not always adequately protected and valorised.

From the different forms of this heritage and its territory today, we can start out again to imagine a public landscape safeguarded through its reconstitution, whose components are related to each other and whose relationships are measured through strategies and design grafts that place permanences in dialogue with a view to the long term and to opening up the sites to the communities in order to favour their accessibility, recognisability and use.

Intersections and concatenations. In the condition of abandonment of consolidated landscapes resides the processual and narrative value of a memory that is not only a deposit of past circumstances but is, above all, a nursery of possibilities for the construction of a state of affairs relative to a present time. Rather than reminding us of the transience of everything, heritage increasingly becomes the symbol that calls us to an unconditional and vigilant principle of responsibility [1] that concerns the definition of an overall development of countries in which the consolidated values of history are not detached from those of care for cultural landscapes at risk, from those linked to the social cohesion of communities and those connected to the economic sustainability of territories.

«One does not want to discover or write new words, but to find new lands in those that are already there, reading them as statements of constructions and processes» [2]. In an attempt to renew the relationship between architectural design and the changing condition of the landscape through the adoption of an archaeological type of reading, Sara Marini argues that among the existing layers, one seeks new lands, one looks at what exists not only with the possibility of recovering it, but to welcome the prospect of development it poses. Architecture is, in this sense, called upon «to make itself a work capable of dialoguing with the time factor and to speak, to communicate with those who pass through it: to refer not to a single history, but to multiple interweavings; to find ways of grafting and participating in the rediscovered stratification» [2].

In consolidated landscapes, as in the case of the landscapes of the Piana Campana, the architectural project works on the concatenation of the morphological diversity of the landscape, on the reconnection between

different and controversial aspects of the context, on the stitching together and re-composition of different times, on the reconstruction of a dynamic identity that confronts the mutilated state of the heritage [3]. Confronted with intermittent scenarios made of eroded strata or precious storage grounds and with the vulnerabilities of changing and disrupted landscapes, new architectural grafts anchor themselves to the topographical roots of contexts, unhinges the fences of monofunctional areas, roots themselves in recognisable physical structures and new narrative devices, giving priority to relationship and dialogue, interweaving the territorial gaze with that oriented towards the interpretation of individual evidence [4].

In establishing a relationship of reciprocal necessity between architecture, archaeology and landscape, it is possible to clarify ways in which the project can take on the role of a device for integrating redevelopment and regeneration measures of both the natural and the archaeological context, reinforcing the value of archaeological evidence as areas of concatenation between different components of the contextual reality and as project opportunities for the integrated regeneration and symbolic collective re-appropriation of large portions of territories.

Multilevel interpretation of the different forms of heritage in the Piana Campana. The area of ancient Suessola and the Casina Spinelli insist in the territory of Acerra, a municipality in the province of Naples, bordering the province of Caserta to the north. The territory is predominantly plain, and to the north-east of the municipality lies the urban park of the ancient city of Suessola. This territory was predominantly marshy due to the Clanio river; in the 17th century, with the Kingdom of Naples, through a reclamation of the Clanio river, the spring waters were regimented with a network of artificial canals called 'Regi Lagni' and the marshy areas reclaimed [5].

In Roman times, this municipality had two centres: Suessola and Acerra, the ancient centre of which remains little investigated due to the complexity caused by the overlapping with the medieval centre. Suessola was an important centre and was crossed by numerous road axes, including Via Popilia, the road connecting Capua and Reggio Calabria; this trend was later reversed and Suessola became a marginal area within the municipality; the Urban Park of the ancient city of Suessola, currently crossed only by the Calabritto road, was created with the aim of preserving a part of the territory, tying it in both from an archaeological and a landscape point of view, with the aim of avoiding the establishment of new infrastructures, since it is already surrounded by several industrial plants and crossed by a motorway viaduct. In addition to the presence of archaeological traces, the park is characterised by the presence of numerous artefacts typical of the rural landscape of the Piana Campana.

The area that is the subject of the project proposal, FIGURE 1a, combines the presence of a relevant architecture such as 'Casina Spinelli' with an area that has been subject to archaeological excavation and has been investigated since the end of the 19th century. The first excavation campaign was started between 1878 and 1901, the subsequent excavation campaigns date back to the period between 1999 and 2002, when the forum area was investigated, in 2016 and 2024.

Fundamental was the study of the ancient city through Amedeo Rossi's reconstruction hypothesis [5], which, through non-invasive investigations, led to the identification of the layout of the ancient Roman city; in particular, adjacent to the Casina Spinelli hill is the forum area, previously investigated and then re-interred with the aim of preserving it, which arose along the route of the ancient Via Popilia (Regio-Capuam) and some of the city's public areas, among which the temple is hypothesised to be one. The other fundamental hypothesis concerns the theatre on which the Casina is grafted, the particular shape of the north-east side revealing traces of the layout of the Roman theatre of Suessola from the 4th century B.C.; the curved boundary wall replicates the perimeter of the cavea and the main body is hypothesised to be located on the proscenium.

The stratification of the Casina is complex and marked by superimpositions over the centuries: the above-ground wall, which replicates the perimeter of the cavea, and the tower are from the early Middle Ages; it is assumed, in fact, that they were parts of a single defensive structure. The main body was conceived in 1778 by Count Ferdinand III De Cardenas of Acerra as a hunting lodge, and between 1778 and 1786 the wing for servants was built. The last superimpositions, with the stables to close off the courtyard and the two volumes to the north-east, are dated between 1922 and 1994 [6]; gradual abandonment followed. Therefore, the state of conservation of the Casina was studied, through an indirect survey, limited to the portions of the building most closely connected to the archaeological area.

These assumptions made it possible to develop a strategy on the scale of the park, FIGURE 1b, that emphasises the desire to integrate different forms of heritage through the project.

An architecture of connections. River and rural landscape forms, architectural ruins and archaeological remains are the integrated heritage forms within the park-scale strategy involving to the north, The Water Mill and to the east, the Riullo spring.

Starting from the reading of the traces of the layout of the ancient city that have come to light and from the ruins of Casina Spinelli, FIGURE 2, the project, FIGURE 3, has been configured through an interconnected sequence of architectural grafts that allow for accessibility, enjoyment, recognisability and the continuation of the excavations, reconfirming the propositional value of the fundamental ancient axis of Via Popilia. A first series of grafts has been placed in the interspace between the western part of the Casina and the axis of Via Popilia, creating a basement building and a rest area; a second series of grafts is positioned within some of the rooms of the Casina involved in the reuse strategy as part of the visitor route, with special attention paid to the work of the archaeologists and their stay at the site; finally, a third series of grafts is placed around the architectural and archaeological presences, and defines the two entrances to the area, for operators to the north and for visitors to the south.

The validity of the route of the ancient via Popilia is reconfirmed through the configuration, along its development, of a footbridge that runs through the entire project system, while allowing the archaeological excavation work to proceed, and which is topped by a walkable canopy that provides a further possibility of visiting the site at an elevated level. FIGURE 4. The

graft, therefore, would allow the reconnection of the two areas, the crossing of the entire site and the scanning of the visit route. The visitor route begins through the walkway, continuing in the new grafts and concluding in the rooms of the Casina involved in the re-functioning hypothesis.

FIGURE 5.

The geometric and modular configuration of the walkway and the canopy is rooted in the proportions of the measurements taken from the traces of the ancient Roman temple and the façade of the Casina; moreover, by grafting onto the route of the ancient pathway, it is conceived as a dry structure, with removable paving, also to allow the excavations to continue. Temporary structures can be anchored to the canopy to support archaeological excavation operations only. These can be dismantled and relocated according to the needs of the excavation.

The entrance volume located to the south and dedicated to visitors makes it possible to begin the visit by choosing whether to continue at the lower level corresponding to the level of the excavations, walking along the walkway also around them, or at the higher level corresponding to that of the Casina, climbing up to the roof.

Subsequently, the exhibition volume placed as the basement of the western part of the Casina, which can also be walked on the roof, has the role of a junction between the excavation area and the building. Next to it, a transversal pathway connects the two levels and while on the lower level it precedes an area to stay, on the upper level it marks the separation between the area dedicated to visitors and the area dedicated to the work of the archaeologists and their stay at the site. The visitor route continues on the upper level of the Casina, access to the Casina is made possible through the helicoidal staircase located inside the oval room on the western side. This graft was made possible by the collapse of the intermediate vault; the upper vault has also partially collapsed together with part of the roof slab to the south of the main body which, as part of the re-functioning, is dedicated to exhibitions.

Inside the two volumes, which had functioned as stables and are in a considerable state of decay, totally lacking roofing, two volumes with sloping roofing have been inserted, juxtaposed with secondary elements of lesser height and with flat roofing, which define the pathways and direct towards the guest quarters volume, which also represents the access to the area for archaeologists, for which the same compositional logic has been followed.

The design proposal, through the stitching together of the architectural and archaeological system, becomes a node for creating directionality and possible connections with the forms of the surrounding landscape. FIGURE 6.

Conclusions. «From these elaborations we arrive at a definition of archaeological context [...] which, similarly to the definition of landscape context [...], outlines a sphere characterised by common evolutionary features - historical and contemporary - within which to propose 'specific' rules of design behaviour, aimed at guiding the landscape transformation according to sustainability guidelines» [7]. Understood as a unicum for the construction of a greater design sensitivity and for the reconstruction of a sense of cohesion and inclusion of local communities, architecture, archaeology and landscape are the symbolic components of a broader

cultural discourse related to the sustainability of the development of consolidated contexts. This means not only rethinking excavations and archaeological sites, but defining a system of connection of these areas with each other, with the museum system, and above all with the delicate environmental system in which the so-called 'minor heritages' are inserted, for which the project becomes a cure, a preventive therapy against alterations, tampering, oblivion and isolation [8].

In the prospect of constructing an even more extensive concatenation with other heritages of the Campania Plain, such as the Water Mill and the Lanciolla along the Regi Lagni in Acerra and the invisible city of Atella in Frattaminore, integrating the work on the relationship between the widespread heritages with that of a more general objective of enhancing the compatible development of the areas, the approach described and developed through the project becomes a fertile opportunity to strengthen the symbolic value of the heritages from which to start off again for the reconnection of larger parts of the territory.

Attributions. The research work was developed by all the authors jointly, however the paragraph "Introduction" is to be attributed to Mariano Nuzzo and Serena Borea; the paragraphs "Intersections and concatenations" and "Conclusions" should be attributed to Bruna Di Palma; the paragraphs "Multilevel interpretation of the different forms of heritage in the Piana Campana" and "An architecture of connections" should be attributed to Marianna Varchetta.

References.

1. G. Tortora (ed.). *Semantica delle rovine* (Manifestolibri, Rome, 2006).
2. S. Marini, *Nuove terre. Architetture e paesaggi dello scarto* (Quodlibet, Macerata, 2010).
3. B. Di Palma, "From physical de-composition to identity reconstruction. Architectural design for ruins as re-composition", in *Heritage, temporality and materiality. Perspectives Exchange between Italy and Philippines*, edited by P. Miano (CLEAN Edizioni, Naples, 2017), pp. 116-131.
4. B. Di Palma, *L'intermittenza dell'architettura. Teoria e progetti sui luoghi dell'archeologia* (ANCSA, Gubbio, 2019).
5. Pandemos srl (edited by), *Studio Archeologico. Carta archeologica e delle potenzialità archeologiche per il PUC di Acerra*, Paestum (SA), Italy, 2020.
6. Comune di Acerra (edited by), *Studio di fattibilità per la realizzazione del museo archeologico-naturalistico all'interno della Casina "Spinelli" nell'ambito del parco archeologico di Suessola*, Acerra (NA), Italy, 2007.
7. L. Caravaggi, "Intorno alla valorizzazione archeologica", in *Paesaggi dell'archeologia invisibile: il caso del distretto Portuense*, edited by L. Caravaggi and C. Morelli (Quodlibet, Macerata, 2014), pp. 22-51.
8. N. Emery, *Progettare, costruire, curare. Per una deontologia dell'architettura* (Edizioni Casagrande, Bellinzona, 2010).

Figures.

FIGURE 1 - a) State of the sites, b) Territorial strategy.

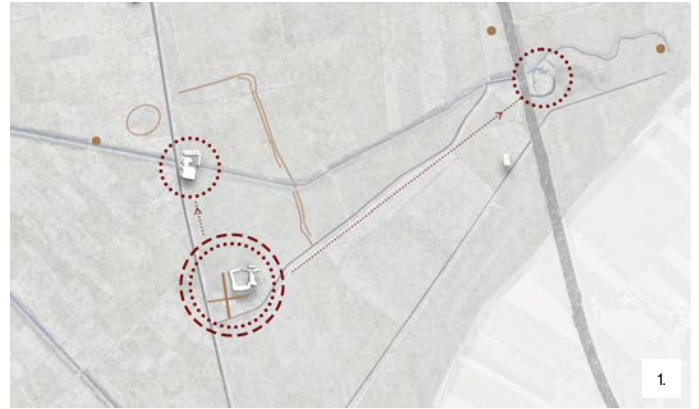
FIGURE 2 - Project area: the Casina Spinelli, the landscape and the archaeological area.

FIGURE 3 - The project planimetric layout: excavation level - Casina level - roof level.

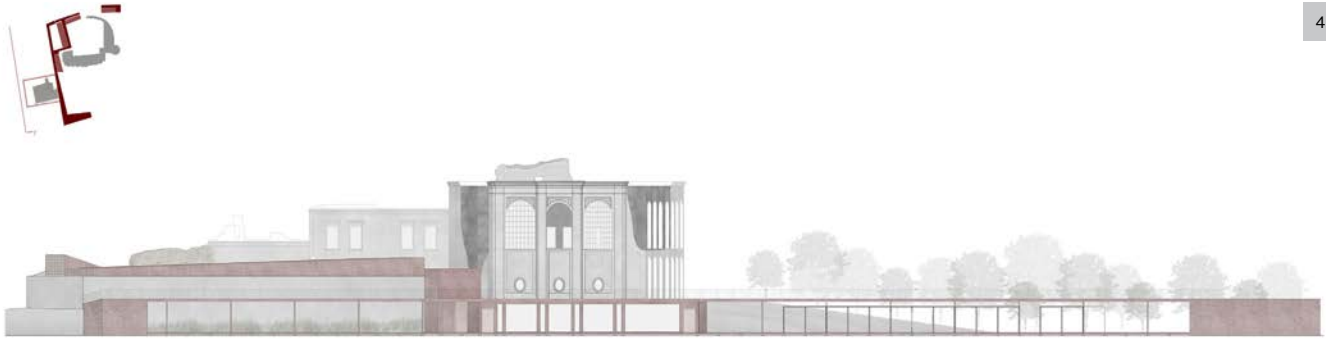
FIGURE 4 - The project as a new layer-base between different ground levels.

FIGURE 5 - The project as a connection between different altitudes.

FIGURE 6 - The project and its possible expansions in the landscape.

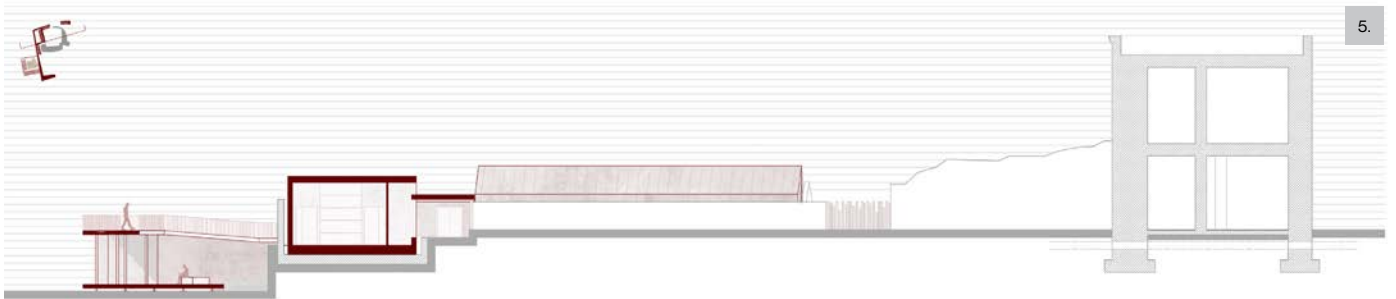


4.



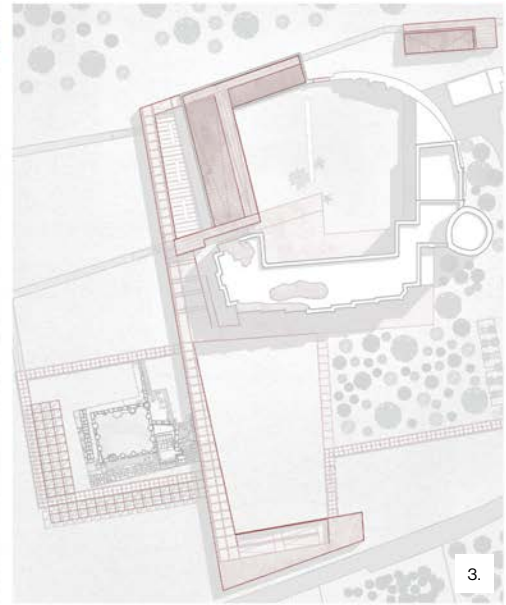
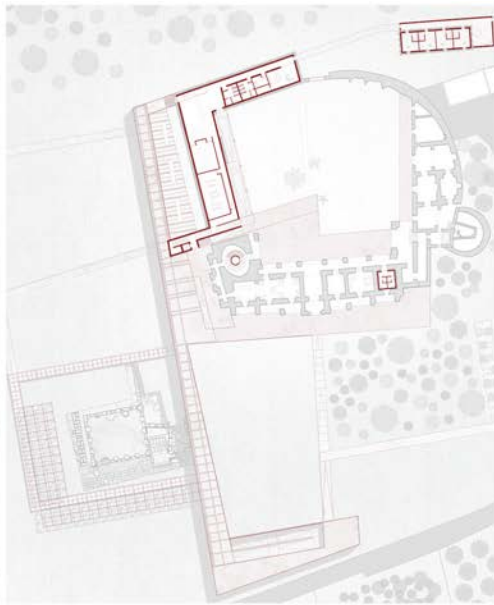
N 0 2 5 10m

5.



N 0 1 2 5m

0 1 1 1 1



3.

