

ARCHAEOLOGY, ARCHITECTURE AND CITY The Enhancement Project of the Archaeological Park of the Baths of Baiae

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Abstract

Following the theoretical and disciplinary framing of the elements that substantiate the relationship of archaeology with architecture and the city in light of the transformations of the modern city, the project aims at valorizing the archaeological asset, promoting a knowledge of the ruins from multiple theoretical perspectives. The enhancement project of the Archaeological Park of Baiae experiments with different modalities of knowing that include the knowledge of the relationship between the ruin and the landscape, the philological, typological-constructive knowledge, and the knowledge of the ruin's own spatial elements. Bringing together the contributions of different disciplines and experts under the coordination of an architect, the theoretical core of the project promotes the enhancement of the Archaeological Park, envisioning it as a means of valorisation of a wider urban environment.

Keywords: Archaeology; Architecture; City; Interdisciplinarity

INTRODUCTION: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The contemporary city with its architecture, its multiple infrastructural systems, its yearning to change, its challenge to welcome climatic and environmental change, finds its meaning in the relationship with history and memory, with archaeology and the monuments. The idea that the monuments of the contemporary city, whether archaeological remains or permanent elements of the settlement structure, should, as sites of memory, function to inspire development and change is a shared and acknowledged notion. The codification and evolution of "urban archaeology" (Francovich, Manacorda, 2000) into a discipline and the large bibliography available on this topic mobilize scientific methodologies to govern the processes. The definition of urban archaeology - «The archaeological research in an existing city over its whole settling history from the foundation to the present without privileging a period over another» - refers to a necessarily systematized knowledge of the city's archaeological history that includes excavations and interdisciplinary research, to always engage with an eye to the transformations of the contemporary city. «The aim of teaching urban archaeology is to gain an in-depth knowledge of the relationship between the archaeological traces of the cities that existed before the present settlement and the need to identify processes of urban transformation compatible with the layered and complex palimpsest of the historical centers» (Manacorda, 2008). Biddle and Hudson's *The Future of the London's Past*, (Biddle, Hudson, 1973) and Andreina Ricci's essay *Attorno alla nuda pietra* - "Around the naked stone" - (Ricci, 2006) are a first reference to approach the issue from the archaeological and conservative point of view. From our position of architects it is important that the study of the stratifications of the city's originary settlement systems and the acts of preservation that accompany any thinking on archaeology and the monuments do not ignore the form of the city. The architect's research will focus on respecting the rule of conservation in harmony with the

form of the *urbis*, with the construction of the city and of the culture that it expresses. The city is a collective construction, based on its own history and representative of the people that built it; the city is always specific. Archaeology is the heart of thinking about the roots. Besides preserving the harmony with the form of the *urbis* and the specificities of the city, lies the issue of how to use archaeology's knowledge to plan the contemporary city without relinquishing the aesthetic aspiration.

Ever more often a consequence of an exasperated conservationist fundamentalism, or of inadequate cultural tools, has turned archaeological sites into archaeological enclosures, similar to the non-places, the islands of estrangement, described by Marc Augé (Augé, 2008). Architecture should, instead, address the ruin as a sedimented deposit of knowledge upon which to plan the new, regarding it for what it is in material and construction terms: the metamorphosis of an architecture, a part of all the historical architectures that comprise the architect's main tool of planning.

The enclosure and excavations connote the archaeological enclaves, constituting the main obstacle to grasping the connections that bind the ruins to the city, the soil's stratigraphies and the elevated constructions. Historical topography performs the necessary task of retracing possible sequences of representative spaces.

It carries on a patient research of the papers, the views, the representations that would help to grasp the connections and potential lines of continuities between the traces of the past and the city in becoming. The architect should prefigure a system of likely traces, connecting, integrating, entwining the archaeological ruins with the spaces of the contemporary city, where the red thread of history holds together multiple and multifarious elements, where the archaeological *insule* make up the foundation needed by architecture to pursue the value of the "eternal present" (Venezia, 2013). If this is the ultimate goal, we should create a methodology and establish a distinction between the archaeologist's "how" and the architect's "how", always keeping in mind that interdisciplinarity is one of the defining frameworks of such a project. Andreina Ricci argues that the first aim of the archaeologist is to help everybody to fully understand the meaning and value of the ruin and to virtually appropriate it by employing the two categories of "translation" and the "tale" that define "archaeological communication".

The architect's task is to implement the re-use of that asset in harmony with the "translation" and the "tale" envisioned by the archaeologist, never losing sight of the relationship between the form of the city and the architectural form of the ruin. Knowledge in its multiple meanings is the tool of the architect. As always happens with planning projects, critical orientation makes the work of knowledge essential and complex. Let us focus on three exemplary projects where the relationship of archaeology with the city and architecture is based on different modalities of articulating knowledge: Dimitri Pikionis' landscaping of the archaeological site around the Acropolis and the Filopappou Hill, Athens 1954-57, Giorgio Grassi and Manuel Portaceli Roig's restoration and rehabilitation of the Roman theatre of Sagunto, Sagunto 1985-93, and David Chipperfield's rebuilding of the Neues Museum, Berlin 1997-2009.

For Pikionis, the urban landscape enhances the knowledge of Athens' acropolis. The plan of the paths and platforms represents a realization of the dispositifs of vision of the acropolis. Pikionis practices a perceptive and material knowledge of the ruin in the landscape. «The Attic landscape, that has long lost its integrity, finds new life in the micro compositions that dot the path, in the narrow enclaves that give new meaning to the sense of the place, letting the original meanings ooze out of the rocks and intermingle with the other, century-old ones in the analogic play that regulates the succession of forms and ideas throughout history» (Furlenga, 2006).

Giorgio Grassi rather adopts a mode of knowledge of the typological-constructive variant. This is knowledge of the constructive features of the Roman theatre, actualized by means of an accurate redrawing deployed by means of maps, sections, and prospects, of different Roman

theatres, which he regarded as a necessary practice to reconfigure the absolute essence of the theatre's architecture. «The Roman theatre of Arles represents, from a material and especially symbolic point of view, the beginning of Grassi's Spanish projects between architecture and archaeology [...] The first concern that emerges from these notes is the notion that archaeology is integral to architecture and, as a direct consequence, the idea of 'ruin' as an architecture that lost part, or all of its original condition, without, for the same reason, relinquishing its typological and formal structure. It never ceased being an architectural form. Thus, the ruin is an architecture that has 'regressed' to a state preceding its completion, or, if we look at it from the opposite perspective, it is an 'unfinished' architecture that was interrupted halfway through its construction» (Malcovati, 2013).

Chipperfield practices a mode of knowledge based in the knowledge of the spatiality of "that ruin": this is a work on the architectural object in itself that reconfigures its perceptive unity. Chipperfield writes: «The process can be described as a multidisciplinary interaction between repairing, conserving, restoring and recreating all of its components. The original sequence of rooms was restored with newly built sections that create continuity with the existing structure. The almost archaeological restoration followed the guidelines of the Charter of Venice, respecting the historical structure in its different states of preservation» (Chipperfield's office web site, 2011).

In the enhancement project of the Archaeological Park of Baiae described in the following pages we mobilized the three modes of knowledge: the knowledge of the relationship that the ruin entertains with the landscape, the philological-typological-constructive knowledge, and the knowledge of the ruin's own spatial elements.

METHODOLOGICAL ISSUES

The method should be based on the principles of a theory that pertains to architecture, the project's sphere of activity, and aim at elaborating a process by establishing a common set of operating procedures for the projects within the different disciplines involved (architecture, archaeology, economics, as well as the institutions that deal with the protection and the local territorial governments). So an integral part of this process included the operations connected with dealing with the institutions that govern the territory to which the archaeological asset belongs; the governmental bodies in charge of its stewardship, the community of interested entrepreneurs, as well as with the state organizations which could offer funds to implement the development.

The process moves from a thorough understanding of the essence of what pre-exists. First of all an act of cognition is necessary. The same methodological consideration that invests the terms *archaeology* and *city*, but above all the interconnections established by these two terms, finds its inescapable beginning in the creative quest for knowledge. There can be no judgement without knowledge and there can be no project without judgement. The disciplinary tool which the architect mobilizes to know the city and architecture, or as one urban theory asserts, *the city itself as an architecture* (Rossi, 1966) is *Urban Analysis*, a tool which identifies specific epistemological modalities which depend on the urban project. In this disciplinary context, the project becomes an instrument of knowledge. If urban analysis provides us with a well-known procedure, in a certain sense codified by a reading of urban phenomena, for what, instead, pertains to the knowledge of the archaeological asset, we must necessarily refer to its material and formal consistency. It is clear that there exist several possible levels of knowing the archaeological asset. In light of this premise, the work involves a reading of the territorial scale, urban analysis, a formal reading of the archaeological asset, a research of historical documents, and a description based on a relief and re-drawing. After establishing the perimeter of the study-area, the urban analysis proceeds to include: an identification of the infrastructures system and accessibility; knowledge and description of the geomorphology of the ground and the configuration of the green areas and

open spaces located in the analyzed context; a reading of the urban context (primary elements and construction pattern, urban morphology and construction typology); the investigation and reconstruction of the urban scenes on which the various configurations assumed over time by the archaeological site have referred to (documentary investigations through elaborate graphic descriptions). In contrast, followings are the tools that allow an approach to the knowledge of the architectural form of the archaeological asset: historical documentary studies; studies on architectural consistency, particularly material form and composite based principles; drawings from architectural surveys and reconstructions of the configurations assumed over time by the asset. The process's first step is identifying the founding elements of the asset's architecture, of the underlying structure of its formal configuration, to re-propose the recognized characters in the concept of the pilot project. In this way a relationship of continuity and affiliation is established not with the linguistic and figurative apparatus of the asset, but with his *hidden structure* (De Fusco, 2000). An integral part of this process is represented by all the operations connected to the relationship with the institutions governing the territory to which the archaeological asset belongs; the governmental bodies with the community of interested entrepreneurs, with the state organizations which could offer funds to implement the development.

The complexity of this topic requires the cooperation of multiple actors to enhance the definition of the project, to transform the archaeological site in a propeller engine of the urban transformations of the local territory.

ABOUT THE RUIN

The enhancement project of the Archaeological Park of Baiae was developed under the scientific coordination of *Fondazione Internazionale per gli Studi Superiori di Architettura*, by the following team of architects: Uberto Siola, Renato Capozzi, Adelina Picone, Federica Visconti as senior scientists.

The monumental complex lays on the low part of the hill of *Baiae*. It consists of natural terraces, which, according to need, are moulded by powerful substructures acting as basis *villae*. It is a semi-annular shaped area of approximately 400 metres facing south-west to north-west. It is located between the Ferretti building and Piazza De Gasperi and features two nuclei, isolated from the original context by contemporary urban cuts (as shown in the so-called *Temple of Venus*), at the entrance of the harbour and the so-called Temple of Diana at the bottom of the modern square. The site is now under the authority of the Superintendence for the archaeological heritage of Naples and Pompeii. The first excavation in Baiae took place in 1800. In 1935 in obedience to Amedeo Maiuri's will, the Archaeological Park of the Baths of *Baiae* was created, following a process of land expropriation, excavations, restoration and safeguarding of a wide area expanding from the hill to the sea, which was however, enforced only in 1941. Other excavation and relief campaigns have been carried on in the area up to the present day, with the aim of restoring a more complete picture of the local topography. Experts have rarely agreed on dividing the site into sections, but today the complex is commonly to acknowledged as part of the imperial *Palatium* divided into the following sections: *Diana section*, *Mercury section*, *Villa Ambulatio*, *Sosandra section*, *Small Baths*, *Medium Level Baths*, *Hadrian Baths*. These designations are subordinated to description needs, as they refer, more or less, to autonomous architectural entities. The difficulty in detecting the use of these buildings is due to the network of structures and the presence of superimposed building phases that often prevent identification of the original architectural project of the buildings. The state of preservation of the area is not uniform and only a few original decorative coatings have been preserved (Guardascione, 2011).



Figure 1. The Archaeological Park of Baiae (Source: Authors).

THE AIM OF THE PROJECT

At the core of general theoretical consideration and of planning experiences carried on by the project, the archaeological site should be the object of proposals concerning not only its restoration and preservation, but also its use in the present days and, therefore, its inclusion in the behaviour of the contemporary city in light of a wider territorial reorganization. All this invites to look at the archaeological heritage from the alternative perspective of architecture.

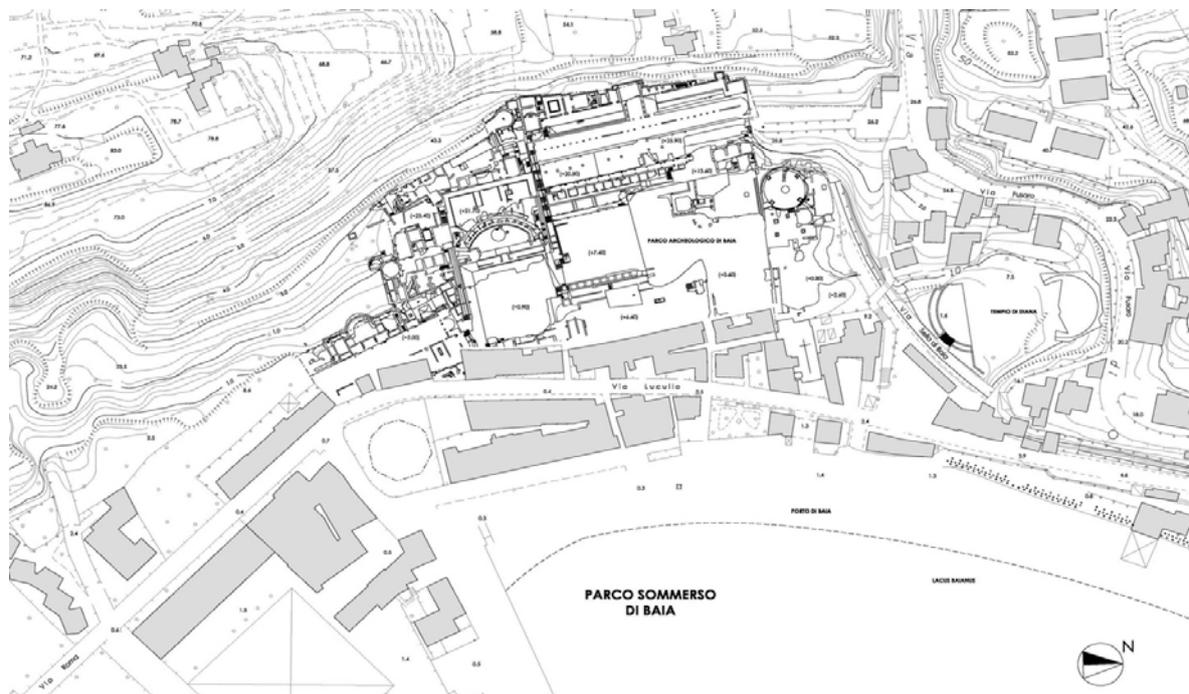


Figure 2. The Archaeological Park of Baiae: Consider The Monument, redraw general plan of the ruin (Source: Authors).

Carrying out the project has meant broadening our vision to larger areas, other than merely the archaeological ones, which as a result of the identification of their own dimension, changed from study-areas into project-areas. Beyond attaching a significant value to the pre-existing archaeological sites, we worked within these areas to restore the functional, formal and meaningful relationships between the different elements involved. From the functional point of view, this meant working on accessibility and on the supply of services, while formally we also introduced new architectures, as we continued to settle and stratify traces. Finally as concerns meaning, we suggested to introduce new “themes” and identified new uses for the archaeological areas. The Archaeological Park of Baiae acquired the look of an area where the narration of architectural and landscape values merges with the theatrical one, in different forms, such as opera, classical and experimental performances, in harmony with the several spaces surrounding the complex. Furthermore, the project aims at reestablishing the original functionality of the ancient thermal baths, located in the so-called Mercurio Sector, where the architectural spaces are still well configured.

THE ENHANCEMENT OF THE ARCHITECTURAL DESIGN

The distinctive trait and, in our opinion, also the real value of our work consists in developing an approach to the archaeological issue that avoids creating physical and functional areas and fences. Thanks to its great value, archeology should instead be perceived as an area to protect, found within a broader “space” where changing opportunities can be seized by trying to turn actual remains, which are sometimes indecipherable except for the experts, into elements whose task is «to spread our present into the future» (Ricci, 2006). The only possible way to enact this spreading in an enhancement project is to achieve a great and deep knowledge. The analytical actions needed to acquire the knowledge of the archaeological asset have to be undertaken firstly: the archaeological research and the redrawing with reliefs to verify the correct representation of all the asset’s portions.

The project begins with an extensive study of the level of accessibility and infrastructural system of the archaeological monumental emergencies of *Baiae* (the archaeological monumental park, the submerged park, the *Castel of Baiae*) considering them as parts of a much wider complex of archaeological assets, which stretches up from Puteoli to Cumae and includes the Phlegraean Fields. The topics are:

- redefining the entrances;
- pedestrianizing the coast which supports the plan of accessing the Archaeological Park from the Temple of Venus, restoring the original relationship between the building and the *Palatium*;
- the new entrance from the Venus complex with a bookshop also accessible from an alternative route to the Archaeological Park;
- the entrance from the square directs visitors to the Mercury complex and implementing its restored thermal function;
- the established use of the open spaces as theatres, according to the various envisaged intervention levels: from the simple preparation of the seats and lighting fixtures in the so-called Temple of Venus for performances of experimental theatre, to the mounting of a “theatrical machine” in the *natatio* of the Sosandra section for performances of classical theatre and opera, as well as the layout of a natural *cavea* in one of the pensile garden for musical shows;
- the re-functioning of the baths in the so-called Temple of Mercury, foreseeing the restoration and a new functional life, closest to the original one, with the possibility to exploit the still-active thermal springs.

The development of these last two topics, related to the new functional life of the Archaeological Park, allowed to experiment with an interesting interdisciplinary approach.

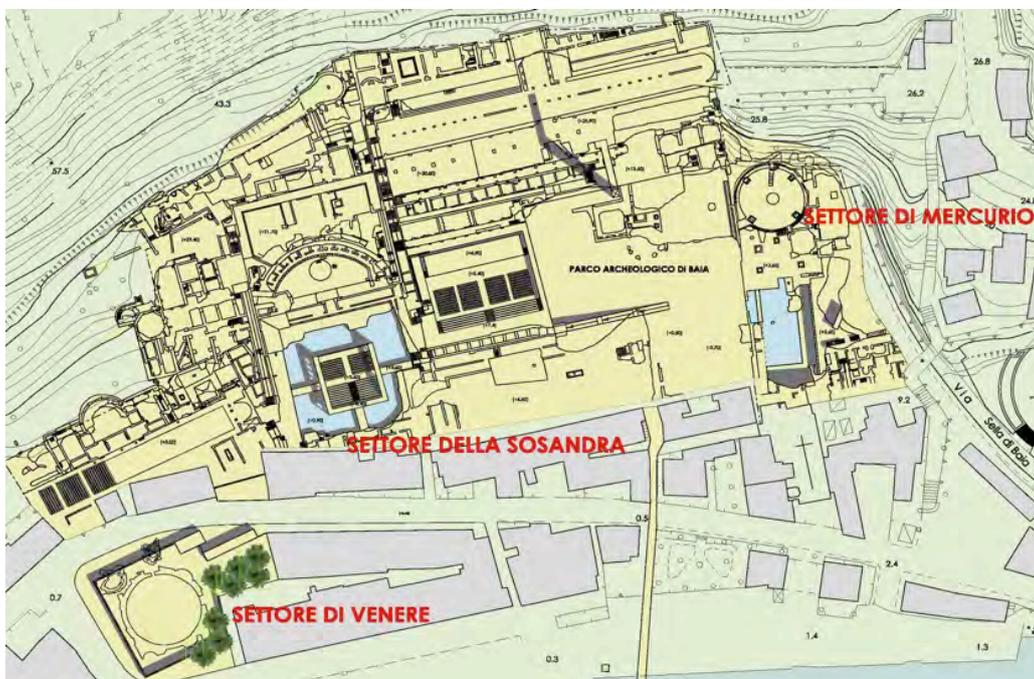


Figure 4. Archaeological Park of *Baiae*, the general enhancement project (Source: Authors).

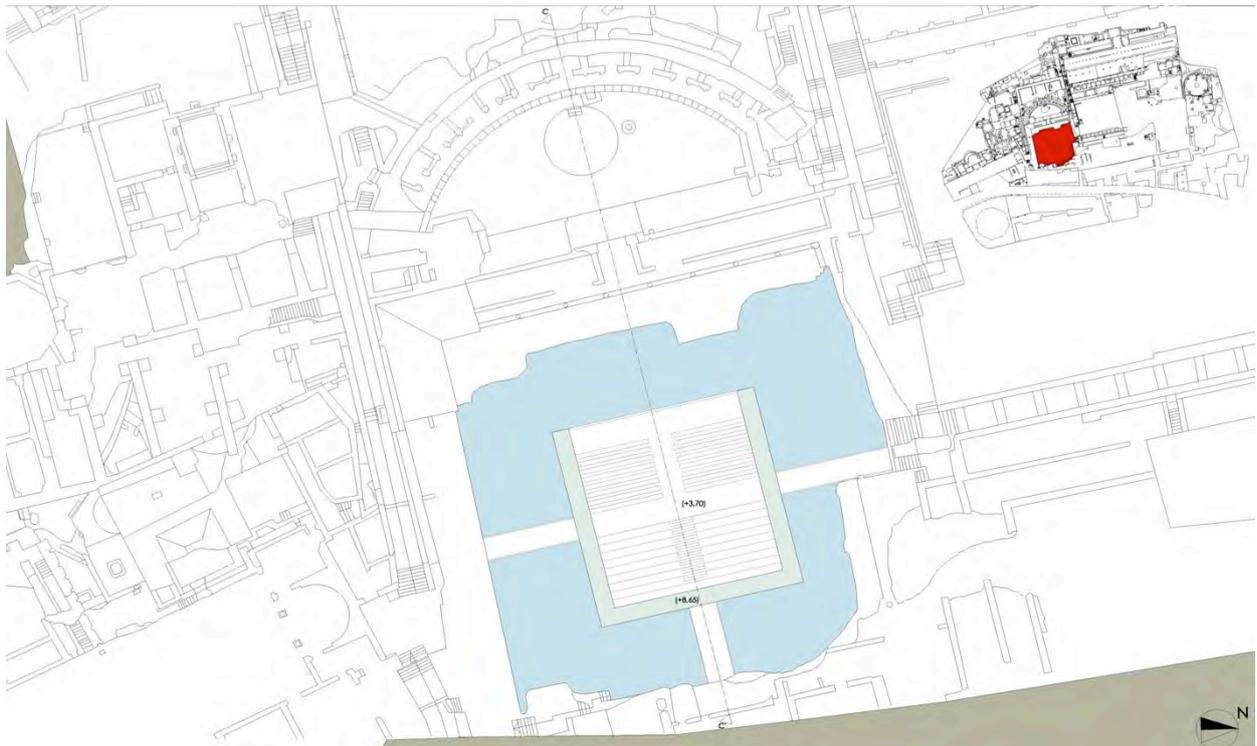


Figure 5. The project: the theatre in the Sosandra sector, plan and section (Source: Authors).

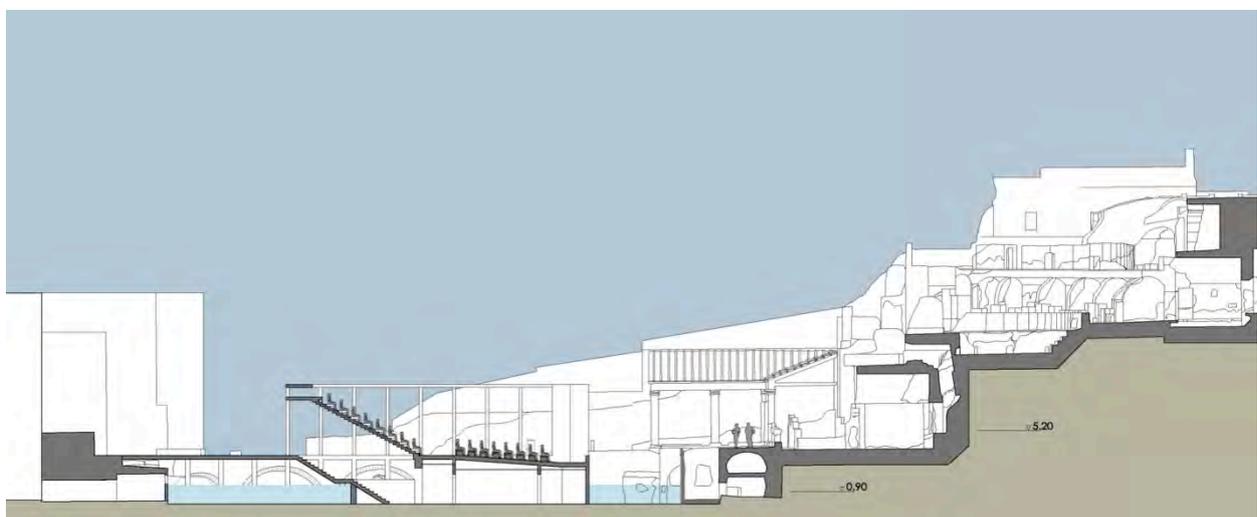


Figure 6. The project: the theatre in the Sosandra sector, plan and section (Source: Authors).

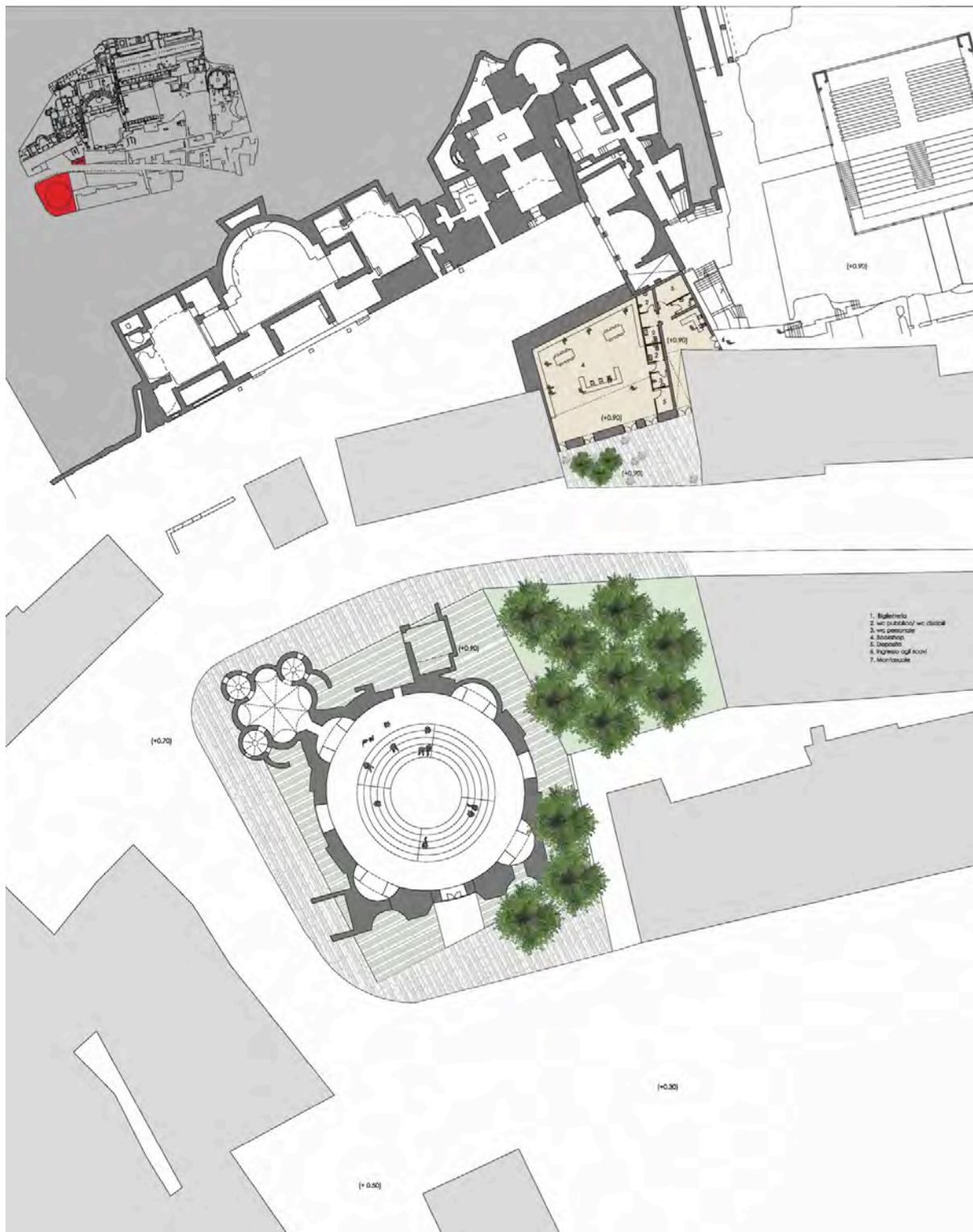


Figure 7. The project: the theatre in the Venus sector, plan (Source: Authors).

INTERDISCIPLINARY PROCESS

The different experts involved in the elaboration of the project played the relevant role of defining the work group, which required the coordination of an architect, an archaeologist - which worked not only as a consultant *ex ante*, but also as an interlocutor throughout the project -, and economists for context analysis and operational proposals in the framework of a strategy of revitalization and integration of resources.

It is really interesting to analyze this project in depth. In fact, all the elements of the explained methodology were epitomized in it. In the elaboration phase a number of collaborations were established with Flavia Milena Guardascione, an archaeologist involved also in the architectural project team; the team of economists composed by Luigi Manfra, Valerio Tuccini and Alessio Liquori, who worked under the scientific coordination of UniMED-Mediterranean Universities Union; a research group of the *Centro Interdipartimentale di studi per la Magna Grecia*, under the scientific coordination of Giovanna Greco; Campania Region's team, under the coordination of General Department Relations with National and International Bodies in matters of Regional interest-EU Projects Unit. Following the contributions of different actors:

- UniMED team produced not only the economic feasibility studies, but also the configuration of revitalization strategies of the entire urban environment, based on a deeper analysis of the context conditions, of the tourism market and of cultural asset's accessibility to the Phlegraean Fields. Furthermore, the economic research offered an important contribution to the new functions definition, as will be illustrated in the next sections.
- The research group of the *Centro Interdipartimentale di studi per la Magna Grecia*, in collaboration with the theatre company *Teatrocontinuo* directed by the dramaturge Nin Scolari, realized a theatrical experiment that was performed in the archaeological spaces. The performance, born from the scientific results of a research on the *Great Female Figures* from the ancient world, helped to test the potentialities of the archaeological park's open spaces.
- The Campania Region's team encouraged putting into practice the integration and cross-disciplinary contamination procedure, by envisaging comprehensive, cheaper and innovative architectural solutions and forms of management, with the aim of developing realistic and achievable action plans.

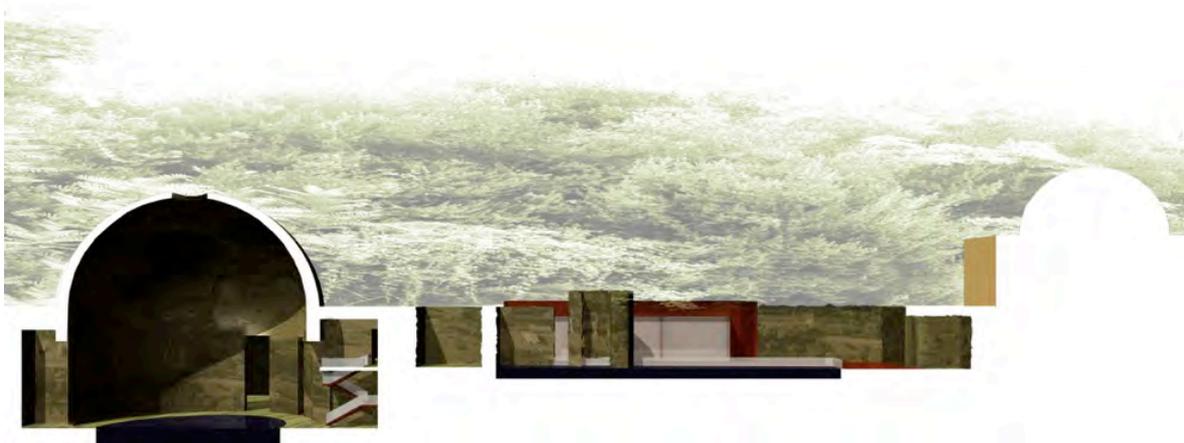


Figure 8. The project: the Mercurio sector Roman Thermal Baths, section (Source: Authors).

THE FIRST ENHANCEMENT RESULT.

The Archaeological Park as a multiform theatrical scene

The decision of holding a theatrical performance inside the Archaeological Park showed its potential function of events centre, considering the open spaces of the asset as background to all kinds of possible representations and performances: from experimental theatre to musical events, to grand opera theatre.

All the project's actors agreed with this vision, particularly the team of architects, which conceived the design with the aim to restore the ancient unity of the *Palatium*, highlighting the necessity of giving renewed centrality and urban visibility to the Archaeological Park. The new entrance, close to the Venus Temple, reconnects, also in a functional fashion, the monument with the Archaeological Park.



Figure 9. The project: the Mercurio sector Roman Thermal Baths, plan (Source: Authors).

The role of the Venus Temple is to reconnect and link once again the threads of the ancient tissue and the original landscape relations, providing a perfect chance to promote new urban centralities in present-day *Baiae*. This is the meaning at the basis of the project, which intends to set the temple free from its fences and to restore its surrounding backspaces, re-adapting them for urban fruition. The expected interventions include the simple rationalization of the pavement and the green parterre of the garden that surrounds the monument, which, in the new functional

life that ArcheoURB foresees for the Archaeological Park, will host experimental theatre performances and cultural events. The problems linked with the control, security and safeguarding of the archaeological ruins will be addressed by placing gates and glasses to the access rooms leading to the main hall, which will constantly be visible but accessible exclusively on planned occasions. Just in front of the Venus Temple, the project envisages a new access to the Archaeological Park using an area roughly based on via Lucullo, one of the few fissures of the curtain wall through which it is possible to actually see the archaeological complex. Here, we find the remains of the walls holding the above terrace of the Small Baths complex. These walls originally closed the halls, that according to archaeologists are of old age and were presumably used as warehouses. Here the designers plan to locate the bookshop and the ticket office, planning the front space in continuity and as an analogy with the parterre project of the Venus Temple.

This transformation was made possible thanks to the important contribution of the archaeological research, in order to give a certain knowledge of the original underground levels of the ruin. Furthermore the economical-financial study and the context analysis, conducted by UniMED team, were crucial in indicating the visibility-strategy.

The team of economists suggests to commit the crucial managerial aspect to a third subject, i.e. a foundation, who would be in charge of coordinating the different levels of expertise associated with the number of authorities involved: State, Region, Province, Phlegraean Park, Archaeological Government Department responsible for the environment and historical buildings.

In spite of the large funding that has been invested in the last ten years for the restoration works, for the rehabilitation and the environmental requalification actions, the expected cultural and touristic development in the Phlegraean Fields has never really started due to the lack of an integrated managerial action, and of the implementation of the system. The economic research makes a proposal for an operational solution for the enhancement of Baiae based on holding theatrical events within the Park: «the promotion of the Archaeological Park area by promoting cultural activities and events which may involve residents and day-trippers. The *Baiae* Roman baths is a charming area, open to different options due to the dimensional characteristics and the morphology of the site. The operational proposal devised in this project consists of setting-up several performance spaces in the baths area, with variable capacity, where a number of featured events (about 20) could be held in the summer season. Extraordinary funding channels could be employed (EU or national) for the facilities (the estimated cost for the performance areas is about € 4.2 m). Besides, regarding the events schedule (the estimated cost is about € 210,000 per year), grants for operating expenses, only partially covered by ticketing incomes, would be necessary and could be obtained from different channels (local administrations, sponsors, etc.). These activities could attract a relevant volume of visitors (a potential audience of about 8,200 people) and the contribution (the public and the private one) would be widely justified by the potential appeal of the activity, the cultural promotion of the archaeological area and the economic impacts on the retail trade» (Manfra, Tuccini, Liquori, 2011).

Following this idea all the *Palatium's* open spaces become potential theatrical spaces, as exemplified by the performance of the *Centro Interdipartimentale di studi per la Magna Grecia*, which chose an open space in the *Sosandra section* to host its performance, without requiring any sovra-structural installations.

«An extremely minimalist scenery has been requested and implemented, being almost inexistent in some particular areas where, indeed, it has been entrusted to the effects of lights, costumes and dancing, highlighting its emotional and fascinating side. On the whole, the scenery has never been invasive whereas the lights have emphasized the structures always present in the background. The monument, in all its parts, goes on playing the main character on stage and accompanies the audience towards the discovery of a beautiful niche, vault, or sinuous recess,

which is its actual enhancement. The theatre stage, the scenery with its lights and sounds has never hidden the monument and the open-air Museum has gained great emotional momentum.



Figure 10. The project: the Mercurio sector Roman Thermal Baths, view of the new entrance

The scenery has made the best use of lights by re-using the shades of ancient structures, thereby giving rise to evocative powers and feelings that have never upset or effaced the ancient character and the original nature of the monument. At the end of this research activity, a story

gathering texts, images, evidences, impressions discussed during numerous meetings and exchanges of views among the participants in the work group, philologists, archaeologists, historians of religions, comedians, has been staged. The story is set in the Mediterranean, sailed across at different times and along different routes. The performed travel is the travel of men, ideas, religions, cults and rites, which unfolds from the fall of Troy and the arrival of the Greeks on ancient Italy's coasts up to the present day. Great female figures that ancient tradition has passed on to us who answer the same strong and imperative appeal of motherhood. Guided by the strong royal power of Hera, protectress of sailing and happy landings, these Mediterranean goddesses-mothers narrate events and passions, changing routes, spaces and times, beyond rational, natural and temporal borders, thus becoming eternally universal icons and archetypes» (Greco, 2011).

Different and more complex is the case of a grand opera event that requires a large number of sovra-structural installations, as happened with the grand opera events (Cavalleria Rusticana, Aida) that the San Carlo Theatre of Naples staged in the Archaeological Park.

In order to stage effective theatrical activities in the archaeological park in terms of cultural promotion and economic impact, the offer of cultural activities should be diversified. Hence the need to host grand opera events without necessarily investing funds for the sovra-structural installations on every occasion, which would make the operation too expensive. The design meets these needs with its "theatrical machine". The new theatre - conceived as a demountable wooden structure - leads into the big court bringing it back to its original level and restoring its original function of *natatio*. The new building - as in the Roman tradition of "celebration machines" for *naumachias* or as for the maritime theatre of *Hadrian's Villa* - is an independent element inscribed as a fragment in the global additional composition for each single part, a new fragment which endeavours to making it easier for visitors to understand the rules and forms of the old times. In order to define its presence without imposing itself on the monument or competing with it, the theatre - from the architectural and syntactic point of view - thanks to an adequate and fit proportion, reaches the maximum height of the portico of the court; maintains in its overall layout the compositive axe passing by the centre of the exedra of the first terrace; and finally, due to its planimetric form, gains the shape of a square. In this way, the theatre, isolated in its formal and dimensional individuality, stands out and reflects itself in the stretch of water linked to the portico by two pedestrian paths running on a piled structure facing east-westward which marks the passage between the two *cavea*, while a third path facing north-south links the theatre to the perimetric *deambulatio*, to the changing rooms, the warehouses and the lavatories on the ground floor. From a constructive point of view, the theatre is organized by a very high procession of slender pillars (in lamellate wood) constantly steady step, which, through the *vomitoria*, hold the slabs of the steps. These are completely pierced to increase the transparency of the entire building and, as a consequence, to consent the perception of the terraces of the *palatium* also in the backside towards south. This semantic choice makes the new building uncovered and open, attaching to the sole framing element - which joins together the two scene towers closing the orchestra - the definition of the architectural decoration whose main objective is to revive the general completeness, alluding in this way to a virtual cubic volume. The proper double inclination of the *ima cavea* and of the *summa cavea* guarantees a perfect visibility either of the stage of the maritime theatre, or of the complex architectural/backdrop system formed by a terraced system with concave and convex exedras of the ancient monument. The new building above whose composition, as mentioned above, is programmatically and evidently based on the old monument above proposes, therefore, a possible contemporary interpretation of the theatre theme, in the archaeological sites, basically as an "architectural device". Such an intervention would justify a new presence and collocation in a so delicate and complex context, acting as a suitable "watching machine" for shows and for the archaeological ruins without winking but with

great respect and, at the same time, being able to glorify and acknowledge its beauty and value of testimony.

THE SECOND ENHANCEMENT RESULT.

Modern life for the ancient thermal baths in the Mercurio temple

As for the Mercurio section, the archaeological research ascertained the ancient function of the thermal baths, even if the original internal distribution of the spaces is not entirely clear due to the superficiality of the archaeological excavations. Most of the internal spaces of the Mercurio section are substantially still underground and their planking levels still unknown.

«As for the oldest complex we can only say that the big *rotunda* could be a *natatio*; here, drillings were done which reached a floor 8.50 metres under and intercepted a vein of water at 60° C. Chemical tests on water samples coming from the western area of the *rotunda* of Mercury were run, which have shown the presence of hyper thermal water with a temperature of 54,7° C, with organoleptic characteristics so to be classified as *strong sodium chloride* useful for balneo-therapy and mud therapy. The *Mercurio section*, which underwent magnifications, had to be very busy, but it never experienced functional alterations» (Guardascione, 2011).

The citation is from a Conference held in 1969 in the *Castello aragonese di Baia*, entitled: *Baiae Hydrothermal resources. Usages, Perspectives*, whose proceedings were published in 1997. The permanence of the water spring, the thermal proprieties of the water, the conservation of the thermal spaces, and mainly the striking *natatio* filled with water up to the vault, invite to imagine a new life for the *Palatium's* Baths, not only for functional and financial reasons, but to restore the ancient *genius loci*.

It is almost unnecessary to stress the importance and effectiveness of reusing parts of the Roman baths of *Baiae* to promote tourist-economic development, not only for *Baiae* and the Phlegraean Fields, but for the whole regional territory. The main point is identifying the modalities of conceiving this reutilization which should be not only appropriate as regards the safeguarding of the archaeological heritage, but also an effective tool of preservation for two essential reasons. The first one is of strictly economic nature and concerns the possibility of entrusting the management of the thermal activity to a private company which will take charge of the ordinary maintenance of the complex. The second one, of educational and popular nature, concerns the appropriate usage of the original archaeological heritage which allows a more direct empirical knowledge, restoring the original function and finally making the *Baiae* Complex alive. The main theme of the project of the Mercury section is the excavation, dictated either by distribution or spatial choices. The excavation itself - about three meters under the actual level of the floor of the entrance of the so-called Mercurio Temple - which will portray the open space of rectangular shape, - compositive nucleus of the intervention: one space conceived as a water basin, a modern *natatio*, which will compose the archaeological findings that the excavation will bring to light - the natural forms of the landscape, the architectures (historical and contemporary shapes) - and which will also work as an access to the baths. The autonomous function of the baths will be ensured by a separate entrance. The entrance from *Baiae* square, designed and realized at the time of the last restoration works, was never used and has now been vandalized. The project foresees the same archaeological visit to the park, but starting from the new entrance located in front of the *Venus Temple* and it will be carried on by visiting the three sections, with the possibility to face inside the *Mercurio natatio*.

As far as the functional articulation of the spaces is concerned, around the central one formed by the big hall of the Mercurio Temple, the project intends to give back the original usage of the Roman baths to the halls and functions and foresees as well, in spite of a lack of reliable data which could probably be gathered following thorough and exhaustive archaeological researches, a destination compatible with the greatness and proportions of each hall and their

proper use, in any case changeable, whenever new excavations bring reliable ascriptions to the punctual destinations, given the general sense of the operation.

The UniMED research highlighted the high touristic impact of this type of enhancement, with a really long range and huge potential. The main concern regards the managerial model, which would necessarily involve a qualified private actor, expert in the field. Following the formulated scenario: «It would represent an interesting opportunity even in terms of management because the maintenance of the area would be entrusted to qualified wellness and spa professionals, once spaces and structures have been restored and given their original function. In addition to maintenance and custody, this option may provide a potential income with positive relapses on the local economy (this initiative may take several legal forms that need further study and investigations). In the case under consideration, the particular features of the territory constitute a *unicum* which favours this union, by limiting to a minimum the harmful effects that are often attributed to the involvement of the private-profit sector in the cultural sector, and by providing an opportunity of “mutual support” thanks to which an important cultural heritage that is not available today may become accessible to the public. A time-regulated concession of the spaces can be hypothesized, through the payment of a fee in proportion with the income potential of the thermal activity. The resources deriving from this fee could be aimed at management of the part of the archaeological area that is open to the public (the possibility to start a project finance is not precluded). In order to understand the importance of the contribution that this solution could guarantee to the public mission of the supply of an available cultural heritage, some estimates and some basic, simplistic, yet crucial hypotheses in outlining the possible scenario, should be made. At this preliminary stage, according to some parameters gathered from field investigations, we hypothesize that the management of a spa facility in the Roman site may even produce a significant “compensation” flow aimed at the public management of the site, that may be approximately comprised between €100,000-€200,000. As stated, this hypothesis is very attractive and innovative but also actually applicable; it is particularly interesting because of the way in which it would make it possible to “open” a limited, yet important management space to private individuals, while still guaranteeing conservation of the heritage, sustainability of the cultural management and access to the public, in an area that today has a high risk of degradation and of being shut down» (Manfra, Tuccini, Liquori, 2011).

The interdisciplinary perspective from which we have elaborated this project requires the involvement of experts able to individuate the water springs still in action, to analyse the nature and properties of the water, and pushing away seawater seepages into the Mercury hall. Such a relevant research exceeds the competences of the project, which has anyway endeavored to bring to light, starting from a strictly urban view, the potential increased value in this field, giving a specific and clearly outlined scenario of an interdisciplinary methodology of research, waiting for funds that would allow to carry on with the plan.

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