

Synchronous Worlds

Architecture, Archaeology and City through a Project in Sicily

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In the Mediterranean basin, the archaeological presence is extremely relevant and diffuse. Together with this is a difficult intertwining with contemporary urban settlements, which archaeology, by tradition, has to be protected from. If conservation is the goal of restoration, the problem of the cohabitation between past and present use is still an issue. This paper will focus on the project of enhancement of the archaeological park of the Greek colony of Naxos, near Messina, in Sicily, led by the Department of Architecture of the University of Palermo in cooperation with the administrative head of the park. At the crossroads between the sea, the highway, a lemon orchard and the city of Giardini Naxos,

the ancient Greek settlement could be an example of coexistence of the different layers composing the landscape, with the aim of making history and archaeology come to life as synchronous components of the contemporary fruition of the place.

- 1 Maria Costanza Lentini, ed., *Le due città di Naxos. Atti del Seminario di Studi Giardini Naxos, 29-31 ottobre 2000*, (Milan: Giunti Editore, 2004).
- 2 Lentini, ed., *Naxos a quarant'anni dall'inizio degli scavi* (Messina: Regione Siciliana, Assessorato dei Beni Culturali Ambientali e della Pubblica Istruzione, 1998).
- 3 Over the decades, the lack of maintenance forced a restoration of the project of enhancement itself, but its principles were disregarded and the current coverings are far from the originals, with no attention to natural light, lightness of materials or ventilation. For a view on both the first and the second project, see Giuseppe Guerrera and Sebastiano Tusa, "Attualità dell'opera di Franco Minissi," in *Franco Minissi e il progetto di restauro della Villa del Casale a Piazza Armerina*, ed. Katiusia Sferazza and Ilenia Grassedonio (Palermo: Stampa Eurografica, 2007), 7-12.
- 4 The research was possible thanks to a 6-month scholarship, supervised by Professors Giuseppe Guerrera and Andrea Sciascia in agreement with the head of the Archaeological Park of Naxos, Arch. Vera Greco. On the same subject, Prof. Guerrera was also tutor of two master's degree theses in architectural design, titled "Progetto e riqualificazione del parco archeologico di Giardini Naxos," by the students Simonetta Catalano and Mariangela Pellerito, 2017-2018.

Introduction

Like the rest of Southern Italy, Sicily was an obligatory stop of the Gran Tour of scholars and voyagers from all over Europe since the 18th century, which had its peak during the 19th century, after the discovery of the Temple of Paestum. The island has a very diffuse and rich presence of archaeological remains, some very well known, such as the great examples of Agrigento, Syracuse, Selinunte, some (more than a hundred) less known but no less important settlements, on the coast and inland. A very consistent part is made up of the remains of the Greek colonization, whose first city is identified in Naxos, on the Eastern coast of Sicily, near Taormina. Born as twin of the homonym Cycladic island of Naxos, in the Aegean sea, Naxos is a very peculiar example of how the archaeological site is, in some way, forced to coexist with the contemporary city in the Mediterranean area: the place is a highly touristic seaside resort, at the crossroads with the railway connecting Catania to Messina and very close to Taormina (just 9 kilometres away) and the Alcantara valley; the park itself has been a lemon orchard for at least a century and the rest of the Greek city lies among the contemporary buildings, sometimes as a fenced area, sometimes still hidden under the basements.¹ Indeed, the coexistence between archaeology and contemporary settlements is not easy. The history of the institution of the park is made up of legal battles, expropriations, harsh defeats and great findings, as happened with many other archaeological sites in Italy.²

Moreover, if the purpose of archaeologists is to preserve and take care of remains, which is mainly a problem of cataloguing, the issue of preservation and fruition implies a collaboration with the designers. This has been at the centre of the debate on restoration, especially after ww2, when the hypothesis of the reconstruction caused fights and theoretical reflections. The general intent of enhancement of the archaeological sites as collective heritage led to solutions sometimes simply imitating forms which were very hard to reconstruct as they could have been, and at other times in extreme dissonance with the place, even drawing the attention away from the artefact they should protect. In this sense, the work of Franco Minissi with Cesare Brandi at the Roman Villa del Casale, in Piazza Armerina (EN) was a forerunner in the theme of cooperation between architecture and archaeology, where the architectural project had the scope of protecting and enhancing the ruins with no false forms and imitating materials.³

This paper shows the results of a research led in 2018 within the Department of Architecture of the University of Palermo, Italy, in agreement with the head of the Archaeological Park of Naxos.⁴

The aim was to provide the head of the park and the citizens with a project of enhancement, musealization and museography of the archaeological park of Naxos. Due to its potential urban role of green park, the quality of the vegetation and for the importance of the ruins of the first Greek colony of Sicily, Naxos stands out as an occasion for the architectural

- 5 The agreement offered two research lines, one in architectural design (which the author conducted), the other concerning architectural representation and surveys, led by the architect Maria Antonietta Badalamenti under the guidance of Professor Fabrizio Agnello.
- 6 "Les ruines existent par le regard qu'on porte sur elles. Mais entre leurs passés multiples et leur fonctionnalité perdue, ce qui s'en laisse percevoir est une sorte de temps hors d'histoire auquel l'individu qui les contemple est sensible comme s'il l'aidait à comprendre la durée qui s'écoule en lui," Marc Augé, *Le temps en ruines* (Paris: Galilée, 2003), 43.
- 7 See Christopher Woodward, *In Ruins* (London: Vintage, 2002), 2: "When we contemplate ruins, we contemplate our own future."
- 8 Georg Simmel, "La rovina" (*Die Ruine in Philosophische Kultur, Gesammelte Essays*, Leipzig 1911), in *Saggi sul paesaggio*, ed. Monica Sassatelli, (Rome: Armando Editore, 2006), 70.

intervention to interact with the archaeologists, with the purpose of enhancing the park itself and disclosing its urban values in order to donate them again to the citizenry.

The first part of this research (which will not be shown here) concerned the graphical representation of the site; this has been possible thanks to the metric survey that provided a univocal and precise view of the base material of the relations between the excavations and the soil, the vegetation and the existing buildings of the park and between the borders and the contemporary city, Santa Venera creek and the coastline.⁵ Starting from this new base material that upgraded the previous ones, with the comparison with the historical and archaeological mappings, the proposal could be investigated. The process and results are here explored. It was a work on the ground, meaning its surface, with vegetation, the lower level, that of the excavations, and the upper level, that of the built architecture.

The indications of the project derive from the comprehension and deep knowledge of these three main levels. Its purposes were oriented towards the integration of archaeology into the contemporary context of Giardini Naxos. The first aim is to make the didactic value of the park explicit, with interventions evocating the ancient spaces and volumes, letting the visitor imagine the places as they could have been and increasing fascination with the ruins; second, it reflects on finding solutions able to reconnect the now interrupted relationships among the sea, the park and the contemporary city.

The ultimate goal is to make the archaeological park a green lung and public garden, the fruition of which could change it into a true urban fringe, with vital intertwining layers, like a living time-machine.

1 Living (the) Ruins. Inhabiting the Archaeology

Recalling Marc Augé, ruins exist through the gaze that falls upon them. In his work *Le temps en ruines* [*Time in ruins*] he points out how there is a gap among ruins' many pasts and their lost functionality, a sort of place outside time, that allows those who admire them to perceive the flowing of time itself over them.⁶ This way, Augé summarizes the sense of multiple times enclosed in the ruin; the simultaneity of all history is something both archaeology and architecture deal with: they share a present that links all the multiple pasts and prepares a new past for the future to come.⁷

Georg Simmel shows then the link between architecture and archaeology in both the conquest of nature and the re-conquest by nature of the human effort. Between the not-yet and the no-more, the ruin stands in all its fascination because nature re-shapes it, and from its new form one can imagine other possible past and future forms, a different new whole.⁸ The action of architectural intervention, then, must deal with this concept of new totality of the ruin that is, in fact, different from the original. The other aspect, no less important, is the impossibility of catching the ruin in its isolation. By addressing the ruin, we refer rather to a landscape



fig. 1 Territorial context of the Archaeological Park of Naxos (author's drawing).

- 9 André Corboz, "Le territoire comme palimpseste," *Diogenes* n°121 (January-March 1983): 14-35, and also Bernard Lassus, *The Landscape Approach* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1998), 144-145.
- 10 "L'archeologo opera, in genere, sulle stratificazioni, cioè su depositi tridimensionali che una quarta dimensione, il tempo, ordina secondo una sequenza stratigrafica che va ricostruita, distinguendo le componenti materiali e quelle immateriali che non per questo sono fisicamente e concettualmente meno significative." Daniele Manacorda, *Prima lezione di archeologia* (Rome: Laterza, 2004), 6.
- 11 Manacorda, *Il sito archeologico tra ricerca e valorizzazione* (Rome: Carocci, 2007), 86.
- 12 Alessandra Capuano, "Archeologia e nuovi immaginari," in *Landscapes of Ruins Ruined Landscapes*, ed. Alessandra Capuano (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2014), 40; Idem., "Archeologia e nuovi immaginari," 42. See also the 2003 UNESCO *Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage*, the 2005 *Faro Convention on the Value of Cultural Heritage for Society* and about Italian heritage the 2014 ICOM, *Musées et paysages culturels*, Conférence Internationale de Sienne.

of ruins, made of artefacts, vegetation, agriculture and layers of history in the past and present, that form a whole. So the intervention on a ruin, or on an archaeological site, is indeed an intervention on a landscape where archaeological findings are just one component.

In some way it means working on a palimpsest, as a metaphor for catching how the territory of archaeology must not be different from the territory itself: it is made up of a series of processes that add layers upon layers, sometimes increasing, sometimes destroying what is laid down, making the territory a product of history and of human passage on this planet.⁹ In very simple terms, archaeology has the scope of unfolding these levels one by one. Notably, "In general, the archaeologist works on the layers, i.e. on tridimensional deposits which a fourth dimension, that is time, puts in order according to a sequence to be rebuilt, distinguishing the material components from the immaterial ones, that are both physically and conceptually equally significant."¹⁰ The importance of the archaeological context has a lot in common with the intervention of architectural restoration, which in Italy, especially after the Reconstruction, learnt to deal with the "context" and not only with the big isolated monument. Moreover, the architectural intervention for archaeology has the role of making the connections between the ruin and the surroundings visible, to sew the interrupted links into the present use.

The diffused presence of architectural remains implies a dialectic between protection and valorization that finds the key point in the architect: how can one make a place discoverable and also financially sustainable, while also trying to guarantee its conservation and preservation for scholars and the visitors of the future? The concept of valorization is particularly tricky, because it carries the term "value," linked to an economical aspect, and also a further reflection on the cultural and environmental point of view.¹¹ In the awareness that every modification of the territory means to inevitably lose something, one should ask oneself what value this territory can acquire; this applies to the archaeological practice itself, where excavating implies some sort of destruction to get to the lower levels, and to the architectural intervention, especially in the archaeological field. Against the mummification of the sites and the city of fences, the concept of active conservation has arisen, and the architectural project has the role of triggering fruitful interactions between archaeology, contemporary city and rural areas.¹²

The site of Naxos is exemplary in this sense: it is a highly remarkable archaeological place in documentary terms, while not so relevant in terms of spectacular ruins; on the other hand, the municipality of Giardini Naxos is a very lively site, where summer tourism changes the place into a popular destination; moreover, the lack of public areas, with the exception of the beach, provides further motivation to rethink the archaeological park as a public one, with differentiated areas of fruition and facilities for the community, also in seasons other than summer.

- 13 The castle was acquired by the Regione Sicilia and the head of the archaeological park in November 2018 after decades of negotiations with the former owner.

2 The Archaeological Park of Naxos Today

To get to Giardini Naxos one has to drive along the highway connecting Catania to Messina, towards Taormina, with the shining blue sea on the right and the massive silhouette of the volcano of Mount Etna on the left. After taking the turning to Giardini Naxos, the city is a chaotic maze of roads, with several cross streets going down to the coastline. One of them leads to the harbour and the Schisò Castle, a 13th century building whose name comes from the name of the peninsula it is sited on.¹³ Slowly following the coast and bypassing the castle, a small, almost invisible sign announces you have arrived at the Archaeological Park of Naxos, which indeed looks like a garden (the city name, Giardini Naxos, where “giardini” means “gardens” in English, refers to the historical tradition of the area known for its flourishing gardens of lemon trees).

From the small parking lot, a path starts under the shadow of the trees. From here, the visitor must continue on foot. Passing by the small

fig. 2 The current condition of the park (author's drawing).





museum, (most of the relics are not exhibited but stored in the buildings at the other side of the park), among ancient lemon trees, medlars and mulberry trees, the remains of houses and urban blocks lay almost hidden by the grass. Following the path, under the far vigilance of Mount Etna in the background, a wooden covering protects the excavations that brought to light all the stratifications, from the most ancient (the indigenous settlement around the 8th century BC) to the 5th century BC (when the city was destroyed by Syracuse). There one must come back, following a narrow, 19th-century street lined with cypresses and then finally take the main street of the Greek city, called *plateia B*, a long etching on the ground, to then arrive to the walls, on the south-western border of the park. These are the most impressive ruins of the area, in cyclopean work of black lava stones. Beyond those, a pinewood covers the area where some precarious buildings, forbidden to the public, contain thousands of findings. After the pinewood, a fence separates the park from a narrow path skirting the Santa Venera creek: here children, families and teenagers walk down to get to the beach, which is very close. Turning left, a 19th-century wall, almost 10 metres high, with the former function of protecting the lemon orchard from the wind, separates the archaeological park from the sea. It is the southern margin of the park, where the most interesting archaeological remains can be seen: the sanctuary, the furnaces, the so-denominated *B* temple.

The dimension of the archaeological park of Naxos is hard to perceive. The excavations seem few and scattered, vegetation is predominant, and there is no great temple rising or column evoking

fig. 3 The current visitor path through a row of cypresses. Mount Etna in the background (author's photo).



- 14 Lentini, *Naxos a quarant'anni dall'inizio degli scavi*, 39.
- 15 Dieter Mertens, *Città e monumenti dei Greci d'Occidente* (Rome: L'Erma, 2006), 40.
- 16 Oscar Belvedere, "Himera, Naxos e Camarina, tre casi di urbanistica coloniale," *Xenia* 14 (1987): 5-20.

a glorious past. The actual appearance of the park is the result of three excavation campaigns, in 1953-61-63, in 1973 and in 1995, and the site in its complex is 40 hectares wide.¹⁴ From the first surveys led in the Schisò peninsula, it appeared that the place had been occupied since the Neolithic.

The Greek city was founded in the 8th century, but the area was already inhabited, and the new urban grid almost overlapped the previous one.¹⁵ It was made up of three main streets running north-south, called *plateiai*, and several orthogonal secondary streets, called *stenopoi*. Long house blocks compose the grid; in the central area they measure 39 × 156 metres, that is the base module of the entire urban system.¹⁶

The central, so-called *plateia* A, half hidden under the contemporary road via Stracina, assumes a principal role because it is equidistant from the urban perimeter. Its disposition takes the morphology of the terrain and some pre-existences into account, like the altar in the south-western area, outside the actual perimeter. The central street is 9.5 metres wide while the other two are 6.5 metres wide. The orthogonal system of streets is made by the 5-metre wide *stenopoi*, with the exception of *stenopos* n°6, which is 6.4 metres wide, leading to the agora and the harbour, which is still visible today in the area of the arsenal (5th century BC), outside the perimeter and enclosed by the residential buildings. On the creek side, the city is enclosed by the fortification walls which were probably built at the end of 6th century BC, when the city was threatened by Gela. These walls were likely to have had towers, based on the Gela model, probably in brick and 8 metres high, 4.6 metres wide and interrupted by urban gateways corresponding to the urban streets.

fig. 4 The urban fortifications in cyclopean work and the remains of the pincer-like gateway (author's photo).



- 17 Tessa Matteini, *Paesaggi del tempo. Documenti archeologici e rovine artificiali nel disegno di giardini e paesaggi* (Florence: Alinea, 2009).
- 18 Pierluigi Nicolin, "The Vestiges of Architecture," *Lotus* n°162 (April 2017): 57.

Of the original plant, only *plateia* B is visible today, inside the perimeter of the park, along with the foundations of its gate through the walls, toward the Santa Venera creek. This gate was part of a hierarchical system made up of three main entrances to the city, at the end of the *plateiai* A, B and C, plus some other less important gates, one still visible on the walls fencing the sanctuary and another one, formerly facing the sea. *Plateia* B crosses part of *stenopos* n°2, leading to the sanctuary area, and eastward to the *stenopos* n° 6, where the excavations brought two plots of houses to light. From here on, the *plateia* disappears into the street lined by cypresses.

3 Plant Footprints

Until the fifties, the area of the park was a private orchard as were most of the surroundings. The remains of it are still visible: tangerine, orange, lemon and pear trees, medlars and mulberry trees. Olive trees and palms dot all the plain.

The continuity between vegetation and archaeological remains is already evident since the rising of the Renaissance aesthetics of ruins and it became explicit many centuries later with Simmel's essay. In the 20th century, what was acquired as Romantic picturesque became part of the architectonic whole.¹⁷ Vegetation is conceived as architectural element to enhance contemplation and the fruition of the archaeological place.¹⁸

The area of Naxos shows all the elements to be thought of as a unique context of intertwining between endemic vegetation and archaeological presence. The historical stratification of different plant

fig. 5 The walls of the sanctuary. Beyond them, the 19th-century wall conceived to protect the orchard from the wind of the sea (author's photo).

footprints goes along with that of the ancient city, and they can be resumed as following.

- a The orchards. The agricultural heritage is still visible all around the peninsula, with scattered ancient fruit trees and artefacts; on the eastern side, one can still observe the “saje,” the irrigation channels for the lemon orchards, nowadays dry. Thus, most of the lemon and orange trees still present are abandoned and they have gone back to a wild state, no longer productive. The medlars are weak and poor and sumachs and wild olive trees have invaded the inner parts, making them inaccessible.
- b The ornamental plants. The area is hallmarked by a remarkable row of cypresses going south-north, and by a wide area shadowed by a pinewood in the south-western margin, facing the Santa Venera creek. Due to the cypresses and the 19th-century wall, one’s gaze cannot look over to the sea, just beyond the wall.
- c The spontaneous vegetation. The park contains a great variety of vegetation, mostly spontaneous after the expropriations of the orchards. The area of the sanctuary especially is very close to a small hill covered by prickly pears, cane fields and spontaneous oleanders, typical elements of Mediterranean bush. All these presences determine a further diversity of volumes, heights, shadows, colours and scents that make the area unique.

4 The Proposal of Enhancement: Evocation and Imagination

The main purpose of the plan is to work in two directions: vertical and horizontal. In a vertical sense, the aim of the architectural intervention is to show all the archaeological levels, from the most ancient and deepest to the surface of the urban park; in a horizontal sense, the area takes on the role of a bridge between fragments of the contemporary urban settlement, made of infrastructures, beach and tourists facilities.

It is a complex park composed by several layers that should be harmonically in balance and equally accessible. In order to fulfil this commitment, five elements need to be considered: first, the existing wall of the city, and consequently the orthogonal plan of *plateiai* and *stenopoi*; second, the 19th-century wall which encloses an area with easy access from within the park and facing the sea, to be thought as a naturalistic park; third, the row of cypresses, a very strong symbol recalling the recent past of garden; fourth the lemon orchard, to be recovered and enhanced; and finally, the system of the entrance, which today is that of the museum and will become the arrival of the visitor path.

4.1 Some Issues

As defined by the agreement with the directors of the park, the project proposal aims to establish some guidelines and relationships that future

- 19 Tim Williams, "Archaeology: Reading the City through Time," in *Reconnecting the City. The Historic Urban Landscape Approach and the Future of Urban Heritage*, ed. Francesco Bandarin and Ron van Oers (London: Wiley, 2015), 35.

interventions should pursue. Thus it provides just one of many possible solutions, using the project as an investigative tool.

The main issues explored were the following.

- Protection. It is necessary to rethink the protection devices of the excavation, for which an architectural box is intended, with the function of shielding it from the weather; this would be both light and reversible, so as not to interfere with the accessibility and comprehension of the excavations and of the whole park.
- Distinctiveness. Every element (on the ground or in elevation) should be easily distinguishable if compared to the excavations and in turn should allow the immediate perception of the excavations themselves, making visitors mentally visualize the spaces of the ancient city of Naxos.
- Accessibility. The purpose of the project is to improve and optimize accessibility to the area, rethinking the car paths and the disposition of the parking lots right beyond the "fence" of the park. In turn, the concept itself of the "fence" should be revisited and mostly replaced with solutions which can stitch the interrupted relations between park and city.
- Fruition. The choices of the project should be taken to improve the fruition and the didactic value of the park. Reception facilities should be placed to help the visitors to understand what they will see or just imagine and to guide them through the paths of the park.
- Vegetation. The project must deal with the surface of the soil with the same attention it will pay to what lies underneath. Thus the conservation and enhancement of the vegetation is a crucial point. The new path will guide the visitor along the park passing through one of its urban gateways and it will focus attention on the south-western margin, where the limit is marked by the Santa Venera creek. Here the pinewood defines the border till the sea and since it is immediately outside the wall and too close to the creek, the archaeologists have established that the ground would not hide any other archaeological evidence. This area could then be the real gateway of the park, where all the reception facilities should be gathered with the aim of preparing visitors.

4.2 The Overall Design

The general purpose of the intervention is to change the archaeological park into an urban park, a threshold between the contemporary city and the sea, integrating the archaeological remains into the urban environment.¹⁹ The proposal aims to provide a comprehensive vision of the ancient city spaces, allowing the visitor to understand the dimension and relations of the signs of the city. As a first "refoundation" act, the proposal replaces the access on the side of Santa Venera creek, establishing the visitor path

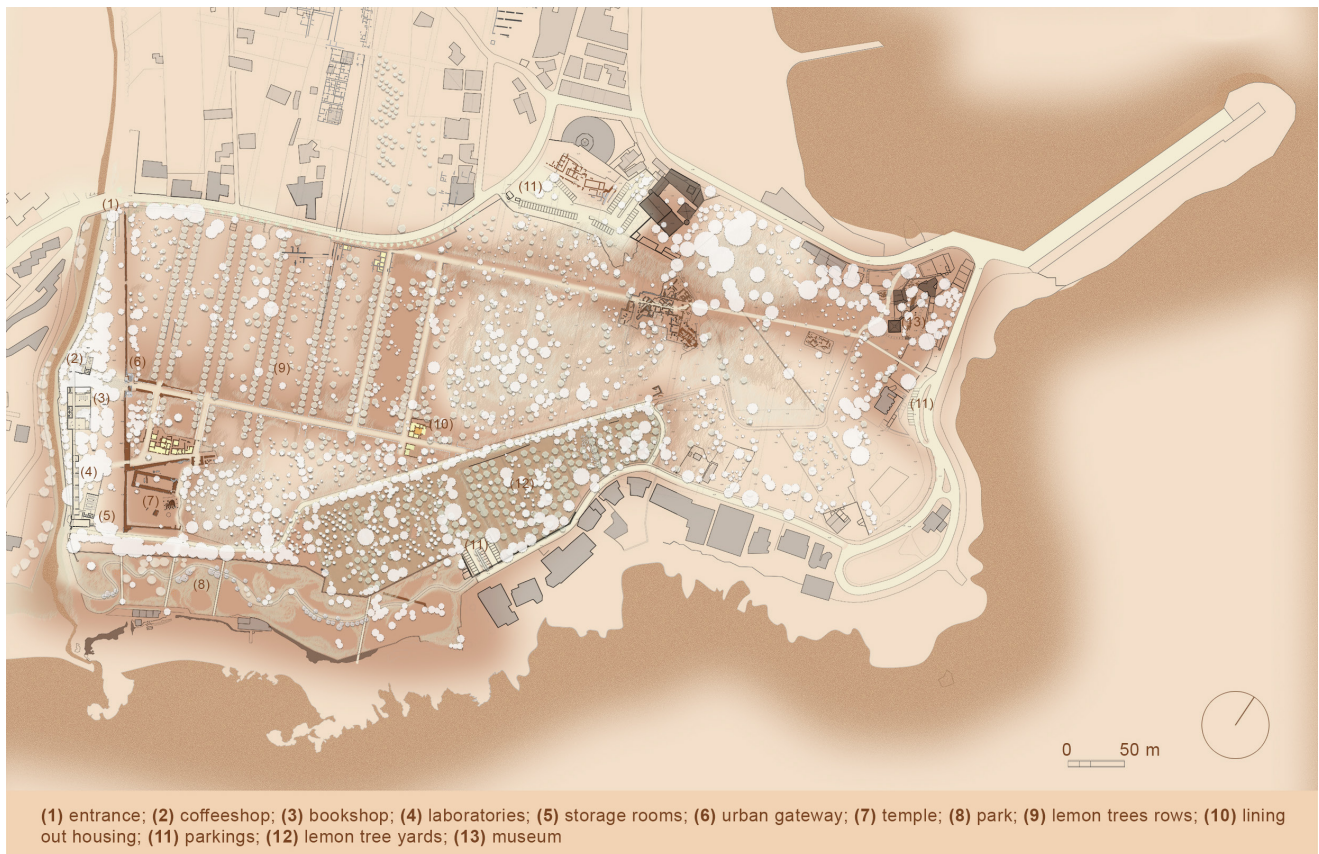


fig. 6 Plan of the proposal with new paths and interventions (author's drawing).

as starting from the real entrance to the city, that is from its urban gateway. The visit is an ideal crossing of the ancient Naxos.

The fence here is replaced by a system of buildings, hidden among the trees, that define a sort of built wall that widens the existing urban path connecting the city to the beach and embracing the pinewood as a public area. The buildings are conceived as a hierarchical system of facilities serving both the public and the park (cafeteria, ticket area, bookshop), facilities to be opened to the public for some events or occasions (laboratories) and strictly scholar-related facilities (restoration laboratories and new storage rooms).

Thus, the visitors can choose to stay under the shadow of the pinewood at the cafeteria, cross the pinewood, go to the beach or enter the park. Upon passing the reception system among the pine trees, one can find the new gateway to the city. The visitors have to follow the same path the ancient inhabitants of Naxos did to enter the city, along *plateia* B.

20 Katuscia Sferrazza, and Ilenia Grassettonio, ed., *Franco Minissi e il progetto di restauro della Villa del Casale a Piazza Armerina* (Palermo: Stampa Eurografica 2007).

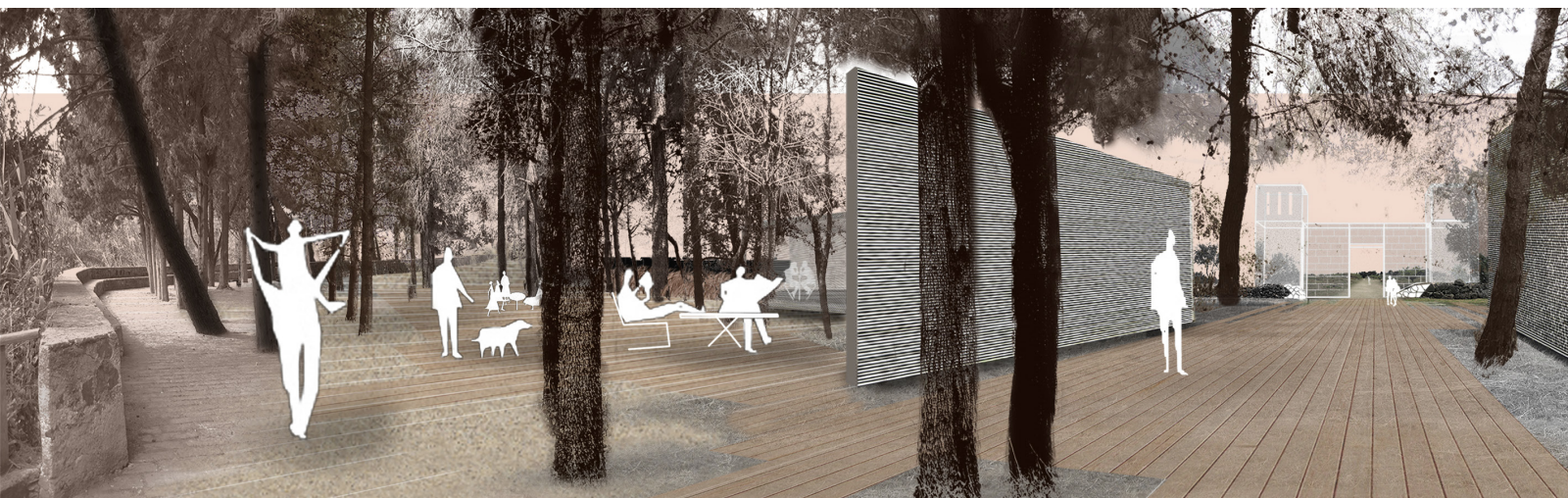
One can notice the crossroads between the *plateia* and the *stenopoi*; *stenopos* n°2 can be partly crossed to the south and it leads to the propylaea of the sanctuary. After this deviation, one can go back on through the *plateia* and get to the excavations of the houses at *stenopos* n°6. Comprehension of the city is aided by evocation devices, explained in the following paragraph, which guide the visitor along the street. Going on, one can reach what still exists of *plateia* A, the main street of the city, where all the major historical stratifications of Naxos can be found. The path goes on and ends with the remains of the urban walls facing the sea, finally leading to the museum.

4.3 Strategies of enhancement

The strategies adopted for the enhancement of the paths of the park are to provide a simpler understanding by the visitor, stimulating his imagination through evocative means.

By the term “evocation” we mean a strategy similar to the one adopted in the fifties by Franco Minissi with the collaboration of Cesare Brandi at the Villa del Casale in the territory of Piazza Armerina (EN). Here the need to protect the mosaics and to contemplate them from an ideal elevated position led to the solution of a transparent, light structure that evoked the forms which the villa should have in an abstract, simple way, letting the light in but avoiding heating; then the designers conceived a system of paths that used the elevation of the existing walls. The solution designed a series of transparent volumes that allowed the ancient spaces to be imagined, not imitating them, and harmonically interacting with the surrounding landscape.²⁰ A similar concept was used by Franco Ceschi

fig. 7 The entrance area, with cafeteria and ticket office, under the pines on the southern border; beyond it, the urban gateway to the city (author's image).



- 21 Franco Ceschi, "La Rievocazione del Tempio di Apollo a Veio," in *I Siti archeologici: un Problema di Musealizzazione all'aperto*, ed. Bruna Amendolea (Rome: Gruppo Editoriale Internazionale, 1994), 91.
- 22 Antonello Marotta, "Toni Gironès Saderra, adattamento delle rovine di Can Tacò, Montmelò, Barcellona, Spagna," *Industria delle costruzioni* n°439 (September-October 2014): 34.
- 23 Marotta, "Lola Domènech, restauro del foro romano di Empuries, Spagna," *Industria delle costruzioni* n°439 (September-October 2014): 28-33.

for Apollo's temple in Veio, Rome, in 1992.²¹ Before the intervention, the ruin of the temple was in fragments and almost unrecognizable. The architect used a metal structure to rebuild dimensions and proportions of the temple in an abstract way, including the columns of the front, and it was concretized with copies of the pediment and of the antefixes, the original of which are on display at the museum. Toni Gironès led an analogous work of abstraction and evocation at the Roman site of Can Tacò, Spain, where he operated a sort of refilling of the Roman traces, thus building a cracked ground from which the flat volumes of the excavations emerge. In some places, a sort of curtain is built by a light iron structure filled by local stones that have been removed by the excavations.²² With comparable attention to the ground and to materials, at the ruins of Empuries Lola Domènech employed a very elegant solution of a zero-height architecture of thresholds, little rising platforms or steps that immediately allow visitors to glance at the different spaces and volumes of the site.²³ All these projects share a common sensitivity towards the archaeological site and its contemporary fruition, and towards the strategies to enhance the comprehension of the site. The architectural intervention, mindful of Minissi's legacy, interacts with the archaeological sites to be protected and made accessible for public fruition, places where time is condensed into the present. These reflections were necessary to conceive the proposal laid out in this paper and to develop further questions about the different layers of the project. The main strategies are summarized as follows, for area and type of intervention.

a *Plateia B_lining out*

This is the base strategy. It proposes the restoration of the external and internal walls by their lining out through a cement screed to level the height and to allow a more complete vision of the perimeter of the rooms. The ground is treated with different colours and materials to distinguish the spaces (rooms, courtyards, external spaces).

b *Plateia B_metal profiles*

This strategy aims to rebuild the volume of the houses at the corners of the streets in an abstract way, by using steel profiles that evoke the ideal height of the house walls and leaving the doors open. The entrances are underlaid by a wooden platform that signals the house threshold and that allows the visitor to look inside.

A semi-transparent curtain wall could emphasize the built façade.

c *Plateia B_hedges*

Where there is a lack of archaeological evidence (having not yet been excavated), to underline the built border of the plot, the use of hedges is possible with plants like mastic, lantana or pittosporum, whose very short roots allow the conservation of the possible remains in the lower layers of the ground. The endemic plants are easy to care for; the whole effect is a green wall stimulating the imagination of the built plot.

d *Stenopoi_ lemon tree roads*

Planting rows of lemon trees along the borders of the *stenopoi* which are not yet excavated allows the evocation of the traces of the urban streets of ancient Naxos, with no real reconstruction. The lemon tree roots are not very deep, so planting them does not preclude possible future excavation because they do not destroy the archaeological remains; instead, they immediately show the urban tissue, by using an element, the lemon tree, belonging to the recent history of Giardini Naxos.

Together with the replacement of all the old or weak trees with healthy ones and the proposal to consider a productive orchard, the character of agricultural area is provided for the archaeological park. It thus recovers its previous value of a "garden," with a preference where possible for the geometry of the plantation trees for the built architecture. The proposal limits the solution of the lemon-trees rows to *stenopoi* 1 to 6, where the path could bend to get to *plateia* A. The reason is mostly because the area of *stenopoi* 7 to 14 has never been subject to concrete study. If no further excavation campaigns were envisaged in that area, the planting of lemon trees could be extended; however, even without covering all the urban grid, this partial solution is already evocative of the overall scale of the city.

e *The urban gateway*

The fortification walls on the side of Santa Venera creek clearly show the foundation of the gateway that closed *plateia* B. This should be an evolution of the ancient wall, originally linear. It is a primitive pincer-like gateway, built out of the need to defend the city, by folding back the walls to the inside of the city. This hypothesis is supported by the fact that the stone blocks used to build it are different from the cyclopean ones of the rest of the walls but similar to those used for the 5th-century plots. It makes the gateway in Naxos the first pincer-like gateway in the Greek world, because every other example in Sicily or Greece dates back to the Hellenistic period.²⁴

fig. 8 The evocation of the gateway of *plateia* B,
the new entrance to the park (author's image).



- 25 Paola Pelegatti, "Naxos – relazione preliminare delle campagne di scavo 1961-64," *Bollettino d'Arte* n°11 (April-June, 1964): 149-165.
- 26 Mertens, *Città e monumenti dei Greci d'Occidente*, 101.

The aim of the proposal is to underline the peculiarity of this gateway, starting from a reconstructive drawing that tries to understand original dimensions and materials. Thus the project of evocation tries to re-propose the proportions by using a system of steel tubular profiles defining a tridimensional drawing. The curtain is a transparent screen that makes the volumes of the guarding towers evanescent, allowing the vegetation to be seen beyond the threshold. Overcoming the ticket office, among the trees, visitors discover the real entrance to the city. Through its semi-transparent image, they can imagine its real consistency in the 5th century BC and its relationship with the fortifications.

f The B temple

The excavations of 1961 brought to light the foundation walls of what is called "B temple," inside the sanctuary that was probably dedicated to Hera or Aphrodite.²⁵ It looks as if it was founded over another more ancient *sacellum*, not later than the 6th century BC. There is no sign of a peristasis, so a compact and massive typology was supposed, the decorative element of which was a rich system of clays today on display in the museum. The reconstructive drawing can be based on similar temples in Sicilian sanctuaries of the same period, especially on the one in the Malophoros sanctuary, in Selinunte, where the wall blocks only opened for entrance.²⁶ The strategy of evocation uses the same metal profiles to build the illusion of volume on the façade and on one of long sides of the temple, to suggest the dimension of the building (around 38 metres long and 14 metres wide). The cladding becomes denser around the edge where a portion of the front acquires solidity, and then it progressively dematerializes. The proposed solution then explores the issue of the incomplete, trying to build a kind of new ruin.

g The naturalistic park

The former function of an orchard is a strength the project wanted to enhance. On the one hand, beyond the recommended visit path among

fig. 9 A view of a lining out technique proposal (author's image).



the ruins, the visitor is encouraged to freely take other ways, following the row of cypresses that lines a recovered lemon orchard leading to the northern part of the park, enjoying its garden character.

On the other hand, where the area turns into the totally public place facing the sea, the project seeks to re-link the interrupted relation between the archaeological park and the sea, divided by the windbreak wall that was built in the 19th century to protect the orchards from the sea winds. The plan overlaps a system of traces on a sinuous path that ideally continues the grid of the city, opening some visual passages in the wall, in some places even crossable, visually and physically linking the park to the coastline. Thus, the 19th-century wall changes from a barrier into a permeable threshold, renovating the lost relationship of the Greek city with the sea. The maritime pines, the eucalyptuses and the Mediterranean bush are maintained, but the area is cleaned of the pioneer plants (especially a particularly thorny species of *opuntia*); the vegetation is then integrated with acacias and *Phytolacca* to shade the path.

5 Conclusions

Many years have passed since the first excavations of Naxos were started. The first campaign (1953-56) brought the cyclopean southern walls of the city and the furnaces inside the orchard to light.²⁷ Since then, a wide area has finally been expropriated and subtracted from the growing illegal building of the sixties and the following decades, though with the result being a fenced-off area, mostly excluded by the dynamics of the city itself.

The proposal shown here has explored and extended some already acquired notions in the relationship between the architectural interventions and archaeological areas. This relationship aims at raising the visibility of the archaeological presence and making it readable to a public wider than that of scholars and who are often totally unaware of the historical events that produced that type of ruin. The project, more than being shown, wants to show a once existing reality with new eyes, stimulating the visitor to imagine spaces and volumes now physically lost.

In defining a new visitor path, going through the ancient city as would have happened in the 5th century, the proposal aims at making the Greek site and the contemporary park exist synchronously, simultaneously perceiving what exists today and what no longer does.

The strategies have the purpose of an immediate and evocative comprehension of the most relevant elements of the park excavated at present, i.e. the fortifications, the urban gateway, the sanctuary, *plateia B* and the crossroads with the *stenopoi*. The hypotheses seek to make a whole plan of the ancient urban tissue with the traces of the modernity, equally significant for the territory of Giardini Naxos. The recent acquisition by the head of the park, the long dreamt of Schisò Castle (after the conclusion of this research) opens a new scenario in the story of the park and widens the possibility of making it a great museum centre starting from the proposals

shown here. The vision is to gather all the thousands of findings belonging to Naxos and now scattered throughout the current museum, the Paolo Orsi Museum of Syracuse and the storage buildings inside the park.

Even if well identified in its perimeter, the Greek city of Naxos still lies mostly under the surface. Moreover, a large part of the vegetation has grown wild, and maintaining it is very expensive. Therefore, the project focuses the attention on the western and southern border, the entrance system and the first crossroads of streets. This leaves to the future the possibility of excogitating the development of this plan, by imagining further excavations along the *stenopoi* in the northern-eastern sector, where the archaeologists hypothesize finding the most ancient traces from the 8th century BC. Like a kick-off plan, the proposal maintains its character of incompleteness, not giving an exhaustive answer or solution, but establishing some norms for the decisions to take. They shall necessarily take wide reflections into account linking the visit of the park to the city, to the relationships with the mountains and the sea, and between built elements and ground.



fig. 10 Illustration of the relationship between the new urban park and the archaeological area beyond the 19th-century wall (author's image).