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Coastal Landscapes and Invisible Archaeology

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The Case of Crapolla Abbey in Massa Lubrense

The aim of this contribution is to investigate the relationship between coastal landscapes, invisible archaeology and architectural design through the case of the archaeological site of St. Peter's Abbey, in the fjord of Crapolla, Massa Lubrense, in the Sorrento Peninsula, which has been the subject of an interdisciplinary research. In these particular situations, architectural design works on an interpretative condition where the intersection between reciprocal learnings takes on great importance in order to define design strategies for the valorization of weaker archaeological traces which are still present in the contemporary territory.

Crapolla Abbey is an emblematic case, where the results achieved by different studies, from archaeological excavations to surveys, from studies on ancient materials and construction techniques to those on the spolia architecture, from landscape studies to geological ones, inevitably become the basis of architectural design. This must be constantly updated, taking the connotations of an "open work" and becoming a sort of "building site of knowledge" in progress.
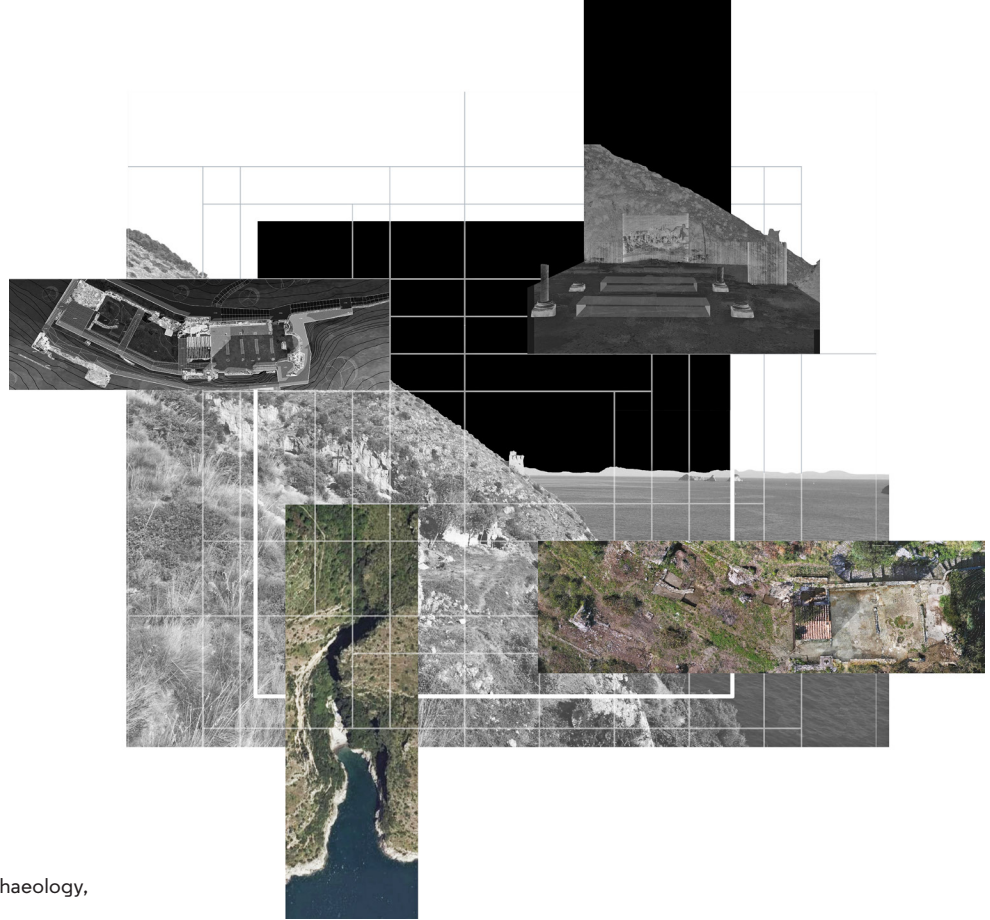
fig. 1   Coastal Landscape and Invisible Archaeology,
manifesto (author's drawing)

1 By "invisible archaeology" is meant the
archaeological sites not yet subjected to
excavations, or the sites excavated as a result of
"inevitable" territorial transformations, studied,
documented and then re-buried to guarantee
their conservation. In: Lucina Caravaggi
and Cinzia Morelli, *Landscapes of invisible
archaeology. The case of the Portuense district*
(Macerata: Quodlibet, 2014), 22.

Introduction: the Discovery of a Hidden Landscape

In the crossing of archaeology, landscape and architecture, places where
archaeological findings are barely perceptible or completely invisible take
on a particular character.[1] A clear example is embodied by archaeological
sites, located in isolated coastal landscapes and totally inserted into
nature, not yet excavated, or excavated, covered and forgotten. Here,
archaeological remains are so barely distinguishable as to express a silent
and unintelligible condition in the landscape.

It is a very broad and problematic issue which requires very
specific design answers. In these cases, the architectural design, developed
before and during archaeological excavations, has necessarily to take
an interdisciplinary approach, since it refers to something that is not
visible or even to something forgotten, which gradually re-emerges.
The project has to deal with an interpretative and evocative condition,
which tries to explain weaker traces and where mutual intersections

between archaeological excavation, knowledge of the site and open project, but also between nature and artifice, memory and amnesia, imagery and imagination represent some of the main tools that characterize design approaches in these specific situations.

This interesting topic has been broached and developed in an interdisciplinary research experience, leading with the case of the archaeological site of St. Peter's Abbey in the area of the Crapolla fjord, municipality of Massa Lubrense, in the Metropolitan city of Naples, located along the extreme offshoot of the Sorrento Peninsula that extends towards Capri (figure 2).[2]

The research work has investigated the relationship between coastal landscapes, invisible archaeology and the architectural project through a transdisciplinary interpretation that has crossed different studies and knowledge. From this interaction, design strategies and hypotheses have been developed, aimed at the conservation and at the enhancement of the site, intended as a unitary cultural heritage in the contemporary territory, but also, with the involvement of the local community, aimed at prevention of the loss of the ancient traces still present here.

fig. 2   Crapolla fjord in the Sorrento Peninsula, Massa Lubrense, 2017, aerial view (drawing by Francesca Coppolino).
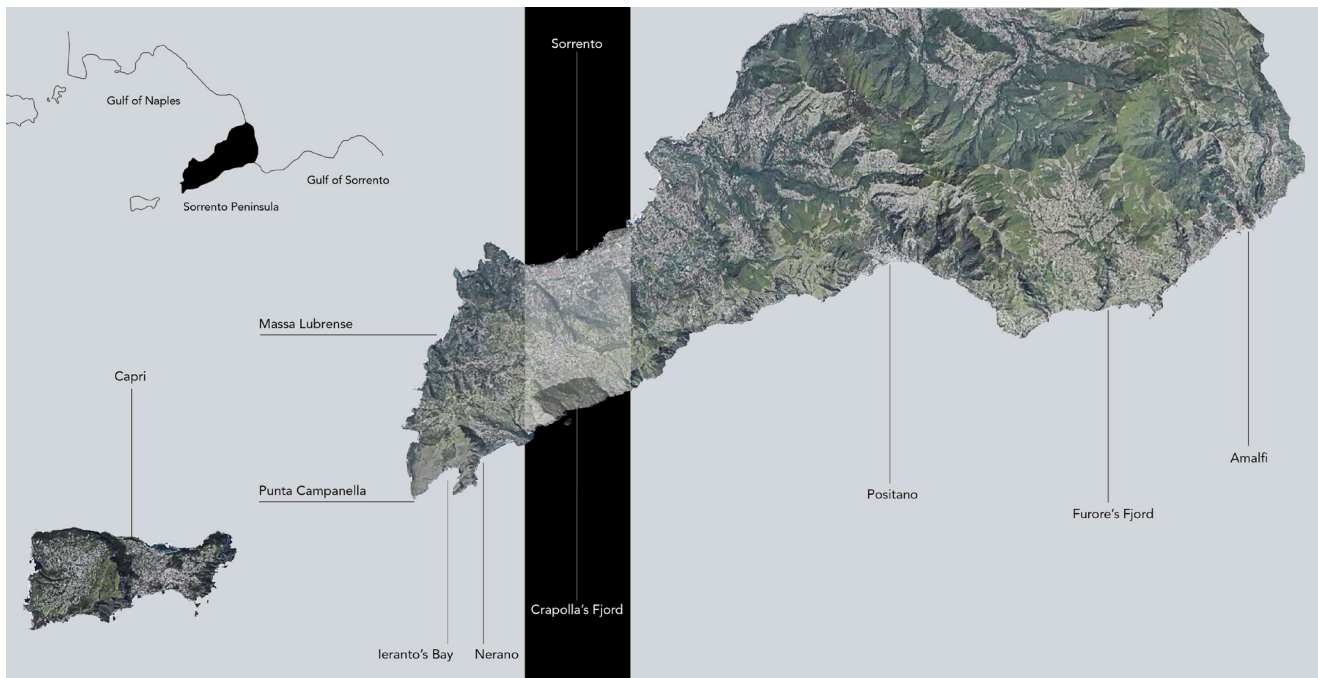
3 The involvement of the Department of Architecture DiARC in relation to the Crapolla site can be traced back to 2008, the year from which many issues related to the knowledge of intangible values, physical-constructive characteristics of the various artefacts and the landscape were investigated (coordination: V. Russo). For a deep analysis of the results of the activities carried out between 2008 and 2013, see Valentina Russo ed., *Landscape as Architecture. Identity and conservation of Crapolla cultural site* (Firenze: Nardini, 2014).

4 Field work regarding archaeological excavation campaigns has been coordinated by the archaeologist Giovanna Greco, Department of Humanities DSU, University of Naples Federico II, both during the research activities conducted between 2008 and 2013 and for those done between 2016 and 2019. For an in-depth analysis of the excavation investigations and the interpretative hypotheses on the configuration and stratification of the religious complex, see Giovanna Greco, "Peoples in the Sorrentine Peninsula, between myth and reality," in *Landscape as Architecture*, 211-221.

5 In the fjord to, the complex of cisterns connected to a water system that insists on the narrow strip of beach belongs for a first Roman occupation between the 1st century BC and the 1st century AD. It was only in the early Middle Ages that the Abbey dedicated to St. Peter was built on the western side of the Fjord. In the Viceregal Age, the tower of St. Peter was built on the eastern side of the inlet; finally, the so-called "monazeni," on the eastern side of the beach, used as a resting place for fishermen and for sheltering boats, complete the picture of the architectural presence within the fjord. See Greco, "Peoples in the Sorrentine Peninsula," 211-221.

6 George Simmel, "La rovina," *Rivista di Estetica*, ed. Giovanni Cerchia, no. 8 (1981): 121. Original edition: George Simmel, "Die Ruine," in *Philosophische Kultur* (Leipzig: Gesammelte Essays, 1911), 125–133.

1 The Topic: Invisible Archaeology in the Crapolla Fjord

The case of St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla is an emblematic case on the topic of invisible archaeology in coastal landscapes, since it is an archaeological site, totally incorporated into the landscape of the fjord. It was mostly unknown before the systematic interdisciplinary research work led from 2008 by the Department of Architecture of Naples DiARC of the University of Naples Federico II.[3] The religious complex has been the subject of many archaeological excavations during the long period of research, but also of historical, geological, landscape and design studies. These have helped to make some parts of the ancient mysterious fabric gradually understandable, even if, for other lost parts, the possibilities of interpretation are still open and wide.[4]

The expression "invisible archaeology" is intended to focus attention on archaeological remains that are so absorbed by nature that they blend in with the surrounding landscape, "becoming one" with it. In this case, the limits between artifice and nature are difficult to perceive and the topics of memory and amnesia, of imagery and imagination become important tools for the architectural project.

A merely superficial look at St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla shows it to be a ruin similar to many others spread throughout the territory of European and Italian cities. Here, more than in other cases, the specific condition of a difficult site to reach predominates, since it is located in the intersection of impervious paths that cross and go up the fjord (figure 3). It is a set of routes on a territorial scale that, on the one hand, connects the site to the sea in several directions, and on the other, connects it to the hill and to the near widespread cores of the town. This set of routes finds a natural viewpoint in the area of the ancient complex, with fascinating views of the coast so distracting as to prompt one to forget the architecture that is present there.

The ruins, which can hardly be traced, have a very close relationship with the natural landscape of the Crapolla fjord in which they are inserted: from the sea it is possible to see only a few remains; then on reaching the top of the hill, from the small beach, it is possible to find a hidden place, located on the edge of the slope and totally open to the sea. In the current situation, here, although they are difficult to distinguish, can be found the apse, the sacristy, the atrium, the wardrobe (*armarium*), the crypt and various stairs of the ancient St. Peter's Abbey that led to the paths towards the slope. Finally, it is possible to discover the Roman cisterns (figure 4).[5]

Today, the examined site appears as a set of limited fragile ruins, assimilated by nature, which recall what George Simmel wrote about the relationship between ruin and nature: "the ruin of a building shows that, in the disappearance and destruction of the work of art, other forces and other shapes have grown, those of nature, and thus, from what still lives in ruin of art and of nature, a new whole has come out."[6] The peculiarity of the ruin,
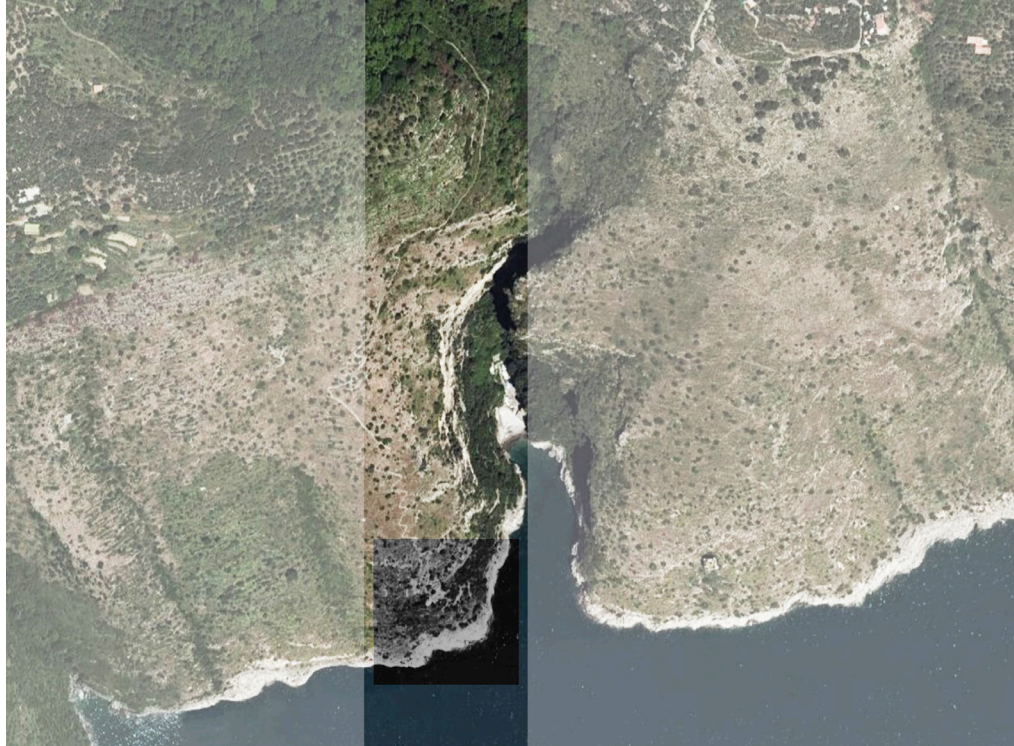
fig. 3   St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla fjord, 2017,
          view from above at a large scale (photo by
          Marco Facchini).

fig. 4   St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla fjord, 2017,
          the archaeological remains (photo by
          Marco Facchini).

7 For more information, see: Gianluigi De Martino, *Rovine e ruderi: conservazione e progetto* (Roma: Gangemi Editore, 2017).

8 A centuries-long absence of maintenance, together with direct exposure to meteoric agents have now led to an advanced decay of the Abbey of Crapolla. What is still preserved is threatened in a widespread way by the presence of weed vegetation and by the absence of preventive measures of decay.

9 For an analysis of the historiographical sources and of the hypotheses regarding the layout and transformations of St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla over the centuries, see: Russo, "On the edge of a precipice bathed by the sea: a knowledge path for the conservation of the Abbey of St. Peter's in Crapolla," *Arkos*, special number (July 2010): 70-81; Idem., "Memory and conservation of fragile ruins. The Abbey of St. Peter in Crapolla," in *Landscape as Architecture*, 95.

described by Simmel as a new element that comes from the combination of artifice and nature, is precisely what it is possible to find in the Crapolla fjord, where the identification of the artificial element is, in some cases, very complicated or almost impossible.

In the case of the Abbey, nature has re-appropriated the building to the point that its remains are difficult to distinguish, since they are now in inseparable unity with it, shaping an overlapping of perceptions, temporalities and different images.

This particular condition could lead one to believe that the balance reached between nature and artifice should not be changed, that there is nothing else to do to than preserve what remains today and appears to our observation. However, Simmel's own consideration on the continuous and never-ending changing of the condition of ruin, transformed over time into something "new," highlights how conservation itself is an active and complicated process, a process which presumes change.[7]

The case of the ruins of the abbey is a clear example of this condition, since the need for conservation has stimulated multiple issues in different directions and, in addition to the topic of the relationship between nature and artifice, has brought about the identification of other two design topics that are extremely sensitive and helpful in the context of the contemporary project for the places of archaeology.

A first aspect concerns the relationship between memory and amnesia, two concepts that might seem opposite and contrasting, but which, on the contrary, often coexist in the case of ruins, giving rise to interesting design considerations.

The site of the medieval St. Peter's Abbey of Crapolla has, over time, been characterized by a long process of abandonment, which, however, was full of "returns" and active memories.[8] In fact, the religious attractiveness of the ancient site, of great influence over the centuries, and the local identity have never completely failed.

Although it is difficult to see, the ruins of the ancient archaeological artefact are highly stratified. Through a careful study of the archaeological remains it has been possible to identify traces of different historical and temporal phases that have condensed within the site, bearing in mind that first information on the abbey, reported in documentary sources, date back to 1111, although its existence seems very likely in previous centuries.[9]

In this regard, observation on-site has demonstrated how, in the phase of construction of the abbey dedicated to St. Peter, *spolia* material was widely reused, defining an accumulation of layers and an intersection of fragments into the landscape (figure 5).

Another example of the overlapping of architectures over time in the same site is the post-war chapel, built in an intermediate position with respect to the ancient atrium. The addition of this element involved
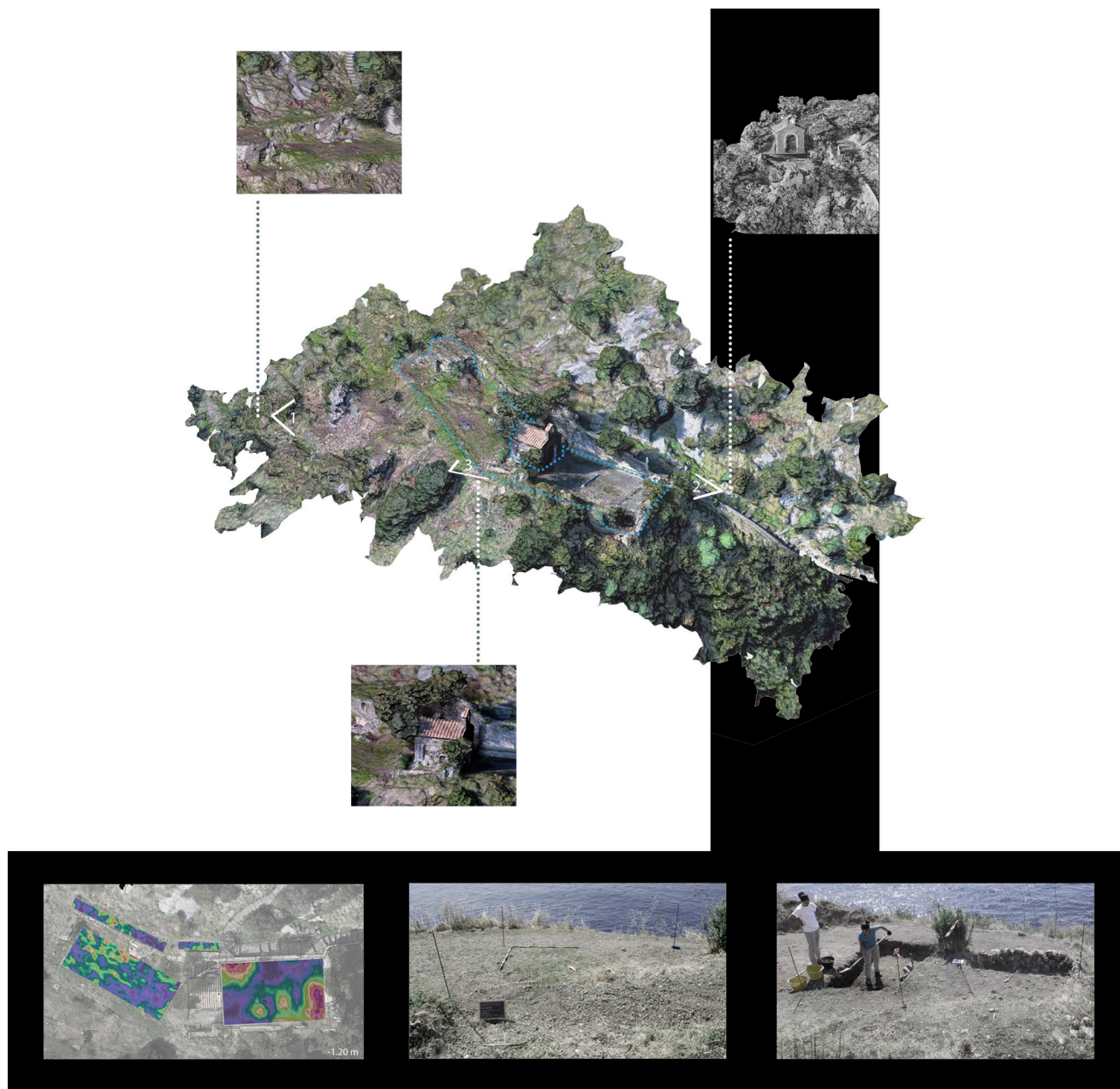
fig. 5 Site investigations in Crapolla fjord, 2017, geological studies, archaeological excavations, metric surveys (drawings and photos done by the research group coordinated by Valentina Russo).

10 Amedeo Maiuri, *Passeggiate sorrentine*, ed. B. Iezzi (Sorrento: Franco Di Mauro, 1949), 91-92.

11 "memoria di quel che fummo, le rovine ci dicono non tanto quello che siamo, ma quello che potremmo essere. Sono per la collettività quello che per l'individuo sono le memorie d'infanzia." Salvatore Settis, "Rovine. I simboli della nostra civiltà che rischiano di diventare macerie," *La Repubblica* (Novembre 2010).

12 "deposito di identità collettiva." Francesco Venezia, *Che cosa è l'architettura. Lezioni, conferenze, un intervento* (Milano: Mondadori Electa, 2011), 92.

13 Sara Marini, "Amnesia," in *Recycled Theory: Dizionario illustrato,* ed. Sara Marini and Giovanni Corbellini (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2016), 33-41.

14 Marcello Barbanera ed., *Relitti riletti. Metamorfosi delle rovine e identità culturale* (Torino: Bollati Boringhieri, 2009).

a reversal in the orientation of the liturgical functions, originally turned towards east and, since 1949, to the west.[10] In fact, to ensure access to the chapel, near the apses a small entrance was created, along the path that surrounds the church. The uninterrupted use of the chapel over time by the local community constitutes a very significant aspect in relation to the topic of the continuity of worship and of memory, recalling, as Salvatore Settis wrote, that: "memory of what we were, ruins tell us not so much what we are, but what we could be. They are for the community what childhood memories are for the individual."[11] The citizens themselves, but also inhabitants of neighbouring municipalities, have never ceased to recognize the religious site as an important place of memory in the territory of the Sorrento Peninsula. The involvement of the local community in the research process has in fact constituted an important aspect for the definition of the design hypotheses of conservation, reuse and transformation of the area of St. Peter's Abbey.

Alongside memory, intended as a "storage of collective identity," in the case of the Crapolla site, the concept of "amnesia" has even more value, intended, instead, as a manifestation of absence.[12] The term "amnesia" means the double negative of "memory," which involves an absence of memory, something that is not remembered or that has escaped from memories.

"Amnesia, already the subject of studies by Sigmund Freud (Freud 1901), is grafted into the articulated system of memory as an anomaly and, degenerating, can arrive to undermine the 'internal coherence of life.'"[13] Therefore, amnesia can be understood as an interruption of memory, a suspension of knowledge, a temporal stop, a lack, a void, placing itself as a possible interpretative tool for the project. Regardless of its duration, it leads to the making of a gap within a sequence of phases and to the removal from reality of a fragment of identity.

When amnesia concerns archaeological heritage, it highlights a significant distance between the evolution times of the landscape and the rhythm of the metamorphosis of the ruins.[14] If not considered by a design vision capable of combining all the temporal variables that characterize stratified landscapes, this distance can degenerate into a progressive process of abandonment.

In the case of the archaeological site of Crapolla, amnesia itself displays respect to what is hidden or has not yet been discovered, to what is absent and presumed, but not certain. It happens in relation to some historical phases and some elements of the abbey of which fascinating legends are narrated, but of which there is no precise evidence or documentation. An example is the case of the ancient tower, which is said to have been erected in the north-west area of the archaeological site, but of which only a faint memory remains, an absence to be verified.

In this direction, of great importance are the design actions built around the concept of "absence," which have the main aim of transforming

15 Caravaggi and Morelli, *Paesaggi dell'archeologia invisibile,* 13.

16 Riccardo Filangieri di Candida, *Sorrento e la sua penisola* (Bergamo: Istituto Italiano d'Arti Grafiche, 1917); *Archive Roberto Pane*, Crapolla, 1955; *Archive Storico Luce*, Penisola sorrentina, 1950.

17 Tessa Matteini, *Paesaggi del tempo. Documenti archeologici e rovine artificiali nel disegno di giardini e paesaggi,* (Firenze: Alinea, 2009).

18 Caravaggi and Morelli, *Paesaggi dell'archeologia invisibile,* 24.

19 On these lines, it can be remembered the Greek lyric poet Simonide di Cheo (556 - 468 BC), considered the founder of mnemonic techniques and who experienced that memory operates visually, through logical and ordered sequences of images and that their precise arrangement is an indispensable condition to guarantee a certain remembrance. See Maria Clara Ruggieri Tricoli and Maria Desirée Vacirca, *L'idea di museo. Archetipi della comunicazione museale nel mondo antico,* (Milano: Lybra Immagine, 1998).

fig. 6 Teodoro Duclère, Drawings of Crapolla's ruins, Museo Correale, Sorrento, 1850, Tav. CXLV-CXLVI; Roberto Pane, Short films, Penisola sorrentina, 1950, Archive Storico Luce; Roberto Pane, Photos of the St. Peter's Abbey ruins, Crapolla, 1955, Archive Roberto Pane.

absence into presence, placing the interaction between the historiographic function of archaeology and the design mechanisms linked to the topic of imagery and imagination: "the important thing is not what it is seen but what the imagination reconstructs with the mind's eye through a process of transfer which refers to something else. This process is, at the same time, allusion and illusion."[15]

A second relevant aspect, which the condition of Crapolla Abbey allows to be highlighted, is that of the imagination, which precedes the project. The very close relationship with the natural landscape of the Crapolla fjord, of which the abbey is part, has defined an overlap of multiple and different images and imaginaries, which constitute a precious material for the architectural design.

When, from the sea, the top of the hill where few remains lie is reached, an unexpected, hidden, surprising place is found, a really "imaginative place," totally absorbed into the surrounding landscape. This same perception of surprise had characterized the photographic images of the early twentieth century taken on the site by Riccardo Filangieri of Candidaor those taken by Roberto Pane, who made the site an original and ideal film set for some short films shot there (figure 6). [16]

However, it is only by looking from the top that it is possible to have an overall view of the church and the abbey and then try to imagine a sort of general plant and individual parts. Only in this way is it possible to see the traces that evoke the ancient system.

It is of great importance to keep in mind the imaginative force produced by the traces, the alignments and the rhythmic sequences of the ruins, eloquent fragments of lost architecture and for this reason capable of generating new figures and new shapes.[17] In this condition, the invisible archaeology, dipped in nature, can be imagined as a real "landscape capacitors"[18] or even as a "mnemonic landscape."[19]

20 Santina Di Salvo, *Luce e colori sulle rovine. Strategie museografiche per la comunicazione dell'archeologia* (Roma: Aracne, 2012), 31.

21 Gaston Bachelard, *The poetic of space* (Bari: Dedalo, 2011); Juhani Pallasmaa, *Frammenti. Collage e discontinuità nell'immaginario architettonico* (Pordenone: Giavedoni, 2012).

22 Ibid.

23 Pallasmaa, *Frammenti,* 50-51.

24 Caravaggi and Morelli, *Paesaggi dell'archeologia invisibile,* 25.

Mnemonics, also known as the "art of space," is a so-called "topical" strategy, because it consists of preserving all the things that must be remembered in the *topoi* or *loci*, a sort of familiar places: "this allows a precise image to be attributed to everything, which, in this case, is called *imago agens*, that is an image that acts to recall the object that must be brought back to memory. This second phase is the result of imagination, or *phantasia*. This art therefore implies a mnemonic landscape, in which everything that must be remembered present a precise location."[20]

In this direction and in order to focus attention on the crossing of memory and imagination, it is possible to refer to Juhani Pallasmaa who, starting from Gaston Bachelard's distinction between "formal imagination" and "material imagination," argues that "images that arise from matter show experiences, memories, associations and emotions that are deeper and more touching than those evoked by the shape."[21] So, he speaks of fragment, collage and discontinuity in the architectural imagery, underlining the need to operate towards an "open, unfinished reality, associations of ideas, memories, the concept of collage and assemblage."[22] In an another circumstance he stresses again that: "the restoration of Castelvecchio (1956-64) by Carlo Scarpa in Verona, the transformation by Sverre Fehn of the ruins of the Archbishop's Museum in Hemar (1967-1979) and the recent David Chipperfield's reconstruction of the destroyed Neues Museum in Berlin (2009) are among the most extraordinary examples of architectural collages that emerged through a sensitive and deep architectural design."[23]

Pallasmaa's considerations invite thought about the importance of the "imagery" and "material imagination" and on how narrative techniques and cinematographic *montage* can define an archaeological density of the imagery and a hybrid narrativity, through the juxtaposition of fragmented images deriving from non-linear origins, providing interesting design possibilities.

Starting from these considerations, it is possible to understand how the archaeological evidence, even if invisible, can, through the architectural design, find a new creative capacity and new constructive possibilities for the contemporary space. This can happen through the reinterpretation of traces, locations, dimensions or the definition of new spatial associations, in relation to different time periods and to the changes of the environmental contexts, "avoiding the interpretative accentuation of the 'shape' (stylistically understood) of the single objects."[24]

In these cases, the enhancement of the site is pursued through the insertion of new elements that give a new interpretation of the landscape traces belonging to different temporalities of the findings. These signs and elements cannot be interpreted in an arbitrary way, but, as Andrea Carandini underlines in a more general reflection: "the new elements could arise from the hidden, the obvious from the secret and the transformation of the existing would not be based on a quick and intuitive synthesis,

25 Andrea Carandini, *La forza del contesto* (Bari-Roma: Editori Laterza, 2017).

26 Cesare Pavese, *Il mestiere di vivere: diario 1935-1950* (Torino: Einaudi, 2000), 241.

but on solid knowledge bases, where detail is considered as an indication of a system to be reinvented."[25]

The intent of an architectural approach, conceived in this way, referred to the sensitive topic of invisible archaeology, that the case of Crapolla Abbey highlights, cannot be to affirm its own supremacy over the past, but rather to strengthen the unity of nature and artifice and to narrate the continuous sequences of a possible uninterrupted tale of memories and amnesias, since, as Cesare Pavese wrote, "amazement is made of memory rather than novelty."[26] In this way it is possible to imagine new or ancient futures and to provide new meaning to the ruins of the past, through an architectural project intended as a building site of knowledge in progress and as the result of mutual intersections between different disciplines, becoming a kind of a scaffolding for archaeology into the landscape.

2 The Strategy: Architecture as a Scaffolding for Archaeology into the Landscape

The design approach for the enhancement of the archaeological site of Crapolla proposed in the research work took a multiplicity of aspects into consideration: firstly, the incompleteness of the knowledge relating to the site, especially the archaeological one, and the value of the social identity, recognized by the local community, that the religious place has maintained over time; then, the "non-recognizability" of the ruins of the abbey in the current condition in which the dominance of the strong value of the multiple perceptions of the landscape is felt; finally, the aspect referred to the possibility of using a mechanism of imagination that could, on the one hand, tell the space in ruins, or on the other, direct it towards new possibilities (figure 7).

In this situation, where there is the necessity of waiting for knowledge deriving from different studies in progress, it becomes important to consider very different ideas, but also, at the same time, to be able to refer some precise design actions to this articulated framework. In particular, the need to better understand the site, waiting for archaeological excavations or during the first archaeological excavations in progress and, at the same time, continuous dialogue with the local community during the research constituted two important aspects that influenced the design process.

In the research work, these very problematic assumptions have not been taken into consideration in an abstract way. They have been faced as a response to existing needs, which have made the conservation and the re-use of the site very difficult and in this main aspect lies the originality of the whole design operation. These real needs mainly concerned issues related to the securing of the site; the protection of some elements, such as the frescoes found; accessibility on a large scale, but also the necessity to introduce public facilities in order to improve knowledge and usability
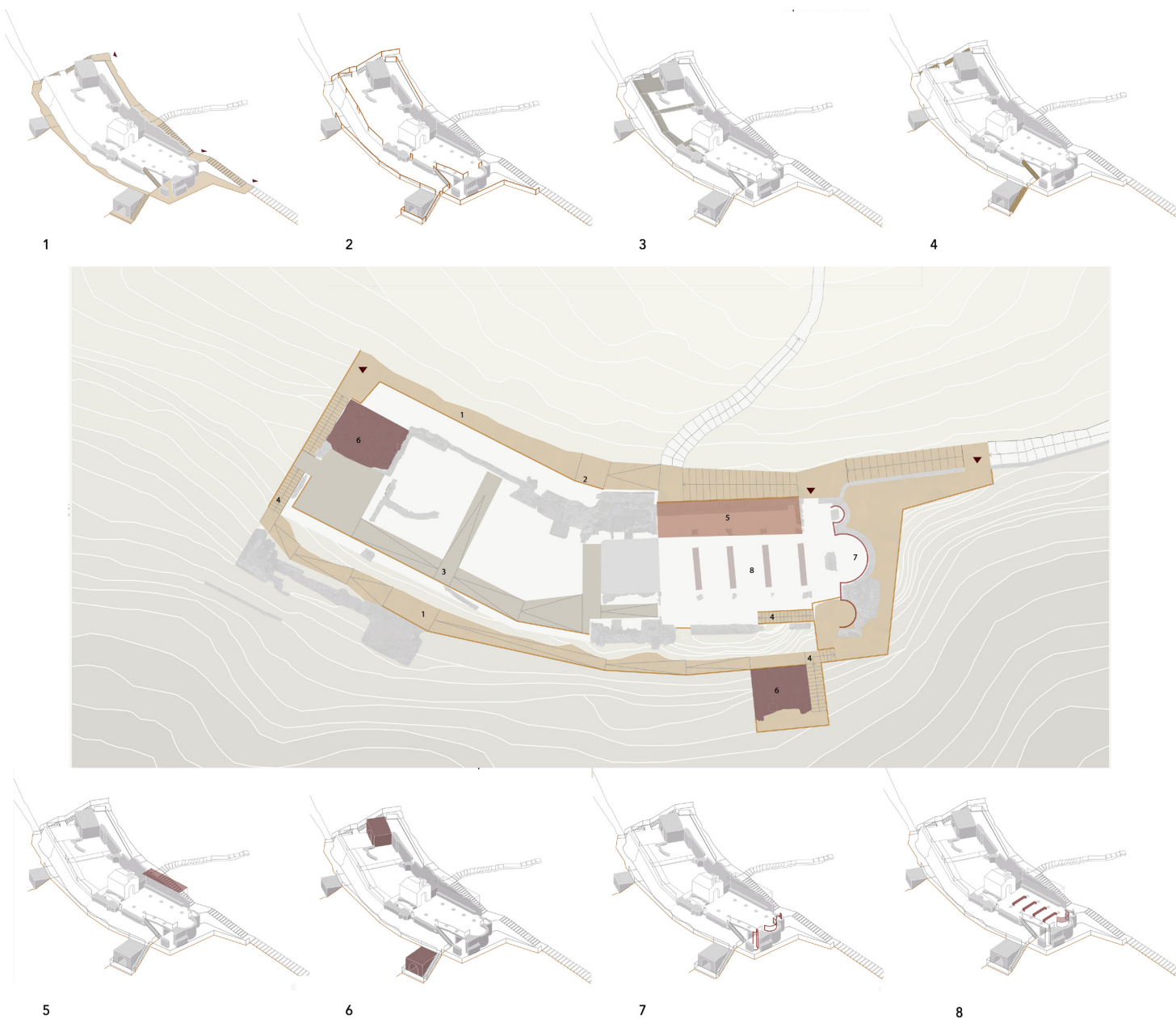
fig. 7   Pasquale Miano, Francesca Coppolino
& Angela Spinelli, general strategy, Crapolla,
2017, concept and different design actions
(author's drawings).

27 The reconstruction project for Salemi was conceived by Álvaro Siza Vieria and Roberto Collovà, starting from the studies for the Belice Design Laboratory with the collaboration of the Technical Department of Culture of Mazzara del Vallo. The executive project, commissioned by the Curia of Mazzara del Vallo, concerns the church, but also outlines interesting indications for possible future interventions in the historic centre. See Rosa Tamborrino, "Invisible thresholds: the reconstruction project of the Mother Church in Salemi di Collovà and Siza Vieira," *Restauro e città* (1989): 82-93.

28 See Toni Gironès Saderra, "Restituzione del Teatro Romano di Tarragona, Spagna," *Casabella,* no. 898 (June 2019): 44-51.

29 Ibid.

30 Renato Bocchi, "Le strutture narrative e il progetto di paesaggio," in *Il Parco dell'Ariosto e del Boiardo. Progetti di luoghi come esercizi di fantasia,* ed. Carlo Olmi (Macerata: Quodlibet, 2010), 41.

31 Ibid*.,* 60.

of the site. All these needs are intertwined with the demand to continue the investigations on site with further researches, especially, as said, through the archaeological excavations in progress.
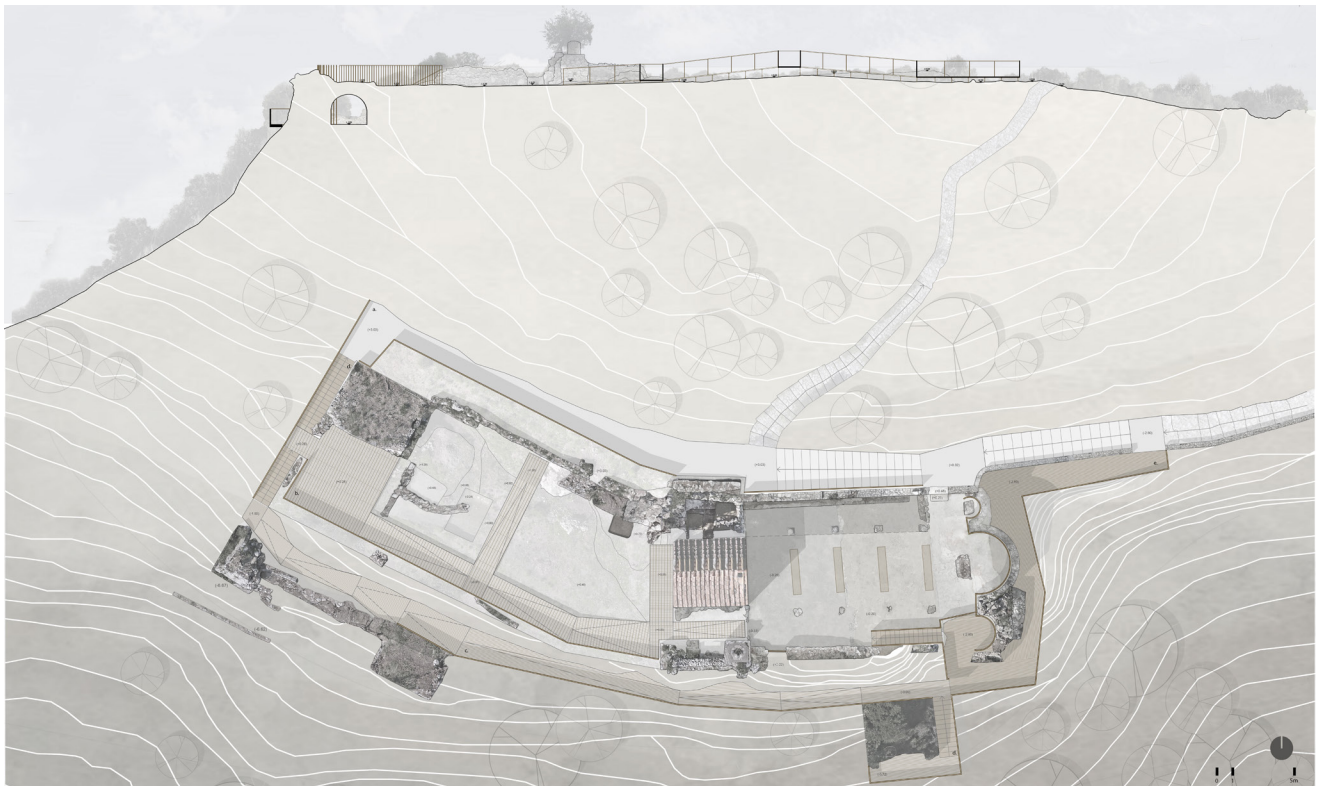
Giving answers to these needs has meant addressing the topic of the contemporary intervention in the ancient matter, defining a close dialogue with the fragile ruins and with the landscape. This dialogue has, in compliance with the principles of reversibility and recognition of the new intervention, imposed a careful work of correlation and comparison between the new elements to be inserted and the ruins of the abbey.

In this direction, the parallel with the project made by Álvaro Siza Vieira and Roberto Collovà for the valorization of Piazza Alicia and the reconstruction of Salemi Church (1984-1997) can be very useful for illustrating the design rationale that has been introduced in the architectural hypothesis proposed for Crapolla.[27] In Salemi the condition of ruin is caused by the earthquake; in Crapolla, instead, it was caused by time and the lack of physically recognizable elements. The intervention of Siza and Collovà, through the inclusion of a few essential elements, had the goal of reconnecting the relationship between the fragmented parts and, at the same time, achieving continuity between old and new architecture. This action has given unity and coherence to the general intervention.

In the same way, it is possible to mention the intervention by Toni Gironès Saderra for the Roman theatre in Tarragona (2018), where the construction of a structure in corrugated steel rods defines the generators lines that raised part of the remains of the theatre in volume.[28] "Like a cloud of flocks and by reversing what is static (the observer) and what is in movement (the choreography of birds in motion) the tangential visions of successive alignments build the shadow of the old theater starting from the experience of visitors as new contemporary spectators."[29] The intervention highlights a very important aspect in relation to the design logic experienced for the Crapolla site, that is the experiential narrative of the archaeological site which, starting from an evocative-imaginative mechanism and through the insertion of light and changeable elements, tries to evoke the void that the ruin shows, making some parts of the ancient complex legible and visible and defining spatial episodes.

It seems possible to paraphrase Renato Bocchi's formula of "architecture as a framework to experience landscape," speaking of "architecture as a framework to experience archaeology."[30] Designing landscape means designing a complex spatial system, subject to constant change and also to a continuous variability of perceptions according to the movement of those who experience the landscape.

In this design research, Bocchi's reflection allows emphasis of how there is no contrast, but a combination between the shapes of architecture and those of archaeology: architecture is a scaffolding, a framework with its own specific structure designed to read, interpret and narrate the archaeology, but not to compromise its shapes.[31]

fig. 8   Pasquale Miano, Francesca Coppolino & Angela Spinelli, project proposal, Crapolla, 2017, general plan and section (author's drawings).

Starting from the ruin-nature unity that has been achieved in the Crapolla archaeological site, the aim of the proposed architectural hypothesis was to realize a new unity in which the new inserted elements, above all, define a condition of internal coherence, which at the same time is able not to alter, but rather to strengthen, the ruin-nature unity from which it is started.

Realizing a condition of coherence between the new grafted elements, for examples, a walkway, a connection path between different heights, a small roof, a light railing and small volumes, meant interpreting the different elements as a unitary plot of interconnected elements, through which to establish relationships with the ancient traces, without overwhelming them (figure 8).

The work of the historical reconstruction of previous strata and layers is intersected with the securing project of the site, by engaging design steps that move between the invisible and the visible and that are inspired by existing signs, starting from which a new contemporary element, consistent as a whole, is grafted.

So, in the design explorations related to the area of Crapolla Abbey, an attempt was made to act through the "light grafting into the landscape" of a few and precise elements which are necessary to protect the site and to ensure adequate use.

A "wrapping" of the site of the abbey was proposed, which could enhance its consolidated role as a crossroads of paths coming from the sea and the hills, improving accessibility to it.

Along the two parallel paths that could be installed above and below the abbey, with exceptional views of the landscape, the existing entrance at the altar can be maintained and two new entrances can be inserted: a first access which, by arriving behind the apses of the church, allows the roman crypt to be reached directly and then goes up towards the church; a second access, instead, provided near the cistern located to the north-west, could allow the complex to be entered from the cloister side.

Basically, the limited new connections realized by these paths, largely already traced, could improve the usability of the site, but also could allow the site to be protected through the introduction of railings along the two paths and the reuse of the pre-existing staircases providing access to the crypt and to the abbey spaces.

Overall, it may be possible, in compliance with the inevitable problematics of the site, to safely access the interior spaces of the abbey and the church from different levels. In particular, in the interior spaces it may be possible to define a single connection on several levels able to connect the church with the Abbey area, the crypt and the cistern.

The path through the ruins of the abbey could find a first information point in the so-called cistern in which to place didactic and informative supports aimed at illustrating the historical events and architectural features of the religious complex.

The exploration of the parts down from the abbey towards the sea will allow new directions to be defined for the visit connecting the floor of the cloister and the lower levels. The crossing of the previously mentioned court will allow exploration of the ruins corresponding to the interior and exterior spaces of the Abbey.

A further vertical connection may still be necessary to connect the floor of the church with the basement placed below the transept and between this one and the low cistern, now almost inaccessible. Finally, the basement may constitute the suitable place to insert exhibition elements and information about the abbey complex and the Crapolla site.

A very close relationship can be implemented between the safety railings of the upper path and a roof to protect the frescoes found along the perimeter walls of the church (figure 9).

The internal ramp leading to the abbey spaces could be conceived in close interaction with the progress of the archaeological excavations, for which a modular floating floor can be considered which, depending on the excavation areas, will be moved to the most appropriate position.

fig. 9 Pasquale Miano, Francesca Coppolino & Angela Spinelli, light grafting into landscape, Crapolla, 2017, longitudinal section (author's drawings).

fig. 10 Pasquale Miano, Francesca Coppolino & Angela Spinelli, light grafting into landscape, Crapolla, 2017, transversal sections (author's drawings).

At this point, but without any discontinuity with the described proposal for accessibility and securing, some design considerations can be advanced relating to the readability and use of spaces.

The substantial change introduced with the construction of the small post-war chapel led to the creation of a very particular religious space, with the altar and the apses opposite the chapel, generating a contrast between ancient and contemporary religious rites, which is configured as a peculiarity to preserve.

It appeared interesting to suggest some architectural solutions which can help to read the layout of the ancient church, such as, for example, the anastylosis of the ancient columns based on the procedures of the restoration discipline, but also the definition of a new "scene," a sort of light background wall, in correspondence with the apses, which supports their identification (figure 10). This intervention can also be thought of in continuity with the railings and the roof, mentioned earlier, so once again the design action primarily answers the goal of securing and protecting the area.

On the other hand, by modifying the height and material consistency, it is also possible to conceive the "scene" as a screen for projections or as a background for small concerts, also introducing a secular use of the ancient religious space.

It may be possible to create a light exhibition set-up to complete the requirements for accessibility and safety, also providing for the insertion of linear steel elements in the church, which can be used as seats for both religious ceremonies and for concerts. Also, the cisterns could be used as an exhibition space with the insertion of a few removable and recognizable elements.

On a larger scale, the issue of visitor facilities must finally be taken into consideration. It is a relevant issue, which cannot be addressed only by considering the fragile site of the abbey, but referring to the entire scale of the fjord.

Designing the unity of the architectural elements and, at the same time, their total recognition and reversibility is a very sensitive goal which requires in-depth studies and considerations that can only be achieved in the detailed phases of the project. From this perspective, the final choice of materials to be used will be the outcome of a long and coordinated process, in which the various alternatives can also be evaluated through field trials.

In the research phase, aware that several alternatives will usefully be considered, with the development of excavations and knowledge, the introduction of some materials was proposed: the beaten earth for the paths that surround the site, providing joint treatments for safety, with the introduction of stone curbs; bronzed steel for the railings, roofs, ramps and stairs, in order to obtain spaces which reveal their difference, without contrasting with the context; steel for the construction of the internal

floating carpet and the new connection path along the edge of the apses with the definition of a grid and, where necessary, of a slab (figure 11).

Of course, each hypothesis has to be measured in relation to the findings of the ongoing archaeological excavation campaigns, and always taking into consideration the necessity to choose reversible and flexible systems according to the changing requirements of the archaeological excavation site.

In this regard, it is important to underline that, in the design solutions, particular attention should be paid to the requirement of modularity to facilitate working aspects, such as transport, assembly and disassembly, and reusability; but also, to the requirement of maintainability and of easy inspection and, above all, to the requirement of flexibility and reversibility of the new contemporary "layer" to be introduced. It should be a non-definitive layer, open to new possible changes deriving from the evolution of research and new archaeological findings, which may also significantly revise the project.

The research work on the Crapolla Abbey could further continue, by extending the field of knowledge relating to the archaeological site in the north-eastern part of the complex, not yet examined, but also relating to the many archaeological paths to be defined towards the coast and the centre of the town.

fig. 11   Pasquale Miano, Francesca Coppolino & Angela Spinelli, perspective views, Crapolla, 2017, vision of the "scene" between the absent apses and vision of the flexible platform between archaeological excavations (author's drawings).

32 Marguerite Yourcenar, *That Mighty Sculptor, Time* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1993).

33 Paul Valery, *Eupalino o dell'architettura* (Lanciano: Barabba, 1932).

34 From the Greek *metamórphōsis*, which derives from *metamorphôun* transform, composed of *metá*, which indicates transformation, and *morphē*, form.

These last considerations are really important since they raise the issue of the adaptation the architectural configuration to the changing reality of archaeological sites and to the evolutionary process of scientific research.

As Marguerite Yourcenar, speaking of the "time, great sculptor," remembers: "On the day when a statue is finished, its life, in a certain sense, begins. The first phase, in which it has been brought, by means of the sculptor's efforts, out of the block of stone, into human shape, is over. A second phase, stretching across the course of centuries, through alternations of adoration, admiration, love, hatred, and indifference, and successive degrees of erosion and attrition, will bit by bit return it to the state of unformed mineral mass out of which its sculptor had taken it [...] Some of these alterations are sublime. To that beauty imposed by a human brain, by an epoch, or by a particular form of society, they add an involuntary beauty, associated with the hazards of history, which is the result of natural causes and time. Statues so thoroughly shattered that out of the debris a new work of art is born."[32]

Marguerite Yourcenar's "mighty sculptor, time" acts on the physical consistency of architectures, modifying the "matter of its shape: matter of uncertainty" and defining an involuntary beauty.[33] This matter, initially conceived as a construction of solidity, synonymous of eternity and duration, is now found as malleable, undergoing a metamorphosis, in which with the term "metamorphosis" is meant to reveal the constantly open and developing aspect of the archaeological ruin.[34]

Conclusions: A Building Site of Knowledge in Progress

St. Peter's Abbey in Crapolla has constituted a real interdisciplinary research field, where knowledge has represented the common goal and where elements and considerations that have originated from the different contributions – from archaeological excavations to surveys, from studies on construction techniques to those on *spolia* architecture, from landscape studies to geological ones – have become basic aspects for the project work. In this case, architectural design needs to be constantly updated and integrated, assuming the connotations of an open project in all phases, from the initial setting up to the daily work on site.

In particular, two aspects played a significant role in the definition of the design approach: the development of the archaeological excavations during the design process and the involvement of the local community. The archaeological excavations have constituted the main tool of knowledge for the site and, therefore, the central element around on which the various design hypotheses taken into consideration turn, which have been modified, integrated and updated with the changing situation due to the excavations in progress. The further aspect that influenced the design process concerned the involvement of the local community

35 Franco Purini, "Il nuovo e tre forme dell'antico," in *La modernità delle rovine. Temi e figure dell'architettura contemporanea*, ed. Stefano Bigiotti and Enrica Corvino (Roma: Prospettive Edizioni, 2015), 80.

in the definition of the strategy and of the architectural interventions for the valorization of the site. In fact, there has been a continuous exchange of ideas and a rich dialogue with local community that took place at various moments of the research, through meetings, conferences and collective site inspections.

Starting from these considerations, the proposed design strategy for the fragile heritage of the archaeological site of Crapolla suggests and defines a single, layered architectural system, whose "image" shows all its autonomy and recognizability, without marking formal mimesis with respect to the ancient material. A "light" architectural graft that tries to blend itself into the landscape in a harmonious way, without renouncing its action as a "new architectural sign in the stratification process."[35] An articulated and reversible architectural system, almost ephemeral, which can change itself with the changing archaeological excavation campaigns and with the storytelling site museum requirements, taking the connotation of a "permanent transitory device," a device in continuous evolution, a sort of a scaffolding of archaeology into the landscape.

Finally, the archaeological site of St. Peter's Abbey in the fjord of Crapolla is configured as a study case which can enhance the cognitive character of the architectural project, not only by its intrinsic specificity, but also the ability to correlate and synthesize research results from different disciplines.

Through the illustrated design strategy, it has been possible to highlight the importance of the process in the architectural project that operates in archaeological contexts: a process linked to the dynamics of excavation, the progress of knowledge, interlocution with the community and the municipality and the progressive interactions between different spheres of knowledge. All these variables are essential elements in trying to define an architectural design aimed at enhancing these particular and hidden sites, but which is open to possible future discoveries in the archaeological landscape, configuring itself as a "building site of knowledge" in progress.