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ARCHITECTURE, ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE CITY

ARCHITEKTURA, ARCHEOLOGIA I MIASTO

Abstract

Two different possible interpretations of the relationship architecture/archaeology are discussed. The first one could be called "archaeology as lesson" and is about a research project on the ancient city of Pompeii investigated not from a historic and chronological point of view but looking at its form, on an urban and architectural scale. The second could be called "archaeology as theme" assuming that a positive role of architecture in the archaeological contexts is possible: two projects – one for *Týndaris* in Sicily and one for *Priéne* in Turkey – will be discussed in order to demonstrate the thesis.

Keywords: Pompeii, Týndaris, Priéne, archaeological city, form of the city

Streszczenie

Omówiono dwie różne możliwe interpretacje związku między architekturą a archeologią. Pierwszą z nich można nazwać „archeologią jako lekcją", określa ona projekt badawczy dotyczący starożytnego miasta Pompeje, badanego nie z historycznego i chronologicznego punktu widzenia, ale w skali urbanistycznej i architektonicznej. Drugą można nazwać „archeologią jako motywem", zakładającą, że możliwa jest pozytywna rola architektury w kontekstach archeologicznych: dwa projekty – jeden dla Týndaris na Sycylii i drugi dla Priéne w Turcji – zostaną omówione w celu zobrazowania tej tezy.

Słowa kluczowe: Pompeje, Týndaris, Priéne, miasto archeologiczne, forma miasta

1. PREMISE (THE THESIS)

The city is created by architecture and the canons of architecture have created the perfect space. This affirmation, contained in the thesis of the 2023 International Conference "Defining the Architectural Space", can be shared. However, in the current *crisis* situation, these principles need to be re-discussed: paradoxically, the way is to look back to the past.

As Rafael Moneo stated:

> The Architecture, that in the past has been art of imitation and description of the Nature, came back to be this, but now assuming as model the architecture itself. Thus, it turns back to *mimesis*, but of itself, reflecting the reality of the history, a history that is broken and

> fragmented. The only reality that remains for architecture is its history. The world of images offered by the history is the only sensible reality not destroyed by the scientific knowledge or by the society[1].

Another author that discussed the origin and essence of Architecture as *mimesis*, is Giorgio Pigafetta that, in a less optimistic way related to the current situation, wrote:

> Today the mimetic doctrine is no longer nothing. Its gnoseological premises have been completely removed. This doesn't mean that the problem of the mimetic relationship between architecture and models not completely disappears […] on a more 'vulgar' side, the insistent media iconicity, dense of gestural elements, of a certain recent architecture testifies this[2].

One cannot disagree, thinking of the skylines of many metropolises, especially in Asia – but today also of some European cities – where *objects of enlarged design*[3], frequently named with the same word that describes the object they seem, juxtapose and compete, represent images able to strike our senses from distance but not able to make city, to *donate places*[4]. Skylines that we are forced to observe from afar profoundly different from the spaces of the ancient cities, of the archaeological contexts that, even if devoid of human figures, allow us to imagine how human bodies had inhabit them.

Moreover, as the philosopher Giorgio Agamben said:

> Europeans always meet the truth in the dialogue with their past. For us the past doesn't mean only a legacy or a cultural tradition, but an anthropological background condition. If we ignored our history, we could only know the past in an archaeological way. The past would become for us a distinct life form,[5]

and this means that we can look at the past in order to find in it our future. In other pages, Agamben affirmed that 'quoting' means *re-actualizing the past*[6] and 'quoting' is a possible technique of architectural and urban composition if we think to how this action is defined in the vocabulary where we can read can be read "1. Inserting others' words in a speech or in a writing; also, the quoted words; *long q.*; *author's q.* 2. extens. in arch. and in the figurative arts, explicit or allusive reference to forms and particular contents in famous works". All the Great Masters did it: Mies van der Rohe when, in Berlin, built the Neue Nationalgalerie evoking an ancient temple, consecrated to the culture; Louis I. Kahn when, in Dacca, followed and realized with the National Assembly, the dream to build again a Pantheon, a place – as the architect from Philadelphia said – "[…] a place where everyone could practice his cult

[1] R. Moneo, A. Casiraghi, D. Vitale, *La solitudine degli edifici e altri scritti. I. Questioni intorno all'architettura*, Umberto Allemandi, Turin 1999.

[2] G. Pigafetta, *Architettura dell'imitazione. Teoria dell'arte e architettura fra XV e XX secolo*, Alinea editrice, Florence 2005.

[3] V. Gregotti in an article in the newspaper "La Repubblica", 15 September 2008, after the inauguration of the 11th Biennale di Architettura of Venice, titled *Ma l'architettura non è un'arte ornamentale*.

[4] In M. Cacciari, *La città*, Pazzini, Villa Verucchio 2006 is recalled the task of the city "to donate places" and the loss of this capability of the contemporary city.

[5] G. Agamben in an interview with Gabriella Giudici published with the title *Giorgio Agamben, La crisi perpetua come strumento di potere*, http://gabriellagiudici.it/giorgio-agamben-la-crisi-perpetua-come-strumento-di-potere/ (access: 15.06.2023).

[6] G. Agamben, *Che cos'è il contemporaneo e altri scritti*, Nottetempo, Roma 2010.

with equal rights […] a wonderful interpretation: a circular building incompatible with any formalization of a ritual"[7].

Thus, a possible twofold declination of the relationship between architecture and archaeology emerges.

The first sees archaeology – or rather the archaeological contexts – as a theme that is offered to architecture. In these contexts, made sensitive by the presence of relevant values – historical but even more formal – in our country but not only, it is difficult to find any design experimentation and interventions carried out worthy of an original theoretical thought on the relationship between history and design, even if this is a specificity of Italian architectural culture, consolidated in the second half of the twentieth century precisely in the disciplinary field of architectural and urban composition. This is probably attributable to the affirmation, on the other hand, of a culture of conservation that, in a real paradox, seems to want to give up on allowing *our age to express its own greatness*, overlooking the fact that the value of our cities and territories is also in their uninterrupted stratification. This useless contrast, between culture of conservation and culture of transformation, becomes stricter in the archaeological contexts, where the time of history has been interrupted and it seems impossible to hypothesize that spaces can, once again, host life, except in the forms of their transformation into open sky museums. Thus, the action in the archaeological sites is often reduced to the restoration of individual artefacts with interventions – less courageous today than in the past – usually aimed only at avoiding the deterioration of the structures by renouncing to reflect on the possibility of restoring their formal and spatial values or at interventions which, protected by the easy slogan of 'distinguishability', unwisely renounce to 'deal with' the existing and to establish relationships with it and prefer to resort to self-referential and ostentatious excesses of form.

In the past, the city has always been built by adding autonomous parts or superimposing layers, while today this co-presence, this stratification and this complexity sometimes leads to the *Cháos* of the contemporary city. Why not think that these archaeological cities, which sometimes emerge as *wounds*[8] in our territories, because having remained buried or abandoned, assume different alignments and geometries, could suggest the possibility of re-establishing new systems of order? It is a compelling theme for the boundaries of Pompeii attacked by recent urbanization and which leaves a possible system of relationships, morphological rather than functional, today still unsolved.

The second possible declination of the relationship architecture-archaeology proposes the ancient as an operative lesson.

In the ancient cities we can recognize features that in the chaotic development of the contemporary cities seems to be disappeared. The ancient cities were built in a strict relationship with their geography: first of all, they say to us how architecture can 'comment' and 'reveal' the underlying structure of the territory they had chosen for the settlement and they have been built on. In addition, cities of the ancient past clearly make manifest in the space the 'culture of inhabiting' that comes true in their urban fabrics – where a clear relationship between building typology and urban morphology is realized – and also in the forms that the public spaces take, where the collective values of a society are represented.

[7] L.I. Kahn, *Statement on Architecture*, "Zodiac" 1967, no. 17, pp. 55–57.
[8] A. Ricci, *Attorno alla nuda pietra*, Donzelli, Roma 2006.

In a recent intervention, the anthropologist Iain Chambers returned to a theme dear to him, that of the archaic, and proposed that, somehow, today we should set aside the idea that progress always acts on a time line which continually advances leaving behind what preceded but rather imagining that this line should rotate ninety degrees and bring back what is archaic, i.e. original, in the contemporary[9].

Following this concept, a research activity on Pompeii and two projects – one for *Týndaris* in Sicily and one for *Priéne* in Turkey – will be discussed in order to demonstrate the thesis.

2. READING THE ANCIENT CITY: LEARNING FROM POMPEII

The archaeological city of Pompeii has been investigated[10] through analytical categories related to the form – the urban morphology and the architectural typologies – and to the spatiality on the different but always connected scales: of the urban fabric, of the block, of the house.

It is possible to read, in the map of Pompeii (Ill. 1), the presence of a central core, around the forum, and subsequent enlargements based on an orthogonal grid built of elongated rectangular blocks. The *Straßenbau* – representation of the road system – and the *Schwarzplan* – 'black plan' where buildings are represented in black on a neutral background – describes a city that it is possible to define 'compact' but 'porous'. The compactness is the outcome of a precise relationship between buildings and urban fabric: the buildings are always aligned along the orthogonal road system and the blocks are completely filled in. In this kind of city *Straßenbau* and *Schwarzplan* are one the negative of the other. Porosity is related to the building typology of the residential areas: the patio house.

Inside the Regio VI, the House of the Tragic Poet represents a house really near to the *ideal domus* represented by the archaeologist Amedeo Maiuri in guide of Pompeii in 1931. This patio house is built along an axis: the entrance is through the *fauces* to the *atrium*, at the sides of which are the bedrooms and the *alae*. At the bottom of the *atrium* there are *tablinium* and *triclinium*, through them it is possible to enter into the garden, *hortus*. The scheme is perfectly symmetric excluding the 'additions' on the south side – where the *triclinium* enlarges – and to the west following the plot's deformation. A special spatial character of the Roman patio house is that this sequence is relevant not only in plan but also in section. In fact, moving along the described axis spaces that are narrow are also reduced in height and enter spaces that are wider and from which it is possible to see the sky: in this way the spatial sequence becomes dynamic. All the semi-covered (*atrium*) and uncovered (*peristilium*) spaces define the porous quality of the urban fabric.

Something significant can be added about the spatiality of the city referring to the theory proposed by Uwe Schröder and the use of another tool of urban analysis: the *Rotblauplan*[11]. This kind of reflection is based on a concept of space as the foundational element of architecture able to generate the form that defines it. The *Rotblauplan* distinguishes 'warm' spaces represented in red – open spaces as architectural construction, defined by wall and in this way related to the idea of typology – and 'cold' spaces represented in blue – open spaces as

[9] I. Chambers, *Sulla soglia del mondo. L'altrove in Occidente*, Meltemi, Roma 2003.

[10] See F. Visconti, *Pompeji – citta` moderna = Pompeji – moderne Stadt*, Ernst Wasmuth Verlag, Tübingen 2017.

[11] U. Schröder, *Pardié. Konzept* für *eine Stadt nach dem Zeitregime der Moderne*, Walther König, Köln 2015.

fragment of nature, defined also by topological elements. Observed in this way, Pompeii is a dense city with prevalent spatial interior quality, certainly built as 'otherness' to the nature but able to establish with it clear and nameable relationship at distance, especially through the panoramic views towards the sea, on one hand, and, on the other, with the Vesuvius.

If at the territorial scale only a gradations of red and blue is applied to the map of the city, at the urban scale not the roof plan is represented but the typological plan and two gradation of colours are differentiated: particularly dark red is applied to spaces that are defined 'interior-interior' – the spaces inside the buildings, the 'cells' – while light red is applied to spaces that are defined 'interior-exterior'. This second spatial quality is especially interesting because is that of the spaces that have architectural delimitation and a certain kind of ratio (1:2 maximum) between width and height. In Pompeii urban spaces – the streets or the rectangular *forum* – have this quality but also the uncovered interior spaces of the patio-houses with their intermediate spatial structures such as, for example, porticos. It means that the spatial structure of this city of interiority is various and really valuable (Ill. 2).

The ancient Pompeii can represent a possible *exempla* for understanding how the city is built in relationship to the forms that the Earth assumes in its place of settlement, of how the city is a collective artefact made of houses and singular, summarizing and representative places, of how the city, in its best forms, establishes very strong inter-scalar relationships between the forms of the house, the forms of its elementary part – in the Roman city, the *insula* – the overall *forma urbis*. However, immediately clearing the field of a possible misunderstanding: that it is a nostalgic way of looking at the past. This is not the case if it is true that, through critical redrawing as a tool of our discipline, it is possible to make evident the relationships between urban structure and topographical forms that characterize, in the Mediterranean area, that ancient relationship that used to be established between human forms of history and natural forms of geography and then that other indissoluble relationship between the typological forms and the form of the city: materials that, if understood, can be turned into materials for the contemporary design, in today's city.

3. REVEALING THE FORM OF THE ANCIENT CITY THROUGH THE PROJECT: TÝNDARIS

The archaeological city of Týndaris is based on a rocky promontory facing the sea. We know from Diodoro Siculo that a military settlement was based here in 396 BC named Τυνδαρίς. It crossed the history of the Greek cities in Sicily and was conquered by Augustus in 36 BC and became one of the five Roman colonies in Sicily. Calamitous events determined its slow but unstoppable decline, finally an earthquake quoted by Plinio il Vecchio in his *Naturalis Historia*.

Different were the excavation campaigns over the time. Today we can recognize a clear grid that defines the ancient urban fabric based on parallel axes, *plateiai*, 8 metres wide, that longitudinally pass trough the city, crossed with smaller streets, *stenopoi*, 3 metres wide. Significant is that the smaller dimension of the insula is, more or less, the same of other ancient cities (34/36 metres), Greek and Roman, because it depends on the dimension of the *elementary domus*, at the origins of the ancient cities' foundation.

Archaeology and Architecture share the etymological root in the prefix that recalls the ἀρχή but relevant is the difference in their posture regarding the heritage of the past. The

archaeological gaze interprets the ancient ruins as a *document* arrived to us through a temporal fracture, the ancient stones tell us the way of the ancient life of the city. The architectural gaze observes the space – architectural and urban – as *monument*: the city, even if in ruins, is the point of real, physical accumulation in a synchronic present time of morphological and formal values. Thus, the project for the archaeological area of Týndaris[12], elaborated to answer the international competition, aims to compose these oppositional gazes that should always be united in 'taking care' of the significant legacy that Τύνδαρις represents[13] (Ill. 3, 4).

A substantial part of the planned interventions is aimed at responding to the requests of the announcement and equipping the archaeological area with the services necessary for its use, currently absent or located in temporary and inadequate structures. Four functionally and structurally separate blocks are arranged parallel to the upper *decumanus*, in the areas indicated, but are raised off the ground on 'feet' that repeat the position of the *cardines*. The volumes that define the ground connection of the buildings contain, on the east side, dressing rooms and services for the theatre and, in the centre and west, services and vertical connections. Thus, on the raised level, two autonomous bodies, smaller in terms of cantilevering, at the ends, intended for theatre and administrative services, and two central bodies, larger and supported, one of which characterized by a large 'suspended' court, intended more properly for the cultural and exhibition activities of the *antiquarium* (Ill. 5). From the point of view of its character, it is a 'two-faced' building: closed on the north side, due to the orientation, where the path that connects all the spaces is illuminated from above and instead, on the vertical plane, only selected openings while, conversely, the building is opened via a continuous south-facing loggia. The structural solution involves the construction of supports and two high longitudinal beams in concrete and a secondary metallic structure as well as metallic will be the barrack of the north wall, finished in 'projected' and treated concrete, on which the only decoration will be given by the shadow of the takings. The second most important intervention consists of the service block to be built in a parallelogram-shaped area, on the opposite side of the theatre, where the shape of the ground has suggested the possibility of creating a building built into the ground, almost triangular in shape, consisting of two 'abutments' against the ground containing the serving spaces and a central hall with a loggia ambulatory and open to the outside that seems to come out of the sloping ground.

While some other interventions are strictly related to the archaeological remains – visitors' paths and the roofs for the *Domus di Cercadenari* and the *Isolato IV* – a final intervention, not foreseen by the announcement of competition, is the one that foresees the construction of walls along the στενωποί/*cardines*. It is an intervention carried out through metal gabions simply placed on the ground and filled with loose stone material, removable as the excavation operations go on and new evidence emerges, but capable of giving back to visitors ancient Týndaris, in here again an abstract form brought almost to the limit of the land art operation, the possibility not only of observing the great emerging buildings – first of all the theatre – but also of imagining the urban structure which,

[12] Team: arch. S. Solaro (AR project soc.coop, team leader), prof. R. Capozzi, F. Visconti, C. Orfeo with archs. M. Antoniciello, N. Campanile, E.Di Chiara, R. Esposito, O. Lubrano.

[13] Some of the projects presented for the architectural competition were exhibited at the University of Naples "Federico II" and published in O. Lubrano, C. Orfeo (eds.), *Immaginare la città antica: progetti per Tindari*, Thymos Books, Napoli 2023.

in this place as in many of our Mediterranean, tells of an intense relationship between the geomorphological condition of the settlement places and the urban construction and their synthetic extraordinary value.

In this way the architectural design aims to reveal the ancient structure of the city.

4. A NEW WAY OF THE ANASTYLOSIS TECHNIQUE: PRIÉNE

The archaeological city of Priéne is based on the bend of Meandro river on the slope of Micale in Asia minor, currently in Turkey. Priéne is a very ancient city: probably the first settlement is of the 9th century BC but the current place and aspect we know is of the 4th century, after destruction following the revolt of the Ionian cities against Persians and the city had its gold period in the Hellenistic age. The urban fabric, built on four terraces, is constituted of a grid and the dimension of the block is 35x47 metres. The eight *plateiai*, 5–6 metres wide, are West-East oriented while the sixteen *stenopoi*, 3.5 metres wide, are North-South oriented.

The British have studied Πριήνη since the 17th century, reading Strabo and ascertaining that the place where the city is today is not the original. *Agorà*, *Bouleuterion*, *Prytaneion*, are the main monuments in the central part of the city while others – theatre, *Gymnasium* and temples – are on the upper and lower terraces. Priéne is relevant for the history of archaeology because the campaigns of the 19th century, carried out by British and Germans, were the first of the modern age with horizontal excavation able to make clear information on the different ages of the history of the city.

The project[14], developed in the context of a Summer School promoted in July 2022 by the Özyeğin University, with the cooperation of the local and governmental institutions in Turkey, assumed two different themes: one inside the archaeological enclosure and the other one at the boundary.

The project inside the archaeological enclosure concerns the central area of Priéne where some of the main monuments of the ancient city participate of the central public place: the morphology of the ground and the urban settlement articulated in terraces allow this simultaneous facing of the most representative buildings in the *agorà*. But the current situation doesn't allow to understand the spatiality of the ancient city: the condition is quite interesting for architects – because we can 'see' the plan of the buildings in their typological asset – but make difficult for visitors to imagine how the life would happen in the ancient times. The idea is to rebuild a transversal section from *Hiera Stoà* to *Bouleuterion* starting with the *anastylosis* of the two lines of the *stoà* (Ill. 6): the central with thicker columns with a wider span and, on the back, thinner and closer. The *stoà* is covered with sloping beams while an inverted truss is based on the back wall and, cantilevering, covers a part of the *Bouleuterion*. In this way, differently form the reconstruction of the *stoà* on the Athens' acropolis, the proposal is not of a complete reconstruction mimetic of the forms of the past, but of an abstract section that, following the principle of distinguishability, uses wood or steel as materials and give a new *frons scenae* to the *Bouleuterion*. Even if the section, in the same way of the plan, is an

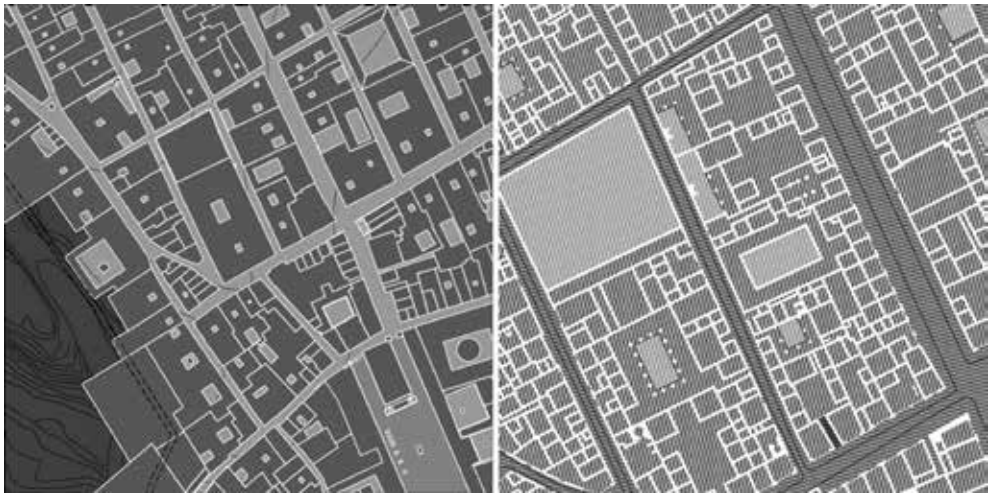
[14] "Priene. Architecture and Archaeology. International Summer School 2022. Survey, Documentation and Design", promoted by prof. Alessandro Camiz (DRUM Dynamic Research on Urban Morphology laboratory). Team Federico II University of Naples: prof. Renato Capozzi, prof. Federica Visconti with Oreste Lubrano.

architectural abstraction, the project, in its complex, leaves the plan readable for the experts and donates an idea of the original spatiality to all the visitors (Ill. 7).

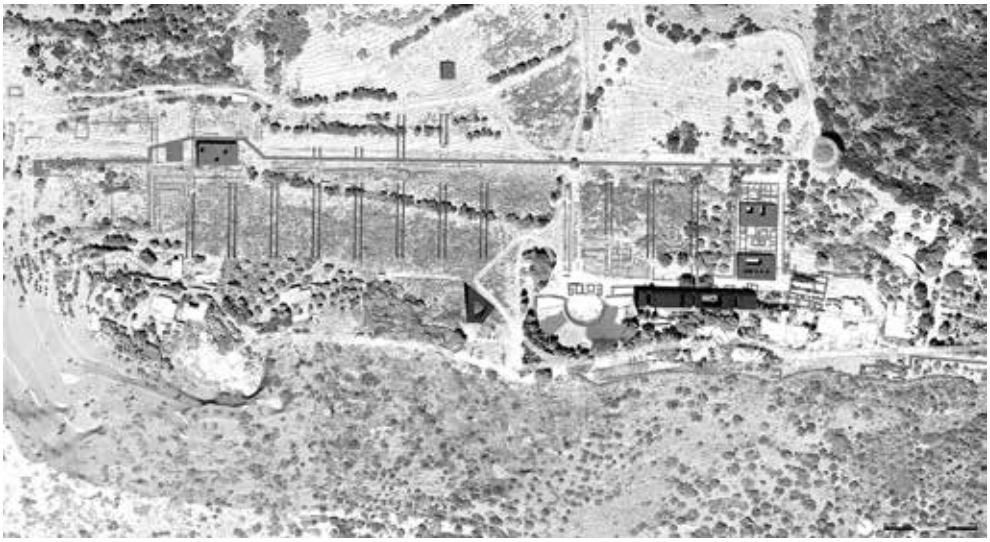
About the second theme, the archaeological site of Priéne is today not very well accessible due to the particular morphological condition. For this reason, an 'architectural device' (Ill. 8) has been designed able to bring visitors from a level where it is possible to install parking areas to the entrance: a line that becomes a bridge and a triangle that seems to go out from the hosting services. As the perspective view from the end of the bridge demonstrates, the building absolves not only to a function – the accessibility – but interpreters a theme: it is an artefact that, seen from afar, signs the presence of the archaeological city and, as in an idyll, frames the landscape of the Meandro river's valley (Ill. 9).



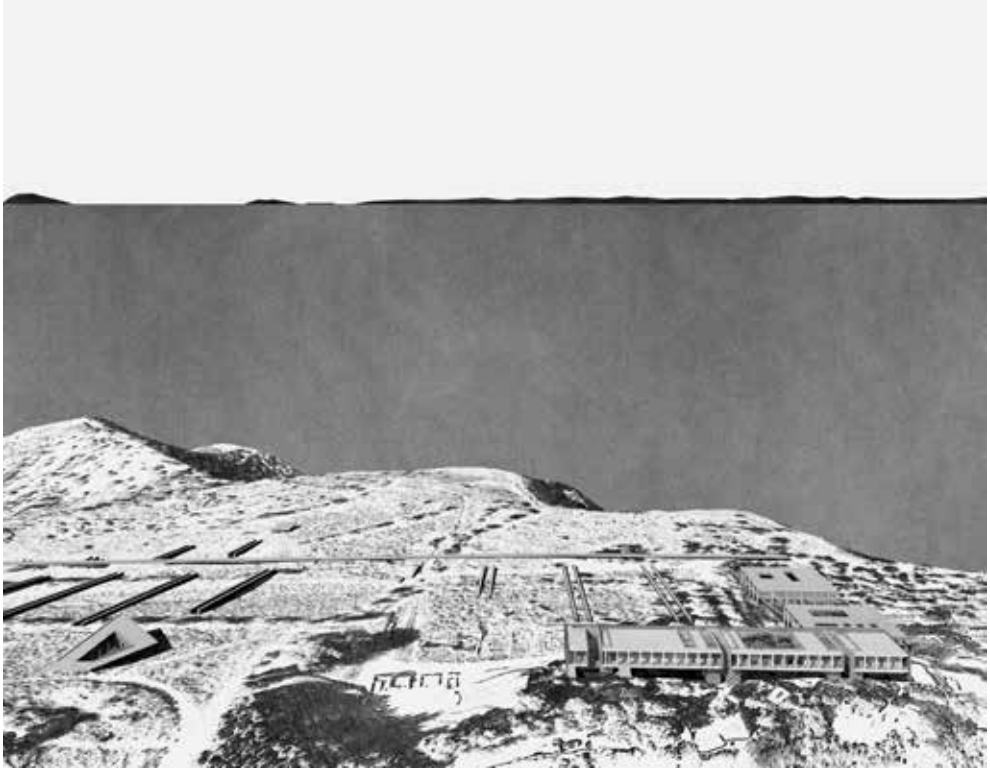
Ill. 1. The archaeological city of Pompeii. Background plan.



Ill. 2. The form of the city, the form of the block, the form of the house. Pompeii, red-blue plan. In dark red (here grey) "interior-interior spaces" and in light red (here light grey) "exterior-interior spaces".



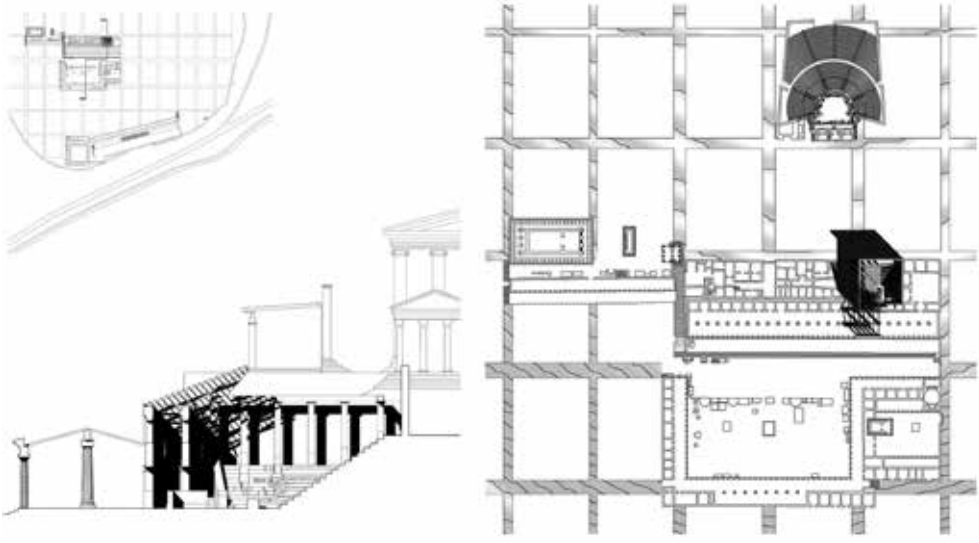
Ill. 3. R. Capozzi, S. Solaro, C. Orfeo, F. Visconti, C. Orfeo, Project for the ancient Týndaris, general plan.



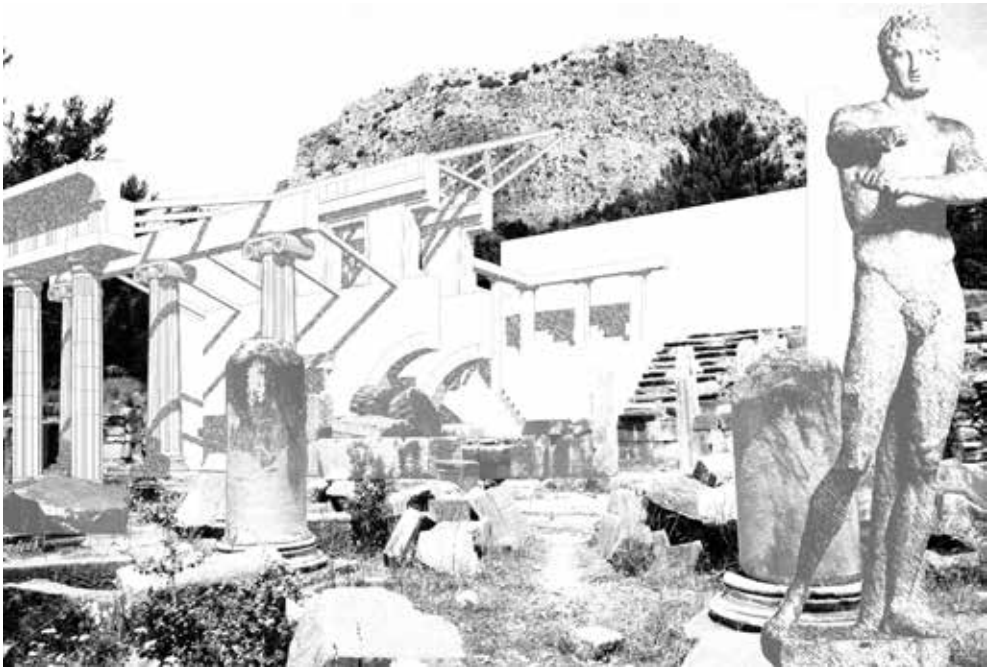
Ill. 4. R. Capozzi, S. Solaro, C. Orfeo, F. Visconti, C. Orfeo, Project for the ancient Týndaris, bird's eye view.



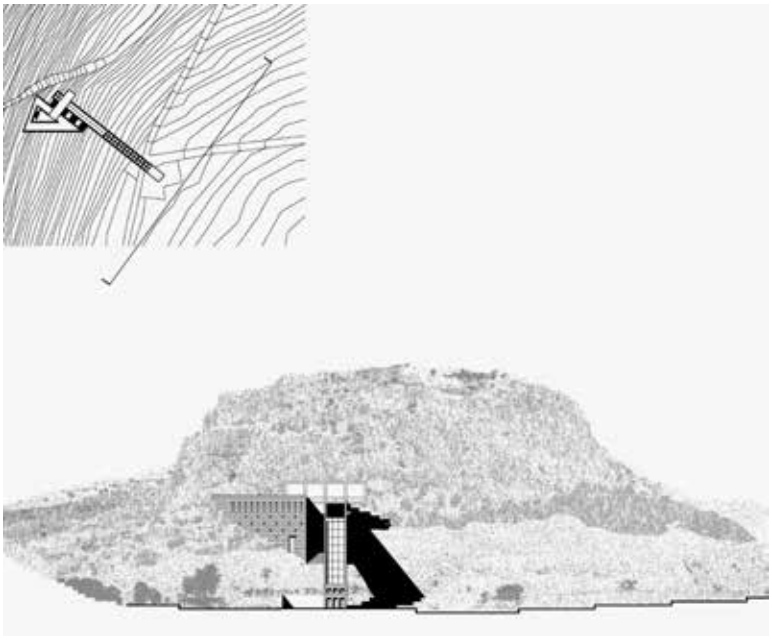
Ill. 5. R. Capozzi, S. Solaro, C. Orfeo, F. Visconti, C. Orfeo, Project for the ancient Týndaris, the *antiquarium*, perspective section and profile.



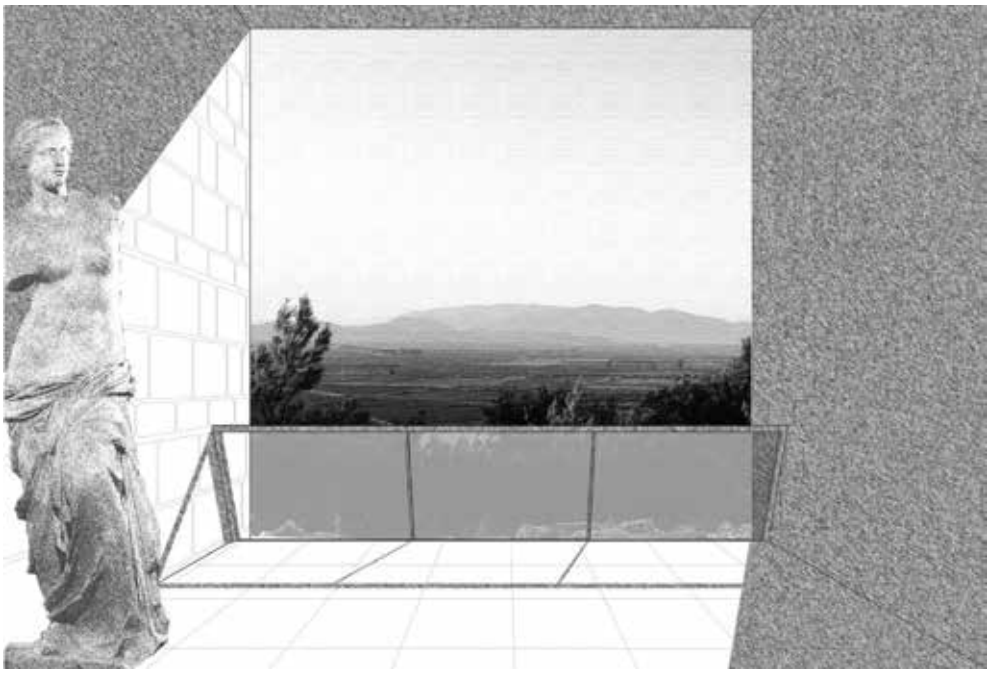
Ill. 6. R. Capozzi, F. Visconti with O. Lubrano, Project for the ancient Priéne, general plan and section of the Hiera Stoà-Bouleuterion *anastylosis*.



Ill. 7. R. Capozzi, F. Visconti with O. Lubrano, Project for the ancient Priéne, view of the Hiera Stoà-Bouleuterion *anastylosis*.



Ill. 8. R. Capozzi, F. Visconti with O. Lubrano, Project for the ancient Priéne, the new 'device' for accessibility.



Ill. 9. R. Capozzi, F. Visconti with O. Lubrano, Project for the ancient Priéne, view from the new 'device' for accessibility.

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A u t h o r ' s N o t e

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