Research Paper Architecture

Enhancement of The Archaeological Site of The Hellenistic-Roman Quarter of The Valley of The Temples in Agrigento

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ABSTRACT

The enhancement of the archaeological sites of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter of Agrigento, in Sicily, should be one of the objectives of a project for increasing the value of one of the most visited places allover the word. This objective can be achieved through specific skills. One of the important aspects to be considered is the ability to communicate the material and immaterial evidence of building remains of the Hellenistic-Roman period to a wide range of visitors. Tasks of technology allow to explore the tools to convey the historical memory and promote the identification of the ruins. In each reliable intervention it is necessary to seek more useful strategies that help audiences experience and understand the sites, according to the conservation requirements. This is made possible by a multidisciplinary approach, in order to create and empower the relations among the values and the potentialities of the Mediterranean cultural heritage.

KEYWORDS enhancement, tachnology, presentation, cultural heritage

Research aims

The enhancement of the archaeological site of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter of the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento (fig. 1) is a goal to be achieved through an effective project for increasing the cultural value, making use of some specific disciplinary skills. In fact, one of the issues concerns the capability to show and communicate the material and immaterial evidence related to residential building Hellenistic-Roman period to different range of visitors. This objective can be traced back to technology and museology, disciplines which can explore the specific tools for conveying the historical memory and the perception of the ruins for the cultural identity of the population. Each intervention of presentation should allow an understanding of the historical and archaeological heritage, while respecting the fundamental requirement of the safeguard of the site: a multidisciplinary language that combines technical knowledge with cultural communication within a varied landscape of professionals.

In the complex dialogue between conservation and enhancement coexist the research of advanced technologies and the cultural push towards an active and conscious exploitation of the ruins. It is believed that a proper protection should be made following an operation for the dissemination of scientific and historical culture, so that it creates a profound understanding between the site and its visitors / users, because it will become a propositive center of culture and no longer a enclosed guardian of memory. The phase of the presentation marks the time "the making available to a wide range of audience", in order to highlight the relevance, making visible the 'invisible, in a deep immersion in the ancient world. For this purpose it is necessary to know the conditions of the place on which to intervene.

Case study

The Roman-Hellenistic Quarter discovered in Contrada San Nicola is only a part of the ancient settlement, albeit an important part for the understanding of the urban plan of the city (fig. 2). About twenty houses of this quarter have been unearthed on the sloping terraces, arranged within a regular urban plan in three blocks, *insulae*, and delimited by the crossroads between the main east-west roads, *decumani*, and the minor north-south roads, *cardines* (fig. 3). The blocks of houses are superimposed on the urban plan of the late 6th and early 5th centuries B.C. and the roads correspond respectively to the Greek plateiai and stenopoi.

The urban plan was developed starting from the 2nd-1st centuries B.C. and lasted till the 4th century A.D.

Among the domus, the Peristyle House (fig. 4) provides an exemplification of the transformations over time: the house, in fact at one point in his life was enlarged to the detriment of the adjacent house to the north, the so-called House of the atrium floors, originally facing the cardo I. This action involved the annulment of ambitus separating the two residential units(De Miro 2010). If the enhancement of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter of Agrigento, as a moment of growth and pleasure, manages to convey the real essence of an ancient population, to make to understand human values, choices and formal techniques, actively involving the audience in the acquisition of spatial and temporal relations, it means that you are able to pass and maintain a direct connection with the past. It is undeniable that the overlay, recordable in most of the excavations of structures produced in different historical periods, the same processes of destruction caused by time and human activities, the same archaeological excavation and many other factors involving often large and sometimes insurmountable difficulty in reading, especially by a non-specialist audience. One of the main issues to be addressedis on how to make these extraordinary riches accessible and intelligible to all community, because feed into the growth of cultural and civic life of the communities with the strength of the reinforcement of identity, of trust in the roots, so that with their stories and their myths contribute to increase the capacity of attraction in the area (Ferrara 2007).

Methodology

The project for the presentation of the archaeological site of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter is addressed: 1) to the inhabitants, since they are the ones directly involved in the preservation of identity and their historical memory and are the first to benefit from the economic impact related to the enhancement project of the site (Thomson 1986); 2) to students who have the opportunity to understand their ancient history, enjoy a mutual exchange of benefits based on the rich monumental and objective reality, inside the lens of cultural growth; 3) to tourists, which represent the greater flow of visitors and therefore are the most significant economic contribution.

Several issues concern the need to understand what is lacking in order to establish a coherent program of intervention. It is appropriate, therefore, to evaluate the different categories of needs, taking into account a variety of functional, perceptual and psychological factors that depend on the location and type of communicative elements used and typology of

the user (Sposito 2003).The cultural and information needs are those related to the need to retrofit the site of didactic panels to navigate the domus, understand the places and the same excavations: the vision of the ruins on the site conveys the same sense of events and the stories of which it was a witness.

The emotional needs are those related to the social and historical significance of the place. If history belongs to men, there is excitement in what it tells us and every object brings with it an interpretation of the past, or the "pasts". To visit the Greco-Roman quarter of the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento is not just "to see": it is a journey through space and time; it is to reconstruct, through what remains and which is still visible, what time has cleared and destroyed. Visiting is to observe, snoop on the details, stop and admire, go back in time and be a contemporary of other eras (Di Salvo 2012).The physical needs must be considered among the primary ones on the site, due to the lack of services for basic needs, such as toilets, and the lack of parking areas to take shelter from the heat of the summer. Critical points of the site of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter of Agrigento, can be summarized as follows:

1) Lack of signals to facilitate access, orientation and the visit of the site.
2) Inadequate presence of reception services, dining options.
3) Lack of educational deals and services in the network.
4) Absence of reconstructions of daily life, myths and rituals in ancient testimony of the cultural overlaps.

The contributions of the technological disciplines and the historical-archaeological may foreshadow more appropriate strategies in respect of the ruins and their context. From an archaeological point of view it appears that in the absence of reliable datait is necessary to make several assumptions to intervene in the most correct way. Often, during the implementation of interventions, issues arise that may call into question the initial assumption, therefore, to illustrate the possible risks of intervention, such as the standardization of parts actually very stratified, is one of the most complex tasks that is necessary to address. Sometimes, the technologies used are related more to the desire to impress that to build a path of re-signification and communication, therefore, incorrect use of certain tools, it is possible to alter or even completely change the original message of the site. In the project for the presentation of the Quarter, the communication of the material and immaterial value of the ruins can be made possible through the typical tools of architecture (shapes, colours, materials and textures), and through the ability to design typical tools of museological discipline (media, graphics, models, interactive communications, dioramas, systems of lining-out, ghost structures, experimental reconstructions, virtual interventions, differentiation of flooring).

There are various ways for the understanding of the place, the spatial organization and the distinction of the environments of the domus, through which it is possible to highlight hierarchies of paths, layering, open and closed spaces, public and private spaces, reconstructions of everyday life (Accardi 2012). The arrangement of touch screen tables to place in the visitor center annexed to the Quarter would be one of the possible technological solutions for the knowledge of the site. To select systems for three-dimensional 3D reconfiguration means to build a virtual reality, exemplifying a significant architecture, like that of the domus, enhancing the attractiveness of the site. As a matter of fact, the information gained from the excavations, historical documents, the representation of materials and finishes, the sketches of the drums of columns and capitals, the photographic material, can form the basis for the hypothesis of a 3D reconfiguration. Detection systems architecture and three-dimensional modeling do not regard only the acquisition of data, but they also represent the opportunity to get more knowledge elements, thanks to the opportunity to share the integrable data by researchers, boosting the level of participation of visitors. The system can allow you to reproduce the domus allowing users to interact and explore, even online the different cleaved through a transversal reading of the architectural system, observing the relationships between different parts of the structure. Elements of communication such as models, diorama, didactic panels and posters, serigraphs of perspectives on restorative glass or plexiglass, appropriately placed at points of interest chosen for an overall perception of the domus, can facilitate the orientation allowing visitors the distinction of hierarchies of formal, volumetric and plastic values among the archaeological ruins that make up the fabric (Ruggieri 2004).

Conclusion

From the research of this case study emerges the need to outline a methodological-operational approach, capable of addressing both the issue of increasing the value of the identity and characteristics of the site and the improvement of the usability of the social heritage. From the analysis of the critical points emerges that with a plan for an effective enhancement it will be possible to encourage the attractive capacity and improving accessibility, visitability and enjoyment of the Hellenistic-Roman Quarter in Agrigento, to go out of the shadow of the current situation, a site of priceless historical value, currently undervalued and, therefore, little-visited compared to the entire area of the Temples.

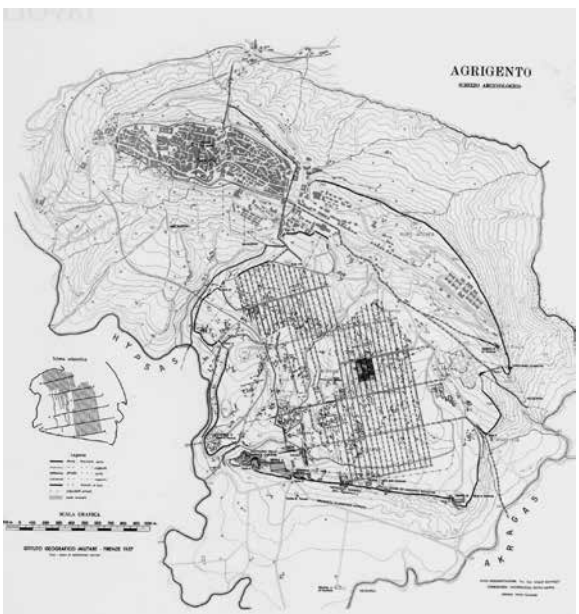


fig.1



fig.2



fig.3



fig.4



fig.5



fig.6



fig.7

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