

Urban Spaces and the Levels of the Historic City

Pasquale Miano and Giorgia Aquilar

In the definition of the interventions in ancient contexts, history and project, archaeology and planning constitute open and intertwined variables, so that none of those components should be excluded, although in practice the conditions for an effective interaction is hard to be determined among those different fields of deepening.

That difficulty is not only operative: in recent decades, even on a theoretical level the debate about ancient centers has lost its broadness, articulation and efficacy, often resulting in the resumption of a few and partial aspects, already formerly detailed.

A case-by-case theory is now clearly prevailing, and probably that approach could be even positive, if meant as the intention of getting closer and studying a specific urban space. A major problem stands in the fact that – very often – the focus element of discussion and study is not an ancient center – considered in its entirety and meant as the field of definition of even limited and partial actions – but the single intervention, localized in a specific point and rigidly closed within its own borders. In many aspects, the dynamics of urban transformations are actually consistent with this mechanism of action: the modifications are the result of contingent programs, from time to time determining individual interventions with a more or less significant weight, in confined spots of the urban fabric.

Thus should not be a surprise if the theme of the ancient centers – and even more the issue of the historical centers – has gradually lost its interest, also because of the futility manifested by planning projects and urban designs on the field. The experience of recent years confirms the inevitability of a condition that tends at tackling each time one single issue at most.

In Naples, that situation really seems to constitute the only possible one: it is worth mentioning once again Giuseppe Samonà's article in "Casabella" and his brief but very clear consideration about the "rejection of plans"¹.

A line of reasoning on the Greek-Roman historical center of Naples with the Hippodamian plan, actually requires to point out that the latest related study and project proposal is "The ancient center of Naples" wrote by Roberto Pane in 1971², which brings us back to that positive climate of debate and controversies about the destinies of the ancient city, which has long been lost.

For several years now, the ancient center of the city of Naples – which is part of the widest historic center in Europe, listed in 1995 as a UNESCO World Heritage site – has not been the subject of proposals and broadly conceived projects. Yet – just as predicted by Samonà – the small but continuous transformations, the areas of neglect and the few realized interventions have changed many aspects.

Further transformations may be determined as a result of the specific "Urban Growth Integrated Plan" (PIU Europe) for the ancient center of Naples, issued by the City Council through the subscription of an agreement with UNESCO. From 2007 onwards, the recovery program provides funding for several intervention on the Neapolitan monumental heritage – historic buildings, religious complexes, urban-archaeological areas – thus constituting the current and practical background of reference for the

1. In 1959, Samonà wrote: "The case of Naples, which ranks among the most complex ones, today looks curiously interesting because it rejects plans". Translation by the authors. Giuseppe Samonà. "Considerazioni sulla città di Napoli", *Casabella* 231(1959): 35-36.

2. Roberto Pane. *Il centro antico di Napoli: restauro urbanistico e piano di intervento* (Naples: Edizioni Scientifiche Italiane, 1971).

development of our considerations. In particular, since the approval of the "Strategic Guidance Document" and the preliminary of the "Integrated Urban Program for the Historic Centre of Naples" by the Regional Council, the first calls for tender of the "Great Program for the Valorization of the Old Centre of Naples UNESCO Heritage" have been recently enacted.

Within those documents and the projects contents, some fundamental aspects emerge as inherent features of the Program's approach, so as defining an essential premise to notice once again the presence of a substantial gap in the theoretical analysis and design experimentation on the themes and specific urban contexts of the ancient city.

In Naples, single interventions will hardly bring to light and realize the restoration of highly prestigious architectural masterpieces of the past, but for those places – that have often been experienced as a unit, throughout history – the interventions are meant separately, regardless of the *interrelations*, which should involve the historical-archaeological nature and architectural-urban character of places. The actions of renovation and conversion – under the funding Program – will be actually developed through limited and specific interventions, according to a dual perspective: firstly, from time to time the architectural operations concentrate on a single monument, which is therefore construed as an isolated and autonomous entity; secondly – although the program also includes the redevelopment of some external spaces, such as several fundamental urban layouts and road axes – these interventions merely aim at "maintaining and improving the existing", quoting the call for proposals. A fundamental aspect thus arises – which appears underestimated by the approach of the announced calls – about the strategic role of the *connections* among the single elements.



Fig.1 The acropolis of the ancient center of Naples. Superimposition of Mario Napoli's perimetration on the current map of the city. Original drawing by the authors.

That consideration lays the groundwork for the choice of working on the construction of a design strategy for the area of the *acropolis* in the ancient center of Naples, which features a specific significance, though constituting a specific portion of a more articulated urban piece.

The acropolis constitutes the greatest important area of the ancient center from the archaeological perspective, the site characterized by major urban complexity and in which some interventions of the European Program PIU are focused, related to monumental contexts often adjoining: the Complexes of San Paolo Maggiore, of the Gerolomini, and of the Incurables, as well as the area of the theaters – the covered structure of the Odeion and the open theater of Neapolis – just quoting a few examples.

As argued by Cesare De Seta, "today it can still be read – in the regular grid of the Hippodamian fabric – a well-circumscribed area with an irregular course, already clearly identifiable in Lafrery's plan (1566); it roughly corresponds to the areas bounded by the current Foria Street, Constantinople Street and the Cathedral Street, including the southern area gravitating around San Gaetano Square"³.

Moreover, already in 1985 the XXV Congress of Taranto was dedicated to Neapolis. In that occasion, "architect Roberto Einaudi presented the project for the archaeological park of the acropolis: it was thus suggested a systematic solution to the problems of protection and valorization – raised in previous years by the wisest part of the archaeologists – which had been completely neglected under the pressure of an alleged planning emergency. The park comprised an area richer in significant monumental episodes rather than archaeological preexistences, placed in a building fabric strongly altered by traumatic interventions"⁴.

This way, a very significant dimension was identified in relation to the ancient center, although the attention was almost exclusively focused on the *traumatic* interventions, namely the measures which destroyed some important architectural pieces of the ancient city, since the end of the nineteenth century. These actions were mainly arranged along the edge areas of the acropolis, from the Maria Longo ramp and school to the pavilions of the Polyclinic, and up to the additional medical clinics arose in place of the Monastery of San Gaudioso.

The idea of an archaeological park, as a result of the abatement of these bulky masses, definitely configures a possible option, while not very practical, so risking to stave off from the deepening of what already exists, remitting everything to some extremely complicated interventions.

The equivocation of an archaeological park – which arises only from the areas of the acropolis made available by demolitions or other highly transformative actions – is also present in the General Plan of Naples, in force since 2004. According to the Plan, on the one hand, the prevailing logics for the ancient center is focused on the realization of individual interventions localized at specific points; on the other hand, more complex areas are identified, almost exclusively designed in the concept of the formation of an archaeological park, as the result of culling and relocation actions. In no event the planned interventions address the need to connect the various monumental complexes. With regard to the acropolis, the identified area of the General Plan named "acropolis and Cavour Square", marks a distinction between the north-western border areas (those of the *traumatic* interventions), and the body of the acropolis, where the site of the ancient theaters is included in a different area delimited by the Plan. In any case, in the General Plan of Naples the theme of the acropolis arises in a fragmented and discontinuous manner, so as not assuming any particular meaning.

A crucial aspect rather consists in the interpretation of the acropolis as a spatial-architectural unit, as clearly stated in some considerations by Renato De Fusco, who has recently dealt with the center of Naples: "Let's look at the urban layout as a whole. Previously, the city was limited to the acropolis – the political and

3. Cesare De Seta. *Napoli*. (Rome: Laterza, 1984), 9. Translation by the authors.

4. Daniela Giampaola. *Napoli: archeologia e città*. (Florence: Edizioni all'Insegna del Giglio, 2003), 5. Translation by the authors.

religious center – and the agorà, which stretched at the foot of the nucleus of the acropolis, in external position with respect to this core. (...) It should be still kept in mind that arranging the buildings of larger size and greater height at the center – around the only open area, ie around the agorà – so as leaving the private buildings in the suburbs, where the ground begins its decline towards the lower parts, means to give the city a volumetric disposition and at the same time a more solemn setting; the city must have looked very high in the view from the sea, and the public buildings had to be the maximum point of reference in this ascensional rhythm"⁵.

Working on the acropolis-agorà – namely the core of the first layout of ancient Naples – also means to assume a firm position in terms of history, from which to develop a design reasoning, which takes into consideration this urban ensemble of particular interest and fascination in its entirety. To confirm this setting, Mario Napoli asserted: "when the new city was founded – around 470 – it was located at the highest point of a well-protected plateau"⁶. The city has been shaped from a peculiar orographic condition, which tends at enhancing this specificity, through a proper positioning and precise configuration of public buildings.

Furthermore, it is possible to retrieve again the arguments of Renato De Fusco, as he claimed that "Neapolis awaits its Schliemann"⁷: the assumption of this approach does not mean to underestimate the centrality of archaeological research – which has made huge advancements in recent years, especially in area of the theatres – but it should be rather understood as posing the issue of archaeology at the center of a reflection about the acropolis.

The results of the archaeological research can become effective under urban profile, when it will be possible to highlight and make visible what is hidden in the acropolis-agorà in a broader way. At this point, once again the need for a planned route is confirmed, in order to involve the acropolis in its entirety and to consider the archaeological park as a gradual but real construction, visible and accessible at every stage of its realization. Precisely because of this specificity, fundamental importance is gained by the choice to take the acropolis as a great unity of the urban landscape of Naples – to be comprehensively planned and designed, by breaking any disciplinary boundary – in order to reopen an argument on the ancient center on a new basis.

The main research questions therefore develop from the evident need for an interdisciplinary exchange, able to overcome the rigid boundaries of the individual disciplines and to trigger a design reasoning on the acropolis of the ancient center of Naples.

In this framework, the primary purpose of our design research thus consists in the construction of an intervention strategy that starts right from the areas and specific elements defined by the development program for the historical center of Naples, but obviously not only and not necessarily just from those components. Within this complex of overlapping plots – involving the ancient settlements, the monumental complexes, the archaeological traces of foundation and transformation of the acropolis of the Greek and Roman city, and the contemporary manipulations of the building structures grafted onto historical tissues – the strategy works on the definition of an additional layer of intervention – meant as a level of both physical and conceptual mediation – able to intervene through even specific, limited and minimal actions – in order to trigger the weaving of a *connective fabric*, just by virtue of its own *intermittency*.

5. Renato De Fusco. *Il centro antico come cittadella degli studi. Restauro e innovazione della Neapolis greco-romana*. (Naples: Clean, 2009), 39. Translation by the authors.

6. Mario Napoli. *Napoli greco-romana*. (Naples: Fiorentino Editore, 1959), 40. Translation by the authors.

7. De Fusco, 45. Translation by the authors.

The proposed strategy thus operates through the section, acting on the vertical axis of the *strata*, in which orography, archaeology and architecture are inextricably linked together: the reinterpretation of the layers and overlapped levels in elevation of the ancient city – in a design perspective – means to configure them as urban cutaways in which the ancient and the contemporary dimensions simultaneously coexist in a logic of construction of an *architecture of connections*.

This is the contribution that the project can give, in respect to the issue of the reconfiguration of the acropolis-agorà.

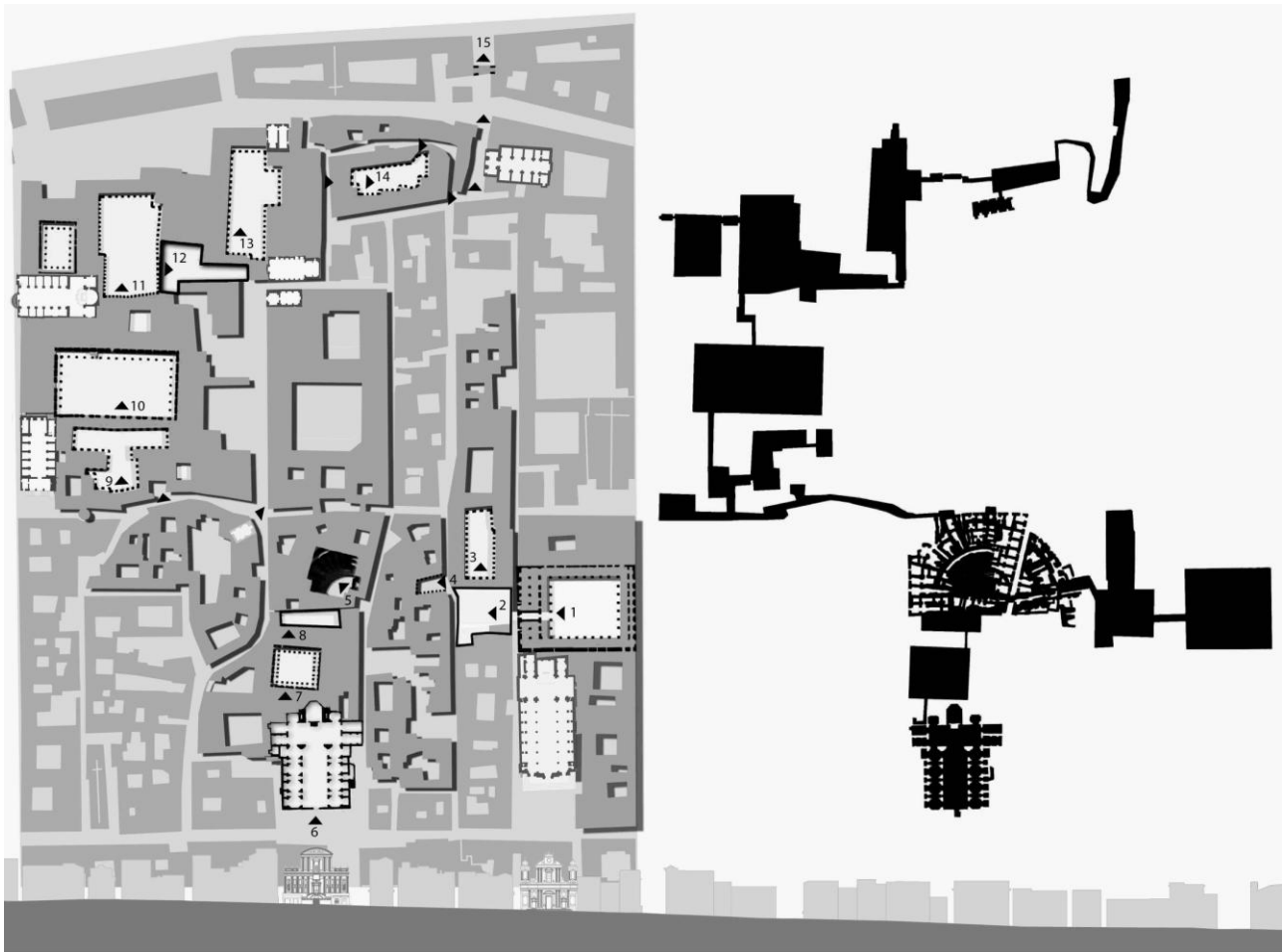


Fig.2 Design experimentation for the acropolis of the ancient center of Naples. Strategic reading of the spaces and elements (left): 1) Gerolomini Cloister; 2) rear area of the Avellino Palace; 3) Avellino Palace and Largo; 4) Giants Largo; 5) Roman Theater of Neapolis; 6) San Paolo Maggiore Churs; 7) San Paolo Maggiore Cloister; 8) courtyard of the Roman Theater Stage Wall; 9) St. Mary of Jerusalem; 10) Regina Coeli; 11) St. Mary of the Cross; 12) connecting area between the cloisters and Armanni Street; 13) garden of the Incurables Hospital; 14) St. Mary of Consolation; 15) San Gennaro Gate. Overall concept of the proposed strategy (right). Original drawings by the authors.

The secret of the site of the acropolis – as pointed out by De Fusco, resuming Mario Napoli's judgment – "lies not in the mere orthogonality of the streets, but in an organically functional arrangement, in the cadency created by the constant and regulated rhyming of the varied architectural volumes, determined by the sequence of single and double islet cells (*insulae*). This planivolumetric interpretation – so subtle and reliably

– makes us regret that only the road layout has remained from this ancient urban organization, since the environment has been totally overwhelmed by the height of the houses raised on the current streets"⁸.

In other words, this means that the acropolis should be seen as a unitary architecture, although articulated, hard to be perceived, and in which it is not easy to orientate if not following the ordinary street routes. This unitary architecture thus requires *reading keys* able to understand its nature, by establishing comparisons with the current condition, but also *interpretative keys*, which can effectively facilitate the comprehension of the relationships between the different aspects, by promoting alternative paths.

In the first place, therefore we can wonder: what would happen if we thought of working on the historical and archaeological interrelations, starting from the considerations about the levels in elevation which characterize the current layout of the ancient city? The underground level of the acropolis may become a field of urban and architectural interventions, configuring a significant cross-section of the city.

Further interweavings may emerge if we consider to involve the level of the wide open spaces, of the widenings (*larghi*) of the ancient city and the enclosed spaces of the cloisters, but also of the urban voids due to wartime collapses. Finally more complex scenarios would be determined, by thinking at the great monumental islet cells facing each other, through the connection of the internal and external spaces of the buildings at their higher floors. And what would happen if we thought of connecting these different levels, fully utilizing the aggregative potentialities of these large joints?

Answering these questions means – from a methodological perspective – to set up a survey and research on the current situation of the places, able to read within the foldings of history, in order to find lost continuities, but mostly to seek for new relationships between the elements which appear completely separated today.

According to this approach, the methodologies applied in the research have allowed to weave theory and practice, research and design, in a complex and detailed process, finding some fundamental opportunities of investigation through the elaboration of several research projects and insights concerning specific areas involved in the development Program, faced in various professional and academic experiences – including the International Master of Science in Design for the Historic City and the School of Specialization in Architectural and Landscape Heritage, together with further researches carried out under the Department of Architecture and the PhD Program in Urban Design – at the University of Naples Federico II.

A specific methodological and design approach has been ultimately drawn up, based on historical, cartographical, and iconographical surveys which can be further developed, on detailed studies of the permanencies and traces, and on the construction of a mapping of the abandoned paths to be rehabilitated and ancient passages to be rediscovered – now hidden inside the transformations and manipulations undergone by the urban and building historic tissues over time – as well as on the identification of new accesses to the archaeological and monumental spaces, on the definition of the pertaining areas of the great historical architectures – by setting them free but clearly denouncing the specificity of each individual artifact, and rediscovering the "below" and "above" parts of the buildings, the archaeological level and the height of roof terraces – on the grafting of new connections at the higher floors of the existing buildings or through the unveiling of underground spaces of great fascination. The ancient paths – settled at different levels in elevation – are thus conceived as the basic elements of a strategy that works through *design stratigraphies* and *artificial topographies*, which have led to the development of a multiplicity of *spatial devices*, able to

8. De Fusco, 49. Translation by the authors.

trigger a dialogue between the specificity of each single case-study and the ascertainment of recurring situations.

The re-articulation of both internal and external public spaces – in relation to the levels of the ancient city with its continuous tampering and transformations – together with a new mode for the management of functions – aimed at overcoming the introversion of the enclaves which characterize these urban tissues – constitute two key aspects of this reflection.

In the overlapped layers of the historic city – where the intermediate spatial character defies traditional classifications – lies the opportunity to recover a continuity of linkages and connections, often negated at the ground level and denied by the street layout, which often excludes just the most significant architectural spaces: the prime assumption at the basis of the study consists in the testing of a potentially uninterrupted connection device – which is today partly realizable in the subsurface of the ancient city – so as the archaeological tissue can be brought to light from time to time, but also crossed and connected beneath the existing buildings. On the other hand, air passages, skyways and raised connections may be conceived by establishing a close relation with the superimposed levels of the cloisters and urban terraces, and even with the ground level itself – thanks to the opportunities provided by the recurring voids and disconnections of the tissues – involving a multiplicity of physical and conceptual planes, until penetrating into the hypogeous fabric. At the same time – just by rehabilitating neglected ancient paths, defining new accesses and rediscovering unexplored connections above or beneath the level of the existing linkages – it is possible to break the closure of the existing precincts, although in full respect of the specificity of the different enclaves, protected as the suitable measure of intervention, but – at the same time – involved in the strategic-design hypotheses as potential first outposts of a "contemporaneity" grafted *inside* and *above* the stratified city.

Together with the urban position of the architectural and urban elements taken into account, the survey has strongly considered the dimension, morphology, delimitation, destination of use, architectural identity and lighting conditions of these open spaces, which reveal themselves as determinant components in the definition of the shape, of the figure, and of the typo-morphological character of this part of the ancient center of Naples. The architectural and spatial reconfiguration of these places can then bind itself to their role as elements of connection and relation, rather than to a typology and also to a function, rigidly defined and to be introduced at any cost. Each of them represents a potentiality to be adequately assessed in the context of a unified strategy for the redevelopment and regeneration of the acropolis and for the introduction of new widespread functions.

On the acropolis, it is necessary to work to enhance an overall urban condition hardly recognizable, through an open design strategy, which can be specified as a condition of long duration variability, to be continuously renegotiate on the basis of the development of the archaeological researches on the field, of the operational possibilities generated by the actions on the single monuments, but also on the basis of a redefinition of the relationship between private and public interventions: a difficult project, which should not assume preconceived units of action, but which is called to the hard task of putting together a field of possibilities in order to achieve concrete results. As the ancient Pompeii, reduced to a total ruin, the acropolis of Neapolis – while continuing to live and contain exceptional architectural pieces from different eras – should be recognizable, experienceable, accessible, and this can be done through a gradual process.

The research results achieved so far do not constitute a completed project, but they can be qualified as a complex and articulated framework made of of potentialities and identification of cases which are

paradigmatic and emblematic of the diverse declinations of the strategic approach described as foundational assumption of the conducted survey, applied to the specificity of concrete cases.

A unified series of open spaces of great relevance thus emerges, constituted by cloisters, archaeological voids, internal spaces and major buildings, narrow passages and places to be consolidated, which can be rearranged and described in different ways. From San Gaetano Square and from the archaeological sites already recognizable and known – as the Complex of San Lorenzo – passing through the Complex of San Paolo Maggiore and the area of the theaters, it will be possible to cross the Monastery of St. Mary of Jerusalem, to reach the Church and Cloister of Regina Coeli and Sant'Aniello a Caponapoli, where relevant excavation findings have been brought to light. By continuing the path through the courtyard of Saint Mary of the Cross, the level of the complex of the former Incurables Hospital will be reachable and from here – in east-west direction – this planned walk will also lead to the complex of St. Mary of Consolation and San Gennaro Gate. But this itinerary is only one of the possible routes within an important ensemble.



Fig.3 Design experimentation for the acropolis of the ancient center of Naples. Underground level with archaeological remains in white (left). Ground level with the proposed connective tissue in gray (right). Original drawings and design proposal by the authors.

At the same time, it will be actually possible to reach the area of the theaters even from the Gerolomini Complex, by going through the ancient passage at Giants Largo, behind the Avellino Palace, which represents – together with its lengthened courtyards – a further element of specificity of the ancient city.

With a view to understand the potentialities of the planned device, three specific cases have been examined in the most ancient core of foundation. The design experimentation has been focused on the identified

crucial points, which constitute the elements of a connective fabric, involving a wide and manifold urban piece, coinciding with the acropolis of the ancient center:

- the level of the connections established by the Avellino Palace, with one of the main entrances to the Roman Theatre in the west, and with the Gerolomini Cloister in the east;
- the level of the connections established by the Cloister and the internal spaces of the Church of the San Paolo Maggiore, through the northern courtyard towards the Roman Theater, which now appear separated by the original Roman wall of the theater scene itself;
- the level of the connections established by the Gardens of the former Incurables Hospital, with the building tissue and the sequence of the cloisters in the islet cell bounded by St. Paul Street and Armanni Street, by descending through the Monasteries of St. Mary of Graces, Regina Coeli and St. Mary of Jerusalem.

Some of those interventions are included within the above-mentioned European Program about the ancient center, but the logics of the single measures will hardly allow to consider the acropolis in a very significant way. With just a few passages – instead – a crossing in the body of the acropolis results to be possible at different levels, taking full advantage of the continuity in that unique part of the city of Naples and overcoming the difficulties, restrictions and closures that now seem insurmountable.

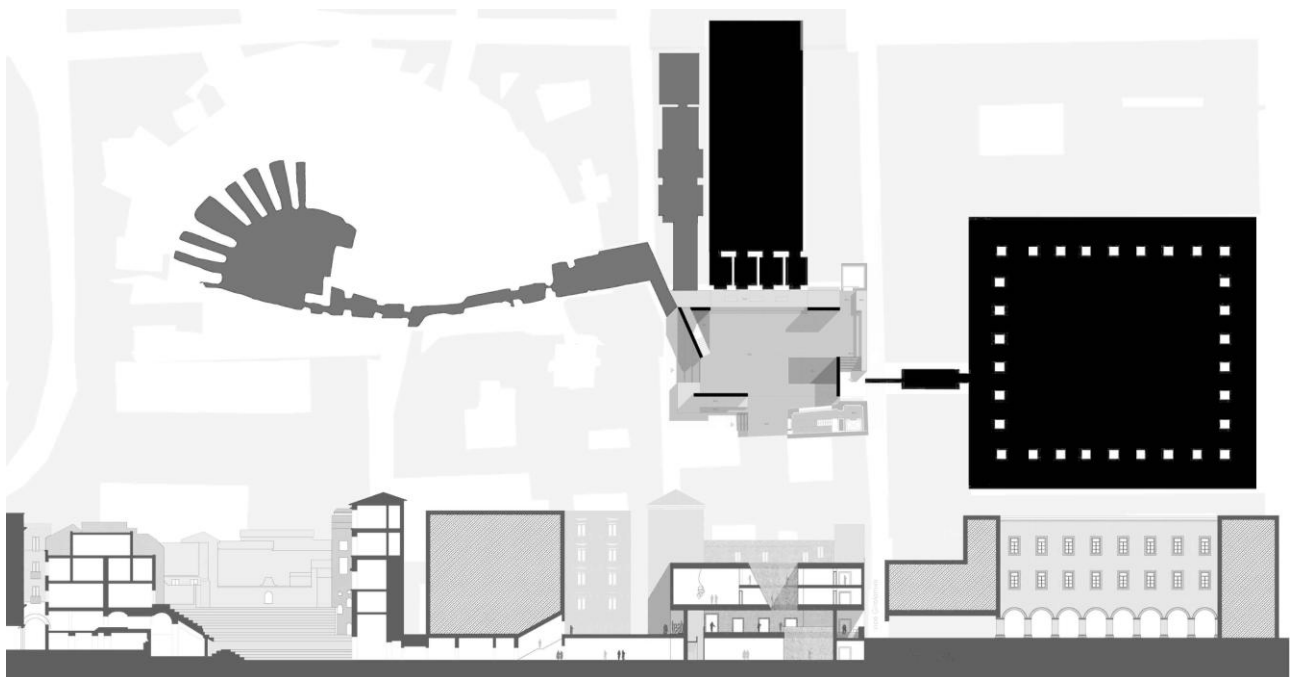


Fig.5 First case-study. The level of the connections between the Avellino Palace rear area with the Gerolomini Cloister and the Roman Theater: ground level linkages (in black) and underground connections (in gray). Original drawings by the authors.

This crossing originally connected the Gerolomini Cloister in the east with the Cloister of San Paolo Maggiore and the Roman Theatre in the west, right through the spaces of the Palace and Largo. Through the Girolomini Alley – today concealed behind the building interventions of the Fifties and Sixties of last century – it will be possible to restore the role of urban linkage that this piece of islet cell traditionally had, and to intervene also on the accesses to the reconfigured urban system, by pursuing the logics of minimal and punctual interventions. Particularly, essential relevance is gained by the realization of a side entrance to

the Roman Theatre, placed underground, beneath the current level of the street. This intervention can be defined as the definition of an eastern access to the acropolis, from the Cathedral Street.

Within the context of the definition of a southern entrance to the area of the theaters, an interesting alternative can be traced.

The complex of San Paolo Maggiore is very important under the archaeological perspective, for several reasons. "The main peculiarity of the first church lies in the fact that not only it was built on the Temple of the Dioscuris (...), but it still retains the old staircase and is located at the same primal level in height". In fact the Temple of Castor and Pollux (namely the Dioscuris) was localized in the area of the ancient *Forum*, at the present San Gaetano Square, together with the two theaters and the complex of San Lorenzo Maggiore, so that the relationships between the different elements are extremely layered and stratified.

The church is also connected to the convent of the religious order of the Teatini, articulated around a cloister, which connects to the rear portion of the theater through a courtyard garden. The rediscovering of these relationships is not easy, but it is precisely the restoration project of San Paolo Maggiore – drafted by the Superintendency – which plays a crucial role. The same project highlights the possibility of establishing a second relationship with the theater, at a high level in the elevation of the monastery complex, intended for housing the residences for students, through the recovery of a space of great fascination – once the refectory of the Fathers Teatini – which results to be adjacent to the stage wall of the Roman theater.

The realization of some initial archaeological assays seems to offer the possibility to link this space with the rear theater area, defining a level of raised connections. Ultimately, multiple physical connections at various altitudes can be defined between the complex of San Paolo Maggiore and the area of the theaters, from the ancient underground level to the current plan, up to the raised level of the scene wall of the Theater.

San Paolo Church then becomes a place to visit, but at the same time it includes specific functions, also becoming one of the entrances to the theater and archive of the Roman findings, as provided by the restoration project of the religious complex⁹, within an essential condition of continuity for the acropolis.

A fundamental crossing of the acropolis can be defined by overcoming the logics of road routes, as previously stated. From San Gennaro Gate, it is possible to traverse the former monastery of St. Mary of Consolation – today a large residential islet cell to be rehabilitated – then, walking along St. Mary of the People, to climb in an interesting way to reach the gardens arranged between the Incurables Complex and St. Mary of Graces. Going down through the courts of the monasteries of Regina Coeli and St. Mary of Jerusalem, it is possible to reach San Paolo Street, finding a further potential access to theaters, from the edge of the Odeion.

This way it is actually possible to reach a barycentric area – a sort of central place acropolis – in which the different paths come into contact.

The theaters thus become a key element of the system, no more as a standalone site, so being configured as elements of recognizability of the different sets of urban relationships, thanks to the described connections. Great importance is assumed by the relation with the gardens of the Incurables complex –

9. See the Definitive Project for the Restoration and Refunctionalization of "Complex of San Paolo Maggiore in Naples", drawn up by the BAPSAE Superintendency of Naples and Province.

arranged along the ancient walls – so as the old Hospital can primarily represent an element of access to the system of the ancient center from the northern edge.

Through the Incurables gardens it becomes possible to establish a direct physical connection between the high level the Hospital entrance and the low level of the cloisters, which can be thus configured as a connective spine between the diverse open spaces rediscovered within the great monumental complexes, so as defining a sequence that ends into the theaters and in the forum of the ancient city.

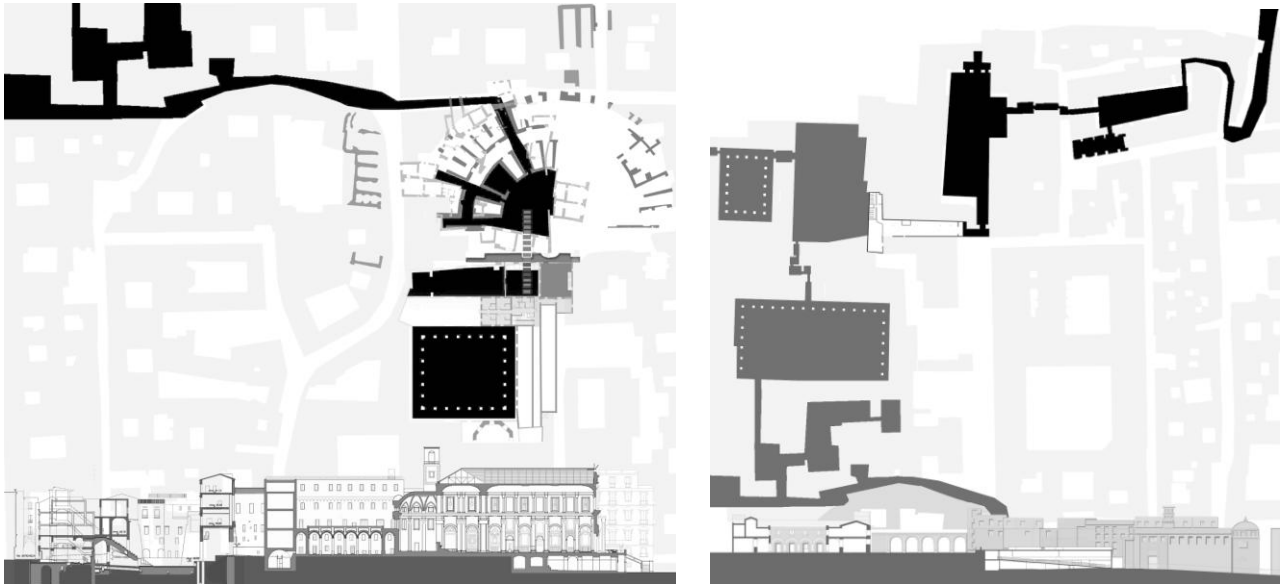


Fig.6 Second and third case-studies. Left: the level of the connections between the complex of San Paolo Maggiore and the area of the Roman Theater. Right: the level of the connections established by the Incurables complex with the southern area of San Paolo Street and the northern access to the acropolis from San Gennaro Gate. Original drawings by the authors.

The conclusions of the research – drawn from this articulated set of examples – are presented as a basis for the identification of perspectives for further studies and inquiries, to be focused on the reinterpretation of complex and articulated urban pieces – in which unavoidable peculiarities can be found together with recurring and common aspects that facilitate the comparison – through the application of intervention logics aimed at building new *plots* hinged on unprecedented relations and connections.

The case of the acropolis of the ancient center of Naples therefore arises as a paradigm that allows to establish a comparison between the deepened construction of new dimensions and configurations for public spaces – closed, open or in hybrid forms – and the study of the permanencies and traces of the great architectures and urban structures of history.

The definition of strategies capable of triggering mechanisms of transformation for these areas becomes the foundation of a potential rediscovery of the interrelations among the different disciplinary fields involved. In several parts of the ancient city, new sequences can be determined, requiring the overcoming of the rigid boundaries between the disciplines of restoration and conservation, architectural and urban design, planning and archaeology. In these places, the presence of ruins, sediments, archaeological findings, remains, gaps in the urban fabric – together with central spaces and representative architectures of the historic tissue, elements of the archaeological city and convent complexes – demands for a work which acts on the system of relations among the inseparable aspects involved, encouraging a close comparison within the different disciplines in the field.

A wide range of possibilities emerges in the need to emphasize the elements of the history, archeology, architecture and of the contemporary city, which could be returned to the common knowledge from time to time. A coordinated design work should open up a great reflection, overcoming the barriers that may hinder the fully understanding of the potentialities of these urban pieces.

Through these interrelationships – which can be even further articulated – the presence of an exceptional series of urban open spaces of multiple and different natures can be ascertained within a relatively reduced area: the space of the street, the empty space of the urban "voids" between close buildings, the space of the cloisters and courtyards, the "hybrid" space of the ambiguity between the public and private sectors, the connective tissues that interweave complex relations with the built fabrics from which they are thus almost inseparable.

The overall measure of the acropolis then becomes the suitable interpretative and strategic extent of the project, and at the same time the intervention strategy by which the actions inside the ancient center can be triggered.

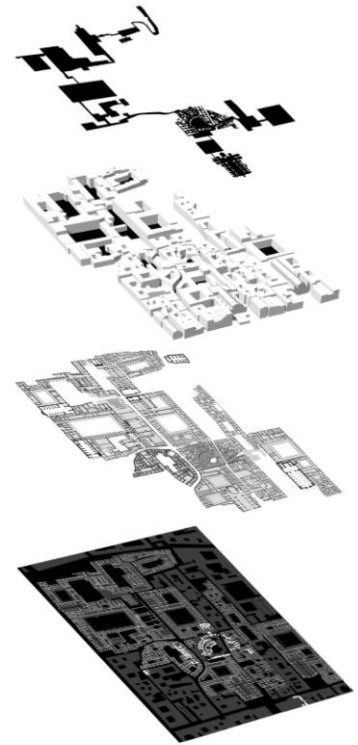
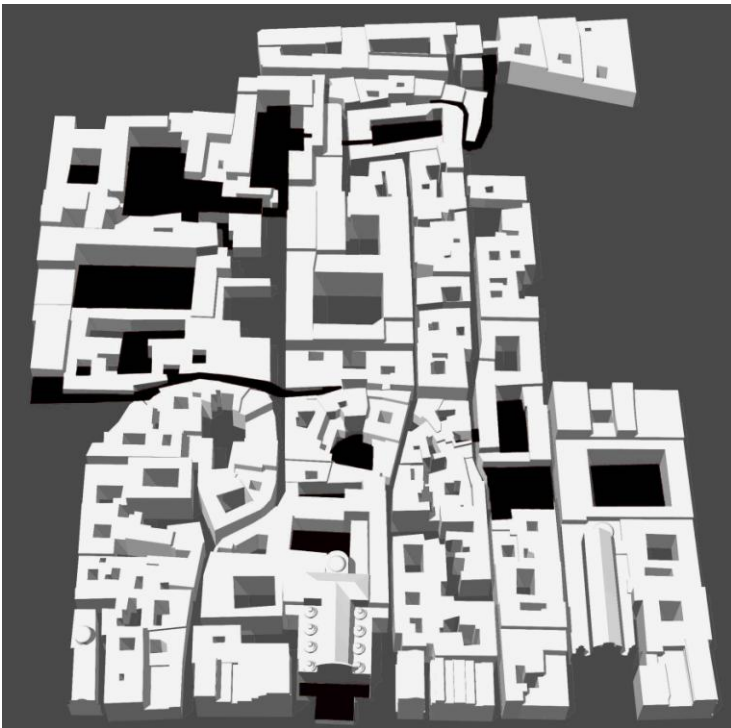


Fig.8 Levels and strata in the body of the acropolis. Original drawings by the authors.