

Multilayered Historic Towns

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**MULTILAYERED HISTORIC
TOWNS AS "MEMORY": TWO
CASES OF STUDY IN ITALY**

prof. arch. Elvira Petroncelli

Full Professor of Urban and Regional Planning - University of Naples "Federico II" (Italy)

Planning and Territorial Science Department

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The site choice for a settlement has almost always been the outcome of the existence of a whole of physical and morphological conditions of the place. Sites have emerged, which have been considered an excellent fit for the settlement, and there has always been a great interest in them.

The history of the Mediterranean area is very old and, as far as it was characterized by the alternation of different people, always the harbour-cities have held a pivotal role.

We can say today that the harbour-cities are the most layered urban structures

The development of permanent formes of habitat has determined inevitably stratifications, also of the functions and uses.

Since in the ancient times the historic towns have also been subject to radical interventions, they offer many elements which attest the vicissitudes and actions of the people who have resided in them in history:

- ◆ the richness of these areas is the result not only of the presence of a rich historic-architectural heritage
- ◆ their value resides just in their being depositaries of testimonies, traces of the people who have lived in them

The difficulty to conjugate the economic crisis, welfare and sustainability research leads us:

- ◆ **to consider** the things in their essence,
- ◆ **to de-structure** artifices which in time we have realized,
- ◆ **to wish** a simplification of our systems.

To engage ourselves in the present wisely means to be conscious of our past, also if we are looking to the future, and not reductively to pride ourselves to have a huge heritage of “traces”, of which perhaps we are not able to understand roles and meanings

It means:

to favor the “traceability” of the processes that research the essence



We have to try to conjugate the instance of the contemporary living with what in a way we feel belongs to us



We need to know and understand what we have from the past, to connect it to the present to better shape the future in which we could recognize ourselves

Among the many concepts expressed in ***The Valletta Principles for the Safeguarding and Management of Historic Cities, Towns and Urban Areas*** (adopted by the 17th ICOMOS General Assembly on 28 November 2011) it is possible to take remarks as start points for some reflections in this way



“1.a ... Historic towns and urban areas are spatial structures that express the evolution of a society and of its cultural identity”

“...Historic towns and urban areas are living evidence of the past that formed them... ”

“... as living organisms, are subject to continual change”

“... Change, when appropriately managed, can be an opportunity to improve the quality of historic towns and urban areas on the basis of their historical characteristics...”

“2.b The basis of appropriate architectural interventions in spatial, visual, intangible and functional terms should be respect for historical values, patterns and layers...”

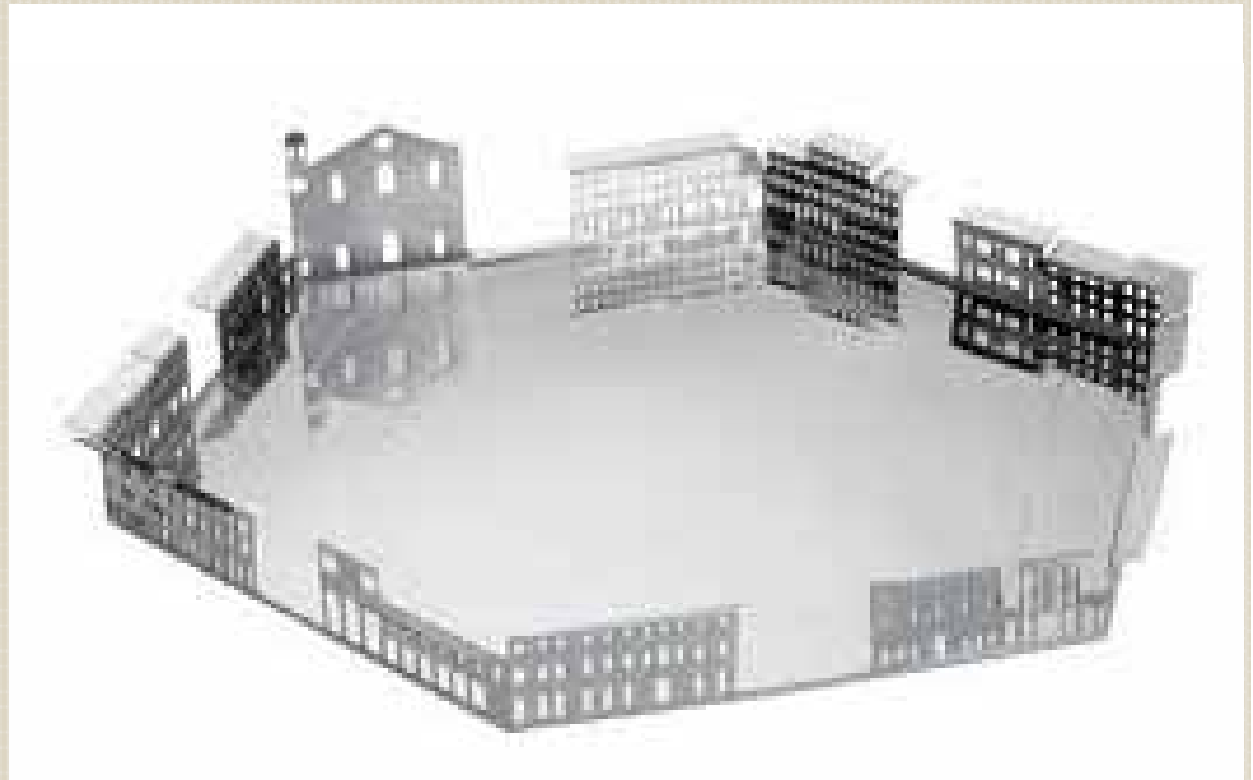
The main difference between a historic center and an archaeological area is that the historic center is to be a living urban area.

This means that it is in continuous transformation and inevitably rich in multilayered elements.

The problem is:

How to handle what has come from the past?

- ◆ The images, ideas and formulas, which come to us from the past, aren't about looking and conserving in a static way, but in a dynamic process of transmission which gives space to a re-interpretation and transformation.
- ◆ They must refer us to some re-reading and reconsideration mechanisms in a prospect of permanencies, there must be a strong sense of continuity.
- ◆ The knowledge of the past is functional to our insuppressible need for memory, identity and future.



The issue of the intervention in the historic areas could find a solution helping the contexts to conjugate what become necessary to guarantee qualified living systems to the local communities, and perhaps also to the city users in general

The problem of many historic areas should not be faced by combining the contexts according to their analogies, but by allowing contexts to realize the necessary interventions to guarantee qualified living systems to the inhabitants.

That means:

**to define projects able to conveying “memory”,
trying to realize a sort of “traceability”**

The concept of “**memory**” has a sense of continuity inside and could offer an interesting reading-key for safeguarding interventions on the historic heritage, produced by the living shapes and ways of who were before us:

- ◆ it has its roots in the reality, in the space, in the gesture, in the image, in an object,
- ◆ it could find a positive expression in the definition of “**memory places**” as physical spaces, formed by material and symbolical elements, where a community recognizes itself and its history, strengthening its collective memory and placing consequently the basis for the construction of **its own identity**.

To create “memory places”, according to the demands suggested by contemporary life, seems to us an answer in the attempt of re-building relations and identities finalized to connect the present to the past and to fight the uprooting generated by the unceasing process of global homologation

The intervention projects would consider actions able to exalt the peculiarity of the historic heritage and, consequently, the identities.



Indeed we should help to suggest means, values and latent orders, to communicate and lead us to discover "hidden" means, making them "known".

In the last decades some big cities of the Mediterranean area have to face up to the challenges of traffic congestion and the smog it produces.

The question was if subway systems could be considered like a good answer.

**The issue has never been as debated as in the
Mediterranean areas**

The need to realize a system of subterranean routes is met with the question of the inevitable uncovering sent out of new and relevant archaeological findings.

To realize a subway system in a multilayered urban area isn't easy and there are many problems in the historic cities

**How can we to balance scientific-ethical needs with
functional and social demands?**

As many projects and interventions in Naples, Rome, Athens, etc. have showed, indeed the issue doesn't concern only a traffic problem, but involves planners, government, constructions companies, archaeologists, commuters and communities and so on.

The reports are rich in debates about problems on:

- ◆the **delay** of the realization times in relation to the recovery of unexpected archaeological findings;

- ◆the **inadequacy** of the allocated money, also because the findings have caused the revision of the projects;

- ◆the **difficulty** to have new economic resources at their disposal.

- ◆...

Nevertheless many times, already during the definition of the primitive projects, in a certain way specialists had considered the possible presence of layers and sometimes many projects were set aside to not suffer events like those

The problem could be thorny under different profiles:

- A. The scientific and ethical approach has to confront with social, economic and cultural instances.**
- B. If now in the international context some deep issues about collaboration among specialists or the actions targeted to the safeguarding/improvement of this heritage are posed clearly, a lot is entrusted to the sensibility of operators.**

Some solutions adopted in Europe could represent best practices and we could see a new metro as an opportunity to dig in areas that would otherwise be off limits and to recover "memory" for citizens

Considering only Italian cases, Rome and Naples are enough to allow us to note the positivity.

Line C of the Rome subway could represent an emblematic example of positive and negative elements.

The joint work which they try to realize has seen involved at the same time the Municipality executives and technicians, the Superintendence for the Archaeological Heritage and the Superintendence for the Architectonic Heritage and Landscape.

An articulate program of the activities has been defined, concerning the investigations and interventions to realize in relation to the archaeological and monumental heritage.





Campaigns of archaeological preventive investigations have allowed them to make excavations in the open air and core borings. Among the just decided interventions there is a multiservice Centrum of 3.000 m² (Museo dei Fori), under Fori Imperiali Street and connected to the present Colosseo Station of the line B, where the findings could be allocated.

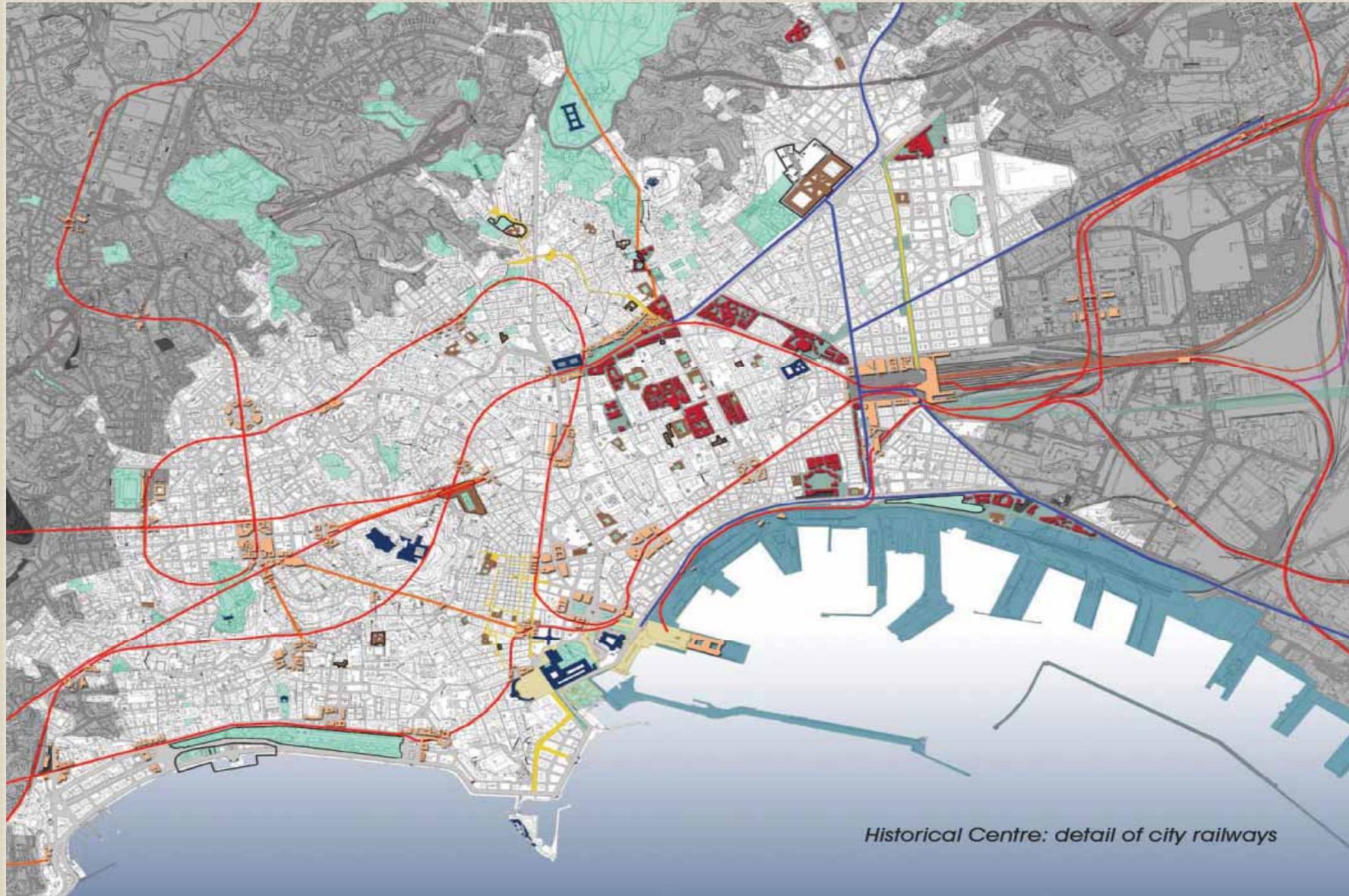
I believe it is interesting to note as circumstances like these became a very important opportunity not only for the archaeologists, but also to define a plan for the realization of an executive project



of archaeological excavation in urban ambit.

Roberto Cecchi has observed that a project like this is an instrument of integrated knowledge which allows us to do reliable forecasts about the archaeological layers in the building site and to plan times and costs. In this way the archaeological project becomes an integrant part of the engineering and architectural operations, and I would also like to add urban, social and cultural.

In **Naples** the works for line 1 of the subway have lead to very interesting discoveries during the building of many subway stations



The works have led to very interesting discoveries during the building of the “via Toledo”, “Piazza Municipio” and “Duomo” stations. Some archaeological findings are today exhibited in the “Neapolis” Station inaugurated in the 2005.





They have recovered Greek ships (Municipio Station), which testify the real and discussed location of the old harbour





Over all, they have recovered Greek walls, other ancient elements and





a “villa” of the imperial period near the excavation of "Piazza Nicola Amore"

The excavations in this way are allowing us to acquire very interesting information about the extension of the Greek-Roman Naples in its Southern area.

These interventions are valuable and almost unique occasions for the archaeologists and scholars. Surely, their interest can't be considered terminated with the finding of elements or pieces of history.

I suppose it is evident that men of science and research, looking to enlarge the “knowledge”, trying also to favor the “memory”, establishing relationship and, in a certain way, contributing to enforcing identities.



Surely to work underground requires many difficulties, but perhaps **two considerations** could lead us to revise many positions

a. It is impossible to think about bringing everything into the open and subtract valuable spaces to the many kinds of necessary production activities:

- ◆ the management and maintenance costs of the archaeological areas exposed to the inclement weathers are greater;

- ◆ the protection and control of the areas on the surface is more expensive.

b. The recent accidents occurring in Pompei Scavi could be a painful example of the remarkable existent difficulties in relation to the archaeological heritage in the open air.

If ethical considerations induce archaeologists to refuse some digging conditions, worried about endangering and almost compromising the remains, many are outweighed by the positive aspects.

We must never forget that safeguarding means:

- ◆ **to enhance** and over all **to show** knowledge,
- ◆ **to allow us to understand** the features of the different contexts, the elements that consent us to recover continuity

The permanencies could be read as expression of identity values

I believe that:

Present and past have to recover their continuity

It is necessary to contrast the process that leads us to consider them in conflict

Archaeologists and city planners have to work together

Subway projects could be an opportunity for archaeologists and city planners to find a balance between efficiency of transportation in modern city, but also a way to recover roots and our “memory”.

To create opportunity of knowledge leads us to know how to adapt the demands and, over all, to allow fruitions.

I think is fundamental to get to harmonize the “found” (the *genius loci*, perhaps) with the “built”, or the imagined, designed and then realized dimension

First of all

The design has to give space to a moment of "hearing" and understanding of the place