ID 053
Archaeology and Architectural Design
New studies and projects for the Acropolis of Athens

Luisa FERRO
Politecnico di Milano, Department Architecture, Built Environment and Construction Engineering ABC, Milano, Italy
luisa.ferro@polimi.it

Abstract
The topic chosen concerns architectural design studies related to archaeology in the Acropolis of Athens. Rather than be an obstacle, archaeological remains provide an excellent opportunity for developing a coherent project design.

The aim is to restore depth of experience to the project linking it to the wealth of ancient artefacts, adopting them as material for study: the shape of a place is in itself a precision instrument and measure.

The Acropolis has been organized in a single line from the Pnyx hill to Mount Lycabettus, in which everything is linked by an extraordinary sequence of viewpoints, and where the architecture (of the past, present and future) has to be the protagonist of the mechanism.

The Architect D. Pikionis identified many “critical points” around the Acropolis; he only developed two of them and leaved the others unfinished.

Today some of these “critical points” could, in the light of more recent archaeological discoveries which involve unknown and archaic places of the Acropolis, become the basis for new reflections on building techniques and projects.

New constructions in such an archaeological area (worksite structures and services of excavation, exposition areas, infopoints, even the custodian’s lodging) they become part of the landscape and can’t be considered temporary buildings.

The new constructions to be introduced are for southern and the north slopes of the sacred hill of the Acropolis and inside the sacred enclosure.

Keywords: Archaeology&Architecture – Athens – Acropolis – Attico Museum

1. Architectural design and urban archaeology [1].
Rather than be an obstacle, archaeological remains provide an excellent opportunity for developing a coherent project design, especially in urban contexts. The project is conceived in its relation to stratification, in its search for hidden underlying forms; the shape of a place is in itself a precision instrument and measure.

The archaeological site of the Acropolis of Athens (with its slopes), object of a massive restoration and replacement for the three main monumental buildings (the Parthenon, the Propylaea with the Temple of Athena Nike and Erechtheion), today presents several problems and points unresolved.

First there are accessibility issues, adaptation and enhancement of new excavation areas, less known but very important for the knowledge of the ancient Forma Urbis: for example, the
area of the old Acropolis Museum, the area on the southern slopes of the Theatres of Dyonisos and Erode Atticus with the discovery of the oldest Stadium.

Among the more complex problems there is the access of the northern slopes for the handicapped and archaeologists (now a temporary rack) and the arrangement of internal routes that are unsafe and dangerous.

Secondly, it is urgent an appropriate solution for workspaces of the archaeologists and the buildings of the yard, now consisting of container and roofing improvised with jobs that are held by nearly one hundred years and will last much longer.

It is therefore to think not of temporary structures but definitive for the archaeological area, also providing services for tourists and the custodian's lodgers.

Finally, there is, especially in this area built partly overlapping, a kind of sediments deposited layers consisting of new archaeological finds and other hidden, forgotten characters of the architectural scene: the old Acropolis museum abandoned, fragments of megalithic walls Mycenaeac Acropolis, the fortified wall of Themistocles and Cimon, the ruins of the ancient hidden Pandion, votive temple of the eponymous hero.

The project areas presented here relate to the places of the Acropolis and its slopes belonging to the deeper layers of memory and often obscure, because next to the events of the mythical origins.

Through projects the archive of legendary memory is dig. Moreover the Muses sing the past starting from the beginning ex-Arches. So the past is much more than the antecedent of this, is the source of this. And the lifts in time does not for a moment abandon the contemporary.

2. The Myth. Acropolis before the Acropolis

Time stands still and the Acropolis, stripped of the chronological data, is wrapped in solitude revealing architectural spaces.

In ancient Greece the crossings, wells, springs were inhabited by goddesses, gods and daimones. Men had to know the spirit that comes from places, the imagination that is knotted in those areas and to know how to respond it. If you did not pay attention to figures that populated the place it ran great danger of being possessed.

The project evokes in a contemporary key the ancient feel within the urban landscape and the archaeological area where everything speaks to us: a curved road, a staircase, a point of view to the landscape.

And where the empty space is not a space to be filled, but the point in which the spirit of the place is revealed. Architectures, porches, stairways contain the cultural traits of their inhabitants and together, through the geometry and proportions, make explicit the imagination of those who built them, of those who have paths, expressing what the substrate of the places.

Unleashing the demons means knowing the spatial dimension of things and reinvent the places, revealing hidden traces adapting to contemporary culture devoted to fruition fast architectural space.

In the Greek myths many things were implicit and for us are lost. Yet reduced to stories, continue to appear to us in all variations, connected, as if we knew why are connected. But we do not know.

Even the architecture, the randomness of the surviving fragments. Ancient architecture its sensual, magical and illusionist essence is hid. We have taken only fragments and skeletons of architectures: measures, types, structures, but not the vitality of the shapes, colours and marbles that were alive and seductive.

Yet in that cloth to shreds, in those stories and in those ruins we can still wrap. And in the world, as in our imagination, that cloth continues to weave itself.

The Acropolis before the Acropolis, there rests the oldest secret. In the solitude of the early days, the divine events were held on an uninhabited scene. Here originates mythical story that makes the impossible plausible instead the possible not believable. Athena was the goddess who loved the Attica more than any other.

There were Apollo and Dionysus, sovereign of possession, that reigned along opposite sides of the sacred rock. Apollo is a double: not only are essential Apollo and Dionysus, but Apollo is itself a part harmony, beauty, serenity and other ecstasy, flash, prophecy.
Apollo lived in a dark cave to the north slopes of the Acropolis, because perfection, any kind of perfection always requires some concealment. Hiding with light, Greek peculiarities. Apollo hides with light. Dionysus is orgiastic collective experience, does not lead to rational knowledge, but brings in the world of the psyche. It is the weakness of human nature but also interpersonal relationship. The enclosure of the temple of Dionysus is a Theatre and is linked to the city through a winding road, the *Tripodon*. Dionysus is the god of awakening. The awakening of nature. His is the time of reproduction and initiation. He lived on the bright and warm side of the sacred slopes.

It is not easy, because as soon as you catch the myth expands. Here the variation is the origin. And in each of the stories that tell you reflect all the others, all we touch like flaps of the same cloth.

Then, at some point reaches a golden dust of figures. Here come the kings and heroes. They build architectures.

Erichthonios, random son of Hephaestus alone cosmic creator and of Gea. was adopted by Athena, more than a mother. Her first gesture towards the child was to girding the neck with a gold chain, which held two drops of blood of Medusa: one killed, the other healed.

Then the goddess deposed Erichthonios in a wicker basket and closed it. She handed the basket to the daughters of Cecrops, king of Athens (half man half snake) with order to never be opened for any reason. The three daughters of Cecrops were called Aglauros, Pandrosus, Herse. Two of them opened the basket and saw out a baby half snake. They knew that they had performed the act the more serious for the Greeks: open the arcane basket at the wrong time.

Terrified by the punishment that awaited them the Cecropides ran towards the deepest Acropolis rocks and threw themselves into the void. Pandrosus obeyed the goddess and she was erected a shrine on the Acropolis near the sanctuary of Athena Polias. Erichthonios was grown up by Athena in a fence in the Acropolis and became king of Athens. Instituted the Panathenaic festival and wanted to be buried in the compound where Athena reared him now lives a snake. The spirit of the city was a snake who lives in the Erectaion.

Every year ,near the shrine of Pandrosus, two baby-girls between seven and eleven were chosen by the king among the oldest families of Athens. They had as a fence where to play. They were called Arrefore (bearers of unspeakable things or bearers of dew). One night, the priestess of Athena appeare to girls, “they carry on their heads what the priestess of Athena gives them to take, and what she gives not know what gives and the girls who bring don’t know what are bringing”. Then the two girls advance into an underground passage, down the steep north side of the Acropolis. Reached the bottom of the tunnel they lay what they bring and take another thing, that bring back. After the ceremony the baby-girls were brought home. This means making a mystery.
From hand to hand is transmitted the chain of Erichthonios, augusta relic of the ruling house of Athens. When Erechtheus gave it to Creusa, his daughter surrounded it on her wrist like a bracelet. On his wrists tightened the grip of Apollo who dragged her into the cave of Pan, a day that Creusa caught the crocuses alone deep in thought on the northern slopes of the Acropolis. It was her more violent and faster love.

3. Mouseion
The aim of the projects would be to recreate a hidden compositional unity, following open-air museum itineraries, restore significance to single finds severed, until now, from an earlier and more complex context to which they once belonged. Further, the chosen places constitute key points of the urban plan worked out on a metropolitan multi-disciplinary museum-school itinerary able to express the structural features of Attica, called Attic Museum.

It will be recalled that the cult of the Muses in the Pythagorean tradition, in Plato and in Aristotle assumed a particular character: their schools in Athens were to some extent organised as associations devoted to that particular cult. A project for a museum implies a number of related questions: first of all the idea to include, within the assigned space, potentially important matters such as collecting, cataloguing, placement, decisions on new destinations for items of information and knowledge.

Another question concerns coincidence, continuity and differentiation among institution, function and localisation. For that matter the origin of coexistence of different disciplines is inherent in the very etymon of mouseion (Temple of the Muses), as is the passage between the inside and outside of a museum where the culture and typology of architecture and of the settlement itself are necessarily and more specifically involved. The metropolitan museum
extends in the built environment and outwards to its surroundings where an epical viewpoint of the city may be obtained. The Museum must be a seat of learning and, in the case of Athens as well as for all these reasons, the great museum as designed in the project (the name chosen is the Attic Museum) stands where new roadways weave over traces of ancient paths. Here are the excavations, the ruins, the archaeological finds but also the trial pieces in gypsum with all they have generated. Finally, there are fragments of townscape, theories of art and ideas for architecture, modern contemporary projects.

At this point further attention may be given to a process that views the conception of the project in relation to archaeological stratification, to other layers of the present day, revealing concrete design possibilities surviving in forgotten fragments, in neglected openings, bearing in mind that absolutely no conflict can exist between the works of yesterday and of today. The great works of the past move us when new ones appear increasing the value of the antique, this because the best are those which brighten things shedding a new light. This idea has its complexities in that one finds oneself “neck and neck” with the work itself, discovering its innermost secrets, challenging it with its own weapons. The Acropolis was built, taken down and rebuilt for centuries. But reutilization damages ancient objects while at the same time ensuring their preservation. There is no such thing as “respect” for antiquities in the abstract, but there are various ways of living together with antiquity.

On the other hand the restoration of the Acropolis is the final stage of a battle fostered by neoclassical architects, by Leo von Klenze. The studies and excavations were aimed at destroying everything that was not classical Greek; not only the Turkish mosque and vestiges but even the tower of the Acciaiuoli (visible in the earliest photographs), the Venetian remains in the Propylaea. The Acropolis, a symbol that today seems eternal, was built at different stages over a long period of time, parts of it reutilized, others removed from what was the ancient castle of Satines. No less true than the Periclean image is that of the Parthenon crowded with Madonnas and saints and fought over by Greek and Latin priests, or that with the minaret, and even that of Schinkel (though never realized) who wanted it as a castle for the new Bavarian dynasty. Each of these roles for the Acropolis represents an age, an idea, a project.

4. Following Pikionis lesson

Some recent and on-going experiences carried out in prominent archaeological places of Athens following a huge and unfinished work of the architect Dimitris Pikionis (1887-1968). Pikionis’ work considers the Acropolis as organized in a single line from the Pnyx hill to Mount Lycabettus, in which everything is linked by an extraordinary sequence of viewpoints, and where the architecture has to be the protagonist of the mechanism. Pikionis identifies many “critical points” around the Acropolis; they direct visual perception towards different perspective sequences. Nevertheless, he only develops two of them in greater detail: at the rest area of St. Dimitris Loumbardiaris and at the viewing terrace on the Filopappou Hill. He leaves the others unfinished.

Some of these “critical points” could, in the light of more recent archaeological discoveries [2], become the basis for new reflections and new projects. The same can be said of his considerations regarding new constructions in archaeological areas: today, more than ever, it is no longer possible to think about worksite structures and buildings at the service of excavation areas as temporary works of architecture, because that is just not the case. They also become part of the landscape, so they should be built with this in mind.

While the work written in 1928 is a defense of the Greek landscape, the famous text Sentimental Topography is a poetic statement, developing a procedure that meets with implementation in the project around the Acropolis. The paths of Pikionis rest on ancient ruins, and construct a rhythmical sequence of images, fragments of a film that involves the monuments and the landscape, a film whose protagonist is the Acropolis. Critical points, rhythm, pace, steps, lingering are determined by the composition, evoking the progress of the procession of the ancient Panathenaic festivals, bringing out what Pikionis called “the spirit of the place”, its innermost essence.
The visitor follows this outline, first walking, then stopping to admire the surroundings. The project has the task of triggering controlled perception of the landscape (theory of harmonic trails). This ancient theory places the viewer at the centre of a harmonious track and determines the arrangement of elements in space. The pertinent places of the trail are those “critical points” of the route the visitor will follow (unconsciously) to approach the monuments.
5. The projects

Southern slopes of the hill of the Acropolis.
The Steps for access to the Odeon of Herodes Atticus form the ascent rises along the border Fig. 2wall (like a sort of harbinger) of a possible future excavation area, known as that of the Stadium of Eumenes (a very recent and important hypothesis of the archaeologists).
The terrace envisioned by Pikionis along the steps reveals the vantage point (now completely blocked by plants) for viewing the Temple of Asclepius (and its mythical spring), looking towards the Theatre of Dionysus. The terrace overlooks the new excavation area, taking on a new role in the reorganization of the new archaeological zone.
The project, through the construction of a Gallery (new Centre for Research) and a new exhibition space and staging (House Museum Proclus), has as its objective the development of a new access to the Theatre of Herodes Atticus and the new excavation area at the Stadium of Eumenes, through the staircase designed by Pikionis with terraces staging points and related visuals.
The new museum at the house called Proclus also builds a route alternative to the existing north-south pedestrian street that connects Dionisiou Aeropagitou and southern parts of the ancient city.
In the area of the Theatre of Dionysus the project aims to define new access to the current archaeological park. A new gallery lapidarium for ancient remains underline the enhancement of the ancient entrance to the enclosure of the Theatre of Dionysus across the street called the tripods (in ancient important part of urban life). Besides the project redraw the perimeter of the excavation of the Odeion of Pericles and dispose new services and exposition spaces.

Northern slopes of the hill of the Acropolis.
In place of a lack for access of disabled people and archaeologists, the project will construct a new access to the Acropolis from the north slopes near the Erechtheion and redefine the terraces of the building's original holy place of the original myth of Cecrops.
An unusual itinerary through the body of the ancient city connects the Plaka (the Turkish city), also through perspective shots, and the Erechtheion. The project takes shape and geometry from the lion Gate near the medieval church of St. Nikolaos at the foot of the north slopes of the Acropolis.
The walk is marked by a sequence of curbs and ramps that gradually climb towards the Peripatos (the ancient road that encircle the Acropolis from the bottom and the sacred rocks). Along this road shrines of the origins are in the caves (the Temples of Apollo, Pan, Afrodite and Eros), the Klepsidra (stage of the Panathenaic festival procession) with the Mycenaean Source, that becomes practicable with a new terrace opening of the most important caves. From there a rack drive on top of the rock near the Erechtheion. Here is evoked the myth and morphology of the oldest Acropolis. The sacred space of the olive, the Pandroseion basement, the Arrefores archaioi Naos. So the project through new terraces and new fences on the grounds of the old ones become a place of memory and of the origins of the foundation of Athens.

The east area of the Acropolis.
The project proposes the demolition of the Old Acropolis Museum, today abandoned following the opening of the New Acropolis Museum designed by Bernard Tschumi down of the hill inside the lower ancient town.
Here the remains of the Acropolis Mycenaean, Archaic and Classical are concealed.
Two large objects that evoke fragments of archaic and ancient parts of buildings become new workspaces for archaeologists. Besides an exhibition area extends in a downward spiral square, which follows the traces of the ancient Sanctuary of Pandion, the Eponym Hero of Athens. Down into deep the Aglauro cave.
Fig. 4 Project for the area of Erode Atticus Theatre and of Dynoisos enclosure - LuisaFerro®
Fig. 6 Project for the access to the Acropolis from the north slopes - Luisa Ferro®
Captions

1. This research project (title *Archaeology and Architectural design*) is part of a long-standing tradition of study and design in which theory and practice are productively combined. Research Team group for the case study of the Acropolis of Athens: proff. A. Torricelli, L. Ferro (coordinators of the projects), Department ABC, Politecnico di Milano. Team group project: architects V. Bertini, E. Ciapparelli, M. Montanari and architects G. Cappellini, D. Galli, M. Guffanti, G. Cella, F. Fiorentino, S. Mullisi, A. Tettamanti, F. Ungaro, E. Volontè, L. Carrabs, E. Gerosa. The production and scientific research is closely connected to teaching knowledge and methodology in its intentions, also finding time processing in the Scuola di Architettura Civile del Politecnico di Milano; in practice activities of ABC and in the Ph.D research (Milano, Venezia). Subjects and case studies (Atene, Campi flegrei, Milano, Mantua, Villa Adriana Tivoli, Alessandria Egypt, Alexandria in Aria and Kabul Afghanistan) have been introduced in several international seminars, workshops and publications.

2. Regarding the new archaeological discoveries, I would like to thank the architect M. Lefantzis and O. Voyatzolgou, 1st Ephorate of Prehistoric and Classical Antiquities of Athens.