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Thoughts about conservation and enhancement of archaeological heritage in France

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Abstract

French archaeological heritage of the classic age has been subjected, over the centuries, to phenomena that have caused either its abandonment or the continuation of its use, its transformation or the loss of its integrity. In particular, the sites for entertainment such as theatres, amphitheatres, circuses, stadiums and *hippodromes* are now often in ruins (as a result of either destructive events or the interruption of their use) after knowing seasons of transformation, conversion to new uses, repairing of damage of various kinds, restoration, adaptation to new stylistic canons: processes that have ensured the survival of these buildings through a continuous integration in urban activities. Today, these goods, mostly located in relevant urban contexts, are part of a landscape whose transformations guided by illusions aimed to make them attractive for tourists, are creating sharp separations between these monuments and the context in which they are. Based on these premises, the paper presents the results of a research aimed the preservation of this heritage, suggesting strategies for its valorization that, in accordance with the requirements of the contemporary world, propose a project for tourist fruition which must be compatible with such goods that are architectural and parts of a landscape. In particular, the paper analyzes some interventions of enhancement on the archaeological heritage in comparison with those cases in which development strategies have proved compatible effects with the demands of conservation.

Keywords: conservation, enhancement, archaeological heritage, theatre, amphitheatre

Memory values and current French archaeological heritage

In France, the interest in archaeological remains dates back to the early years after the Revolution. At the time, within the first activities for the protection of monuments considered

as national treasures, Vitet, Merimee, Hugo and Viollet-le-Duc exalted the heritage's documentary value, studied its processes of transformation and took over the architectural consistency proposing, in some cases, restoration projects. In particular, the young Viollet-le-Duc, during his training years, drew few archaeological ruins and some proposals for intervention which are considered as interesting documents about their state of preservation: the aqueduct of Gard, the theatre of Orange, the amphitheatre of Narbonne, the main Roman buildings of Arles and Nimes.

This attention and the following measures of restoration and protection especially have ensured the survival of monuments such as evidence of a rich historical and architectural heritage. The above-mentioned scholars considered the Roman monuments with an original and revolutionary point of view: not only for their aesthetic value but also for their material consistency and their specific qualities, their successive layers, their relationship with the town and landscape. This idea resulted out of the Victor Hugo's letter, sent in 1883 to the President of the Municipal Council of the arena in defense of Lutèce in Paris: *"Il n'est pas possible que Paris, la ville de l'avenir, renonce à la preuve vivante qu'elle a été la ville du passé. Le passé amène l'avenir. Les arènes sont l'antique marque de la grande ville. Elles sont un monument unique. Le conseil municipal qui les détruirait se détruirait en quelque sorte lui-même. Conservez les arènes de Lutèce. Conservez-les à tout prix. Vous ferez une action utile, et, ce qui vaut mieux, vous donnerez un grand exemple"*¹.

With these words, Hugo emphasizes the importance of amphitheatre in Paris as a document that ideally connects the city of the future with the one of the past, giving to the monument a significant historical value, as an example of Gallo-roman architecture. According to the writer, in fact, its preservation would have been an example for future actions of protection of the archaeological heritage of France. The arena in Paris became, therefore, the symbol of the past in

the contemporary city, assuming a focal role in the social neighbourhood and the cultural activities.

The “obligatory” protection of the archaeological heritage also characterizes the choices made in previous years when Mèrimè and his staff visiting Nîmes and Arles. For those cities, regardless of the work already undertaken for the liberation of the amphitheatres in both cities, he expressed interest to all the ruins, even the smallest ones, which can be related with a more complex and articulated classical ruins web. From these ideas, took place the first excavations and early restorations of the *Maison Carrée*, the temple of Diana at Nîmes and the *Castellum Aquae*, the *forum*, the *cryptoporticus*, the theatre, the city walls and the *Champs Elysées* in Arles².

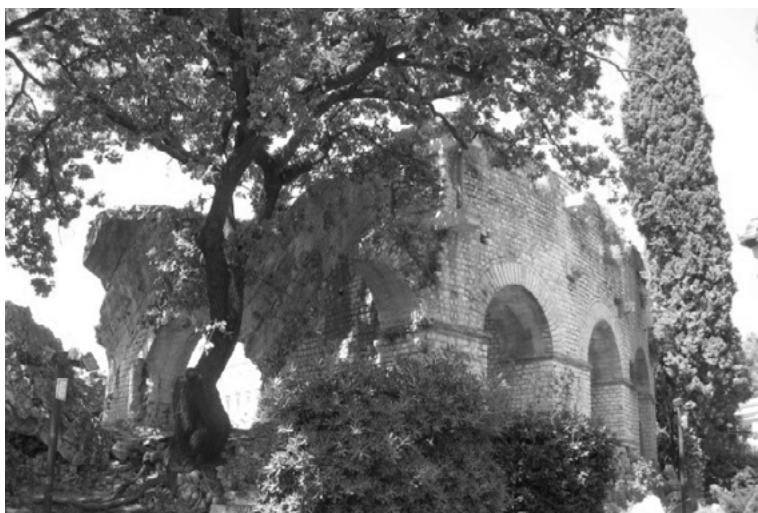
The will to place each fragment in a broader context, in fact, is not limited to the urban fabric but it includes the surrounding territory involving, in these specific cases, the infrastructure system such as aqueducts. In particular that case of Gard which, with its numerous branches, supplied the major hinterland cities and coast. A network of classical buildings then that lies ahead, in the early decades of the 19th century, as a base from which extended protection that would cover both major centres and the less important Gallo-roman urban realities.

Viollet-le-Duc drawings represent restorer attention to landscape and cultural heritage. In these paintings is possible to see how the architect, starting from surrounding contexts and ruins description, lingers later in a relation of ruins with respect to the urban fabric, and then describes accurately monument and its construction and decorative details. An interest, therefore, that suggests a love for an *ante litteram* modernity because the documentary value of the archaeological heritage is enhanced, thanks to its surroundings, and in some cases, thanks to what hides it. In this sense, the different architectural and urban transformation are perceived as added value³.

However, some drawings in which Viollet-le-Duc does not only show the real size but also “the hypothetical original monument condition”, give rise to the subsequent proposals for liberation and integration, which, during the 19th and 20th centuries, deprived the archaeological heritage of any character of authenticity. The categories most affected by these interventions, result of a misinterpretation of the early spirit of preservation of the archaeological heritage, are the triumphal arches and the city gates, the temple buildings, the theatres and amphitheatres. For examples: the arches of Orange, Saint Remy de Provence, Saintes; the city gate of Saint Andre in Autun, and the martial one in Reims; the *Maison Carrée* in Nîmes and the Temple of Augustus and Livia in Vienne; the theatres of Orange, Autun, Lyon, Arles and Vienne; the amphitheatres of Saintes, Bordeaux, Arles and Nîmes.

However, the enormity and declared importance of the French archaeological heritage of the Gallo-Roman period suggest a discussion limited to a specific geographic context and to a specific group of ruins. This, in the belief to simplify reflections on the protection, preservation and enhancement of the entire heritage of the classical era present in France, is limiting the research to a selected territory. The choice fell on those southern territories, bordering the Mediterranean Sea, corresponding to the historic region of the Roman Empire called *Gallia Narbonensis*. This territory, which extends from the Italian border to the Spanish one, still retain considerable traces of monuments of ancient urban infrastructure that are still an integral part of a landscape full of cultural ruins.

Entertainment buildings in particular (theatres, amphitheatres, *odeia*, circuses, stadiums and hippodromes), due to destructive events or simply because of the discontinuation of their use, have lead us to a state of ruin often through transformations (conversions to new uses, reparations of various kinds of damage, restoration or consolidation interventions,



The Lutèce Arena, Paris.
Cimiez archaeological site and part of the amphitheatre of Cemelenium.



Forum Julii theatre and Baeterrae amphitheatre.

adaptations to new stylistic standards) processes which on one hand delay the recognition of classical architecture characters, but on the other, have guaranteed the survival of these buildings through continuous integration.

Nowadays, these monuments, mostly located in natural or urban environments, are particularly an important part of the landscape. Their continuous changes, dictated by those illusions designed to make it attractive for tourists, are relentlessly creating a clear separation between these buildings and the landscape mosaic in which they are inserted. The context/architecture relationship, in fact, persevered for centuries while with the change of use entertainment buildings became a reference point for agricultural activities or points for the territory defence.

This function, although with subsequent transformations due to the well-known urban and regional organizations of the modern age, remained mostly unchanged, with the rediscovery of classical antiquity, until the archaeological excavations and subsequent restoration, undermined that existing *symbiosis* between human life and the ongoing regeneration of nature.

For example, the substantial “liberations” that have affected the amphitheatres of Nîmes and Arles during the 19th century, caused the consequent loss of historical-documentary data: the Middle Ages residential buildings, living accommodations arose in the stands. Moreover the system of small squares formed within the arenas; inputs fortified and equipped with towers, born in correspondence of the *vomitoria*; commercial and rural agglomerations that near the arches of the ancient Roman gave to the ancient cities a new life, in the centuries following the fall of the Roman Empire, defining the current plan metric patterns and urban settings. For another example, the “liberation” took place in the theatre of Orange showed, even up to the mid-19th century, the houses and shops of those who had used the building as a fortress during the wars of religion, during the Middle Ages.

The paper presents, therefore, the results of a research that aims to conserve this heritage suggesting enhancement strategies which (although in compliance with the requirements of the contemporary world) propose a project of compatible tourism with such buildings. This is achieved through strict observance of the dynamics of transformation that have always ensured a close relationship between building and environment. The research on this topic, therefore, proposes some thoughts about the consistency of archaeological heritage by analyzing the current state of conservation, suggesting advanced techniques of investigation and finally proposing new tools for development.

Ancient entertainment buildings can be found today in many cities of *Gallia Narbonensis* but also throughout the territory and can be, in our opinion, divided in four categories at least based on not only the historical events that have determined their conservation, but also on their use throughout history, and on the degree of interest that they have raised in the past, especially in the decades between the 20th and 21st centuries: in the first group are those structures found in locations or archaeological sites well known to critics; to the second group belong those buildings that can be formally recognized in urban areas boasting Roman or Greek foundations; in the third group are entertainment buildings still present (in urban areas but also other contexts) but only recognizable through traces or whose structure corresponds to current building or urban systems; the fourth group, finally, gathers those structures (mostly not adequately researched) which are located throughout the landscape: these are more or less preserved, frequently prove to be abandoned, and are almost never the object of valorisation strategies.

Furthermore, these buildings show subsequent stratifications that on one hand have guaranteed their survival, but on the other, by not showing the typical classical architectural characters, haven't raised enough interest even while

representing a potential cultural resource as much as the other categories. Up to now valorisation practices have in fact favoured structures located in traditionally acknowledged archaeological areas which have maintained, even though in ruins, an authentic “classical” character by not showing stratifications owing to reuse.

The same cultural influences have also too often suggested restorations and operations of “liberation” from stratifications on theatres and amphitheatres (both in archaeological sites and in urban contexts of roman foundation) in order to recover the original image of the monument, thus endorsing the loss of valuable layers of history which had been collected on these structures. On the other hand, those complex elements resulting from successive stratifications haven’t yet been through a recognition process, mostly because of the lack of understanding for these same centuries-old processes. Considering then the growing interest for cultural heritage conservation in Europe and in extra European countries, and the new initiatives in the field of archaeological heritage conservation, there follows a need for improved instruments for its study and valorisation. This includes, after the identification of the structures inside urban aggregates and the analysis of their transformation processes, the development of instruments for the interpretation of these classical testimonies in the landscape, and the creation of befitting promotion strategies.

Consistency and state of preservation of the Gallo-Roman entertainment buildings

The past studies⁴ researching the French archaeological heritage are certainly useful as a starting point to define correct conservation strategies and enhancement programs. Plus, precisely because of the high reputation of these monuments, they appear as less vulnerable ones, in fact, these buildings

are often protected by national and international committees, such as UNESCO.

However, it is necessary to include, within those programs, a safety measure that should also be extended to those ancient entertainment buildings lesser-known. Especially for them, in fact, when it was done, the researchers used to apply knowledge tools related to traditional detection systems and graphic rendering ill-suited to highlight those aspects that most easily make this vast and interesting heritage understandable. Moreover, in almost every case, among those investigated, it was found a particular interest in urban or landscape in which the facilities are located, but often the program strategies for tourism led to the devastation of the landscape as well as the isolation of the monument and its consequent desertification. In fact, the study of the ancient entertainment buildings requires a very complex knowledge process from the origins of the monument shall consider all stages of the history including the most recent ones.

So, firstly it is necessary to identify, through topographic maps, all the known buildings within the urban context, including also those which show later stratifications. It is necessary to verify the state of the legislation and the existence of conservation policies extending to the archaeological structures, their context and especially to their stratifications. The existing graphic documentation must also be verified and, if inadequate, integrated with new surveys carried out with current systems and technologies.

The identification of classical permanence in historical cities is also essential, together with the study of their later uses and integration with political, economic, social dynamics. A historical register of buildings must be compiled identifying the transformations owing to functional adaptations, and exposing the more recent incongruous elements. There follows, unavoidably, the study of architectural elements and technological solutions pertaining to later additions, and



Traces of the Roman theatre of Massilia ruins.
Colonia Julia Viennensis: Roman theatre.

verification of their efficiency. Furthermore, for those theatres and amphitheatres which are still in use, an analysis of current functions and urban context is essential and must focus on the compatibility between conservation of the structures, landscape preservation, and fruition.

Another determining factor is the creation of thematic tables related to the state of conservation of the structures and, in order to facilitate their study, the identification and cataloguing of possible finds kept in museums and ascribable to these urban systems and architectures. Finally, for the development of correct conservation policy, it is necessary to consider the drafting of a Charter with both methodological guidelines (in order to define a reference point of typologies, requirements and priorities for analysis procedures), and conservation and valorisation procedures. The Charter will contain recommendations on conservation – including restoration, consolidation and maintenance projects – but also programmes for urban and territorial redevelopment and proposals for compatible reuse.

This document, with reference to the indications contained in the more recent national and international Charters on archaeological and urban heritage restoration (in particular the international Siracusa Charter for the *conservation, fruition and management of the ancient theatrical architectures* of 2004), will focus on different specific questions, as for example the recognition of the cultural value of these structures, operating procedures on materials and architectural elements, permanence of formal and functional characters, relationships with the urban and territorial context, connections with the current socio-economic realities.

Following the division suggested in the previous paragraph, the study will analyze for first the theatre and recreational facilities found in archaeological areas, well-defined and known to the experts, starting geographically from the eastern border of *Gallia Narbonensis*. The paper will describe the

state of preservation and architectural consistency, referring to the next paragraph any proposals for enhancement and management.

Firstly substantial traces remain of the amphitheatre of *Cemelenum*, within the archaeological area of Cimiez, in the town of Nice, though, after the disposal, in the Middle Ages, it was partially destroyed by the construction of a road. However, it is precisely the interventions of urban enlargement on the hilly area of the city of Nice, in the late 19th and 20th century, that stress a new interest in the structure through the first systematic archaeological excavations and the first restoration. These focus on a portion of the outer north-east with the restoration of some parts dismembered and reconstruction of several arches. These measures have not altered the authenticity of the monument that still looks like an interesting ruin that characterizes the entire archaeological area.

The additional archaeological excavations, dated on the threshold of the third millennium (2007-2009), have added helpful information to the monument comprehension while strengthening interventions and maintenance have affected the amphitheatre since 2008. Such actions have ensured a favourable conservation status, although it is found the need to date tools both monitoring of development that may affect the entire archaeological area. But the largest concentration of entertainment buildings can be identified within the existing urban context of what were the most important Roman cities of *Gallia Narbonensis*.

Forum Julii, now Frejus, has both a theatre and an amphitheatre, studied since the early years of the 20th century. In particular, the theatre is easily recognizable thanks to the presence of the substructure of massive walls that once supported the *cavea* and the stage building is perceptible through the lower parts of the proscenium. Nevertheless, the size of the ruin is strongly affected by the presence of intrusive structures

deemed necessary for use as a theatre for cultural events and performances of various kinds. These structures insist on the archaeological sediments and prevent the perception of the ruins in respect of which there is not a special interest aiming at improving the state of conservation. The only action concerned to the monitoring and maintenance of the structure, are carried out rarely only for specific events and are closely linked to the latter.

In addition, the constant presence (almost throughout the year) of temporary structures invades the entire area, which, on the contrary, would have rich cultural potential. It is, in fact, inserted in an urban environment with buildings of architectural quality, it is rich in typical Mediterranean vegetation and it is walled by structures minimally that prevent man-made invasive actions and damages.

It seems more problematic the question related to the amphitheatre whose history is linked to age-old collapses and looting, most recent damage caused by natural events (Malpasset-Reyran flooding dated 1959) and recent work of “restoration”. These actions have irreparably destroyed the ruins trapping it in heavy reinforced concrete structures. The concrete structure spanning and invading the entire building has been designed to allow new functions such as shows and bullfights and affects the outer perimeter, the ambulatory, the stands and the arena.

Inaugurated in June 2012, the “new” amphitheatre has, ironically, a bad state of conservation that mostly affects the few authentic structures still visible. These are attacked by weeds and show, in several places, signs of structural failure caused, of course, to the concrete structures that rely heavily on the ancient ruins. The amphitheatre of Frejus no longer presents today any historical value or antiquity, accounting rather only an example of myopia in the management of the French archaeological heritage.

The management of the amphitheatre of *Nemausus*, better known as the Arena of Nîmes seems unattractive too. The touristic reasons and the needs related to various events have now the upper hand on the value of authenticity that the building had preserved for centuries. In this case, we find that the choices aimed at the preservation and enhancement have not always responded to the international directions especially for what concerns the sustainability between new function and ancient monument: the latter, in order to satisfy the pressing touristic demands, allow new functional adaptation interventions hardly compatible.

For example, the structures (present almost all year) covering the arena's lower part to allow many viewers to attend bullfights: they block the view of the steps (both the original and the ones result to the 19th-century restoration); of the annular corridors; of the separation barriers between the stands and the arena and of the original functional elements of the latter.

But the damage is not only aesthetic and formal as the need to accommodate, during these events, a large number of viewers has led not only the safety of the ancient structures but the complete replacement of those items that would be able to survive only if it was respected a less consistent load of users. To all this, it must be added the creation (between the arches of the ambulatory outside the ground floor) of new functional spaces for the accommodation of spectators and visitors: ticket office for sightseeing, book shop, box office for events related to shows, toilets, information points.

Ultimately the amphitheatre of Nîmes is only felt from the outside, while the interior is now an "amusement park" where everything is placed in the foreground (bullfights, the fantastic tales of the fights between gladiators and wild beasts, gadgets, audio guides unnecessary for the purposes of historical knowledge of the archaeological heritage) except for the documentary value of the monument. Farther the building

along with the entire town is UNESCO, an organization should not only ensure the enhancement but especially the preservation of the values of uniqueness, authenticity and integrity.

A similar situation, although with less devastating results, can be found in the amphitheatre of *Arelate*, the current Arles. The questionable restorations (done several times) that have now almost entirely replaced the remaining original elements and not result of 19th-century additions are alongside to enhancement measures that disfigure and make it difficult to see the outer ring of the structure such as the great platform that collects information from a number of devices on the one hand, the functional elements, almost identical to those for consistency and number of Nîmes, on the other.

Even within the arena and stairways are hidden by the necessary facilities for the performance of the shows entertaining. Finally, it appears as chilling the inclusion of toilets (still under construction) between the arches of the lower ring: these new toilets in brick masonry area related to the ancient walls, hinder the readability and affect the value of antiquity; enhancing only a misunderstood and vulgar value in use or topical.

On the contrary, still in Arles, the conservation and renovation of the theatre are compatible and sustainable: these are constituted by lightweight structures, which are necessary for today's theatre but they do not invade or hide the structures of the original building. They fit in a but evoke distinguishably, admittedly in a modern key, the structural elements of theatre: they are the service spaces (constructed entirely of laminated wood) placed between the radial septa of the auditorium where they have lost the vaulted structures of coverage. The new architectural elements are detached from the original structures and follow the trend oblique to the ancient times of substructure.

Renovation of *Arausio* Theatre, the current Orange, also in Gallia Narbonensis, deserves attention as compatible with the old building. Here the necessary facilities for the manifestations performance are minimally invasive: they exploit modern coverage (which is essential in its sole function) which protects the original front stage, do not hide the original fragments of decoration; do not overlap the old architectural setting used indiscriminately as a scenic backdrop for any event. This decision shows respect for the original monument as it places at the same scenic backdrop a value that cannot be compared to any contemporary setting. In addition, maintenance and structural health monitoring are constant and the structure presents an excellent state of preservation. However it might regret, in this as in previous contexts of Nîmes and Arles, the loss of stratification occurred with the releases dating back to the 19th and 20th centuries.

The roman entertainment buildings of the ancient *Colonia Julia Viennensis*, current Vienne are fully in the middle of today's cultural city activities, although preserved in ruins. The theatre, for example, was discovered in 1909 and the restoration work has begun in 1922 and was completed in 1938, the works concerned mainly the area of the auditorium where they were rebuilt much of the bleachers. The theatre today presents a balance between conservation and upgrading work to ensure the performance of cultural activities within the building. Much like the Roman theatre in Lyon by type and especially for the restoration work carried out, it will keep track of the stage and the orchestra and almost the entire auditorium. In it, the temporary structures allow the execution of events without completely hide the original plan metric shape of the ancient theatre.

The same cannot be said referring to the odeon. It is in a state of abandonment although it is located in the neighbourhood of the theatre and may help to define, with the circus, a "system" of entertainment and recreational buildings of

ancient *Colonia Julia Viennensis*. The circus remains, in fact, are represented only by one of the elements that decorated the central spine, while the rest could be traced, in the urban fabric where it is clear the mark left from the classical building, like the one found in Arles.

The presence, only as urban trace, left by the two circuses just mentioned, is also manifest in the city of *Baeterrae*, current Beziers, where the amphitheatre is still an integral part of the fabric of the medieval city. The building, on which stands was built in the Middle Ages a neighbourhood and the church of St. James, is now recognizable paragraph in curvilinear facades of the houses and the radial shape of the land parcels. In addition, a series of excavations and interventions of consolidation of the ancient structures still evident today, allow to better perceive the shape and size of the original.

However, the authenticity of the monument (found only in a few other cases such as the amphitheatre of Tours and Paris) is guaranteed by the functions attributed to the arena today: a public garden where the ruins of stands, *vomitoria*, columns and other elements that became apparent during the excavations of recent decades.

Finally, it's important to mention those buildings less known by the scientific community need further studies and investigations or additional conservation actions. Among these, it seems important to mention the amphitheatre located today in the neighbourhood of Toulouse Purpan between the city of Blagnac and Toulouse. The first excavations were carried out between 1837 and 1899, while the first restoration dates back to the sixties of the twentieth century. Unfortunately, until 1983, the building (abandoned) becomes a city dump and the structures previously restored were irreparably compromised. Currently, it is easily identifiable in its floor plan, but the facilities need further routine maintenance and consolidation. However, it retains the charm of a ruin set in an urban setting.

Nowadays, no visible trace remains of the amphitheatre of *Narbo Martial*, the current Narbonne, although they were visible at least until the mid-19th century, the years in which Viollet -le-Duc detects the significant tracks along the road that leads to Narbonne Gruissan modelled on the ancient Via Domitia. Today the building remains in memory only the topography of the area and thanks to some buildings and urban projects that are modelled in part on the track. Similarly, for the roman buildings as the theatre of *Massilia*, the present Marseilles: discovered in the early decades of the twentieth century was partly destroyed and covered up until 2005, the year in which it began a campaign of excavations for the purpose of recovering the few tracks. Currently some steps and part of the orchestra can be seen in the courtyard of the Vieux Port. The theatre, the amphitheatre and the circus present at *Valentia*, the current Valence, whose historical and literary sources testify to the presence.

Enhancement tools: the approach to the systemic episodic

A last objective, in terms of valorisation and promotion, for the paper could be that of creating a series of guidelines (scientifically correct but accessible to everyone) to support the interpretation of this widespread heritage, with strategies that can be relevant on a national (for each single country) and international (for the whole Mediterranean basin) level. Particularly it would be useful to: plan themed itineraries for the fruition of archaeological remains; publish maps, historical data, virtual reconstructions of theatres and amphitheatres that can highlight the different transformations and an abacus of reemployed elements found in the structures or in the wider urban context; create interactive cartographies connecting the diverse fields of study and promoting the accessibility of data and information at different scales.

Thus, the use of technologically advanced instruments, combining ease of use with scientific precision, seems

unavoidable: a useful medium could be the GIS systems which, by mapping a remarkable quantity of data and proving to be easily consulted through the internet, would enable every kind of user to access historical and territorial information.

From this statement we understand how important it is to suggest a not-so-much as episodic but systemic approach regarding the inclusion of such goods within specific contexts of reference: among the different entertainment architectures, among the different urban realities, inside an area strongly influenced by infrastructures (roads, ports, water, etc.) to serve different individual monuments.

In fact, this approach, which was characterized, as seen above, the first studies on the archaeological heritage of *Gallia Narbonensis*, is based, first of all, on a series of spatial references through which the playful and entertainment buildings are born, have been used originally and during the period of their disposal and reuse focused on urban or residential use. The Roman road network represents the major point of reference, which connected along with the coasts of the Mediterranean and inland the urban centres, united by an osmotic system of military and commercial connections as well as socio-cultural exchanges. This road network, for example, linked the major cities to the minor realities and all were connected with the capital of the empire.

In this sense, the greatest role was delegated to the *Via Julia Augusta* (built from 13 BC) starting directly from the *Aurelia* one, joined, along the coast, the cities of *Cemenelum*, *Forum Julii*, *Aquae Sextiae* and *Arelate*. In it hooked the *Via Domitia*: built-in 118 BC connected the *Cisalpine Gaul* with the *Hispania Tarraconensis* across the entire province of Narbonne connecting *Arelate*, *Nemausus*, *Baeterrae*, *Narbo Martium*, the capital of the province. From *Arelate* departed, heading north, the *Via Agrippa* that after going through *Avenio* (Avignon), *Arausio*, *Valentia Julia*, *Julia Viennensis* *Cologne*, reached *Lugdunum* (Lyon). Finally, the *Via Aquitania*, built around 14

BC, starting from *Narbo Martium* through *Toulouse* reached *Burdigalia* (Bordeaux)⁵.

Even nowadays, the main playful and theatrical buildings insist along these roads and could be the starting point for a systemic enhancement that not prefers the most important and most well-known buildings only, but also the smallest one, poorly studied and currently less promoted by the tourism systems. In fact, the success of these buildings is also due to the capacity of the road network to transfer the population of the surrounding countryside in the big cities where they organized games and theatrical performances, as well as the same elements of communication, played a vital role when, during the final years of Roman Empire, especially the amphitheatre became a fortified collection point for the inhabitants of the rural districts.

Another infrastructural system that now deserves to be related to the preservation and enhancement of theatres and amphitheatres are port facilities: in particular, *Forum Julii*, whose playful buildings were built on the edge of the great commercial port, as well as in the case of *Narbo Martius* amphitheatre, built at the marina, or the theatre of *Massilia*: nowadays the few ruins are incorporated in the buildings along the old wharf. Finally, a fundamental role for the functioning of these buildings was covered by the network of aqueducts as shown by the water systems of Gard, Nîmes, Arles and Frejus.

A series of actions aimed at the enhancement and more integrated management of these archaeological sites could further consider the coexistence of several buildings (and not only the playful and entertainment one) in the same urban reality. If in Nîmes, the amphitheatre and the *Maison Carrée* are worth a visit, they could be put in relation with the traces of the urban fabric of the Roman city (in some places very evident, though little known) and other monuments such as the temple-nymph of Diana, the Roman tower (probably a

castellum aquae), the ruins of the fortifications, the city gate. Similarly in Arles, where the acts of exploitation may create two thematic itineraries.

The first could create a system of the Roman buildings still existing: such as the traces of the *forum* with the underground structures of the *cryptoporticus* (whose careful visit would let to understand the real extent of the area at the *cryptoporticus* delimiting the boundaries) and the *exedra* annexed to the forum and visible inside the Hôtel Lavan-Castellane, the Baths of Constantine, and the city walls and towers are still visible and partially embedded in the urban present, the burial area of the Elysian Fields. The second should correlate with the amphitheatre near the theatre (generally excluded from sightseeing), emphasizing formal characteristics and similar decorative, but especially the common fate tied to abandonment, reuse as medieval fortresses, the rediscovery and restoration eight - twentieth century.

Most interesting would be to relate these buildings to the circus, whose ruins are barely perceptible. However, traces of it remain in the south-western urban fabric on the banks of the Rhone. Recent studies and excavations carried out between 1974 and 1989 showed some portions of the substructures and a good part of the arena also in those years it was finally determined that the obelisk at the centre of Place de la Republic, originally decorated the plug of the Roman circus. The simultaneous presence of three entertainment buildings may also be seen in Vienne, where, however, only the theatre is advertised and is subject to constant maintenance works. It is in contrast to the nearby *odeon* which is little known and looks abandoned, virtually unknown, finally, the circus which is apparently only the obelisk that decorated the monument. However, further excavations may trace the structures embedded in the urban fabric.

Even in this case, a systematic approach could be related the playful and theatrical buildings with the other monuments

of the Gallo-Roman town (Temple of Augustus and Livia, the Sanctuary Pipet, the sanctuary of Cybele, the remains of the city walls) and with the extensive archaeological site of Saint-Romain-en-Gal which contains some ancient Vienne residential and commercial districts. Interesting would ideally reconstruct the monuments and the city of *Valentia* based on available literary and documentary sources: from them, we learn that the Roman city had a theatre, an amphitheatre, a circus, an *odeon* in addition to a large forum and a basilica.

More attention deserves the amphitheatre of Toulouse, while in-depth studies and excavations would put out the ruins of the amphitheatres of Narbonne and Orange. The latter, in particular, might merit the same attention given to the theatre and the arc de triumphed in honour of Tiberius if only actions for the protection and conservation (such as to prevent the complete cancellation as archaeological and historical evidence) would be encouraged. It, situated near to the edge of town (across the street from Caderousse) occurs below a large car park and it has neither studies nor tourist signs, although the place names (avenue des Arenes) are mindful of the existence and location.

Finally, it needs to be put in a direct relationship (network) as it is reported in the literature or documentary sources relating to these playful and theatrical buildings, and especially that there are real connections and virtual museum institutions (local and national) that contain fragments belonging to these monuments.

Concerning the virtual reconstructions, they must always be guided by the severity of the disciplinary restoration (the so-called Virtual Restoration, which in the field of archaeology, it called the *Virtual Archaeology*), so it will not have to incur in the pre-eminence of a suggestive impact of a virtual reconstruction more than to their accuracy, or even in an excess of technicality at the expense of the content (the so-called “Cinecittà” and “Star Wars” syndromes). Is it clear how the digital recreations

have an inherent educational and informative role, which allows the reconstruction of monuments, cities and territories with the aim of communicating the ancient cultural heritage in an effective, fast and repeatable way, but also to be an instrument of verification and synthesis of analytical data (derived from the findings, or the analysis of erratic fragments of the architecture, for example).

Whenever the wishes to follow a correct preservation, it is, therefore, necessary that the aspect of advertising will parallel the stringency historical-scientific and, consequently, the tools to support the knowledge are also the basis for the enhancement: in this sense, applications and virtual restoration of the Virtual Archaeology is the right balance between fairness and potential disciplinary layman.

In conclusion, the old buildings for the show, thanks to their transformations and reconfigurations, following these strategies, can renew and strengthen the interrelationship between the land and the landscape, becoming accumulation points of the memory of centuries of historical events, economic processes and social structures of people and society as a whole.

Notes

1 The chapter *Values of memory and actuality of the French archaeological heritage* is written by Emanuele Romeo. *Consistency and state of preservation of the buildings show the Gallo-Roman* is written by Emanuele Morezzi. *Tools development: the approach episodic systemic approach* is written by Riccardo Rudiero.

R. RECALCATI, *Hugo, Boudelaire e Parigi*. In ANAGKH, n°33, marzo 2002, p. 38-48.

2 B. FRANÇOISE, *La passion des Monuments*. In AA.VV. *Mèrimée*. *Connaissance des Arts*, n° 200. Paris: Editions du Patrimoine, 2003, p. 18-43.

3 E. ROMEO, R. RUDIERO, *Ruins and urban context: analysis towards conservation and enhancement*. In XXIV International CIPA Symposium, Strasbourg, 1-6 September 2013, p. 531-535.

4 P. CIANCIO ROSSETTO, G. PISANI SARTORIO (edited by). *Teatri greci e romani*. Roma: Sud Grafica Editoriale, 1994, p. 328-502.

5 A. BERTRAND, F. MICHEL, *Via Domitia et autres voies terrestres de la Narbonnaise*. Toulouse: MSM, 2006, p.9-31.

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