

The Enhancement of the Archaeological Area of Città Murata in Kos (Greece): From the Italian Project to a New Intervention Proposal

Fernando Giannella
Polytechnic of Bari
Via Libertà 33, Barletta, Italy
fernando.giannella@libero.it

ABSTRACT

The study aims to analyze the compositional dynamics which settled a previous project for the archaeological area of Città Murata in Kos (Dodecanese, Greece). It was designed by a team of architects and archaeologists, which during the Italian occupation (1912-1948) and after a disastrous earthquake in 1933, reorganized the entire urban city planning, through the drafting of an innovative master plan. The project here examined, due to G.B. Ceas, operating in Dodecanese until 1936, can be considered as a tile of a larger mosaic that aimed to enhance the city centre archaeological features.

Moving from the analysis of the historical documents and the technical offices managers correspondence, is possible to follow step by step the entire design process, from the initial idea to its realization.

The documents make clear that the archaeological remains and the possibility of hypothetical further findings determined the guide lines of a project forced to develop contemporary with the archaeological searches. This in fieri approach, as well as similar cases in the whole Dodecanese, had as first consequence the project continuous adaptation to the new discoveries.

Besides, on these assumptions, and on the base of the researches of the Polytechnic of Bari team, directed by

Giorgio Rocco and Monica Livadiotti, it is possible now to present a new intervention proposal for the enhancing of

Città Murata, inspired to the old Italian project.

KEYWORDS: Kos, Dodecanese, Ceas, archaeological site, master plan.

When you look at the Town Plan of Kos town, in the Dodecanese, drawn up by the Italian architect Rodolfo Petracco in 1934 (Pitsinos 1996; Martinoli, Perotti 1999; Giglio 2009; Livadiotti, Rocco 2012), it's easy to see how important was the archaeological theme in drafting the guidelines of the urban development in those years. The museum-type presentation of works as well as urban planning and conservation works realized in the Italian age, in the field of architecture, in a city with 30% of the territory subject to planning restrictions, represent interesting answers to the problem, still unresolved, of the relationship between town and archaeological sites. It is a special case: in the aftermath of the disastrous earthquake of 1934, the team of Italian archaeologists and architects could develop a project, until then utopian, of "archaeological site". The numerous archaeological finds throughout the area and the small size of the town allowed the creation of an urban-scale intervention. This is an innovative project in which archaeology and architecture cooperate and work together constantly to redefine the relationship between towns and ruins. This is not a mere museum-type display of the past, but a careful consideration of design aimed at creating a spatial-temporal continuity between areas testifying different ages.

The aim of this paper is to analyse the Archaeological Park of Città Murata, a perfect example of its central role within the urban fabric and the great number of design solutions you can find within it. Among all the many urban areas subject to planning restrictions (Livadiotti, Rocco 2012), the Città Murata area, north of the town, near the harbour, takes on the extension of the intra moenia old quarter, destroyed by an earthquake in 1933, characterized by a typical medieval plant with small winding streets that cut a dense built-up area contained in a fairly regular perimeter, which follows the same pattern of the ancient paths in the broad sense of the word (Livadiotti).



Figure 1: Kos. Plan of the city with an indication of the archaeological area of Città Murata (graphics processing M Cice., N. Dambrosio, based on the archaeological plan of Kos of G. Rocco and M. Livadiotti).

Due to its central position and the number of different structures, an analysis of the project to manage the park of Città Murata can provide an invaluable tool for understanding the original dynamic projections of the original design for a modern reinterpretation. The study of the historic documents in local archives makes it possible to understand the ideas behind the final project. Starting from the idea

that ruins can not be considered as a witness of the past to be unconditionally displayed, the architect Giovan Battista Ceas exploited the exaltation of the greatness of the town of the past to prove the validity of the design choices made in the present time and stimulate the future social growth. The purpose was not to give a functional aspect to the archaeological remains, but to put them in the urban context in a fairly good way. The "discretion" of the project is one of the most interesting themes developed by the Italian designers to exploit the ancient Kos town. Excessive monument-type display of the archaeological areas, besides complicating the relationship between the town and archaeology, would have created a "showcase" effect of the ruin, thus taking it out of context. The basic idea was to create large urban parks intended as public spaces very permeable, where traces of the past would have been a stimulus to the future development.

The project of Città Murata can be described in three phases: removal of the ruins (after the earthquake of 1933) and archaeological field survey (Morricone 1950; Livadiotti, Rocco 1996);

archaeological excavation and designing of border areas; study of the structures and arrangement of the area. A letter of 24 September 1935 sent to the Commissario pel terremoto (Commissioner for earthquake) about the arrangement of excavations in Città Murata, by the Superintendent L. Morricone, makes arrangements, in accordance with the architect G.B. Ceas, to give a detailed description of the

works to be done for arranging the area, and to pay particular attention to those works to be done urgently and rapidly. From this report it is possible to infer the design approach: if the architectural language used is common in all interventions on the island, each project is characterized by different levels of design.

The project of the area Città Murata can be decomposed into three fundamental levels, each of which corresponds to a project on a local, tourist, historic and archaeological scale.

The term "local" means identifying the design phase aimed at guaranteeing an appropriate integration of the archaeological area in the urban context. The park is therefore conceived as a large urban area fenced but very permeable, characterized by numerous points of access (Giannella 2013). A

characteristic of this design level is a kind of nonchalant attitude to the old: the works envisaged aim to try to mend the urban fabric interrupted by the great emptiness of the archaeological area. This results in the design of internal pathways that are independent from the ruins, but allowing easy crossing of the area, connecting directly the three entrances located at main streets. The redesign of the surrounding buildings is a part of this stage: the whole perimeter undergoes a transformation; the suburbs surrounding building are being redrawn with the new Italian style (Giglio 2009). This allows Italian designers to study a new relationship between the archaeological area, the new government buildings already built by Florestano di Fausto in 1926, the Mosque of the Lodge on the picturesque square of the Plane Tree of Hippocrates, in a more general work for arranging border areas.

From a tourist point of view, it's an urban-scale design aimed at improving local transport networks in order to create town's tourist routes involving numerous archaeological sites. This means a careful

design of transport networks in the areas close to the town and a hierarchy of the access points. Città Murata, located in a privileged position between the Castello dei Cavalieri (Castle of the Knights), the town central square and the harbour, becomes "the access to the archaeological site". The project involved greater establishment of monuments of the East access area, towards the Eastern point of arrival, with the creation of a large reception area in front of it, from which specific paths branched off depending on the time and interests of users. The North and West boundaries were used as a pedestrian path, an almost forced choice given the nearness to the points of interest of that area and a functional solution useful for passing the level drops on the northern boundary; in the South, on the contrary, the high part of the medieval walls of chivalry still in situ defines the southern boundary of the excavation, thus obstructing the view from the outside; a vehicular access has therefore been envisaged in this case, which follows the same pattern of one of the ancient access routes and links up the main archaeological urban and extra-urban areas.

The third level is the archaeological and historic one: at this stage the scale changes, the design concerns the inside of the excavation area, governed exclusively by archaeological and historic dynamics.

The original plan envisaged an internal division of the Città Murata area in three theme areas: medieval

(East area), classic Hellenistic period (North) and Roman (southwest) identified after a careful study of

the surviving structures. The interventions envisaged for each area depended on the preservation of the monument, its location inside the area and dating. Even if at that time the project reports were not explicit, it is clear that the kind of conservative intervention depended on the date when the structure was made. Reconstruction and conservative interventions, anastylosis and soil regularizations can be indicated for chivalric, Roman and Hellenistic, respectively.

In a historic period in which the restoration of the old is at the centre of the European scientific debate, the Italian approach to Kos, at first sight safe and self-referential, reveals its limitations and raises doubts when interventions are compared. By comparing the date when the structures was made with the conservation methods used, it is possible to infer an inverse proportionality that relates the earliest times at which they were made with the less invasive conservative methods. The Città Murata area is the one that better represents this situation, because of the presence of structures from various eras. The South and East areas of the Park, characterized by medieval remains, is the most manipulated: from the remains of the boundary wall of chivalry, to be integrated just where it was found and rebuilt in the areas where it was damaged or destroyed, using antique marbles and architectural fragments of great value, such as capitals and well curbs, the whole topped with climbing plants to give the appearance of a ruin. Church squares were designed in the East area, where there were the medieval churches of our Lady and St. George's; they had to be adorned with all fragments of the Byzantine age, replaced at random to bring prestige to the churches (unrealized project); also the Church of San Giovanni, removed from the Hellenistic area and replaced in the Byzantine area (Livadiotti 1986-87) was put back here. In the Roman

area of the excavation, the interventions become less invasive: here, in addition to a restoration of the houses survived the earthquake, a part of colonnade (Livadiotti, Rocco, 1996) was subject to anastylosis.

From a philological point of view it's a correct intervention, but it made use of not yet tested technologies: the original blocks of the structure were in fact modified so as to contain an iron reinforcement and then they were reassembled by using concrete, a technique that is no longer useful and relevant because of its deterioration over time and also because it is not compatible with the trilitic arch structure (Rocco). And finally, the Hellenistic area: here the intervention was limited to a landscaping of

green with flowering plants on external walls and cypress trees that could suggest the spatiality of Hellenistic colonnades (unrealized).



Figure 2: Kos. Sketch map showing the interventions of accommodation in the area east of Città Murata (Archives of Kos Museum).

In general, the layout project of Città Murata, contextualized in its historic period, provides an interesting approach to the subject of urban archaeology and this paper offers some guidelines for its completion. Since this is a multiple-level design, only the completion of the work can link and enhance all the specific aspects. Currently the tourist design is at a standstill, the area lacks of adequate historic and archaeological internal routes. In the light of this, an intervention east of the excavation, i.e. near one of the three entrances to the area, is suggested. The proposal aims at a diversification of the access point, redesigning the front area where there are three medieval churches.

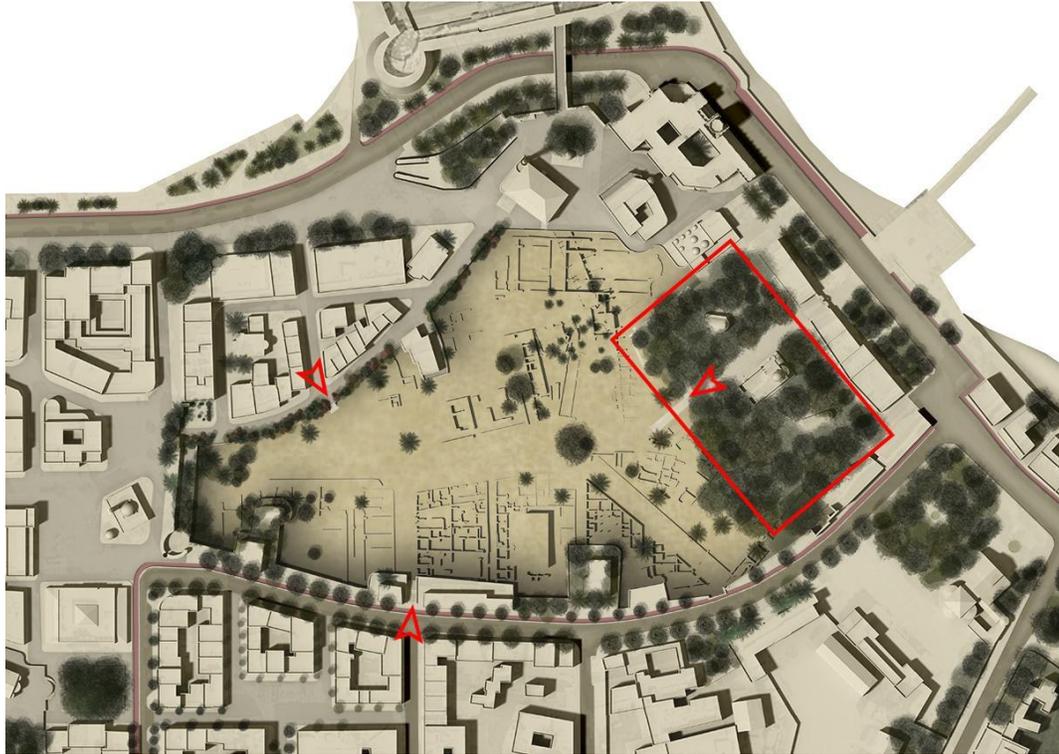


Figure 3: Kos. Plan of the archaeological site of Città Murata with an indication of the project area (graphics processing M. Cice, N. Dambrosio, based on the archaeological plan of Kos G. Rocco and M. Livadiotti).

In the original design, this area was the main entrance to the park of Città Murata and the entire tourist route of the town; later, however, archaeological investigations modified the perimeter and the project was never realized. The project suggested, in continuity with the one of Ceas, starts from the analysis of some of his planimetric sketches. Archival research, which has made the analysis of the interventions possible, has shown a unique approach of the designers of that time, based on a geometric reading of the architecture. The innovations introduced by an amorphous material such as concrete, led contemporary architecture to the experimentation of curved and mixtilinear shapes, as opposed to the geometric and orthogonal rigidity of the ancient buildings. This line-curve dichotomy became the most important element of the Italian architectural drafting in Kos: a surprising trick, because the new Italian curved facilities used for the perimeter of the archaeological areas and the layout of the routes differed from the old without dominating it. In fact, the rigidity of the orthogonal straight lines of the old puts the monument in the foreground against a background without angles and shadows; similarly, mixtilinear paths that branch among the geometric panels of individual structures facilitate its reading.



Figure 4: Kos. Plan of the archaeological site of Città Murata. Geometrical relationship between ancient structures and Italian project .

Moving from these assumptions a settlement of the area east of the park facing the entrance is suggested, this being based on an intervention of planimetric redesign of the square. Starting from the redesign of the green, now almost run wild, it is possible to redefine the spatial relations of the three churches within the large rectangle examined and locate internal paths, designed in continuity with the surrounding Italian style. There are no changes to the access structure, whose monument-type aspect is left to the routes inside the excavation and the square facing it. Within the archaeological area a redefinition of the areas of relevance to each ancient structure is planned through chromatic or particle- size treatments of the soil so as they can be read easily. A redesign of the paths made in stabilized soil is also envisaged.

The plan of arrangement, then traces the lines of development of the West area for a restoration to a useable condition of the area through the least targeted intervention on the soil, the whole aimed at giving a monument-type aspect to the West access point, intended for becoming the gate of the archaeological town of Kos.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank to professors M. Livadiotti and G. Rocco for the valuable guidance and for suggesting this interesting topic of study; i also thank the Ephorus the Dodecanese, dr. M. Michailidou, and the Director of the Institute of Archaeology of the Aegean Study, dr. P. Triantaphyllides, for giving me the permits and authorizations for the study.

REFERENCES

- Ercolino M. G. 2013, Riflessioni sui margini delle aree archeologiche urbane, in *Conservazione e Valorizzazione dei Siti Archeologici. Approcci scientifici e problemi di metodo* (Atti del convegno di studi, Bressanone 9-12 luglio 2013), Edizioni Arcadia Ricerche, Venezia, pp. 87-97.
- Eleutheriou, Netti 2011 = Eleutheriou B., Netti P., Η Αγορά της Κω. Το έργο της απο-κατάστασης του Νότιου Τμήματος, in Giannikouri A. (a cura di), Η αγορά στη Μεσόγειο. Από τους ομηρικούς έως τους ρωμαϊκούς χρόνους, Διεθνές Επιστημονικό Συνεδρίο, Κως 14/17-04-2011, Athens 2011, pp. 425-438.
- Giannella F. 2013, Gli interventi italiani, degli anni '30 nelle aree archeologiche della città di Kos, nel Dodecaneso, in *Conservazione e Valorizzazione dei Siti Archeologici. Approcci scientifici e problemi di metodo* (Atti del convegno di studi, Bressanone 9-12 luglio 2013), Edizioni Arcadia Ricerche, Venezia, pp. 785-796.
- Giglio A. 2009, Città del Mediterraneo: Kos. Architetture italiane del Dodecaneso, 1912-43, Bari 2009.
- Livadiotti M. 1986-87, Il restauro della chiesa di S. Giovanni Battista a Coo, in *ASAtene*, n.s. XLVIII-XLIX, 1986-87 (1991), pp. 403-434.
- Livadiotti M., Rocco G. 2012, Il piano regolatore di Kos del 1934: un progetto di città archeologica, in *Thiasos 1*, 2012, pp. 3-18.
- Livadiotti M., Rocco G. 1996, La presenza italiana nel Dodecaneso tra il 1912 e il 1948, Catania 1996.
- Martinoli S., Perotti E. 1999, Architettura coloniale italiana nel Dodecaneso, 1912-1943, Torino 1999.
- Morricone L. 1950, Scavi e ricerche a Coo, 1935-1943, Relazione Preliminare, Bda XXXV, 1950.
- Pitsinos N. 1996, Architettura e urbanistica nel Dodecaneso italiano, in Livadiotti M., Rocco G. 1996, pp.286-364.

