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Reviewed Article:

The Potential for Open-Air Sites: a Diversified Approach in Emilia, Italy

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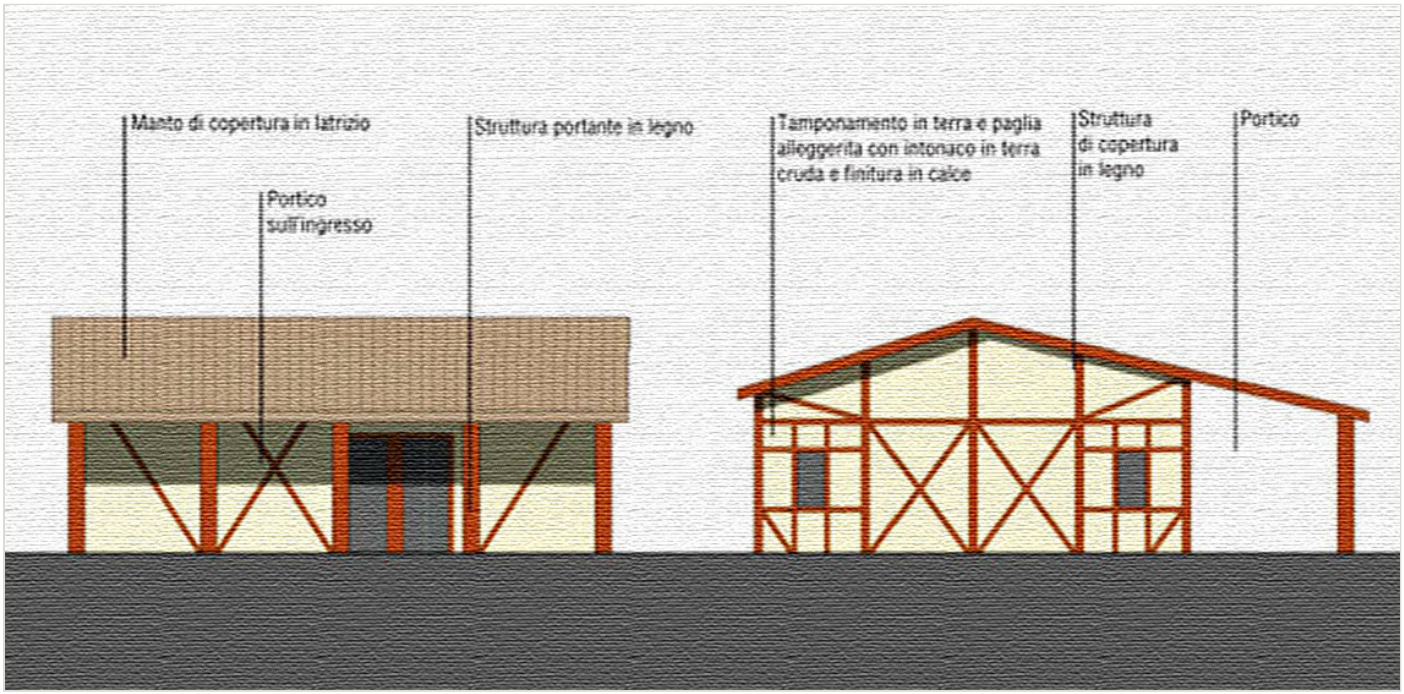
Author(s): Davide Delpiano [1] ✉, Francesco Garbasi [1], Filippo Fontana [2]

[1] Department of Human Studies, University of Ferrara, Corso Ercole I d'Este 32, 44121 Ferrara, Italy.
[2] Department of Humanities, Social Sciences and Cultural Industries, University of Parma, Via d'Azeglio 85, 43125, Parma, Italy.



The development of open-air cultural heritage and archaeological areas is based upon their optimal safeguarding and management, and through the public awareness they generate. In this paper, considering different management issues and end goals, we will demonstrate

how, through cooperation among specialized professionals, local authorities and the public, it is possible to revitalize public areas with distinct cultural heritage features. Case studies of two sites are considered, both managed by our volunteer archaeological group: the first is the site of Luceria, a Roman vicus located in a hilly rural area, while the second is the St. Paul Garden, an urban green space connected with indoor classical and medieval archaeological excavations. Our current effort is to create a broad range of activities in order to take advantage of the full potential of these areas. The activities are centred on public awareness, and include educational initiatives, experimental reconstructions, safeguarding the historical and archaeological heritage, and informing the public about it. The network of small archaeological sites we are working on is a self-sustainable approach in order to overcoming each area's weak points.

> Even if in a small way, our experiences could be an example of how coordinated efforts between professionals, public entities, and population, can be the right answer for the management and recovery of "forgotten" cultural heritage.

Introduction

Typically small cultural heritage sites that do not attract broad masses of tourists and are poorly appreciated by the popular consciousness, suffer most in terms of adequate evaluation. To ensure this, management of such sites should be oriented towards an integrated approach with the landscape, taking in account the social and economic fabric of the region, with heritage resources assuming a position within this fabric (Mitchell et al. 2009; Fielden 2010; Scheunemann & Oosterbeek 2012; UNESCO 2013). Intelligent management knows how to embrace its strengths and create a network to compensate for shortcomings which make valuation difficult. To do this, cultural heritage professionals have to operate in synergy with a large number of local stakeholders whose involvement must be active and targeted (Thomas & Middleton 2003).

These assets are frequently found in an abandoned or neglected state. When dealing with them, we encounter a series of associated questions and problems that may appear to be, at first glance, insurmountable. The lesser or more passive the response from local actors involved, the larger these issues may seem:

- A cultural heritage asset of this kind needs funds, since it typically does not produce money, but requires much of it, not necessarily for its evaluation but for minimal safeguarding. The public entities involved often prefer to invest funding into infrastructures, target places, or events in which the community could feel they have participated in and somehow benefited from.
- Here comes the point of civic awareness: citizens may support investment in cultural heritage assets, but only in the case where the asset is actually perceived as an integral part of the community. It is therefore necessary to be proactive, engaging citizens to

actively participate in the benefit development of the heritage asset at the broadest level of accessibility and engagement.

- At this point, promotion and marketing of the true value of a heritage asset is necessary. Re-discovering something which the community has always possessed but never fully appreciated can add richness to the community, and increase awareness of the potential positive impact that tourism could bring, especially in small communities. But in order to appreciate this, people should first be aware of the potential and, secondly, understand it.
- For this reason, synergy and collaboration between specialized professional figures, who are uniquely qualified for the role of guiding cultural asset enhancement, and the community is necessary. This collaboration encourages active citizenship, including volunteers who will require training by professionals, and is crucially important (Cotturri 2013).
- It is therefore necessary to clearly define the operating range of each of the actors that are part of this synergy, with the result to be able to respond in the best way and taking the best advantage of the personal potential. Similarly, the potential of the region should be taken into consideration, which must be the foundation upon which to build a project of preservation and evaluation. Only through the integration of the asset into the landscape will it be possible to stimulate the natural vocation of the place, using it as a driving force for local development. In this way the cultural asset, integrated into the local development system (and into a cultural heritage network), can have significant impacts on the cultural and educational systems, first of all, but on production and economic systems, as well (Albert et al. 2012; Boccardi 2012).

Here we propose examples of the evaluation process of two sites, each with significant potential but problematic histories of poor exploitation. The two sites are very different in terms of location, features, and facilities, and include archaeological, historic, and nature areas. We will examine how a site's network may execute the most appropriate approach to ensure that development of the asset could lead to regional development, creation of cultural heritage-related jobs, and, more generally, an opportunity for cultural fermentation. The entire project is being carried out by VEA Archaeological Group, a cultural association comprised of young professionals in the fields of archaeology, history, natural sciences, and art history. The association is based in the Parma and Reggio Emilia provinces, in Emilia-Romagna region (Northern Italy), and is mainly active in educational and research activities, and in cultural heritage management.

The context

The area surrounding the sites has a strong internal variability in terms of population patterns and relationship with the landscape. The region is well developed, from an economic and social point of views, it has always been one of the most developed regions in Italy, with

important production sectors, especially in food production, electronic and mechanical engineering industries, and intensive agriculture and farming. Furthermore, there is a strong tradition of cooperation between work and volunteer associations. There are two main cities of medium size (around 150-200,000 inhabitants), a number of satellite towns in the plain, and small villages in the hills and up to the Apennine mountains. In this framework we move from the mostly urban context to the mostly rural, each area with its own specific issues. The two sites featured in this paper represent precisely the variety of situations in the region: the first is Luceria, a small archaeological park located at the periphery of a foothill village, in a significant nature zone similar to the central valley of the Enza river; the second is the San Paolo garden, a park located in the historic centre of Parma, one of the two main cities, in a fully urban context and inhabited for millennia. The Parma region was the seat of Bronze and Iron Age settlements, before an important colony was established there in 183 BC. (See Figure 1)

First case: *Luceria*

The first site considered is the open-air archaeological site of Luceria. It is set on a Roman *vicus* that has been the subject of research and excavations since the 18th century, initially by a group of scholars funded by the Bourbon family who ruled over Parma duchy. This represented one of the first excavations in the area, conducted after the great enthusiasm generated by the discoveries in Pompeii and Herculaneum of that time. In that period, the toponym, or place name, Luceria, also named by Ptolemy in his Geography between the cities of *Gallia togata* region, was assigned to the site.

The reason lies in the proximity to a fluvial toponym, "Rio di Lusera", which marks the northern boundary of the site. Further excavations during the 19th century, especially of the cemetery area conducted by Don Gaetano Chierici, the civic museums of Reggio Emilia were founded. Chierici was an eminent 19th century archaeologist, and early exponent of Italian palaeoethnology, and the civic museums' collections were supplemented by his excavation finds and are still visible today. Thanks to these factors, and to the increasing comprehension of the site, an interesting mixture of native Ligurian people and Romans was revealed (Malnati et al. 1990).

During the 20th century, the Degani excavations integrated knowledge from the investigation of a road and squared spaces, which were interesting but unfortunately affected by ploughing (Degani 1967). Finally, the most recent excavations were carried out during the 1980s and 1990s, after which it was decided, thanks to the engagement of a volunteer association, Amici di Luceria (Luceria's friends), to start an initial project of public use of the explored area (Lippolis 1998). However, in the following years, due to the lack of continuous cooperation between local entities, professionals and citizens, the site was nearly abandoned and not accessible except by request. A passive attitude was adopted with regard to a nearly

unknown cultural heritage asset, thus the interest of community and institutions shifted to other emergencies (this area has experienced several earthquakes in the last few years, not counting the landslides which affect the region every year) and the project has not been pursued in the long term because of lack of funds and the absence of proper involvement of the community. (See Figure 2)

In 2013, believing in the area potentiality, we began facing a difficult situation, attempting to restart the engine that led to the opening of the archaeological area. The first step was, of course, to analyse the site's problems and potential virtues, in order respectively to solve them and use them as leverage capable of catalysing appeal and funding.

The main problems are connected primarily to the fact that the site is located in a rural area, with specific troubles and development trends, which has long been marginalized in the economic and social fabric. In recent times, however, by contrast, a large population increase has been recorded, mainly due to foreign immigration trends. This evidence raises other questions, like the increasing cultural diversity of the population and the parallel increasing variability in the collective cultural consciousness, whereby, working on the site evaluation process can lead to a more global awareness of the local treasures. In fact, the area is not yet perceived as a common heritage, being outside of the main village centre, "newly" opened and difficult to understand by most people since not preserved in elevation, so not recalling directly the original functions of the site. Furthermore, basic facilities and infrastructures are not present, which is another problem of rural open-air areas. Summing up, this site seems difficult to safeguard without the active collaboration between volunteers and professionals: when this collaboration ends, it also retires the main driving force of the dynamics of management, and thus protection of the site.

The strengths and potential of this area, instead, extend from the great propensity for cooperation and civic organization that on certain economic fronts, has led to the establishment of dozens of production and consumer cooperatives. In addition, the strictly cultural aspects of this effort facilitated the formation of several volunteer groups, including the proponents of the park, with whom it is possible to establish a constructive dialogue. These groups are precisely the part of the active citizenship towards which we must move, representing the awareness of the individual who feels part of the community and takes independent initiatives in order to achieve general and common interests: this is a real important factor especially in small villages and rural contexts.

Moreover, from a strictly scientific point of view, the site is a reference point for comprehending the Romanization of the region, since it is the only Roman archaeological park in the province and one of the few in the region that is testimony to a cultural mix between the pre-Roman Ligurian populations, and the first Romans. The site is located in an area that, despite being outside of the main tourist destinations, still has a remarkable

historic importance that moves an increasing number of international tourists. The territory lies under the municipality of Canossa, a site associated with an 11th century AD political showdown between Church and monarchy. The area, has many medieval castles and towers which were part of the Matilde di Canossa domains - all sites of remarkable architectural, historic, and natural beauty.

Everything depends on the dialogue between the municipality and other local private and public entities to integrate the site in a sort of small tourism circuit. A network is currently missing because of the extreme fragmentation of those responsible for the cultural resources present, ranging from the Italian state, the Episcopal curia, the municipalities, and lastly private individuals. Finally, regarding our research and teaching activities, that may constitute a driving factor for enhancement and understanding on a large scale of disciplines like history and archaeology, the site is definitely suitable to conduct landscape and experimental archaeology, being located in a lower fluvial terrace, far from the village and in a bonded area.

Second case: San Paolo gardens

The second site under consideration is the San Paolo garden, a public park in the historic centre of Parma, associated with the herb gardens of the religious complex of the feminine Benedictine monastery of St. Paul, built between the 10th and 16th centuries AD (Sardi 1767; Dall'Acqua 1990; Dall'Aglio 2004). This area, after hosting arable and cultivated gardens annexed to the *cenobium*, has had a civilian use connected to the partial repurposing of indoor buildings of the monastery: these areas were converted and today are partially occupied by a municipal library and art gallery which include, in its interior, archaeological excavations like the medieval St. Paul shrine, a 10th century domed tower representing the oldest part of the monastery. It also includes the remains of a Roman *domus* and some early medieval burials (Catarsi et al. 2014). Little has been done to safeguard the external gardens, which over the last few years are experiencing possibly the worst time of their history, with clear conditions of decay and insecurity.

Therefore, we are dealing with a site that is characterized by a series of noticeable problems. Primarily, decay is the problem most evident to the population, as it threatens the cultural heritage itself, and being in the centre of a city leads to dangerous situations and bad intentions. Consequently, citizens have been denied access to the site, resulting in further loss of awareness of the cultural heritage associated with the site, by avoiding this place during everyday life. From a recovery point of view, the most limiting issue is the onerousness of any idea of reclamation and renovation of the area, since we are dealing with a massive cultural property that includes medieval structures in elevation with stability problems and a garden that has existed for centuries. In this case, it is also not possible to face the problems alone without the support and active collaboration of public entities, a funding provision, and continuous activities required and the implications for continued maintenance. (See Figure 3)

In contrast to the site of Luceria, with the location of the gardens, if well managed, can lead to quicker and more significant positive feedback. In fact, the site is located in a fully urban context in a city centre, making it easily accessible and accessible by a larger amount of public. Also, basic infrastructures for the use are present both externally (but requiring recovery and maintenance) and internally. The gardens are also already perceived as a shared heritage, because of the location and the importance that they have had over the centuries, and still have, in people's daily life. Sections of the monastery has been a school in the recent past, while other parts are occupied by a library, an art gallery and a puppet museum. It is the second main green area in the centre of Parma, after the large duchal gardens, and must be given back to people.
The true importance of this site lies in the connection between the gardens and the cultural heritage assets already developed within the monastery complex that are actual tourist areas: the already mentioned art gallery, which includes remarkable paintings and archaeological excavations from Roman until Medieval times, and especially the Chamber of Saint Paul, frescoed by Correggio, one of the best examples of northern Italian renaissance. In conclusion, high visibility and very high potential are present, ready to be exploited after targeted and steady redevelopment.

Our contribution: what we did

Based on the situations described here, and in order to achieve the fullest potential from the two sites, and to simplify our activities associated with protection and enhancement, we took a diversified approach:
At Luceria, thanks to the cross-collaboration with public entities that we managed to involve (locals at the municipality, and state at the Sopraintendence of archaeological heritage), we arranged a reopening of the archaeological site and park, the natural result of increasingly intense activity conducted by volunteers and professionals.

A conference was organized for the opening, in order to emphasize the importance of mutual and converging works, thanks to the involvement of several scholars and the local archaeological Sopraintendence employees who brought their useful contribution and presenting comparable and inspirational examples (Podini & Garbasi 2014). The opening event also represented the beginning of a new cycle of openings and guided tours, from that moment managed by VEA archaeological group according to a convention signed with the municipality.

Our current work is keeping the site open, performing guided tours, in addition to maintaining a continuous presence in the area in order to involve the population, increase the active citizenship, and train them. Our efforts are aimed at raising awareness of archaeology and local history for those interested, through a lecture series featuring local archaeology, or single events addressed to a broader public such as "*Luceria under the stars*", organized during August nights and focused on the correlation between ancient history,

astronomy, and the pleasant location in which the site is located. Trying to promote in schools the knowledge and appreciation of the site, we have embedded this asset in our teaching activities that we carry out in the region, presenting several classes. This trend is increasing, thanks to the involvement of experienced reenactors related to *I Legio Italica* group, that every year organize an event for the local schools focused on the Romanization of the territory and the relationship between early Romans and late Celtic populations. (See Figure 4)

In the San Paolo gardens, our efforts began with participation on a grant call, "*Giovani per il territorio*" (youth for the territory), announced by the regional cultural heritage institution of Emilia Romagna, in order to reclaim cultural heritage in the region. Thanks to a common path carried out with the municipality of Parma, we prepared a project proposal for the recovery of the gardens, focused basically on these 4 main points:

1. Re-establish the gardens in people's everyday life in the city centre;
2. Restore, even symbolically, the ancient and original nuns' herb and kitchen garden.
3. Place these features at the heart of a future teaching and learning centre focused on archaeology and local history for the city schools;
4. Connect the external activities with interior spaces, the archaeological excavations and collections in the art gallery.

The project, named "*Hortus Conclusus*", is designed to meet these aims: our efforts are essentially divided into two intervention fronts, the outer and the inner ones. The outer began with the identification and rehabilitation of the original gardens orthogonal paths, connected to the restoration of the rest areas and the fountain, in order to contribute to the beauty of the gardens and improve the potential for enjoyment. These paths represent the routes around which our installations develop.

Visual and interactive panels and thematic-sensorial paths have been set along these routes and close to the rest areas. The panels display different aspects which involve the relationships between the monastery and the city over the centuries, such as manufacturing, economic and the religious aspects, and explaining multimedia contents through qr codes. The sensorial path, on the other hand, develops visual stimulations (with murals evoking monastic environments), olfactory stimulations (with an essence diffuser recreating the plant oils extracting activities), and auditory stimulations (with the activations of ambient and monastic activities sounds). In this way, the original function of the gardens, which is quite impossible to rebuild, is evoked and presented.

The inner intervention, instead, consists of the installation, in a room adjoining the garden and part of the monastery, of archaeological reconstructions that have the aim of integrating and deepening the topics presented in the outer path. The pivotal periods of urban

development of the city of Parma are documented, thanks to the creation of three installations that evoke three ages: a prehistoric hut, a roman tavern and workshop, and a medieval apothecary with domestic environment. The reconstructions are functional for our laboratory and teaching activities and for the deepening of archaeological and historical themes carried out outside and planned for the local schools. This is a small step to turn it into a main teaching centre in the city, where children can learn directly thanks to the reconstruction of the invisible. A constant presence, from our side, is provided with workshops and seminars carried out in the summer with the summer camps and from autumn to spring with primary and secondary schools, and at events sponsored by the city and the municipality. (See Figure 5 and 6)

Conclusions: a cultural heritage network

To conclude, even if in a small way, our experiences could be an example of how coordinated efforts between professionals, public entities, and population, can be the right answer for the management and recovery of "forgotten" cultural heritage. The final aim is to integrate them fully into their landscape, and the lives and economy of the population, and of the place where they belong, so that cultural heritage may also contribute to the construction of the cultural identity of people (Fontana & Garbasi 2014)

These two sites affect visitors in different and unique ways due to the different degree of involvement and to the different kind of activities carried out there. Either way, each of these two areas could be an example of sustainable development where many elements, including archaeology, contribute to the increasing awareness of the existence of shared memory-places. This is possible only with a synergistic action, a medium-long perspective strategy that combines different branch specialists and coordinates strengths in order to overcome institutional and administrative barriers.

Moreover, in this way, the group, which aims to be the intermediary for the population (mostly, but not always, the youngest) to the general historical and archaeological themes, but also for the local awareness and knowledge, can rely on a small range of areas that are various and specialized: the gardens as a teaching pole and Luceria as the tourism and reenactment/experimental pole, with an extensive and appropriate presence from time to time to the public.

For this reason, Luceria's vocation should be developed even further. Our participation on the regional call "*Giovani per il territorio*" has been successful in the current year, as well, through a series of partnerships that, thanks to the recent years' achievements, has fruitfully increased.

Through this consortium it was possible to propose a project focused on experimental archaeology that could, we believe, definitely revitalize the site of Luceria and act as a catalyst for a large number of targeted and high-level activities. (See Figure 7)

Through the partial reconstruction of what is possible to admire in foundation at the site (namely the road, arcade, and *domus* with *tabernae*), the aim is to offer a participatory experience of some moments of everyday life of the local Roman people to the visitors, as well as to magnify the expressive and communicative power of the site highlighting its peculiarities, that is the vocation of the commercial and meeting centre between the Ligurian and Roman worlds. Everything will be possible involving universities and cultural associations while maintaining a keen eye for scientific and research purposes concerned with the project implementation. A permanent workshop of experimental archaeology will be established for investigating the construction techniques of the Roman era, the ancient topography, and the ways of living in the past.

The structures are designed as an enjoyable learning area where participation in the full experience is possible. Involvement will be as broad and accessible as possible, starting from children to undergraduate students, up to adults, thanks to the cross-action of re-enactors and experienced professionals of archaeology. In this way, our valuation model will take full advantage of the site's potential, including didactic and educational activities and promotion of craftworks that will lead to an enlargement of the cultural offer at the site, but also in the region, thus being able to position itself as an input for a sustainable development of the area.

Keywords archaeological open-air museum
(re)construction
heritage

Country Italy

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Corresponding Author

Davide Delpiano
Department of Human Studies
University of Ferrara
Corso Ercole I d'Este 32
44121 Ferrara
Italy
E-mail Contact

Gallery Image

FIG 1. THE REGION TAKEN INTO EXAM IN THIS PAPER, ENCLOSED IN THE RED SQUARE, IS LOCATED IN NORTHERN ITALY, BETWEEN PO PLAIN AND APENNINE MOUNTAINS.

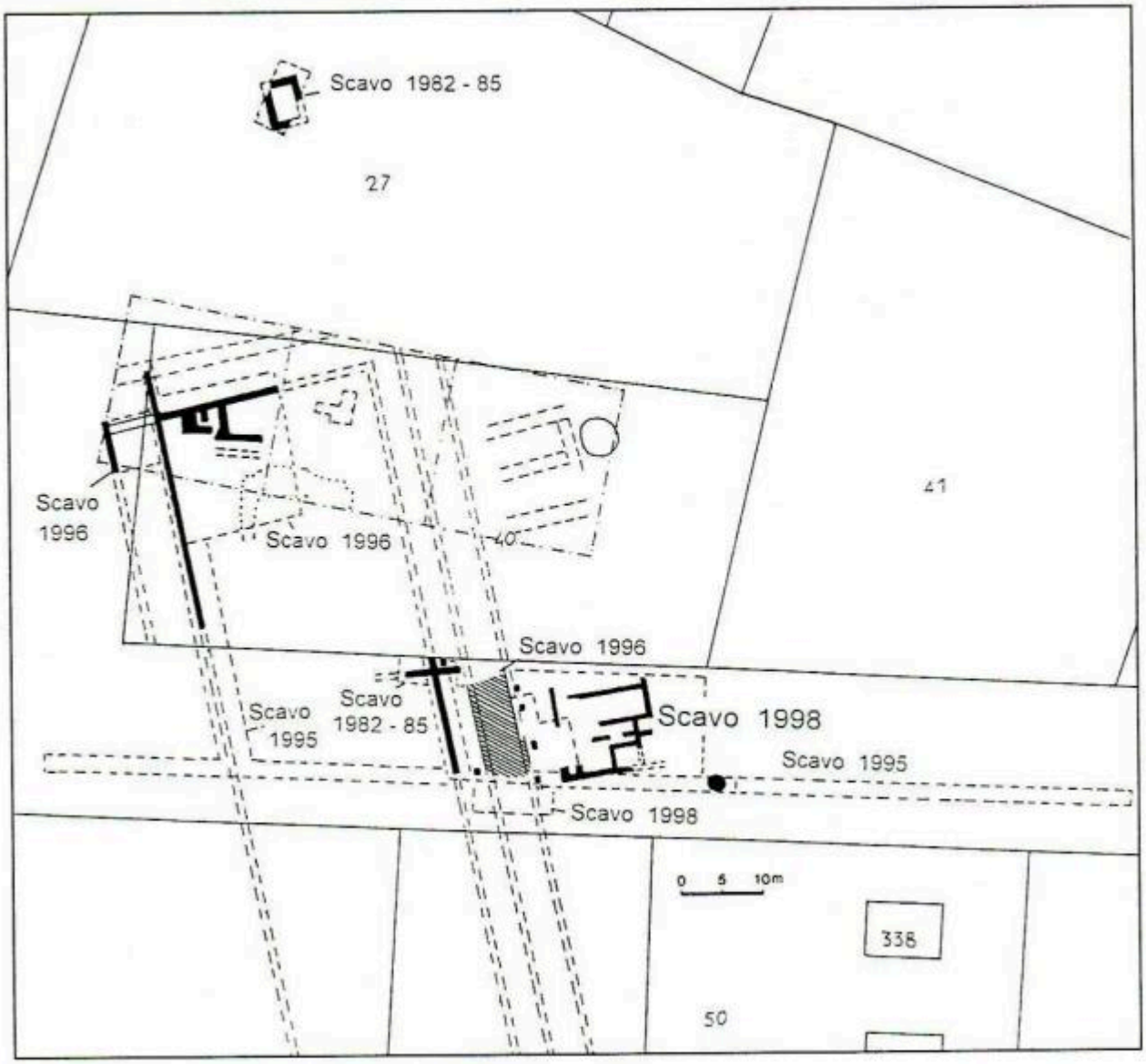

FIG 2A. LUCERIA EXCAVATION AREAS IN 20TH CENTURY INVESTIGATIONS IN LIPPOLIS, 1998 (A); THE ROMAN REPUBLICAN ROAD UNEARTHED IN THE 20TH CENTURY EXCAVATIONS AND NOW INCLUDED IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK (B).

FIG 2B. LUCERIA EXCAVATION AREAS IN 20TH CENTURY INVESTIGATIONS IN LIPPOLIS, 1998 (A); THE ROMAN REPUBLICAN ROAD UNEARTHED IN THE 20TH CENTURY EXCAVATIONS AND NOW INCLUDED IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK (B).

FIG 3A. THE ST. PAUL MONASTERY, WHICH INCLUDES THE GARDENS AND OTHER DISMISSED AREAS (A); THE INTERIORS OF THE MONASTERY, WHICH COMPRISE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS FROM ROMAN TIMES UNTIL LATE MIDDLE AGES SHOWING DIFFERENT PHASES OF PARMA CITY HISTORY (B).

FIG 3B. THE ST. PAUL MONASTERY, WHICH INCLUDES THE GARDENS AND OTHER DISMISSED AREAS (A); THE INTERIORS OF THE MONASTERY, WHICH COMPRISE ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS FROM ROMAN TIMES UNTIL LATE MIDDLE AGES SHOWING DIFFERENT PHASES OF PARMA CITY HISTORY (B).

FIG 4. REOPENING DAY OF THE ARCHEOLOGICAL PARK OF LUCERIA, WITH CONFERENCE MEETINGS, GUIDED TOURS AND HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENTS.

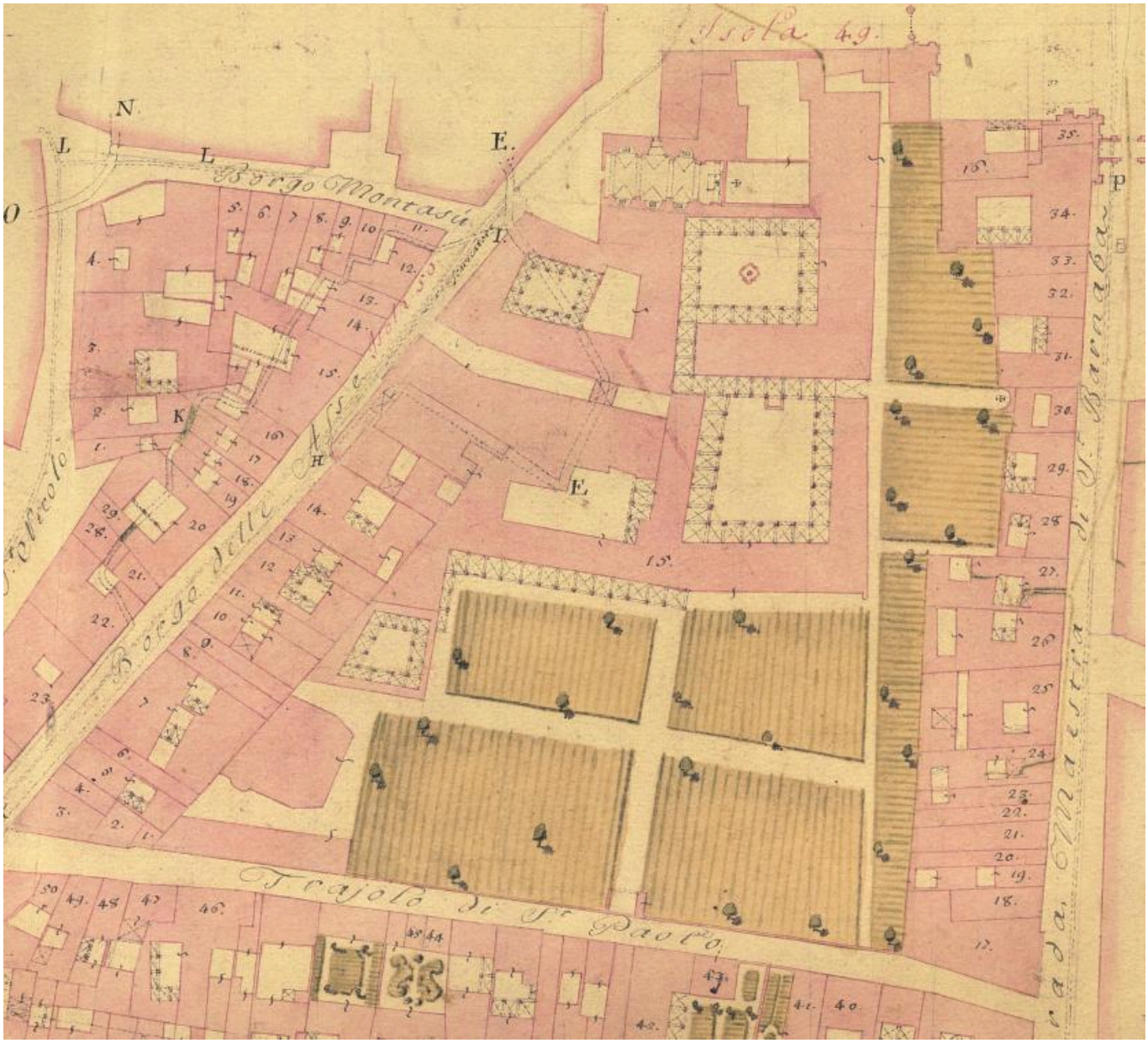

FIG 5A. THE AREA OF THE ST. PAUL MONASTERY AND GARDENS IN THE SARDI ATLAS, 1767 (A); INAUGURATION OF THE OUTER INSTALLATIONS ARRANGED AROUND THEMATIC PANELS ON HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND BOTANY (B).

FIG 5B. THE AREA OF THE ST. PAUL MONASTERY AND GARDENS IN THE SARDI ATLAS, 1767 (A); INAUGURATION OF THE OUTER INSTALLATIONS ARRANGED AROUND THEMATIC PANELS ON HISTORY, ARCHITECTURE AND BOTANY (B).

FIG 6. INTERNAL EXHIBIT ARRANGED ON THREE MAIN INSTALLATIONS: A NEOLITHIC NUT, A ROMAN WORKSHOP AND A MEDIEVAL APOTHECARY.

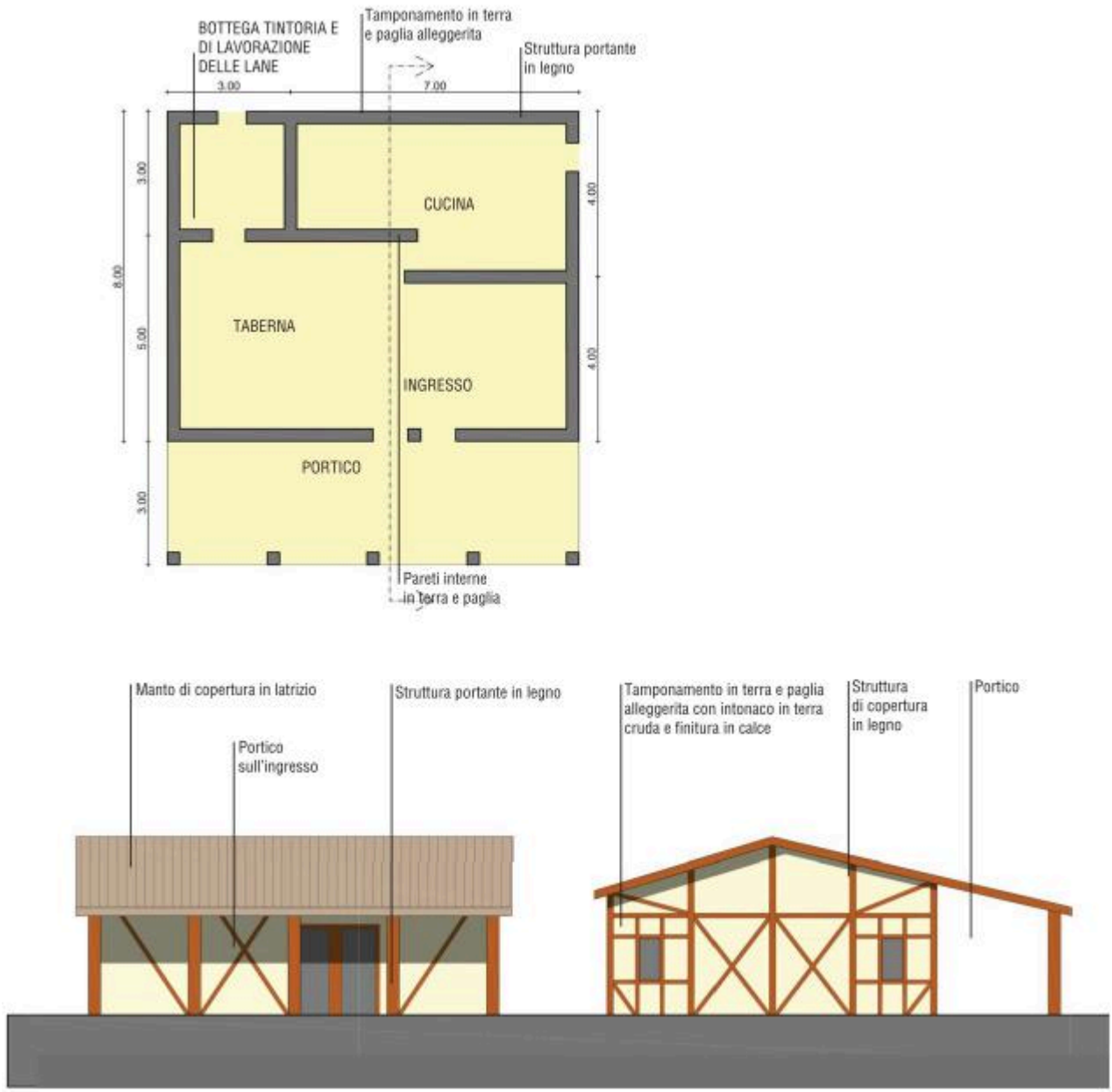

FIG 7. PROJECT OF THE EXPERIMENTAL RECONSTRUCTION OF A ROMAN WORKSHOP WITH HABITATION IN THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL PARK OF LUCERIA.