

# XVIII INTERNATIONAL FORUM

# WORLD HERITAGE and CONTAMINATION

ARCHITECTURE|CULTURE|ENVIRONMENT|AGRICULTURE|HEALTH|ECONOMY LANDSCAPE|DESIGN|TERRITORIAL GOVERNANCE|ARCHEOLOGY|e-LEARNING

Naples 11 - Capri 12 | 13 June 2020

From Italy to Montenegro: cultural contaminations and discipline exchanges for the enhancement of the Roman town of Doclea

# Lucia ALBERTI, 1 Bruna DI PALMA2

(1) Institute of Heritage Sciences ISPC, National Research Council of Italy CNR, Rome, Italy Iucia.alberti@cnr.it

<sup>(2)</sup> Department of Architecture DiARC, University Federico II, Naples, Italy bruna.dipalma@unina.it

#### Abstract

Since 2017, a multidisciplinary research project has been in progress for the study and enhancement of the Roman town of Doclea in Montenegro and the area in which the archaeological site is located. Located a few kilometres from the capital Podgorica, Doclea has seen in the last century long phases of abandonment, alternating with some archaeological excavations, but not apparently integrated in a long-term strategy. The necessity to breathe new life into a site so important for the cultural identity of Montenegro has encouraged cross-discipline dialogues and frequent exchanges between the Italian team of the National Research Council, made up of archaeologists, topographers, remote sensing experts, geophysics and architects, and the Montenegrin team, of historians of the University and conservators of the Superintendence. The Italian expertize in dealing with very complex cultural settlements and landscapes has worked as a stimulus for the creation of a shared intervention protocol and methodology. The need to preserve and enhance the entire area, in cultural and economic terms, produced a real 'cultural contamination' of different views and actors, such as archaeologists and architects, with their varying points of convergences and divergences. The final result is a project aimed at a profound modification not only of the area itself with the construction of infrastructures and facilities, but also the global perception and appreciation of an ancient site by the local population and international visitors.

**Keywords:** cultural contamination, discipline exchange, archaeological area enhancement, Doclea, Montenegro

# 1. Introduction

In the last years, the National Research Council of Italy (CNR) has started a fruitful collaboration with the Ministry of Science and the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro, in particular on the topic of Montenegrin Cultural Heritage. Since 2014, when the first agreement was signed, many scientific accomplishments have been undertaken [1]: in particular some bilateral projects between the Historical Institute of the University of Montenegro and two CNR Institutes – the Institute for Ancient Mediterranean Studies (CNR-ISMA, 2015-2016 [2] [3]) and the Institute for Technologies Applied to Cultural Heritage (CNR-ITABC, 2017-2018) – recently merged in the newly created Institute of Heritage Sciences (CNR-ISPC)<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> In a paper published in 2019 by two researchers of ISPC-CNR (Elena Gigliarelli, Luciano Cessari, "Design strategies for the conservation and extended use of archaeological landscapes. The archaeological area of Doclea in Montenegro". In *World Heritage and Legacy. Culture, Creativity, Contamination*, Acts of the XVII International Forum, Naples 6 – Capri 7/8 June 2019, p. 1103-1109), an enhancement project about Doclea was presented. The authors declare that the project is one of the research lines of the Built Heritage Innovation Lab directed by Gigliarelli and that their project had the support of the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro. Applying the freedom of accurate investigation and reporting that every researcher enjoys, we point out that the Built Heritage Innovation Lab has never worked at Doclea and that the named project, as the lack of publications testifies, does not seem to exist. Their paper contains indeed many evident mistakes and misunderstandings, both in the

As soon as the collaboration started, the need to begin scientific activity on the site of the Roman town of Doclea, located a few kilometres from the capital of Montenegro, Podgorica, was appreciated as requisite and essential, given the importance the site has for the local population.

Doclea, named after the Illyrian tribe Docleati, was the second-largest city in the province of Roman Dalmatia; it was built on an extent of lowland stretching between the Zeta river, the Morača river and the Širalija. The town, occupying an area inside the walls of about 24 hectares, was created as a *municipium* in the Flavian period, and more specifically in the 1<sup>st</sup> century AD. It was then that the main monuments were built: a square-shaped *forum*, buildings of different sizes, *tabernae* and an aisled basilica, the Capitol temple, the temple of the goddess Roma and the temple of Diana, and the two Flavian bath-complexes. Less well known are the private quarters: to now, only a single private dwelling with more than twenty rooms around a courtyard, a bath-suite and a little temple have been excavated. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD, a period of decline started: the East Goths ravaged the city in 489 and an earthquake damaged it in 518. The city was destroyed again by Avars and Slavs in 609.

But Doclea continued to live, as its important Late antique phase testifies, as represented by the remains found in the north-east sector of the town. There, three churches have been excavated: one with three naves, another perhaps with a basilical plan and a third with a cruciform plan. As for dating the later existence of the city, some specialists place the cruciform church in the 9<sup>th</sup> century. Thus, Doclea probably survived for longer than two more centuries after the ravage and devastation suffered in the early 7<sup>th</sup> century, as is also proven by written sources commenting on the existence in Doclea of an important bishopric.

Doclea, moreover, is inserted in a beautiful natural landscape, with many traces and remains, spanning from the Bronze age until the present (Fig. 1).

The first systematic archaeological research goes back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, when British archaeologists excavated the majority of the monuments still visible today, both those in the public centre of the town and the churches [4] [5].

The 20<sup>th</sup> century has seen numerous interventions, even if not obviously integrated in a long-term strategy, by both international and Montenegrin teams. These have brought to light some buildings inside the town and five cemeteries outside the walls (for up-to-date data, results and bibliography about Doclea and the project, see [1], with contributions by many members of the team).

# 2. Contamination as a paradigm

From the Latin 'contaminatio', in the general understanding, the word contamination expresses a contact that threatens or damages a condition of original and absolute purity. As a modifying action, contamination expresses a passage between a before and an after, it is a contagion that alters a state considered stable and that puts in crisis systems already and traditionally codified. But contamination as a 'phenomenon of viral aggression' also redefines physical and cultural 'waiting' spaces that can be thus reworked, in a dialogue of continuity or rupture between the poles of local-global, tradition-innovation, identity-difference, nature-artifice. This positive interpretation of contamination, understood as an instrument of evolution, starts from observing the condition of the contemporary reality, mixed and heterogeneous. Dealing with contemporary urban spaces today means working in an increasingly indefinable, complex (as simultaneous), unstable (as dynamic) and multiple (as different and irregular) reality. The current economic, political and social dynamics have affected profound transformations in the contemporary city, on its physical form and social structure, determining a complex stratification in which networks, fluxes, as architectures of the ephemeral and places of memory, can coexist, disregarding or intertwining with each other.

The theoretical restlessness that touches on the field of spatial disciplines alludes to the appreciation of this complexity, terming it "multifaceted and continuously diversified, because it is the product of multiple, dynamic and changing structures (technical-cultural and economic-social), connected and

historical and in the territorial data, evidencing a marked ignorance of the site and its peculiarities. The enhancement project we are presenting today started its activities preliminarily in 2015. It is financed by the National Research Council of Italy (CNR), the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation of Italy (MAECI), the society Terna Montenegro and it will operate until at least the end of 2021. It involves 13 Italian researchers and associated researchers of ISPC-CNR (Lucia Alberti, Francesca Colosi, Marilena Cozzolino, Antonio D'Eredità, Bruna Di Palma, Elisa Fidenzi, Vincenzo Gentile, Maja Gori, Tommaso Leti Messina, Pasquale Merola, Paola Moscati, Fernanda Prestileo, Carla Sfameni), a INGV researcher (Riccardo Maria Azzara) and the Montenegrin team of researchers of the Historical Institute-University of Montenegro (Tatjana Koprivica, Slavko Burzanović, Olga Pelcer-Vujačić, Ivan Laković), of the Danilvgrad Museum (Boško Iković), and of the Center for Conservation and Archaeology of the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro (Mile Baković). In 2020, more Montenegrin researchers and conservators will be involved. From its start, the project has been directed by Lucia Alberti and Tatjana Koprivica.

interactive" [6]. Consequently, there emerges an apparatus of strategies based on theories that are not univocally determined.

Mixtures, fusions, contaminations assume – in this sense – the role of possible generative tools for the new; they speak to us of the ability to combine things, put them in relation, make them interact with each other. It is precisely in this capacity that there resides the possibility of crossing into fields of different knowledge from their own dynamic ones: "We must be aware of the fact that things (forms, objects, etc.) evolve and cannot be imagined as pure and absolute things that remain identical in time, on the contrary, they change, transform and evolve. In this sense the theme of contamination and encounter is central and inevitable if we talk about organisms, living beings; all the more so if we talk about artificial things and therefore architecture" [7].

Accepting that this principle of contamination therefore allows one to re-write and question already written stories and create, with the same elements, a different story, generating new meanings, then contamination becomes an agent in the transformation of existing identities in a continuous pattern of evolution. In connecting contrasting elements, contamination does not produce a harmonious fusion (in the sense of restoring matters to some pure formal identity), nor a compromised situation between the parts (in which some elements dominate the others), but rather supports a coexistence in which the differences remain, but the whole is enhanced and multiplicity permitted to exist [8].



Fig. 1: Doclea in its landscape

#### 3. Italia - Montenegro, an international exchange for the archaeological site of Doclea

To talk about the cultural heritage of a country means one goes to the heart of a community, attempting to breathe new life and reality into histories and memories laid down over the centuries and millennia. A respectful and attentive attitude to this heritage is the only way able to ensure positive results, not only for present and future generations, but also in memory of the past communities that contributed to its creation.

Very often, when we, as outsiders, intervene in the cultural heritage of another country, we frequently risk adopting a colonialist perspective. Or alternatively, the local communities risk adopting an overprotective attitude towards their cultural heritage.

The relationships between Italy and Montenegro have fortunately taken yet another path: they were already strong before and have been further strengthened by the project. The long history of empathy between the two countries was reinforced in the 20<sup>th</sup> century by various historical events, such as the marriage between Vittorio Emanuele III and Elena of Montenegro and the establishment of the first Balkans radio station in Bar by Guglielmo Marconi, events still very much alive today in our collective consciousness. The most recent history confirms this special relationship: after obtaining independence from Serbia in 2006, Montenegro started the procedure to join the European Union, a process in which the constant collaboration with Italy plays a fundamental role.

A 'dialogue' between two entities, as much as between two countries or two different groups of people, produces a contamination, whose results are very often visible in the cultural heritage. In this sense the 'heritage' concept is particularly expressive of a contaminated and tangible result of different actions of generations, people, individuals and communities over ages and centuries. A perfect arena and mirror of the encounters and clashes of human groups.

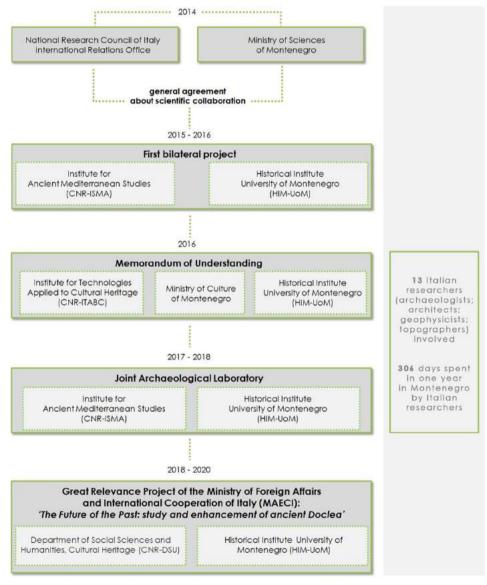


Fig. 2: From Italy to Montenegro, international exchanges for cultural heritage knowledge and enhancement

Following the Montenegrin authorities request to Italy for a collaboration on Doclea, the project represents an example of a fruitful 'contaminated dialogue', produced by an inter and multidisciplinary international collaboration and realized in actuality by the CNR and the Historical Institute-University of Montenegro since 2017 through a 'Joint Archaeological Laboratory' (Fig. 2) [9] [3]. This is a very peculiar and 'contaminating' CNR initiative, in which "a research project is carried out jointly by Italian and foreign researchers who intend to share their skills as well as their research facilities, to create a Joint Archaeological laboratory – a meeting place, both physical and virtual, with new and improved characteristics if compared to the original single structures of affiliation". In 2018-2020, the project was promoted as Project of Great Relevance of the MAECI.

The goal is anything but simple. Doclea is a very difficult site to deal with, essentially for practical reasons: the extent of the area, partially still in private hands, the still-functioning railway built in 1946-47, that destroyed part of the public centre of the town, the absence of any facilities on site (Fig.3).



Fig. 3: The archaeological site of Doclea

The Italian researchers have made available their competences on archaeological survey, new technologies applied to cultural heritage, and new management of good practices for historical sites, and so are collaborating closely with the Montenegrin researchers, that have particular competences in history and archival researches (Fig. 4).

This continuous exchanges produced a cross-fertilization of competences and also a different human open-mindedness of the team and the single researchers: archaeologists learned a bit more about the technologies they require on site, technologists became able to communicate with historians and archaeologists, with the architects often providing the link, acting as a conduit for the passage of various questions and issues.

The positive outcome is visible: the work on site, joint participation at international conferences, publication of the first scientific results in scientific peer-reviewed international journals, and last but not least the promotion of the project to the general public [1] [10] [11] [12].

A very particular component in this collaboration has been the continuous exchange with the Montenegrin Institutions, that always supported the project: the Ministry of Culture for assistance with local regulations; the Ministry of Science for promoting interest in new technologies; the Universities for providing the required Montenegrin scholars and experts in culture heritage studies and management, etc.



Fig. 4: Survey activities around Doclea of Italian and Montenegrin researchers

This last aspect – the creation of specialised courses in cultural heritage disciplines – is an important outcome we are realizing today in collaboration with the Ministry of Culture. This activity also proves as an archaeological project, if structured, developed and communicated in the correct way, properly negotiated between researchers and local institutions, can represent a real development engine not only for a site and a territory, but also for an entire country.

# 4. Top-bottom-top methodology for knowledge

The Doclea project employs a non-invasive multidisciplinary approach, using different expertizes and innovative technologies, and seeks to test a methodological protocol, as is usual these days in contemporary interdisciplinary projects. We strongly believe that a variety of approaches drawn from history, archaeology and topography, and involving remote sensing, geophysics prospections, informatics, architecture, all conducted at different levels and scales of analysis, is the only way to achieve a better comprehension of and future for an ancient site. Without as full a comprehension as possible, there is a real and high risk in an enhancement project of an 'invented' site, similar to the imagined world of a video game, completely removed from the uniqueness, the interest and the beauty of the real Doclea, a fantasy in which the local community will be unable to recognize its real cultural identity.

We have defined "our methodological approach as 'top-bottom-top', meaning that, after the existing literature investigation, we proceeded from aerial reconnaissance from on high, down to earth with the archaeological survey, and even deeper underground with geophysics, before returning up onto the ground surface with the activities of reconstruction and valorisation" [1] (Fig. 5).

The first steps were mostly conducted by the Montenegrin team – they collected data from the archival and bibliographical collections of numerous European museums and archives: information related to ancient travellers visiting Doclea, data from the first excavations, objects from Doclea kept now in European museums. The second steps were the analysis of the site from on high, using remote sensing analysis by satellite, aerial and drone images. Back on the earth, an accurate archaeological survey followed, without any excavation activity, in accordance with the deliberate choice not to act in an invasive manner before having a clear idea of the site and its perspectives. Next there followed the underground analysis, with geophysical prospections. All the collected data were analysed together to enable the creation of valuable and credible 3D reconstructions, useful both for a better understanding and also for the promotion of the site.

As a venue to create and to test a usable protocol to apply also at other sites in Montenegro and elsewhere, Doclea in its landscape appears ideal: quite rapidly abandoned and not inhabited thereafter for centuries, and with relatively few excavation activities conducted till now. It acts as an open-air laboratory, in which experimental actions can be conducted from start to finish, from the first scientific enquiries to the last activity to promote the site.

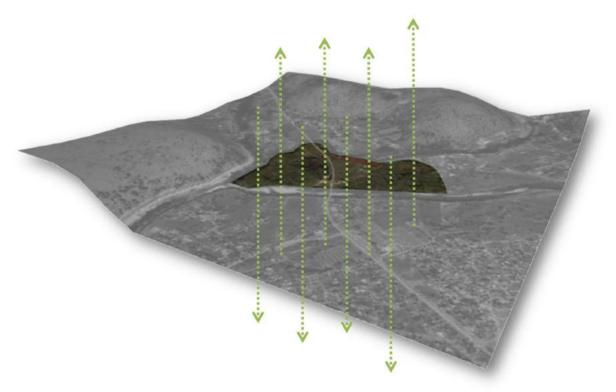


Fig. 5: 'Top-bottom-top' methodology for the knowledge of Doclea archaeological area

# 5. Transversal and trans-dimensional methodology for enhancement

Today the notion itself of Heritage moves in the contamination "between sedimentation and transformation and in the contemporary world its definition is more elusive than ever to be hinged in rigid procedural embankments, offering itself, on the contrary, to transversal theoretical reflections, trans-dimensional readings, inter-disciplinary interpretations" [13].

In this general sense, a precise approach to the heritage project develops a specific enhancement strategy that would contaminate contemporary needs to re-launch the area with its specific consolidated features. For this reason, our preliminary goal was to acquire a better knowledge of the site, its actual extent and dimensions in time and space for both the Roman and medieval periods (Fig. 6). This is to be achieved through a re-composition of old and new data and the construction of an up-to-date digital map, a fundamental first-step for every future investigation.



Fig. 6: Doclea: in white the remains of the Roman town and, to the east, the medieval churches

Starting from this fundamental level of knowledge for a highly stratified site, and one that has suffered much intervention over time, the enhancement project has been developed through a transversal and trans-dimensional approach in the belief that the archaeological site can once again play an active role within the overall dynamic of development of this part of the Montenegrin territory.

For this reason, in the course of the constant dialogue between architects, archaeologists, topographers, historians and geophysical experts in the construction of the general development strategy, aspects that concern specific themes of archaeological enhancement, as well as themes of urban redevelopment and landscape restoration, have been mixed together. The project deals on the large scale with a river and hill terrain, but also at a finer one with the individual archaeological ruins, whilst having to consider aspects related to the accessibility of roads to the site, as well as the internal pedestrian circulation, not forgetting economic issues and the chronological management of the implementation phases of the interventions.

The project has therefore been set up on an applied research activity that aims to intertwine different scales and knowledge to define a new plot of contamination between inside and outside the site, as a redefinition of the urban layout, and outside it, to connect with the surrounding landscape.

Geographically defined by the presence of the hills and rivers, from a territorial point of view the site is interpreted as a possible place of convergence, to the north, of a linear river park developed along the banks of the Morača. In relation to the presence of hills, it is also configured as the possible centre of gravity of a system of connections, both of an excursionist and cultural nature, between the fortified sites on the surrounding hills (probably used since the Bronze age onwards) and the Roman city in the valley. In addition to these considerations, there are also those of an infrastructural nature: the site, although not equipped with specific reception facilities, is crossed by the railway and a stretch of driveway. The project proposes an alternative carriageway, but preserves the passage of the railway, with the provision of a new station dedicated to the ancient city (Fig. 7).

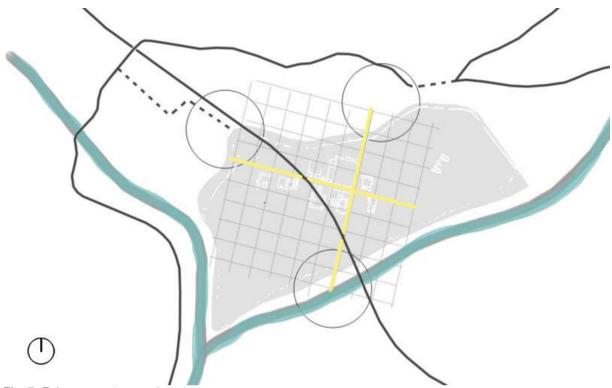


Fig. 7: Enhancement general strategy

Starting from the shape of the square-meshed Roman urban layout, but also from the changes that the open space has undergone over time, the new layout of internal routes then confirms the role of the ancient one, based on the intersection of *decumanus* and *cardo*, and projects its meaning beyond the perimeter marked by the defensive walls, contaminating itself with the more recent routes that define the rural space outside the archaeological area. In fact, at the points of intersection between the edge of the site and these two main routes, some further strategic areas of dialogue between the area and its context are identified and there have been inserted some buildings supporting the development of the site and of the wider territorial framework (Fig. 8).

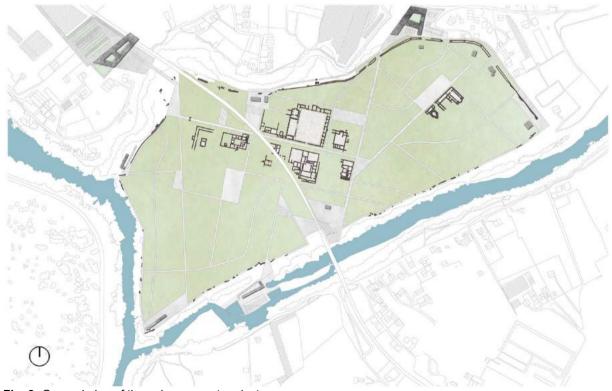


Fig. 8: General plan of the enhancement project

#### 6. Conclusions

This brief account on the Doclea project, even if introductory, outlines the basic principles of the complete development project we are producing for the Ministry of Culture of Montenegro. The worth of our protocols and good practices, the competences of all the professionals involved has attracted new requests of future collaborative interventions by the Ministry of Culture for other archaeological sites in Montenegro.

Concerning Doclea, with the robust collaboration of all the researchers and in an atmosphere of continuous review and discussion, we have already planned a series of medium and long-term activities.

Thanks to recent new funding, we will develop other activities on-site, involving new professionals – such as a seismologist, as well as analysts and conservators for artefacts and surfaces, expanding our objectives to further contaminations. Outside the walls, according to our basic principle of considering the site as one with its territory, integration into the surrounding landscape, with specific reference to the river landscape and the hills, is obviously already a reality (Fig. 9). We are planning new paths and thematic itineraries involving not only environmental/natural aspects, but possibly also other cultural/historical sites.

The next steps will be the involvement of the local communities living in the villages around Doclea, promoting social activities to encourage the re-appropriation of their cultural identity, with the eventual goal of giving new life to past material culture and traditions and to produce economic growth through sustainable tourism.

In complete agreement with the approach of Giorgio Agamben, that "Archaeology is not the research of the past, but research, in the past, of a possibility for the present" [14], our ultimate goal is to mentor a collaboration to restore the collective memory of a community, between past and present, local and global, scientific and popular. As the Italian Ambassador to Montenegro, Luca Zelioli, pertinently said, "preserving and valorising the common heritage of the past, we can also foster a promising, credible 'tomorrow'" [1].



Fig. 9: Enhancement project, the river landscape

#### **Bibliographical References**

- [1] ALBERTI, Lucia (ed.), *The ArcheoLab project in the Doclea valley: archaeology, technologies and future perspectives (Campaign 2017)*, Archeologia e Calcolatori, Supplemento 11, Firenze, All'Insegna del Giglio, 2019. ISBN 978-88-7814-896-3.
- [2] ALBERTI, Lucia, SFAMENI, Carla, La collaborazione scientifica fra l'ISMA e l'Istituto Storico del Montenegro. Un primo risultato di DIPLOMAzia 2014, *ISMAgazine* 2, 2015, p. 12-13.
- [3] ALBERTI, Lucia, SFAMENI, Carla, Italia-Montenegro: da un progetto bilaterale a un Laboratorio Archeologico Congiunto, *ISMAgazine* 4, 2017, p. 19-21.
- [4] KOPRIVICA, Tatjana 2013, Diaries entries and photographic documentation of J. A. R. Munro related to the archaeological exploration of Doclea (Montenegro) in 1893, *Zograf*, 37, p. 1-15.
- [5] STICOTTI, Piero, *Die römische Stadt Doclea in Montenegro*, Schriften der Balkankommission Antiquarische Abteilung Heft 6, Wien 1913, In Kommission bei A. Hölder.
- [6] GREGORY, Paola, Teorie dell'architettura. In AA.VV., *XXI Secolo*, Gli spazi e le arti, vol.4, Istituto dell'Enciclopedia Italiana, Roma 2010, p. 241-252.
- [7] TERPOLILLI, Carlo, L'ibrido in architettura. In VESSELLA, Luigi, *Intervista a Carlo Terpolilli. L'ibrido in architettura*, Senza Cornice n°5, Firenze 2013.
- [8] DI PALMA, Bruna, *L'intermittenza dell'architettura. Teoria e progetti sui luoghi dell'archeologia*, ANCSA, Reggio Emilia 2019. ISBN 978-88-941080-6-4.
- [9] ALBERTI, Lucia, KOPRIVICA, Tatjana, Joint Archaeological Laboratory Italia Montenegro: The Doclea Valley, *Archeologia e Calcolatori* 28.1, 2017, p. 311-313.
- [10] ALBERTI, Lucia, KOPRIVICA, Tatjana, BURZANOVIĆ, Slavko, COLOSI, Francesca, COZZOLINO, Marilena, D'EREDITÀ, Antonio, GENTILE, Vincenzo, MEROLA, Pasquale, MOSCATI, Paola, PELCER-VUJAČIĆ, Olga, SFAMENI, Carla, Progetto Doclea, Montenegro: un'antica città romana da "ri-costruire". In PORCARI, Vito, *La conservazione del patrimonio artistico, architettonico, archeologico e paesaggistico* (CICOP 2018), Atti del XIV Congresso internazionale di riabilitazione del patrimonio, Napoli, Luciano Editore, 2018. ISBN 978-88-6026-245-5, p. 1186-1200.
- [11] DI PALMA, Bruna, ALBERTI, Lucia, Ruins, amnesia and design. Strategic approaches for the enhancement of Doclea's archaeological area in Montenegro. In *Abitare la Terra. Dwelling on Earth*, supplemento al n. 50 anno XVIII 2019 trimestrale, Gangemi Editore International. ISBN 978-884923823-5 ISSN 1592-8608, p. 20-21.
- [12] DI PALMA, Bruna, ALBERTI, Lucia, Tracce antiche, trame contemporanee. Il progetto di nuove connessioni per l'area archeologica di Doclea in Montenegro. In CALDERONI, Alberto, DI PALMA, Bruna, NITTI, Antonio, OLIVA, Gaspare (eds.), *Il progetto di architettura come intersezione di saperi. Per una nozione rinnovata di Patrimonio*, Atti dell'VIII Forum ProArch, Napoli 21-23 novembre 2019, ProArch 2019, ISBN 978-88-909054-9-0, p. 34-39.
- [13] CALDERONI, Alberto, DI PALMA, Bruna, NITTI, Antonio, OLIVA, Gaspare, L'indagine sul Patrimonio come comune denominatore della ricerca architettonica italiana. In CALDERONI, Alberto, DI PALMA, Bruna, NITTI, Antonio, OLIVA, Gaspare (eds.), *II progetto di architettura come intersezione di saperi. Per una nozione rinnovata di Patrimonio*, Atti dell'VIII Forum ProArch, Napoli 21-23 novembre 2019, ProArch 2019, ISBN 978-88-909054-9-0, p.15-17.
- [14] AGAMBEN, Giorgio, La voce, il gesto, l'archeologia. Lecture given at Palazzo Serra di Cassano, Napoli, 9<sup>th</sup> May 2009, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qkvlp4hUpL4.