

Modelling Peripheral Archaeological Landscapes

Challenges and Perspectives of a South Cretan Case Study

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Abstract Hardly any other topic has developed in recent years such a ‘penetrating power’ within the humanities and social sciences, but also such a strong impact on society, as the concept of Cultural Heritage, which is suitable to connect concepts of the past, the present, and the future. As one of the most important manifestations of this field, archaeological sites/landscapes have acquired an impressively increasing scientific and societal significance and present themselves as a demanding challenge that can only be tackled with novel research methodologies and management strategies. Their abundance in Greece, Italy, and other Mediterranean countries is a mixed blessing: On the one hand, ancient heritage sites are threatened, due to the lack of sufficient financial means, and, on the other, they possess a huge potential for ensuring a sustainable development, especially for peripheral regions. The present article discusses some of these current issues around the archaeological exploration and modelling of archaeological sites/landscapes both at a theoretical level and on the basis of a south Cretan case study.

Archaeology: moving from a discipline of the past to a discipline of cultural heritage

One of the most stunning current developments in archaeology is its gradual transformation from a discipline of antiquity to a discipline of cultural heritage.¹ This new field of action is much broader and more dynamic than the static notion of the ‘past’, since it encompasses also the present, thus providing innumerable opportunities for archaeologists to act beyond the ‘ivory tower’ of academia by meeting current challenges at the juncture of science, politics, economy, and, above all, society. Archaeology’s new role in the midst

1 For the notion of Cultural Heritage and its growing importance in the last decades see Smith 2007; Fairclough et al. 2008; Latini and Matteini 2017; Campelo et al. 2019.

of current developments in all these fields is nurtured by its inherent, yet to a great extent still unexplored capacity of being relevant for the present. This is a decisive advantage in our modern society, in which our discipline and related scientific fields are under constant pressure to legitimise their *raison d'être*. The new focus brings not only advantages but also requires a radical reappraisal of the traditional archaeological methods and objectives. The latter can no longer be confined either to the destructive process of excavating or passive practice of studying and publishing ancient material remains but have to acquire a more active and creative role as an 'applied discipline'.²

The best 'seismograph' for recording the rises and falls of this transformative process with its difficulties and opportunities is the engagement of archaeologists with archaeological sites and/or landscapes beyond the excavation context. Countless examples of these are scattered all over Greece, Italy, and other Mediterranean countries, however, their fate differs dramatically according to varying scientific, national, or local priorities. In the archaeology of the 21st century, which is inevitably part of our modern open society and consequently has to define itself as an open academic discipline, archaeological sites/landscapes represent the most demanding challenge. If we leave aside major sites which have been developed to serve as touristic destinations, the majority of the rest—especially minor and/or peripheral ones—are not only neglected but actually at risk due to a constellation of structural problems and conflicting interests. Their protection and conservation have been understandably the highest priority of state archaeologists (and of the current archaeological legislation) not only because of the natural process of deterioration but also due to the severe effects of modern development in both urban and rural environments. Yet, the realisation of even this self-evident goal is impeded by numerous—mostly but not exclusively financial—problems. An exceedingly high number of archaeological monuments and sites either deteriorate after excavation, are menaced by building speculations, or destroyed by looters. Their protection requires massive investment. The limited financial capacities of governing institutions cannot ensure the economic feasibility or sustainability of management models related to issues of conservation and reactivation. In these unfortunate circumstances, archaeologists are forced to operate in a prohibiting rather than creative manner, striving mainly to safeguard and preserve cultural heritage, with only limited capacities of taking the additional step of modelling and integrating it into modern society. In fact, the same also applies to major archaeological sites that regularly attract thousands of visitors every year. Due to financial constraints, their management does not extend beyond the most necessary protection and conservation measures. Despite these difficulties, state archaeologists in Greece and Italy have succeeded in recent years to realise major conservation programs and master plans for improving the accessibility and visibility of

2 Erickson 1992; Downum and Price 1999.

heritage sites in the course of European programs which clearly demonstrate the potential of the ‘creative approach’ (Fig. 1).³ Yet, these project initiatives remain exceptions rather than the rule. At the same time, archaeologists from the academic field who conduct field



Fig. 1 The archaeological park of Selinunte (photo by the author).

projects in Greece and Italy have a pronounced focus on purely scientific approaches that confine them to the narrow limits of the archaeological sites they excavate, with no relevance to and impact on the region and local population. This unfavourable situation becomes even more critical due to a major current threat for Mediterranean cultural heritage which is linked with the activity of the private sector. Especially in periods of financial crises, local and foreign entrepreneurs seize the opportunity to design and realize ambitious projects in the course of which cultural and physical heritage is irreparably damaged. This economic exploitation of some of the Mediterranean’s most ecologically fragile areas has brought only rarely—if ever—the promised positive effects on the sustainable development of a region and was unable to foster the improvement of the life standards of

3 Among several examples for an exemplary management and modelling of archaeological sites/parks, I would like to highlight Messene and Nikopolis (Greece) as well as Selinunte and Agrigent (Italy).

the local population. All aforementioned stakeholders (state, local authorities, the Archaeological Service, academic institutions, entrepreneurs, and the local population) constitute a social conglomeration which is characterized by diverging or even conflicting interests. Given this unfavourable situation, the following questions arise as urgent challenges:

- a. Is it possible to develop sustainable management models for protecting, preserving, and promoting cultural heritage without running any risk of commercialization?⁴
- b. Can archaeology as an academic field contribute to this dialogue by practicing the turn to an ‘applied discipline’ and thus acquire a relevance and significance for our society through the sensible implementation of theoretical concepts for practical modern concerns?⁵
- c. And finally, is it possible that citizens/local communities participate in this dialogue as active agents, being able to determine the fate of *their* heritage sites and—more important still—to implement them as basis of a sustainable economic development?⁶

Through a balanced combination of archaeological theory and practice as well as the commitment to a participatory principle that will embrace all stakeholders, archaeological sites/landscapes can be not only modelled by implementing innovative ideas but also contribute to the sustainable development of peripheral Mediterranean regions. The scientific and social potential of such an approach is explained briefly below, with reference to the concept of archaeological *entopias* and to an on-going archaeological project in south central Crete as a case study.

From archaeological *heterotopias* to archaeological *entopias*

For the ‘modern lives’ of archaeological remains, their inherent historic significance is not enough. Monuments and sites must be energetically ‘modelled’, in an ideal case in the course of creative interdisciplinary projects that involve the participation of archaeologists, historians, ethnologists, architects, and geographers.⁷ This process of conscious ‘placemaking’⁸ refers to both a symbolic and a practical level, i.e.: a) to the transformation of the mon-

4 See Timothy 2011; Bendix 2018; Pacelli and Sica 2021.

5 Erickson 1992.

6 Arnstein 1969; Stroulia and Buck Sutton 2010; Mergos and Patsavos 2017. For rural archaeological sites/landscapes, the active participation of local communities presupposes a certain level of appreciation and engagement with indigenous knowledge. For the increasing significance of indigenous knowledge, see Nakashima 2010; Raina 2019.

7 De Cesari and Dimova 2019.

8 Schneekloth and Shibley 1995; Mosler 2019.

ument/site/landscape into a place of living memory, belonging, and collective identity at a local or national level, and b) to the modelling of a place as a heritage site for financial purposes (tourism or urban regeneration). The key element for a successful placemaking is the notion of solidarity, the crucial factor which can bridge social distances among the involved groups and individuals. Therefore, one of the most pressing desiderata of the modern concept of cultural heritage is ‘commoning’,⁹ i.e. the creation of a framework which will enable the management of shared resources on the basis of participatory principles.¹⁰

In the search of a clearly definable goal of a heritagisation plan¹¹ for archaeological sites/landscapes, one has to start with their actual state, in other words, the way in which they present themselves today to the visitors and/or local communities. From the perspective of both groups, the majority of archaeological sites are perceived as *heterotopias*, namely, according to M. Foucault’s definition of this term, different places set aside from actual place, a disruption of space, a counter-space.¹² Within the fence, an archaeological site is a ‘landscape of ruins’, a fossilized space of a distant past that is void of any activity, except being the object of visual perception. One of the greatest challenges of modern archaeology must be therefore the question of how to reactivate these sites by transforming them to *entopias*, i.e., to places ‘within’, the distinct, authentic places which are simultaneously ideal, existing, and functional.¹³ Heritage sites shaped as archaeological *entopias* can function not only as living places of shared memory but also as basis for a sustainable development of their areas and local populations. This idea can be implemented for both urban and rural sites, yet, with different tools and objectives. In the case of archaeological sites in rural regions, on which this paper focuses, the main challenge is to move from the narrowness of the fenced archaeological site to the (archaeological/cultural) landscape in which the first is embedded. For quite a long time, archaeologists tended to focus exclusively on the material remains of archaeological sites, neglecting their natural environment as well as the various ways in which the latter determined the cultural trajectory of ancient communities. Only in recent years, the impressive development of landscape archaeology, novel methods of digital documentation of spatial data, and—last but not least—the concerns of a society which rapidly transforms itself shifted the archaeological interest from ‘site’ to ‘landscape’, thus creating totally new possibilities for the dynamic—scientific and social—engagement of archaeologists in regions with rich cultural and natural heritage.¹⁴ Therefore, the great potential of

9 Bollier and Helfrich 2015; Bollier 2016, 2; further Calvagna in this volume.

10 See Laaksonen 2010; Bishop 2016; Roued-Cunliffe and Copeland 2017.

11 Brosius and Polit 2012.

12 Foucault 1986.

13 Doxiadis 1966; 1975.

14 Gosden and Head 1994. Concepts and strategies developed for the revitalisation of urban cultural heritage can provide fruitful stimuli also for rural landscapes, see Labadi and Logan 2016; Williams 2016; Wolfrum 2018.

archaeological landscapes lies not only in their purely scientific significance as an analytical category but primarily in their capacity to provide a juncture between past and present as well as between archaeology and society. What we need are landscape-oriented strategies for contrasting isolation and integrating archaeological landscapes harmoniously into the life and economic and social activities of the local population. In every effort to realise these ideas, the main objective should be to generate from spatial coexistence a ‘cohabitation’, creating an interface between past and present.¹⁵ The challenges which arise during the process of implementation of the *entopia* concept are discussed in the last part of the paper which takes the on-going archaeological project at Minoan Koumasa (south central Crete), directed by the author, as a case study.

Minoan Koumasa and the reconstruction of an archaeological landscape

Since Stephanos Xanthoudides’ excavations between 1904 and 1906 and the subsequent publication of their results in 1924,¹⁶ Koumasa occupies a very prominent position in Minoan archaeology. Located strategically on the foothills of Eastern Asterousia and overlooking a large part of the Mesara plain (Fig. 2–3), Koumasa was predestined to play an important role as a regional centre during the dynamic social processes that transformed Early Bronze Age Crete to a palatial society. This importance was reflected in the impressive finds from the old excavations in the cemetery which included hundreds of clay and stone vases, seals, amulets, jewellery, and ritual objects. More than one hundred years after the first excavations at Koumasa, a new research program commenced in 2012 under the auspices of the Archaeological Society at Athens and the cooperation of the Heidelberg Institute of Classical Archaeology and Byzantine Archaeology and the Heraklion Ephorate of Antiquities. The interdisciplinary project initially pursued the simple aim to thoroughly explore the nearby settlement and relate the new results with those from Xanthoudides’ excavation.¹⁷ The potential of this envisaged correlation appeared to be very promising, since the systematic excavation of a south Cretan settlement related to a cemetery has been a long-standing desideratum in Minoan Archaeology. The comprehensive exploration and study of one of the major regional centres of south-central Crete aspired to demonstrate

15 One of the most promising novel ideas is that rural archaeological sites can be transformed into spaces that combine not only a temporal but also a biological diversity, see Wilson 1988. The conception of inventive forms corresponding to new or ancient functions and uses of the territory could include cultivation within archaeological sites as one of the most important forms of their stewardship, see Donadieu 2014. Biodiversity embedded in a landscape master-plan as a design tool would create links between past, present, and future as well as between culture, ecology, and economy.

16 Xanthoudides 1924.

17 Panagiotopoulos 2012; 2015b.



Fig. 2 Minoan Koumasa and the Mesara plain (photo: Andreas Neumann).

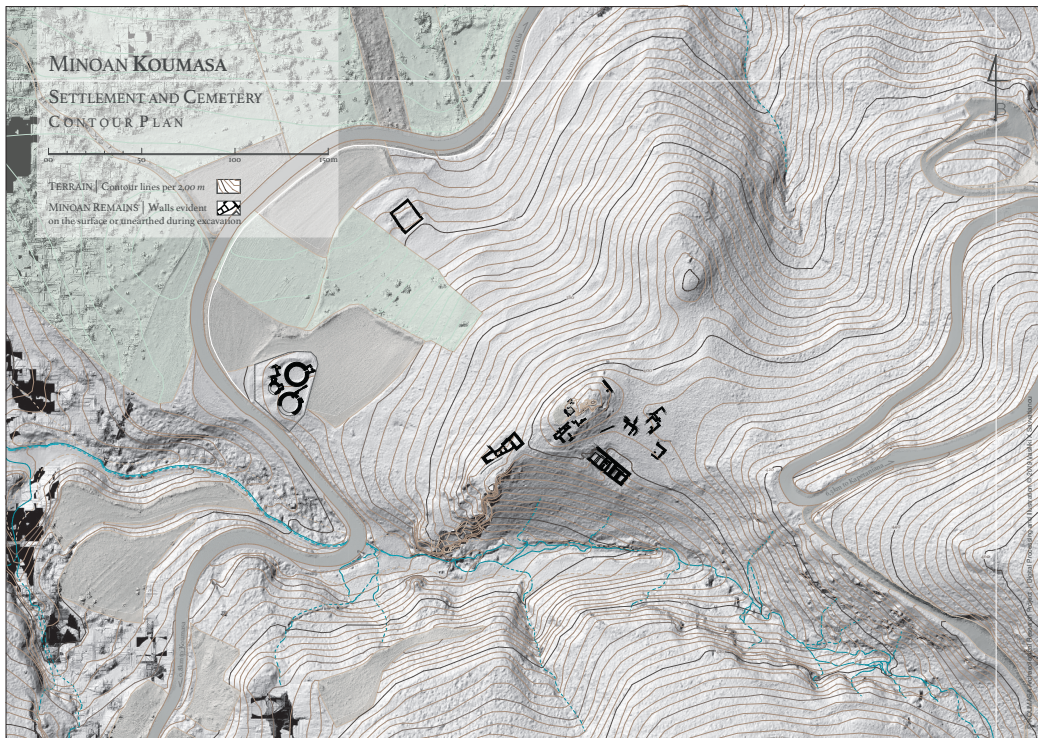


Fig. 3 Plan of the archaeological site of Minoan Koumasa.

how refreshing and important a view from the periphery can be in our attempt to understand the cultural trajectories of Cretan regions in the Bronze Age.¹⁸

Yet, from the very first year of the new project, nothing went according to the original plan. Nonetheless, the reasons for this deviation from the initial concept were thoroughly positive. Our intention to systematically excavate the settlement and to provide only a new digital plan of the already-excavated cemetery had to be adapted to a new challenge: during the first campaign in 2012, we realized that the cemetery was not fully excavated (Fig. 4).¹⁹ Its systematic exploration started in the following year (2013) and was completed



Fig. 4 Koumasa: plan of the Minoan cemetery.

only in 2018, i.e. after several years of systematic work during which we discovered one more burial structure (a small ossuary), several pockets of unexcavated debris, both within and around the tombs, and numerous undisturbed contexts with hundreds of precious finds and thousands of burnt bones from secondary burials *in situ*.²⁰ The new spectacular finds confirmed the regional significance of Koumasa in the Prepalatial and Protopalatial period (3rd and early 2nd millennium BCE) and offered novel insights into the Minoan burial rituals which are currently the object of systematic analysis. The excavation at the adjacent settlement (Fig. 5), which after these surprising discoveries had to proceed at a slower pace, already produced significant results which pose to our team new challenges of interpre-

18 See Haggis 2002, 122: “If indeed the region represents the critical scale at which organisational and cultural systems operate [...], and the effective scale at which those systems might be observable in the archaeological record [...], then we might begin defining socio-economic or political complexity not in terms of centres, but in terms of their surrounding areas”.

19 Panagiotopoulos 2012.

20 Panagiotopoulos 2013; 2014; 2015a; 2016; 2017a; 2017b; 2018.

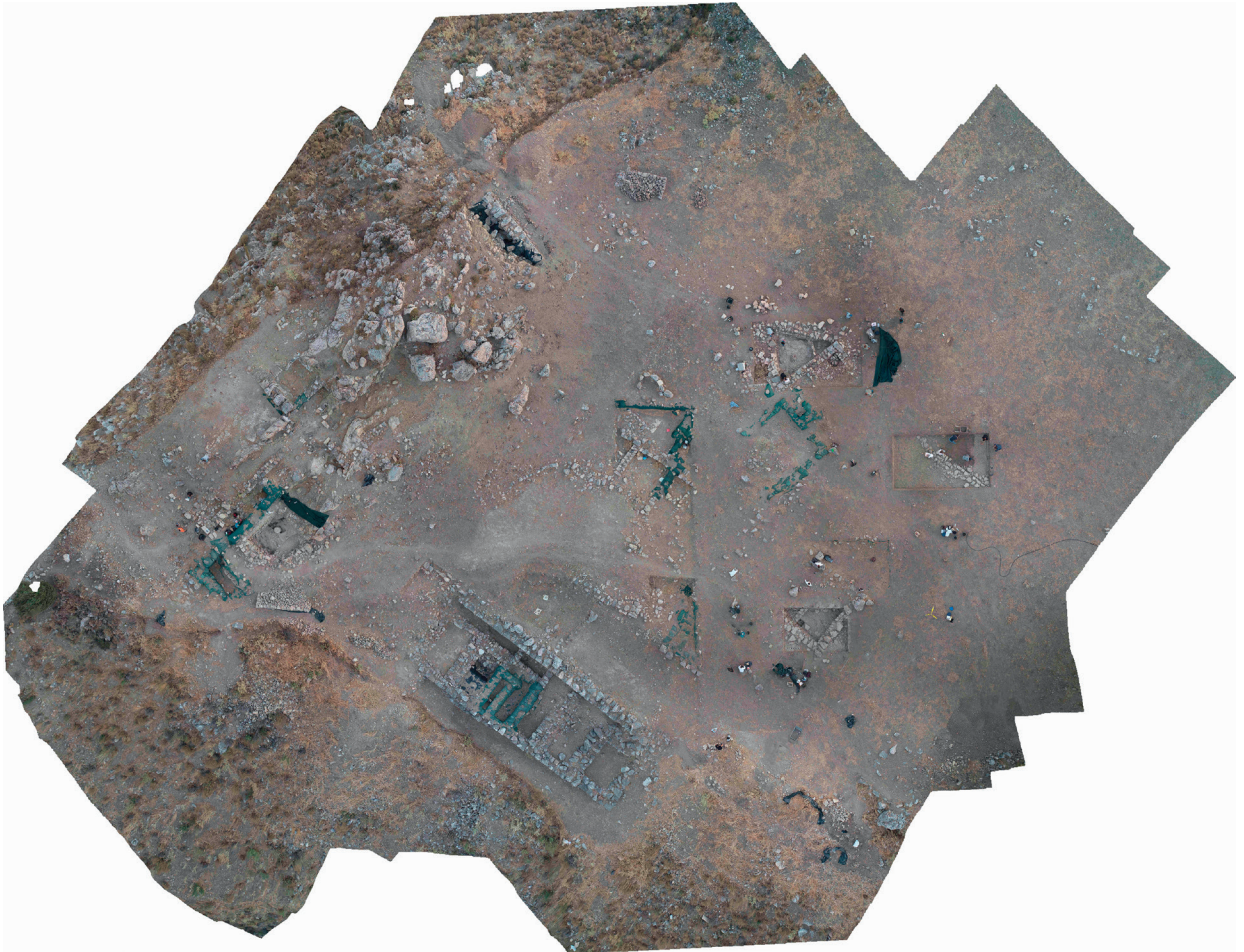


Fig. 5 Koumasa: Orthophoto of the Minoan settlement.

tation.²¹ The uncovered buildings show traces of a violent destruction which was followed by the abandonment of the settlement. The most encouraging fact that resulted from the limited excavation in the previous years is the certainty that the settlement at Koumasa has thick archaeological deposits which in combination with an evident destruction horizon and the extremely favourable taphonomical parameters, ensure an impressive wealth of archaeological data that awaits to be explored systematically by implementing cutting-edge documentation methods. The excavation in all trenches confirmed the destruction and abandonment of the settlement in the Late Minoan I period (c. 1650–1450 BCE) and thus in a period considerably later than the abandonment of the nearby cemetery, the use of which

21 Panagiotopoulos 2012; 2013; 2014; 2015a; 2018; 2019.

ended in the Middle Minoan IB/II A period. The rich floor deposits in several excavation trenches leave no doubt that the end and abandonment of the settlement was a dramatic event. Furthermore, trial pits produced clear evidence for earlier occupation phases that must be dated in the Protopalatial period, to which also the last phase of the cemetery can be dated. The settlement's plan cannot be studied in detail yet, since only small parts of it have been explored so far. However, the common orientation of most walls provides clear evidence either for a massive building or for several buildings within a planned and well-organized settlement.

During the same period, however, the magnetic power of the Asterousia region and its people started impacting the archaeological team in a way in which we did not expect and were certainly not prepared for. The longer we mingled, lived, and worked with our local friends, the more we shared their most urgent concerns and let them shape our objectives. During this process, it became apparent to us that the traditional way of engaging with an archaeological site and the standard archaeological methods, priorities, and goals would have been extremely one-sided, if not naïve, for a scientific team working in the 21st century in a marginal Mediterranean landscape that was affected by a severe economic crisis. Only through a drastic reconsideration of the project's overall concept, we could respond to the challenges of this region, cope with current problems, and finally, exploit the scientific and social potential of archaeological research in an unspoiled landscape. The broadening of our scientific interests both in terms of time (diachrony) and space (landscape) has been thus inevitable. The rethinking of our methods and goals concerned two levels of action: a scientific and a social one.

At the scientific level, one imperative amendment has been the broadening of our interests from the site to landscape and from its history in Minoan times to its diachronic trajectory. Koumasa is a border locality, situated at the junction of two regions that—at least from a modern perspective—are diametrically opposed to each other: on the one hand, the fertile and during most of its history densely populated Mesara plain and, on the other hand, the barren and deserted Eastern Asterousia mountains (Fig. 6). Moreover, the wider landscape of Koumasa encompasses mountains, valleys, and the coastal line, thus providing the opportunity of a much more diversified and comprehensive approach to the interaction between man and natural environment in the Cretan Bronze Age. Koumasa has therefore an obvious hermeneutical potential for the dynamic patterns of human activity in a Mediterranean landscape from a diachronic perspective.

Looking at Koumasa from such a diachronic perspective, there is a crucial question which comes up almost inevitably for every visitor of the site who sees the ruins of a thriving Bronze Age centre lying next to modern Koumasa, one of Crete's most isolated villages (Fig. 7). How can we explain this dramatic contrast between now and then, in other words, a divide that represents one of the most common experiences in field archaeology? The same question of shifting centralities becomes even more accentuated when we turn our atten-



Fig. 6 The Mesara plain and the Asterousia mountain range (photo by the autor).



Fig. 7 Koumasa: Minoan site (in the background) and modern settlement (photo: Andreas Neumann).

tion to Koumasa's wider landscape. Since the Mesara plain has been studied extensively in the past decades,²² a significant part of our project will focus on the geomorphology and history of the considerably less known area of the Asterousia mountains (Fig. 8), a marginal and heterogeneous landscape situated between an economically important fertile zone and a highly frequented antique maritime route along the south coast of the island. This deserted



Fig. 8 Asterousia mountain range (photo by the author).

region has experienced an extremely varied history, either being isolated, as it is today, or densely populated, as it was the case in several periods in antiquity, thus oscillating over the centuries back and forth from an isolated periphery to a culturally thriving landscape and from insignificance to prominence. This oscillating movement between centre and periphery determined the region's cultural trajectory in the last two millennia. After its last period of isolation in Late Antiquity, Asterousia, due to its marginal geographical position and mountainous character, became again 'central' in the Early Byzantine Period (4th to 8th century) as one of the first and most prominent centres of early monasticism.²³ Several centuries later, one of the most prominent scholars of the 14th century, Joseph Philagres, a commentator on Aristotle and copyist, was forced to leave Candia, which was under the fierce rule of the Venetians and the Latin Church. He sought refuge in Asterousia, where in

22 See mainly Watrous et al. 2004.

23 Voulgarakis 2017.

the middle of the Cretan nowhere, in the Monastery of Trees Ierarches (Three Hierarchs) at Lousoudi, he established one of the first scriptoria in the Aegean, where he apparently not only copied ancient manuscripts but studied and taught ancient literature, philosophy, and astronomy.²⁴ Soon after his death, the area faded again into cultural insignificance until the beginning of the 15th century, when the small Byzantine church of another monastery in the vicinity was decorated with wall paintings of the highest artistic quality by artists from Constantinople who had recently arrived on the island. Since the 17th century—and after the abandonment of the monastery—this church, dedicated to Panagia (Holy Mother), was embedded into the village of Kapetaniana, the most important settlement in a very thinly populated region. After three centuries of undisputed regional importance, Kapetaniana experienced a steady decline in the second half of the 20th century and was gradually abandoned by its younger inhabitants. Yet, after the recent construction of an agrotouristic resort, in the very middle of the village, by renovating some deserted houses and by trying to couple Cretan traditions with modern European norms, the village became suddenly a thriving place again as a favourite hideaway and meeting point for demanding guests both from Crete and beyond. The wider Asterousia region provides thus an elucidating case study for this tension between space and history: places and landscapes may have their own distinctive and intrinsic qualities that determine much of their ‘geographic field of possibilities’, yet their cultural trajectories are shaped by a complex interplay of tangible or intangible processes that are beyond these qualities. What also becomes apparent is the ambivalence of centrality: the non-central character of Asterousia, its remoteness from political and administrative centres of power, was the determining precondition for processes of centrality that turned the region from a deserted province into a focus or hub of religious, artistic, or leisure activities. In the course of this historical development, the landscape was both central and non-central at the same time, thus confirming one of archaeology’s unwritten laws, namely that everything is a matter of perspective. The unbroken flows generated by asymmetries at the micro-, meso- and macro-level make clear that what we need is more methodological reflexivity that will facilitate a multiscale approach. Only so can we grasp what N. Purcell so aptly formulated as the “paroxysm of factors” which are always at stake in a Mediterranean context.²⁵

Moving from the scientific to the social level of action, we soon understood that it would be unfair and futile to focus exclusively on the significance of Koumasa in Minoan times or the impressive diachrony of the Asterousia region and demand from the local communities to preserve their cultural heritage at all costs, while these people were confronted with a severe financial crisis, worrying year after year whether they will be forced again, after some months of exhaustive work, to sell their olive oil at a shamefully low price or how to cope

24 Papazoglou 2008; Steiris 2015.

25 Purcell 2003, 13, 23.

with the increasing expenses of grazing their flocks. The question that has inevitably arisen for us was whether it is possible for archaeologists to play a more active role not only by recording processes of becoming central and/or non-central but also by acting as agents who could generate them.

Given that an archaeological project is a long-term endeavour, I think that it has the potential—or better say, the obligation—to change the fate of an isolated region. What we have to do is to find a way to bridge our scientific interests with the concerns of the local people and pursue our common objectives together. This grand challenge of archaeology for the 21st century has been very aptly formulated by T. Spek who stressed that our main concern should be “how the knowledge of the past and the care for cultural heritage can be integrated into an innovative strategy for landscape stewardship” and also “how local experiential knowledge and scientific expertise can be amalgamated and translated into a participatory planning process”.²⁶ The realisation of such a plan should incorporate all crucial aspects of the diachronic history of a region into one entity, one archaeological/cultural landscape encompassing geology, geography, fauna, and flora but also the material remains from the past and finally the way(s) of life of the local population, traditional techniques, rituals, and habits that are authentic and, as such, part of the long history of this region. The success of any effort towards the direction of a holistic management concept of the Asterousia landscape undoubtedly requires a fit conjuncture which in this specific case is now approaching through the combination of three factors:

- a. Crete’s Framework for Spatial Planning and Sustainable Development which was ratified in 2017, prescribing a zoning system for specific activities in each area,²⁷
- b. the ambitious plans of the Heraklion Ephorate of Antiquities to create a network of archaeological sites of the Mesara and Asterousia region using the new Archaeological Museum of the Mesara at Gortyn as a gate to this network,²⁸ and
- c. the inscription of the Asterousia Mountain Range on the UNESCO’s World Network of Biosphere Reserves in 2020.²⁹

Our project aspires to be prepared for meeting these upcoming challenges by working on a master plan for the sustainable development of the wider Koumasa region that includes past and present and is based on the notion of *entopia* as a conceptual framework for studying and shaping a spatial entity based on the principles of identity, relevance, and uniqueness.³⁰

26 Spek 2017, 148 and passim.

27 <https://ypen.gov.gr/wp-content/uploads/2020/11/3827.2010-ΦΕΚ-Α30.pdf> (accessed on 5 July 2022).

28 See Sythiakaki et al. in this volume.

29 <https://en.unesco.org/biosphere/eu-na/asterousia-mountain-range> (accessed on 5 July 2022).

30 © *Minoan Entopia*, see Panagiotopoulos and Savvatanou, forthcoming.

In close cooperation with colleagues from other archaeological projects and disciplines as well as with the local population and the local authorities, we want to preserve, study, and promote this unique landscape as an environment shaped by man and nature. We understand the archaeological landscape not as a conserved archaeological site which is fenced off and strictly protected and thus presents an exhibited dead landscape but as a vivid space in which past and present can coexist according to a well-thought-out plan. The concept of the museum in which the material traces of the past are presented out of context in a sterile space is outdated. The museum of the 21st century is the landscape. Therefore, we envisage replacing the experience of the vitrine with the experience of a passage, a passage through space and time in an unspoiled region, in which one can see and understand the traces of the man-environment interaction and, therefore, better comprehend the dynamics of cultural change. We want the visitors to be able to perceive ancient and modern realities of a landscape as a homogeneous whole by activating all their senses. This concept of the multisensory perception of an archaeological landscape provides in my view a much better and sincere way for reviving the past than re-enactment which is based on a fake experience. In the case of an archaeological landscape, all sensual stimuli a visitor should receive from the past (by seeing and touching) and from the present (by hearing, eating, smelling) will be real, linking past and present to each other as fitting parts of a diachronic whole. The realisation of a multisensory perception of a landscape will also give us the possibility to include the local population and their authentic practices as an integral part of the landscape by offering them the possibility of a sustainable economic development which will be in accordance with the special character and fragility of this region.

For all these reasons, our excavation sets an aim that at first glance might seem quite paradoxical, namely to be a field project that should not be completed but continued in the next decades, thus becoming an integral part of the cyclic movement of this marginal landscape. On the basis of this concept, we wish to present Koumasa not as a fossilized archaeological site but as a vivid co-laboratory of archaeological research, in which the local population and the visitors will be able to witness what is actually the core of the archaeological process, namely our efforts to transform the find into an exhibit by employing all scientific methods at our disposal. With our work, we aspire to activate the power of the place and to contribute to a collective attempt to make Asterousia a region of both a unique aesthetic experience and a prominent focus of modern scientific research.

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