

CONTENTS

Prolegomenon – Dimitra Babalis	7
Introduction	9
Chapter 1 – An Introduction to Ancient Messene	12
Chapter 2 – Overview of the Archaeological Site of Ancient Messene	16
Chapter 3 – Analysis of the Standards for Documentation & Broader Digital Cultural Management Systems	24
3.1. Sources of Material	24
3.2. Using international documentation standards for the safe preservation, organisation and promotion of Cultural Heritage	28
3.3. Copyright management of cultural records for open access to cultural data	29
3.4. International Recording Standards. International Digital Infrastructure. The case of the EDM	30
3.5. The need to safeguard the meaning of cultural collections. Methodologies for approaching and transferring cultural data	35
Chapter 4 – Spatial Survey of the Application Site and Monument Visit Rates	46
4.1. Physical Space	46
4.2. Cultural Background	46
4.3. Field Research on monument visit rates	48
4.4. Conclusions: Connecting Movement with Information	55
Chapter 5 – Information Organisation Methodology and Tour Structures	58
5.1. Digital Tour Application Design	59
5.2. Data Collection	61
5.3. Organization and Sources of Information	65
5.4. The Multimedia Application	67
5.5. Categorisation Of The Tour Structures	70
5.6. Discussion	77
Chapter 6. – Archaeological Site Tour Infrascture	78
6.1. Functional Features Of The Archaeological Site	78
6.2. Proposals for the organization of data in the Archaeological Site of Ancient Messene	81
6.3. Discussion	89
Epilogue – Conclusive Comments in Favor of a Scientific Privilege	90
Bibliography	92

PROLEGOMENON

The essays of this publication are based on a research program held by a valuable Scientific Team of the National Technical University of Athens, (NTUA) together with the special contribution of the Ephorate of Antiquities of Messenia, the Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies, and the IT Applications Development Company Diadrasis. The Program is completed in 2023 and it was funded by the European Regional Development Fund of the European Union and the Greek National Funds, through the Operational Program Competitiveness, Entrepreneurship, and Innovation, under the call "Research - Create - Innovate" for the period 2014-2020.

The book in all its chapters clearly highlights how archaeological sites should be considered for their outstanding heritage assets and the capability to disseminate historical, cultural, and educational value. The archaeological sites' unique and constantly evolving setting can recognize sensitivity and beauty of a place. But also, is recognized the great complexity on organising their physical environment to support archaeologists, visitors, and locals. However, most of them present limited historical descriptions on the site, of monuments and natural surroundings as well. For sure they need to advance changes in order to create new circumstances for acknowledge for visitors and guided tours.

The publication demonstrates how the applicability and recognition of specific digital methods and tools can play an important role on the interpretation and understanding of the cultural heritage, in relation to the image of valuable heritage landscapes. At the same time, technology can encourage a deeper understanding of places, narrate the history, and help people to translate interpretation and learning of monuments and context. The book identifies the added value that digital technology can bring for promotion, preservation, and benefits of such valuable cultural landscapes. Technology can improve spatial organisation such as accessibility, mobility, and perceptibility for all; facilitate precise signage for monuments and sites enhancing open spaces and integrate natural landscape with human spirit. This approach can be found in several plans and projects that will have implications for the cultural heritage value of archaeological sites.

In turn, the case study of the ancient Messene taken into consideration is a good example that directly brings to a deeper interpretation of the valuable landscape that reflects the history of the period and at the same time the application of digital technology defines knowledge of structural adaptations and spatial evolution.

The InterArch design research project, based on digital representation that supports technology, surely gives an added value on the Messinian archaeological site than ever before. Surely, aims to cover further research knowledge and applicability of technology towards a positive innovation of cultural landscapes.

Dimitra Babalis
The Series Editor

INTRODUCTION

Research objective

Archaeological sites are important landmarks of significant cultural, historical, and educational value. They are often located in places of outstanding natural beauty. In contrast to museum exhibitions, being organized and structured, archaeological sites enable visitors to associate more freely with the physical environment. Archaeological visits are significant on their own right, combining cultural and historical data, with the constantly evolving natural landscape of the archaeological excavation. Presently, mobile applications, specifically developed for archaeological guided tours, include mere historical descriptions of the site monuments and archaeological findings. However, there is limited reference to the ways the site monuments are associated with their natural and cultural surroundings. At the same time augmented reality-based mobile applications give priority to visual information (systems of virtual reality and 3D object representation), diminishing partially the multisensory character of the actual visit.

InterArch involves the design of a site-based digital application, for archaeological visits and guided tours. The research program integrates an interactive approach to the natural environment, aiming at a manifold sensory experience. It also implements story telling processes, by engaging an interdisciplinary approach, that familiarizes the user to multiple semantic interpretations and free associations with the cultural descriptions.

Interacting with knowledge and space may yield to rich cultural experience. Implementing ubiquitous computing by using sensors and actuators, that seamlessly blend with their surroundings, visitors may explore and discover freely the archaeological site. In addition, this project aiming at personalization, enables visitors to freely associate with the available information. Exceeding the physical boundaries of the archaeological site, the visitors engage semantically with the cultural content provided, supporting multiple interpretations and associations, that connect historical data to the present time.

The proposed application was developed as a pilot for the Archaeological site of Ancient Messene and will be implemented for visitors on-site, for validation, to enhance its availability for adaptation to other archaeological sites and cultural environments.

The case study

Ancient Messene is amongst the most important archaeological sites in Greece, founded in 369 BC by the famous Theban General Epaminondas, stood on the remains of the old city, that had already existed there since late 9th century BC. Built at the foothills of Mount Ithome, in a valley of outstanding natural beauty, of olive groves, vineyards, and orchards, surrounded by imposing

fortifications and Gateways, a city of monumental architecture, of building assemblages, public spaces and free-standing major works of sculpture, is brought to light.

The city's emblematic structures also became a symbol of political independence of the Messenian nation, following the almost four hundred years Spartan rule and constant warfare. The multilayered history that underlies the architectural and archaeological environment of the site is also associated with numerous material and immaterial indices and extensive cultural references. Our research aims at the unravelling of the multidimensional aspects of the ancient city by incorporating them into the archaeological narrative.

The physical configuration of the landscape, along with the building assemblages, divide the city into three distinctive functional zones that form its religious, political and commercial centers: a. The Ancient Agora and the Ancient Theatre b. The Asklepion and its adjacent public buildings c. The Stadium and the Gymnasium. Furthermore, a multi layered cultural landscape of Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine structures outline the morphological character of the city, with its Hippodamian plan. The distinctive morphological features of the ancient city and its explicit spatial structure became the primary field of research.

The city's remains are situated almost intact, having not been destroyed by more recent settlements. The ongoing excavation works over the past thirty years, have brought to light an impressive ensemble of public buildings, sanctuaries, houses, public spaces, fortifications, and tombs. The extensive archaeological findings in an environment of outstanding natural beauty of 200 acres, along with the systematic restoration works and monument reconstruction, by the Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies [1] and the Ephorate of Antiquities of Messenia, establish a comparative advantage for the city of Messene, as one of the most visited archaeological locations.

Finally, a standard guided tour system for archaeological sites is produced, utilizing services to locate and discover the exhibits by building interaction relationships with both space and information. A standard guided tour system with an emphasis on the end user lived experience that also addresses special groups of visitors, such as the visually or hearing impaired.



Overview of the Archaeological Site of Ancient Messene

The archaeological site of Ancient Messene is one of the most important in Greece. The ongoing archaeological investigation and the systematic excavation and restoration work carried out by the Society of Messenian Archaeological Studies, in collaboration with the Ephorate of Antiquities of Messene, over several decades have revealed a unique landscape in which the daily life of an ancient city unfolded. Within the area enclosed by the 9.5-kilometre-long walls, the urban fabric with its monumental public buildings, structures and open-air configurations of a functional, cult and political nature coexists with large cultivated fields and olive groves, as well as part of Mt Ithome, which rises imposingly to the north. Turning south, visitors can scan the whole of the fertile valley below. The archaeological site lies north to south, offering visitors the chance to see finds dating from the Archaic to the Late Roman and early Christian periods, a timespan of approximately a thousand years.

The topography of the site is very distinctive, the land gradually rising to form three distinct levels with a significant difference in height, with the main monument on each level defining the wider area. Thus three successive levels are identified:

- I. The level of the Agora with the Theatre
- II. The level of the Asklepieion
- III. The level of the Stadium

All the buildings of Messene share the same orientation and are set within a grid formed by horizontal and vertical streets. This urban plan is known as the Hippodamian

grid, after its originator Hippodamus of Miletus, an architect, town planner, geometrician and astronomer of the 5th c. BC. This predetermined grid pattern, divided into equal parts, imparts to the space the principles of isonomy (equality under the law), isopolity (equal civic rights) and isomoiria (equal sharing of land), i.e. the virtues of democracy, offering all citizens plots of land of equal size and suitability, and access to public and sacred buildings. It was on precisely these principles that the Theban Epaminondas and his Argive allies built the new capital of autonomous Messene in 369 BC, after their glorious victory over the Spartans at the Battle of Leuctra. This victory marked the end of Laconian hegemony and the lengthy oppression of the Messenian people, who had been repeatedly forced to leave their homeland during the Messenian Wars.

The city was named after the first mythical pre-Dorian queen of the country, Messene (Messana in the Doric dialect), daughter of King Triopas of Argos and wife of the Laconian Polycaon. Pausanias tells us that, during the preparations for the city's construction, the Messenians offered all the proper sacrifices and dedications to the gods and the ancestral heroes and kings of the country, asking them to return and dwell alongside them in the new city, while Epaminondas was honoured as the hero founder of the city.

There follows a brief overview of the finds within the archaeological site, organised according to the three topographical levels mentioned above.

Plan of the centre of the ancient city and its levels (Source: InterArch).



2.1. The level of the Agora with the Theatre

On the first level of the archaeological site, the two great monuments of the Hellenistic period that delimit the area to the north, the **Theatre and the North Stoa of the Agora**, are the most clearly visible. Less easily apparent finds lie under and over the archaeological remains of the larger monuments; these include the “**Church within a House**” west of the Theatre and the architectural remains of a **Byzantine settlement** that extend across the whole upper level of the Theatre, continuing north and east, while at the west end of the North Stoa are the **Roman Baths**.

The **Theatre of Messene** is one of the great theatres of Late Classical and Hellenistic antiquity, on a par with those of **Epidaurus and Megalopolis**. It was used not only as a venue for performances and spectacles in general, but also as a site of mass political assemblies. Directly west of the upper cavea are floors paved with colourful mosaics belonging to luxury residences of the Roman period used as “prayer houses”, as a “**Church within a House**”, and associated with the first Christian congregations of the community. A new **Byzantine settlement** was built across the whole upper level of the Theatre, extending north and east, from the 9th to the 15th century AD, leading to the gradual destruction of the epitheatre and the demolition of the east outer retaining wall of the cavea.

In the large building of the **North Stoa of the Agora**, which extends eastwards, are visible the remains of two internal Corinthian colonnades, while the outer colonnade was Doric. The Stoa contained no shops, but instead had seven rectangular niches with statues. However, in its furthest northeast corner, where three stone tables are preserved, was an agoranomeion (market overseer’s office), to control the activities of the merchants in the agora.

Between the Theatre and the North Stoa is the **Arsinoe Fountain**, which played an important role in the functioning of the city of Ancient Messene. In front of the great retaining wall was a system of three basins fed by a duct from the Klepsydra Spring, supplying the whole ancient city with water. The operation of the **Sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis**, south of the stage of the Theatre, also involved the use of water, an element which played a prominent part in the cult ritual of the Egyptian gods. The sanctuary contained a

series of large underground rooms, known as “water crypts”, used for sacred initiation rites and immersion.

The Temple of Isis, the Iseum, extended east of the Early Byzantine **Basilica**. The excavation of the church has revealed the semicircular apse on the east, the main church in the centre, divided by colonnades into three aisles, and the entrance narthex at the west end, which was probably connected to a baptistery. Many of the architectural elements of the church come from Roman and Hellenistic buildings.

Moving on towards the centre of the **Agora**, east of the Basilica, there stands the colonnade of a Doric stoa called, according to the finds, the “Pantopolis stoa”, the “stoa of Nikaios” or the “stoa alongside the **Meat Market**”, leading to four shops including a slaughterhouse.

In the southeast part of the Agora level is the **Doric peripteral Temple of Messana**, which contained the cult statues of the deified first queen of Messenia, in the familiar type of the personified city, wearing a “crown” in the form of a tower.

Around the temple lie the architectural remains of two more buildings. North of the temple is the **Bouleion**, a rectangular building in the form of a hypostyle hall, while west of the temple is the colonnade and the elaborate entablature of the porch of the **Prytaneion**, which led to two halls with clay slab flooring.

Among the buildings of the Agora were even smaller monuments, statues, resolutions and decrees of the elected authorities, publicising the public affairs and the external and commercial relations of the city. Along the north side of the Temple of Messana were found **two intact stelai bearing lengthy decrees** in respect of Messenian judges, while southeast of the Bouleion are the remains of a large pedestal known as the **inscribed pedestal of the horsemen**. It bore bronze statues of two horsemen, probably representing the Dioskouroi, with a long inscription of 191 lines referring to the judicial hearing of a border dispute between Messene and Megalopolis, by a body of 147 jurors from Mytilene. The issue was decided in favour of the Messenians.

Two sacred underground chambers serving important city functions were also discovered in the Agora. South of the Temple of Messana

Messene: the level of the Agora with the Theatre
(Source: P. Themelis SMAS).

is the city **Treasury**, used to store precious objects and gold and silver coins, the proceeds of taxation or spoils of war. There is another underground chamber next to the southwest corner of the Bouleion. This is the **Well with the Infants**, where newborn babies were buried separately; they had not reached three years of age and so were not considered full members of society.

2.2. The level of the Asklepieion

The second level of the archaeological site is dominated by the **Hellenistic building complex of the Asklepieion with the peripteral Doric temple and the great altar**, in the centre of a rectangular open space surrounded by colonnades leading to various rooms arranged around it. Pausanias (4.9.10) presents the **Asklepieion** as a museum of works of art, with spaces for displaying statues, rather than the usual temple of healing the sick. He also stresses the political aspect of **Asklepios of Messene**,

calling him a “Messenian citizen” (4.26.7). The Asklepieion complex was the centre of political life, and most of its rooms served state functions, particularly those of the north and east wings. The great halls of the **Sebasteion or Caesareum**, on either side of the north staircase, were originally used for official banquets but were later dedicated to the cult of Roma Dea and the Emperors. The small theatre of the **Ekklesiasterion** (Assembly Hall) in the northeast corner of the east wing was used for gatherings of a political nature, as well as theatrical or musical events. After the **East Propylon**, the **Bouleuterion** was the main gathering-place for the synedroi, the delegates representing the cities of independent, federal Messenia. In the southeast corner was the **Archive of the Secretary of the Synedroi**. Its visible architectural remains date from the Early Byzantine period, when it was reused.

Statues of **Tyche (Fortune)**, the personified city of **Thebes**, the **Theban Herakles**, **Apollo** and the **Nine Muses**, and the iron



statue of Epaminondas have been found in the oikoi of the west wing. The oikos of the **Artemision**, the first in the west wing to the north, was an especially sacred space: it contained the colossal **statue of Artemis Orthia as Phosphoros** (the Light-Bearer). The **Messenian sculptor Damophon** was chiefly responsible for the sculptural decoration of the Asklepieion complex, including the great cult group of the temple, depicting Asklepios with his sons Machaon and Podaleirios. His contribution was honoured by the Messene and six other cities, with the posthumous dedication of an **inscribed Doric column 3.30 metres high**, in the southeast corner of the open space. Here, walking along the stoa, we come to the funerary monument **Heroon D**, on slightly higher ground, which is also believed to have been dedicated to the sculptor and his family.

The **Hellenistic Baths** on the south side of the Asklepieion to the west also served a public function, while the building of the **Hierothysion** just south of the complex was used for sacred ceremonies associated with the city. It housed statues of the Twelve Gods of Olympus and a bronze statue of Epaminondas, who was honoured as the hero founder of Messene, equal to the gods. The function of the Hierothysion was directly related to the hierothytai, annually elected city officials responsible for the celebration of the Ithomaia and other religious festivals of the city.

Besides the visible Hellenistic remains, this was also the site of the earlier Archaic temple of Asklepios of the 7th-6th century BC, which was demolished in the late 3rd century BC to make way for the large Hellenistic building. **Finds from sacred buildings of an earlier period** are also found outside the northwest corner of the complex. Further west is the Sanctuary of Demeter and the Dioskouroi, dated, like the first Asklepieion, in the 7th century BC. It was integrated into the Hippodamian grid when the city was founded in 369 BC. Next to the Asklepieion was the small **sanctuary of Orthia** with the statue of Artemis; this ceased to function when the cult of the goddess was transferred to the newer Artemision, inside the new Asklepieion.

The ruins east of the Asklepieion are of later date. In a prominent position opposite the east entrance of the Asklepieion is a **funerary enclosure** constructed in the first half of the 2nd century BC, in honour of seven men and five women who fell in battle defending Messene. All **along the east road of the Asklepieion** and inside the complex itself is a densely built **Christian settlement** of the 5th to the 7th century AD. It is an extension of the settlement that arose around the upper part of the Theatre. Over 40 Christian tombs and at least two Early Christian basilicas have been found; the buildings were roughly made, incorporating fragments of architectural members and sculptures from



Messene: the level of the Temple of Asklepieion (Source: P. Themelis SMAS).

the surrounding Hellenistic buildings. To this group of buildings belongs the 90-metre-long Hellenistic stoa that runs along the north side of the Asklepieion, and which was built in the late 4th to the early 5th century AD.

The remains of a luxurious **urban villa** of the Roman period lie a short distance southeast of the Asklepieion. The building was destroyed in the last decades of the 4th century AD, shortly after 365 AD.

2.3. The level of the Stadium and the Gymnasium

On the lowest level of the archaeological site is the largest and most impressive building complex of the whole city, that of the **Stadium**, the **Gymnasium** and the **Palaestra**. They are accessed via the wide road connecting the Asklepieion to the west stoa of the Gymnasium, passing through the monumental tetrastyle **Doric Propylon**.

In ancient Greek societies, the education of the young was closely associated with athletic games. Gymnasia were the schools of the Greek world, where ephebes (adolescent boys) of the upper social classes were not only trained in physical exercise but taught reading, writing, arithmetic, geometry, literature and other subjects, preparing them to enter adulthood and assume positions of administrative responsibility. This is why the functions of the Stadium, the Gymnasium

and the Palaestra were usually combined for the three-year education of the ephebes.

The **Stadium** includes the 182-metre-long race-track and the north horseshoe-shaped section with 18 *cunei* (wedge-shaped sections), each with 18 rows of seats, divided by staircases. To the south, the sides of the race-track are bounded by a slope. On the west side of the horseshoe is the *exedra* (platform) with the bench where the members of the prize-giving committee for the athletes sat, and the throne of the priest of Zeus Ithomatas.

The imposing **Doric stoai of the Gymnasium**, largely restored from the original fallen architectural members, flank the Stadium on three sides. The longest, east stoa is also termed the Olympic stoa. The west stoa does not continue to the end of the Stadium because it is connected to the **Palaestra**, which consisted of a rectangular peristyle open-air court in the Doric style; this housed the baths and the rooms where the ephebes lived and trained. Along the west stoa has been revealed the system of underground drains connecting the toilet facilities of the complex to a central drain with running water.

In the Hellenistic period, such complexes became busy centres of public life and places to display important works of art, as attested by the finds from the Gymnasium of Messene, including the colossal **cult statue of Herakles** in the Farnese Hercules type,

Messene: the level of the Stadium and the Gymnasium (Source: P. Themelis SMAS).



and those of **Hermes and Theseus**, carved in the style of the Doryphoros of Polykleitos. The statues were discovered behind the west stoa, in rooms including a **temple of Herakles and Hermes**.

Besides the places of worship of the gods and the heroic protectors of youths, the area is scattered with heroa, dedicatory monuments and inscriptions praising glorious acts, meant to provide appropriate models of conduct to guide them in their adult lives. In front of the east stoa stand, in a straight line, a limestone **base with four relief shields commemorating a battle against the Spartans**, a tall Doric column that once bore on its capital a bronze statue, probably of Aristomenes, and, directly to the south, a **circular dome-shaped monument** with a carved Ionic crowning element. Of particular note is the **crown of a pedestal with an inscription of the 3rd century BC** found in the **north stoa of the Gymnasium**: the inscription commemorates the Spartan Damostratos, who managed to reconcile the eternal rivals Sparta and Messene.

Numerous choregic inscriptions are also found on the buildings, revealing the local Messenian aristocracy's habit of vainglorious competitive display, especially during the Roman period. This tendency seems to have been encouraged by the attitude of the Gymnasiarchs and their assistants, as we see from the architrave and metopes of the **main north façade of the Propylon**, which bear the dedicatory inscription and others referring to repairs carried out.

It is not surprising, then, that all the visible sides of the pedestals for bronze statues on the **south inner side of the Propylon** are covered in "graffiti" made by epebes who, following their teachers' example, carved their names in letters of different shapes and sizes, irregularly running in various directions. On the second step of the staircase is carved a **chequerboard** for a game played with counters, a form of noughts and crosses.

The door pillars and columns of the west stoa of the Gymnasium and the Palaestra are also carved with lists of the epebes of Messene, in an irregular way, indicating that the practice was not systematic or controlled by the Messenian state, nor was it intended to "publicise" acts of the state in order to inform the citizens.

Bringing the epebes into contact not only with the legacy of the heroes but also with

the world of the dead, together with the accompanying traditions and rituals, was considered a highly important part of the process of their integration into society. This is why there are many **funerary monuments** in the area of the complex. They, too, reveal a tendency towards display: each has its own architectural form, while the size of each and the number of cist graves in the floor of the monument matched the family's size and wealth. Some of the monuments are set in a row, behind the west stoa of the Gymnasium, while the most imposing of all is the **Mausoleum of the Saethidae** at the south end of the Stadium.

Burial chamber K3 stands out for its biconcave conical roof, unusual by Greek standards, crowned with a Corinthian capital bearing a stone vase. **Monument K1** to the north is decorated with a frieze of animals on the east side and a lion devouring a deer carved in the round. It resembles a famous frieze block in the Louvre, with a **relief of a lion hunt attended by Alexander the Great**, which also comes from a funerary monument in the Stadium of Messene.

The **Mausoleum of the Saethidae** is in the tradition of similar monuments from Asia Minor. In it were buried eminent members of the family, from its construction in the 1st century AD down at least to the reign of Emperor Lucius Verus (161–169 AD).

The restoration of the monument provides a clear picture both of the monument itself, a Doric temple with four columns built entirely of local limestone, and of its direct spatial and functional connection to the Stadium. The finds show that inside the mausoleum lay a marble sarcophagus of the reign of Nero with an imago clipeata (shield) containing a relief bust of a man in a breastplate.

The whole structure protrudes from the city wall like a bastion, built on a high, stepped rectangular podium revetted with alternating courses of thicker poros-stone and thinner limestone blocks. Many bases of funerary stelai and fragments of funerary aediculae were found scattered across the podium.

In the 4th century AD, during its last phase of use, the Stadium was mainly used for gladiatorial combats and wild beast fights, leading to some structural modifications. The lower register was closed off with a narrow parapet, and circular sockets were cut into the upper surface of the second row of seats to hold in place iron uprights for a barrier.

The race-track assumed an oval form with the addition of a curved wall at the south end of the horseshoe. During the period when wild beast fights were held, it was customary for seats to be rented for a fee, the names of citizens being carved into them in large letters in order to secure a permanent place at the spectacles.

The latter years of the city

In the 3rd and 4th centuries AD, the city gradually fell into decline and many of its buildings were abandoned. The glory days of independence had long since passed, following the Roman conquest of Greece, but Messene remained an important political and artistic centre under the patronage of enlightened emperors. The latest destruction and abandonment layers of most of the city's buildings are dated to around 365 AD, when there was probably a great earthquake followed by widespread fires. In 395 AD the Goths invaded the Peloponnese, completing the decline of the city.

However, in the 5th to 7th centuries AD, the region revived with the establishment of an Early Byzantine settlement on the ruins of the old city. The settlement flourished, gradually expanded and survived into the period of Frankish and Venetian rule, at least until the 15th century.

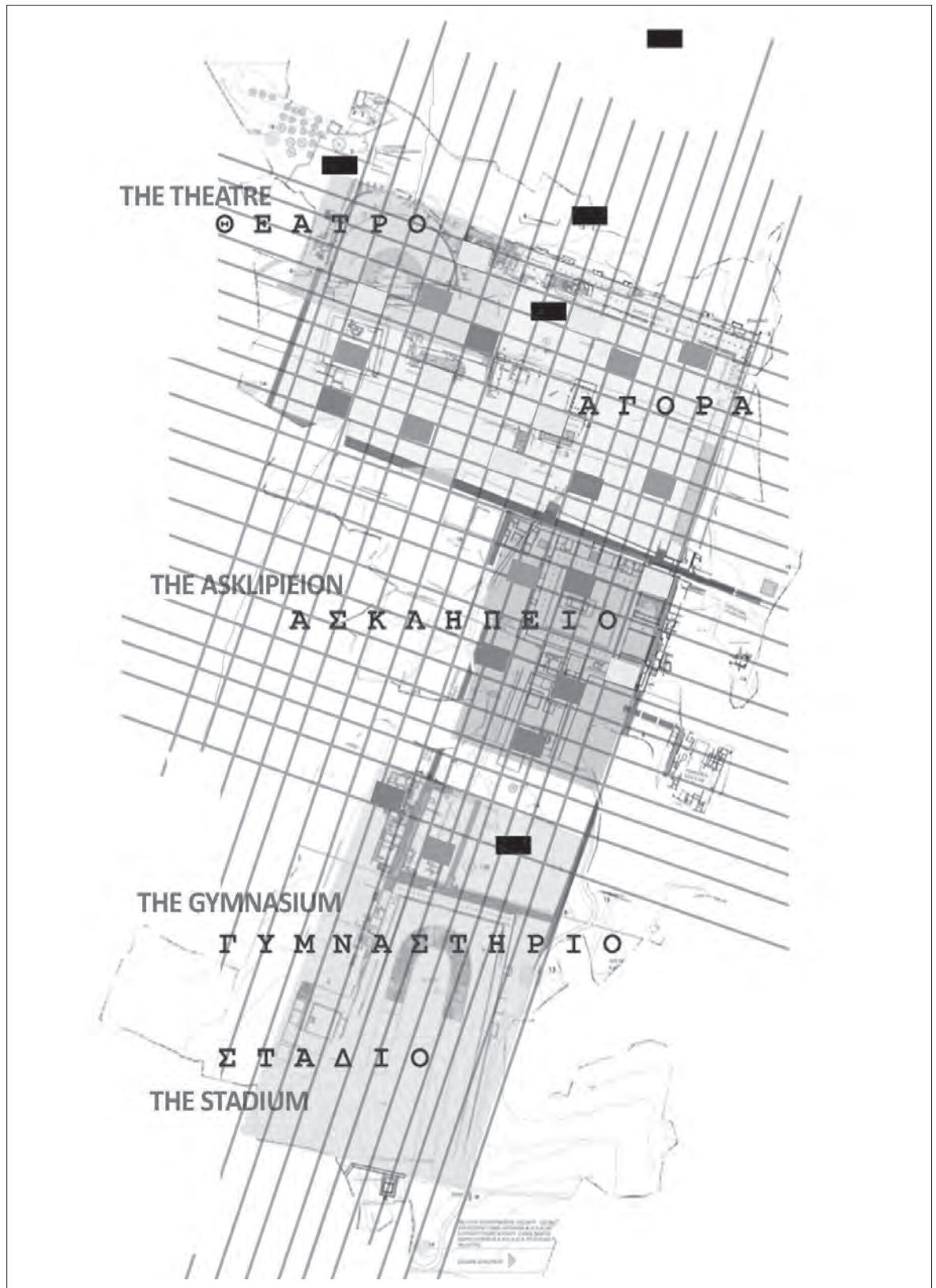
The modern experience of the archaeological park: a two-way relationship

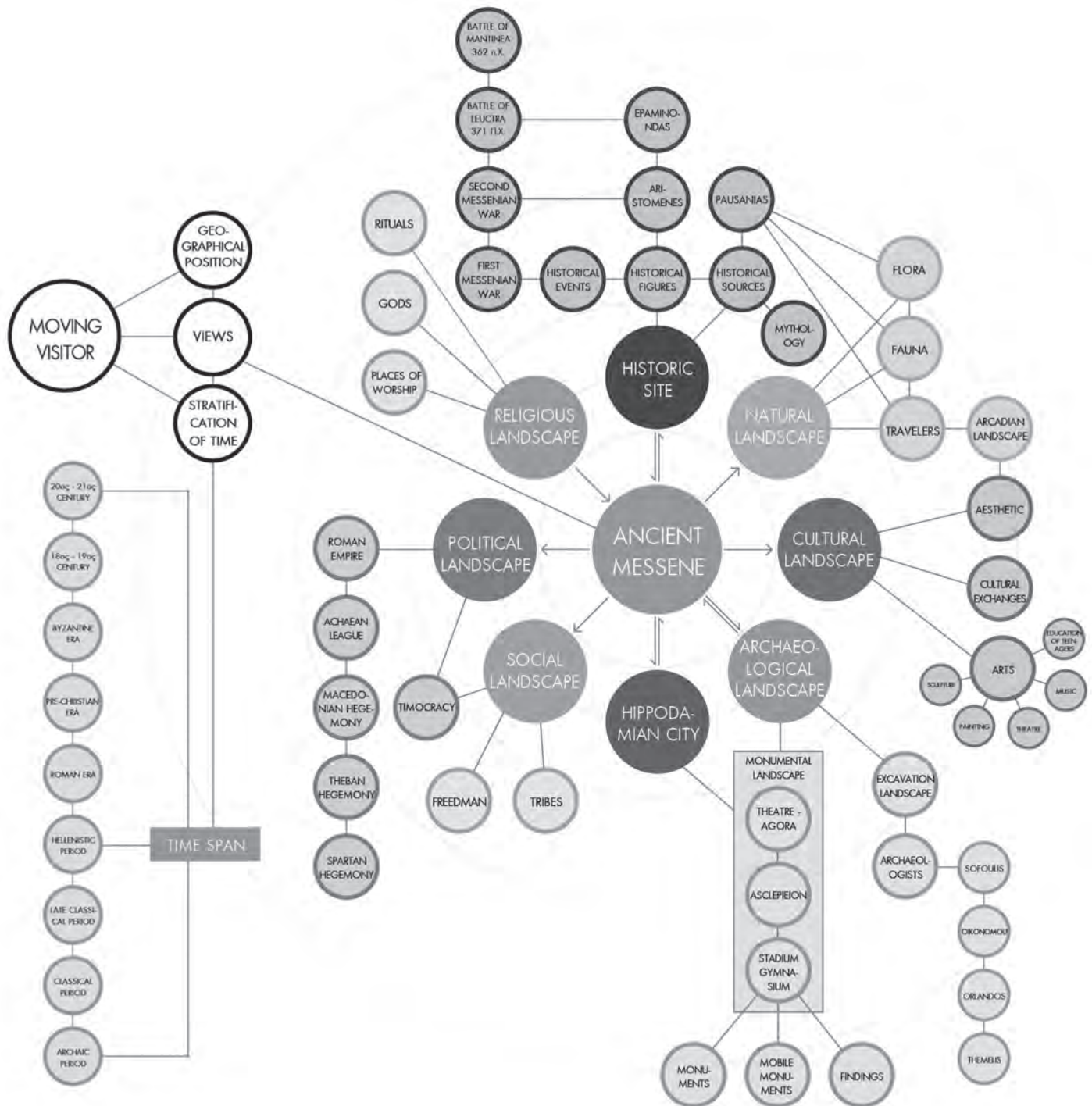
Messene was mainly known from Pausanias' description and the imposing ruins of its fortified enceinte wall. These later attracted the attention of 17th- and 18th-century European travellers, who recorded the first evidence on the surviving monuments of ancient Messene in their accounts. The Arcadian Gate, controlling access to the city from the north, was still standing and became the hallmark of the city in their drawings, together with some of the ruins of the ancient Theatre, which usually studded the landscape paintings of the area. The French Scientific Expedition of the Morea led by Abel Blouet, with its monumental publication (*Expédition scientifique de Morée*, Paris 1831–1838), is the best known of the foreign expeditions sent by European nations to record and evaluate the natural scenery of Greece. It was the first attempt at a systematic study of the topography of the region and the ancient remains.

The early European travellers, however, had a very different impression of Messene to the

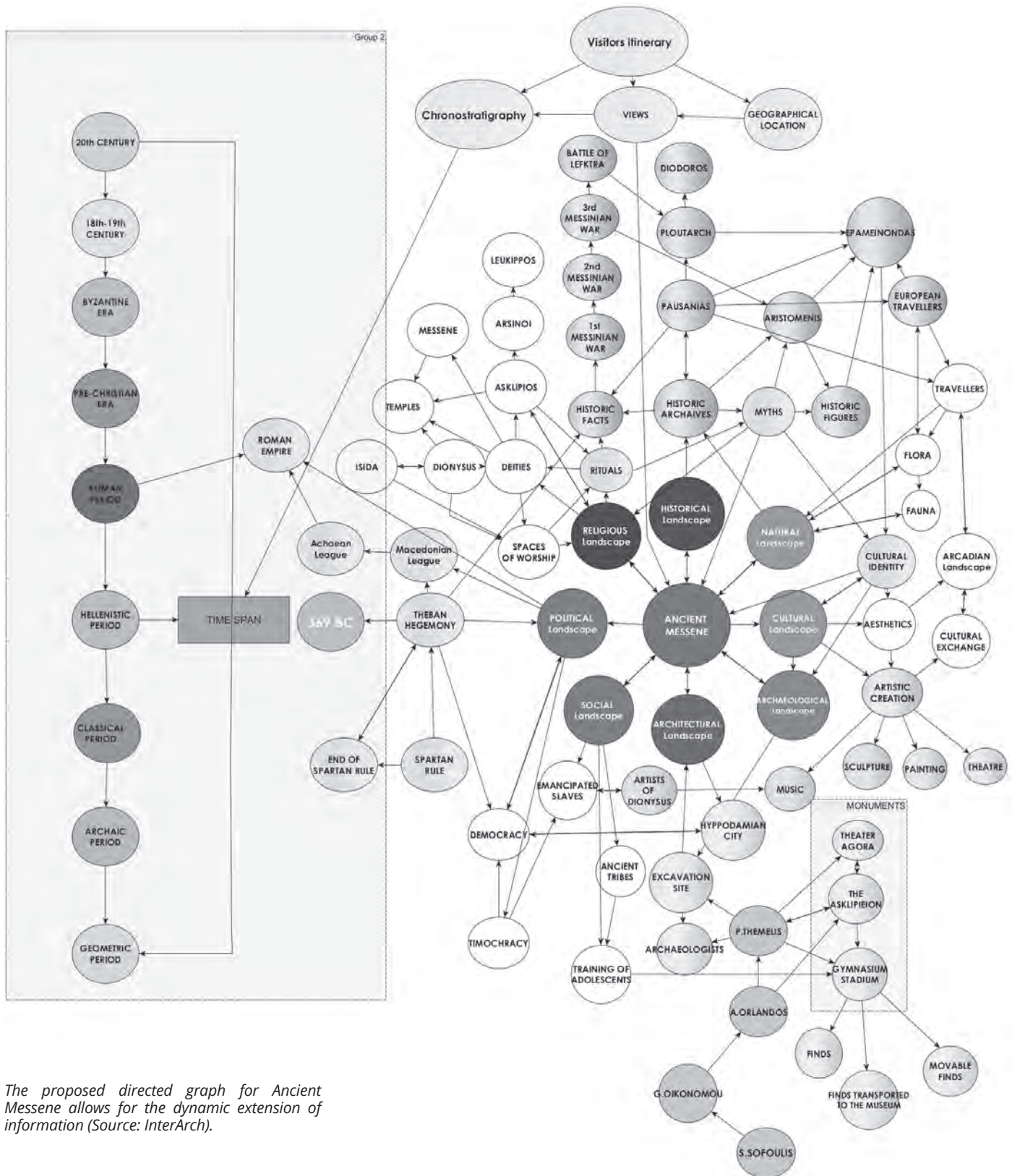
picture gained by modern visitors today. The modern archaeological park, with the iconic buildings appearing among olive groves and vineyards, gives us a much more vivid idea of what the ancient city would have looked like, with ordinary people of the time walking down its streets, discussing the administration of the city and the prices of goods in the agora, working the fields, cooking in their homes or watching the public festivals.

The excavations at ancient Messene were launched by the Archaeological Society at Athens in 1895 and continued by various important archaeologists, including Professor Anastasios Orlandos, a member of the Academy of Athens, from 1957 to 1974. In 1986, Professor of Classical Philology Petros Themelis took over the excavation and restoration work, of which he is still in charge today. Following modern approaches to the preservation of cultural heritage, the project for the enhancement of the site involves multifaceted artistic events with plays, musical performances and exhibitions of contemporary art, combined with educational and research programmes, forming influential two-way relationships with the thousands of visitors, local communities and future generations. As Professor P. Themelis characteristically says, "The ancient polis assumes an increasingly complete form day by day, living a second life in the modern world [...] The material remains of the past in ancient Messene are not mute, rather they transmit complex meanings that change as different social groups and individuals from all over the world interact with them on a daily basis. Reciprocal relationships emerge depending on the different interpretative approaches, revealing their secrets and the past."





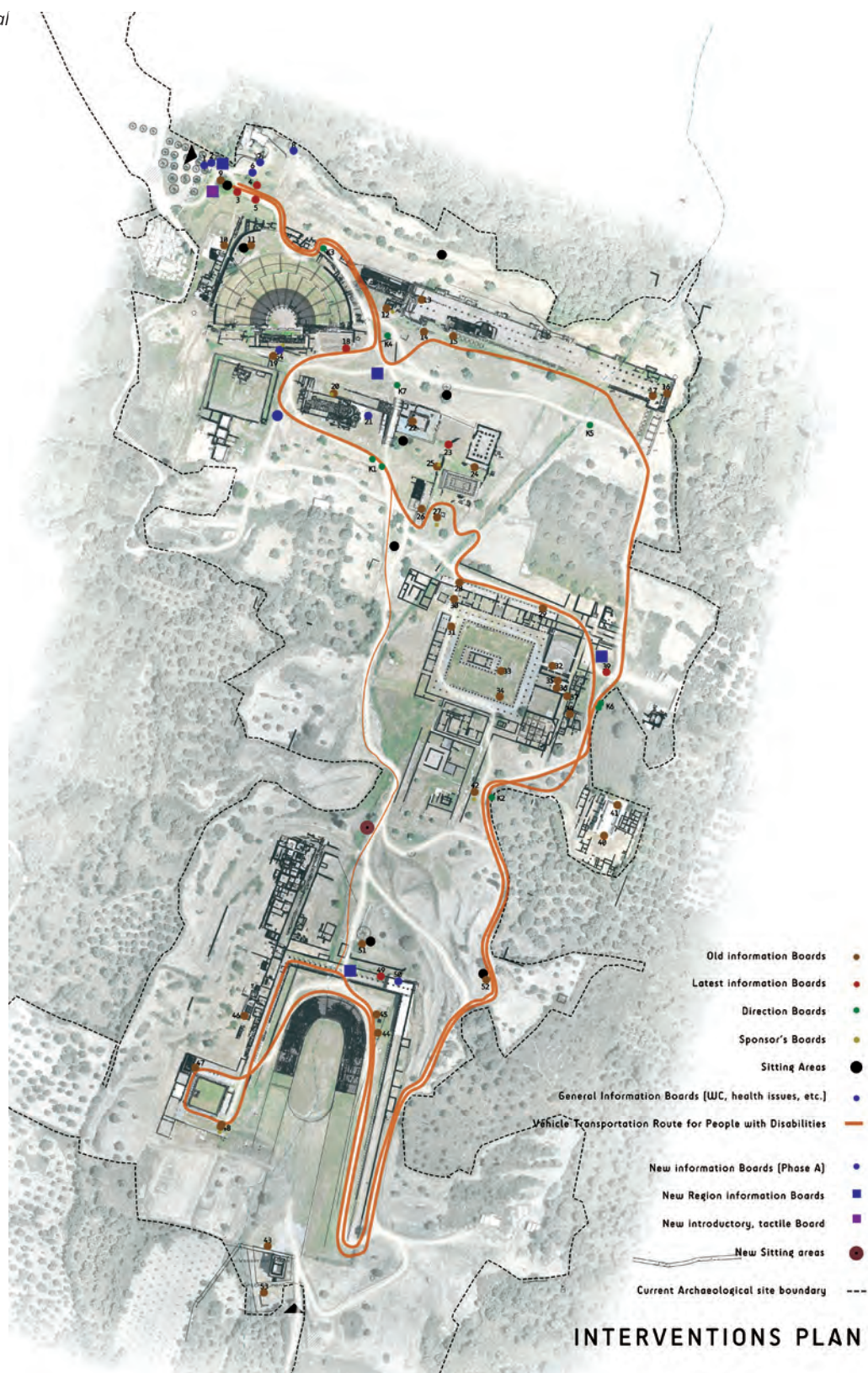
The multimodal reading of Ancient Messene using a directed graph (Source: InterArch).

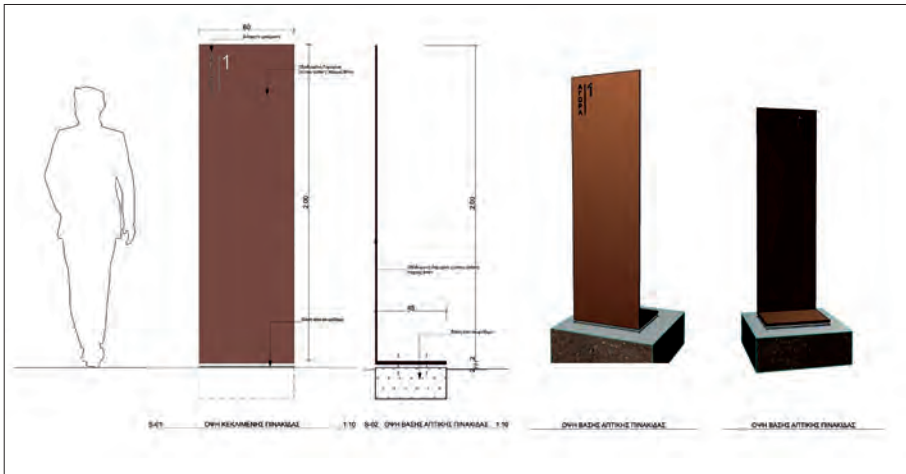


The proposed directed graph for Ancient Messene allows for the dynamic extension of information (Source: InterArch).



Map of Ancient Messene. Proposal
(Source: InterArch).



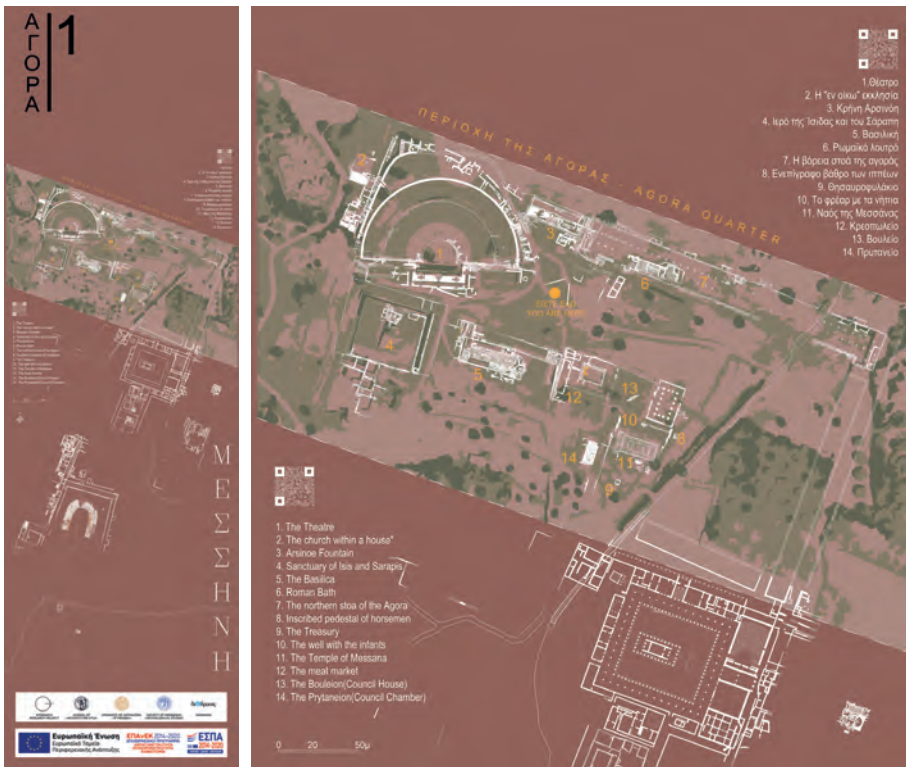


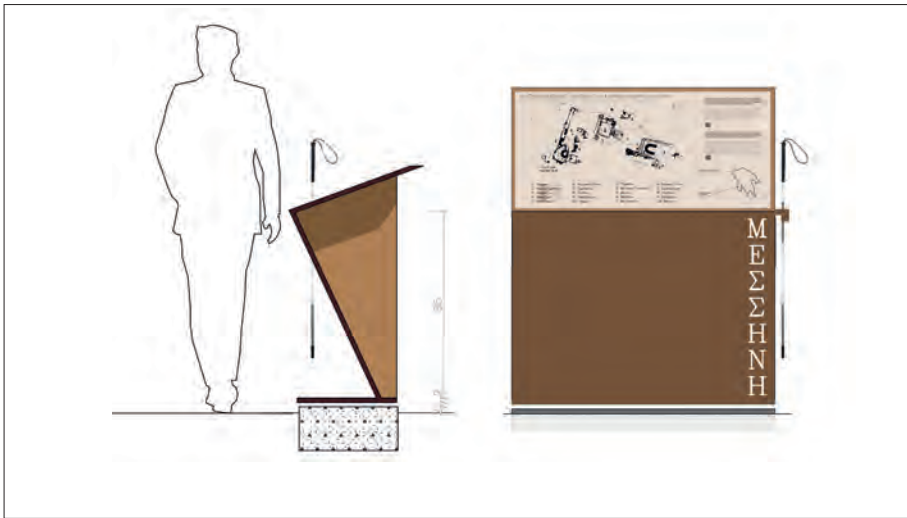
Drawings and views of the Agora region information sign.

Drawings and views of the Agora region information sign (detail and the whole sign).

The Agora region information sign in comparison with the human height.

(Images source: InterArch).





Drawings and views of the tactile sign.

Drawings and views of the monument's information sign (Iseion) and comparison with the human height.

(Images source: InterArch).

ΑΡΧΑΙΟΛΟΓΙΚΟΣ ΧΩΡΟΣ ΑΡΧΑΙΑΣ ΜΕΣΣΗΝΗΣ ANCIENT MESSENE ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITE

Το Ιερό της Ισιδας και του Σάραπι The Sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis

Η λατρεία της Ισιδας και του Σάραπι μεταφέρθηκε στη Μεσσηνή από την Αλεξάνδρεια μέσω της εμπορικής οδού που 20 αι. π.Χ. η κυμαροειδής στήλη με κρητή νερού με τη μορφή ενός βαγάλου (H μήκους 46,50μ., και πλάτους 15,50 μ. αποτελούσε σημαντικό στοιχείο του ιερού χώρου ως συμβολικό απόδειξη του ότι Ησίδα συνδέονταν με τη Σάραπι και τις τελετουργίες.

Ανάμεσα στα ευρήματα στην περιοχή κρητή του ιερού είναι το μαρμάρινο το άγαλμα της Ισιδας που θηλάζει το παιδί της, τον Σάραπι. Στην αίθουσα της κρητής υπάρχουν τρεις κωμωδοειδείς σφύρες αποκατεργασμένες από γυαλί και γυρίσματα φερόμενων δοκίμων με λίθους οπασίτες σφαιρικές, κίβας και πολλαπλές σφαιρικές σφαιρικές κοιλότητες που παραχρυσίζονται από χρυσόσκονη παρασκευάζοντας κοσμήματα του Σάραπι και τους ποικίλους των υαλινών κοσμημάτων του ιερού. Τυχαυνότητα είναι το μαρμάρινο άγαλμα του Σάραπι που αναπαριστά μόνον με τις τρεις κόγχες στην ανατολική πλευρά όπου σε μια από αυτές προκάλυπται και ένα στήθος γάλακτος. Η κοιλότητα του Σάραπι φαίνεται ότι σχετίζεται με τελετουργικές κηλίδες, όπου ο βάρος του νερού ήταν διαφορετικός για τον καθαρισμό του ιερού στον χώρο των ιερών της θεογονικής λατρείας, όπως συμβαίνει στην κρητή του ιερού της Σάραπι. Οι μνηστές μετά από κατάκληση του θανάτου επισημαίνονται στο μέσον θανάτου, έπειτα να βυθίζονται στο νερό των δεξαμενών, στο πλαίσιο μιας τελετουργικής πορείας που συμβαίνει τον θάνατο του Ολοφάνου ενώ η νερά του Νίλου.

Το μέγεθος, η πρωτότητα και η χρησιμότητα του αρχαιολογικού χώρου του ιερού της Ισιδας και του Σάραπι στην αρχαία Μεσσηνή, η πολυπλοκότητα και η ποικιλομορφία των χώρων, η εκλιτική αξία του επί μακρόν ιστορικού χώρου του ιερού και της περίπτωσης, ο χαρακτήρας του υπαρκτού χώρου της Ισιδας, η σύνθεση και η ομορφία της, η μοναδικότητα του οικοδομικού αυτού και καθαρού κόσμου, είναι τα στοιχεία που το ιστορικό πρόβλημα της ιστορίας του οικοδομικού συγκροτήματος των οικοδομικών της, της οχύρωσης και των οχυρώσεων των κατοίκων που μετέβησαν στο ως ιστορικό της λατρείας, τις ιστορικές τεχνικές και τα καθορισμένα κομμάτια που προσοδεύονται στις υφιστάμενες και στις κρήνες του.

Among the findings in the underground crypt of the sanctuary is the marble statue of Isis breastfeeding her child, Heros. In the niches of the eastern wing of the vaulted colonnade, a large number of mosaic floor fragments with stone tesserae were uncovered, along with numerous glass tesserae of various colors originating from mosaic (parietal) paintings that adorned the floors and walls of the underground chambers of the Iseion. The elaborate floor of the eastern courtyard with its three shafts on the eastern side revealed a ceremonial bathing pool. In the vicinity of the sanctuary, a cluster of later Christian tombs also came to light.

The functioning of the complex appears to be associated with initiation rituals, where the role of water was essential for the initiate's transition into the world of the deities of Egyptian worship, similar to the performance of the baptismal mystery. After receiving catechism while seated on the stone benches, the initiate had to immerse themselves in the water of the tanks as part of a ritual act symbolizing the death of Oshun by drowning in the waters of the Nile.

The size, quality and originality of the architectural design of the building complex of the Sanctuary of Isis and Sarapis in ancient Messene, the complexity and diversity of the spaces, the artistic value of the various elements such as the mosaics and the elaborate opus spicatum of the monumental courtyard space of the south side entrance, leave no doubt about the uniqueness of this ambitious and costly project, its significance for the Messenian capital, the powerful political and economic families of the aristocracy, as well as the entire population who participated in the celebrations, rituals, secret ceremonies and purifying baths offered in the underground galleries and halls.

Αεροφωτογράφιση του βόρειου τμήματος του αρχαιολογικού χώρου της Μεσσηνής. Το ιερό της Ισιδας και του Σάραπι είναι το κεντρικό σημείο.

Λεπτομέρεια του χριστιανικού τάφου με την αποθήκη δίπλα στο κρανίο του νεκρού.

Βασιλική κρητή σε σχήμα κοίλης κοιλότητας ανατολικά του αυθιού.

1 Το Ιερό της Θεοτόκου
2 Ιερό της Ισιδας και του Σάραπι
3 Βόρεια του Κτιρίου

