

ITALY

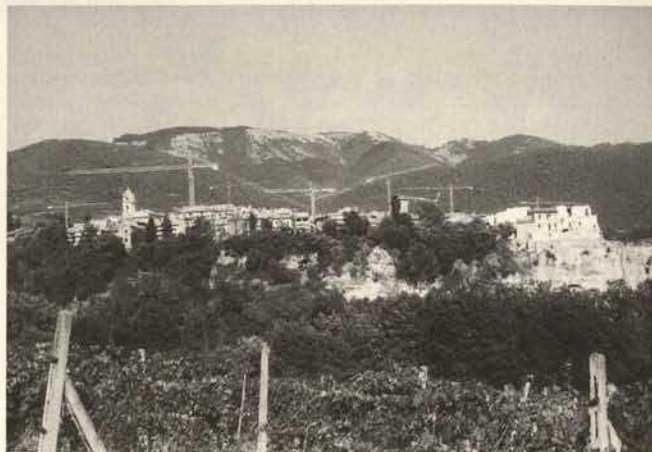
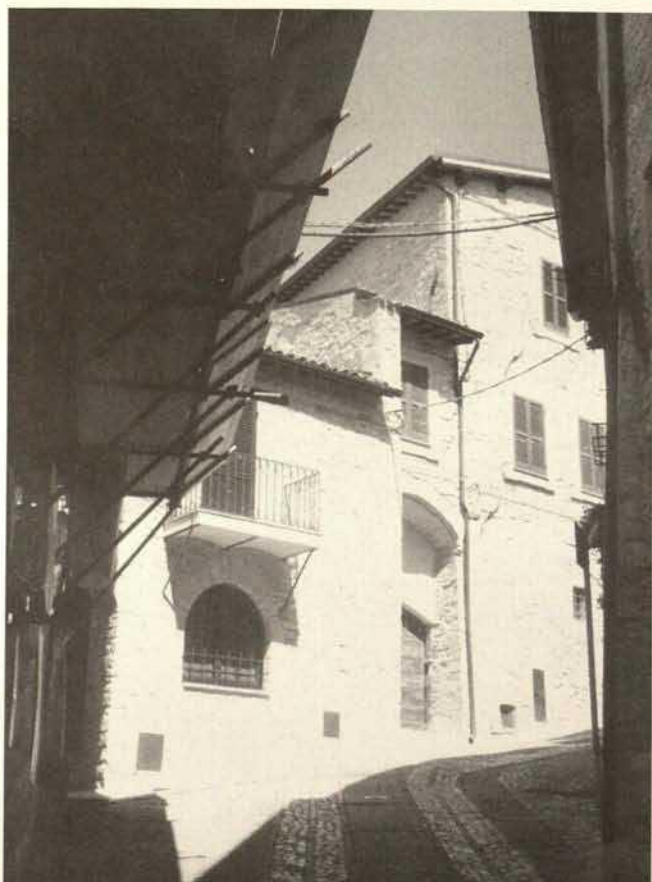
Last year's report for Heritage at Risk on the situation in Italy reminded us of the outstandingly rich and precious cultural heritage of this country. Of course, the sheer amount of monuments makes it difficult to preserve, restore and maintain all of them adequately.

Three case studies showing examples of positive as well as negative developments have been selected this year as an addition to the report of the year 2000.

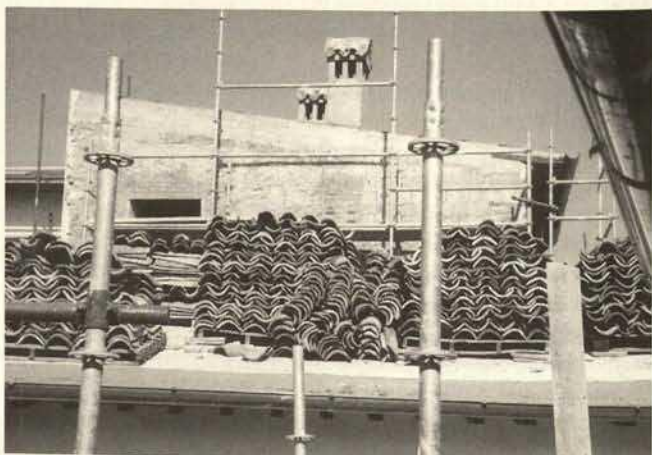
Case Study 1: Reconstruction of Towns and Villages in Umbria, Destroyed or Damaged by the Earthquake of 1997

In the *Heritage at Risk Report 2000*, information was given of the intensive and exceptional efforts to rebuild and repair S. Francesco in Assisi, but fears were also uttered that the repair of this important tourist city would go faster than in the other, less known places of Umbria. In this region, between Assisi and Spoleto, Nocera Umbra and Todi there are innumerable small and bigger towns and villages, most of which are of high artistic and architectural quality and contain a great density of cultural heritage. The earthquake shocks of 1997 caused tremendous damage, on average 30% of all buildings were so badly affected that they were no longer inhabitable. The historic centre of Nocera Umbra had to be evacuated completely (see *Heritage at Risk 2000*) and other historic places, such as the small town of Massa Martama, situated in the hills east of Todi and still surrounded by an intact mediaeval town wall, faced the same situation. Massa Martama had to be

Spello, repaired houses in the Via Belvedere



Massa Martama: The town, badly affected by the earthquake, is being repaired



Massa Martama: Old roof tiles have been recovered to be used again

Massa Martama: Despite strict earthquake protection measures this historic wooden ceiling with brick elements could remain in situ



evacuated after the first earthquake of May 1997, and all buildings needed to be supported by emergency scaffolds: it was dangerous to enter the town itself. The second earthquake occurred in October of the same year, causing the well-known damage to the historic structure in Assisi and to other historic places across the entire region.

It is a great joy to be able to report that the fears mentioned in last year's Heritage at Risk publication have not eventuated. Due to enormous private initiative, but also with the help of considerable public funding, the repair work has in some cases already been finished – in others it is well on its way. This does not only apply to Assisi, but to all small and bigger places concerned, even to individual farmsteads.

In Montefalco, for instance, the restoration of the Palazzo Comunale (13th–15th century) and of the church of San Francesco, now used as a museum and particularly known for its fresco cycle by Benozzo Gozzoli, is still in progress. In nearby Beragna the restoration work at the Palazzo dei Consoli (circa 1270) and at the church of San Silvestro (dated 1195) has been completed; on the other side of the square, San Michele (12th century) is still clad in scaffolding and restoration is underway. It is, therefore, all the more regrettable that the 2nd-century Roman temple in Beragna apparently has been in the process of decay for a long time, independent of the earthquake damage. In Spello, immediately south of Assisi, most of the damaged buildings have either been restored or are presently being restored; this includes the Palazzo Comunale (built in 1270) and the church of San Lorenzo (1120). At one palace with a baroque facade near San Lorenzo, a rusting scaffold was noticeable, however, the building is obviously uninhabited. In places such as the lively Foligno or Trevi and Nocera Umbra, as well as in the already mentioned Massa Martama (which has turned into a huge building site), the situation seems to be equally positive. Under the leadership of the town authorities, all houses are being repaired and adequately modernised. The most important aim of public funding is to make the houses as earthquake-proof as possible, an understandable aim in view of the unstable geological situation in this region. However, this is not possible without reinforced concrete – ceilings as stabilising slices or as tension rings in the wall crests – or without installing tie rods of steel. Historical constructions – for instance vaults and well-preserved wooden ceilings – can remain *in situ*, and the basic structure of the buildings, including features such as winding stairways, is being respected. Even the old roof tiles have been recovered and used again.

Case Study 2: Paestum

The remains of ancient Paestum can be found in the wide plain between the Amalfi peninsula and the Cilento. Thirty years ago it was still almost uninhabited, but is now almost completely urbanised in a seemingly chaotic way, particularly along the streets and the Mediterranean. Only a small area around the former urban settlement of Paestum remains relatively free from any development. From the archaeological park one can still have the illusion that the three magnificent classical Greek temples stand in noble seclusion. The unavoidable souvenir shops and restaurants at the entrance to the grounds, as well as the museum and the car park, are sufficiently hidden, even in summer by lavish greenery. Therefore, the first impression of this magnificent cultural ensemble is quite pleasant. The three temples are in excellent condition; they have obviously been cleaned and restored recently and in a very careful manner. The central, most monumental so-called



Paestum, "Tempio di Nettuno", interior still in scaffolding, and Basilica with protective fence

Temple of Poseidon (tempio di Nettuno), built around 450 BC and originally consecrated to Hera, is still in scaffolding inside – the building site (including the scaffolds) making a positive impression.

From the conservation point of view it is important and essential that the three temples are protected by fences that are optically unobtrusive but highly effective, even if today it is not possible for us to appreciate them in Goethe's sense, that is by walking 'around and through them'. Another aspect proving the exemplary care given to the temples is the solid, properly roofed wooden frame, where individual hewn pieces are stored.

As we know, during Antiquity, these three Doric temples were not in the open countryside, as the neo-classical and romantic ages (and perhaps we today) liked to imagine them. Instead they were integrated into a busy trade place named Poseidonia, founded in the 7th century BC by the Greeks, conquered by the Lucanians around 400 BC and governed under the name of Peistum. Afterwards it became and remained a Roman colony known as Paes-

Paestum, water basin in the former atrium of a Roman house: damaged covering of the wall crests, destroyed antique plaster, broken mosaic floor, extensive plant growth





Herculaneum, former shore front underneath the "Area Sacra" (entrance to the excavation)



Herculaneum, 5th Cardo with street front of the vestibule of the Palestra in danger of collapse

Both sides of the building fronts of the Decumano Massimo blocked off



tum, until its gradual decline in late Antiquity. The walls that completely surrounded the town and part of the settlement have been excavated. In comparison to the whole area, this is only a small strip between the temple of Ceres and the southern town gate, the Porta della Giustizia, along the Via Sacra connecting the three temples, the Greek agora and the Roman forum. This excavated and exposed part of the town – with architectural remains from Greek, Lucanian and above all Roman times – is regrettably much neglected and cannot be compared with the state of the three classical temples. The whole excavated area is heavily overgrown by weeds and bushes, particularly in the area between the Forum and the Tempio di Cerere and in the villa district west of Via Sacra. Here the plasters and the crests of the house walls, which are up to 1.5 metres high, are no longer sufficiently protected; furthermore, the elaborate mosaic floors are overgrown with bits broken off, tempting visitors to take coloured stones home as souvenirs. The situation is slightly better in the area of the Agora forum; however, the typically high substructure of the Roman Capitoline temple is used as a viewing terrace and climbing frame, with the individual architectural elements such as capitals and mouldings gradually sinking into the ground.

It is imperative that the site be adequately preserved and protected, due to the importance of the excavated area for the understanding that the three temples were integrated into a town, as well as to the high quality of the architectural remains.

Case Study 3: Herculaneum

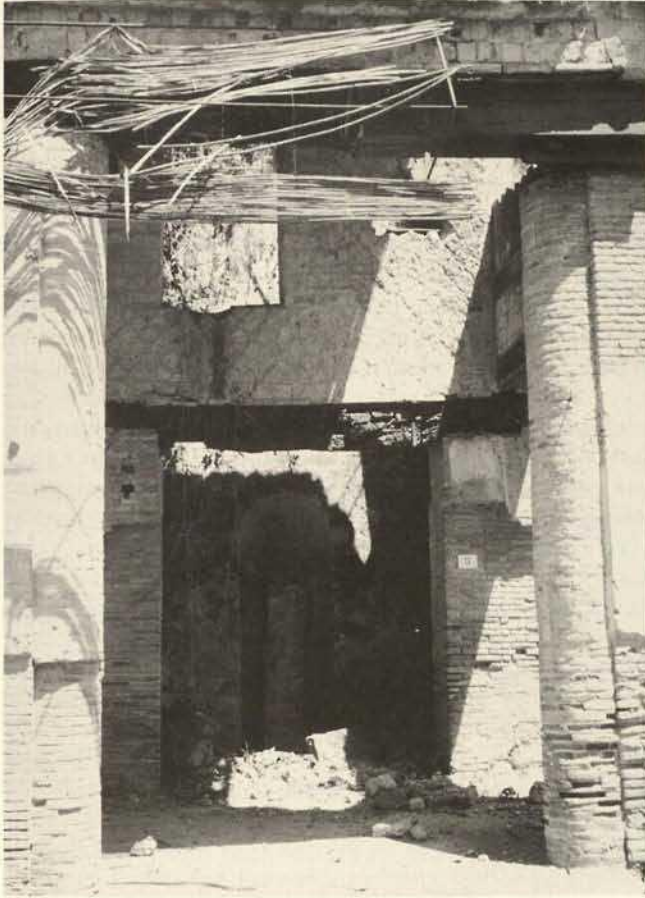
In the 2000 Report the lamentable situation in Pompeii was described in detail. Herculaneum, too, was buried by the eruption of Vesuvius in 79 AD, but in contrast to Pompeii, not by hot ashes and lapilli but by muddy ashes and afterwards by lava. The excavation area in Herculaneum is smaller than that in Pompeii. The buildings, however, are comparatively better preserved and include a whole range of wooden elements. In the same way as Pompeii, Herculaneum has been only partly excavated; above the many metres of lava layers there is modern Ercolano.

It is regrettable to conclude that the conservation and care of this outstanding cultural site is in an equally bad state as that of Pompeii. The decay of the exposed buildings continues at great speed and the efforts to retard this development are far too small. The causes of this decay include unhindered plant growth on the protective roofs, as well as on the wall crests and original floors; and also inadequate or non-functioning water drainage from the roofs, resulting in the destruction of the roofs until they collapse. Without these roofs the antique masonry, the plasters with paintings, the floors and the wooden elements are also exposed to destruction. Moreover, similar to Pompeii, the restored areas open to the public are not sufficiently protected, especially the antique composition floors and mosaic floors.

The extent of the neglect and the consequent decay becomes apparent if one compares the present state with a small, but very instructive brochure from 1997 – the *Itinerario Archeologico Ragionato* by Mario Pagano, Director of the excavations.

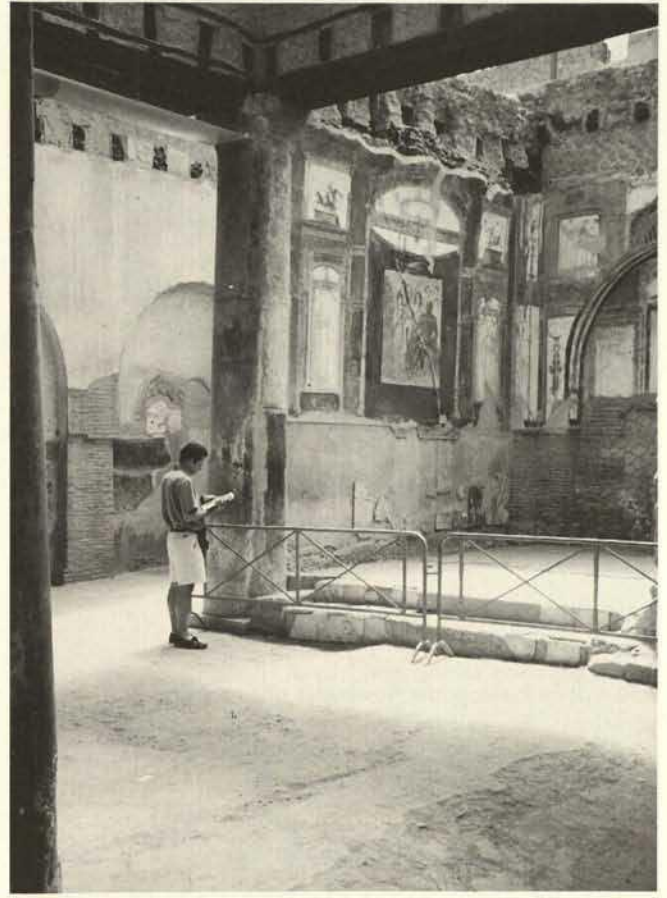
Immediately, at the beginning of a visit, one is shocked by the state of the substructure in the 'area sacra' and of the terrace with the altar of M. Nonio Balbo, considering that in 1981 well-preserved remains of more than 250 people were discovered here at what is the former coastline of the Mediterranean. These people died of hot gases when they sought shelter from the eruptions of Vesuvius in the vaults open to the sea.

In the 5th Cardo, at the beginning of the path around this section, the Casa dei Cervi (House of Stags) is presently being



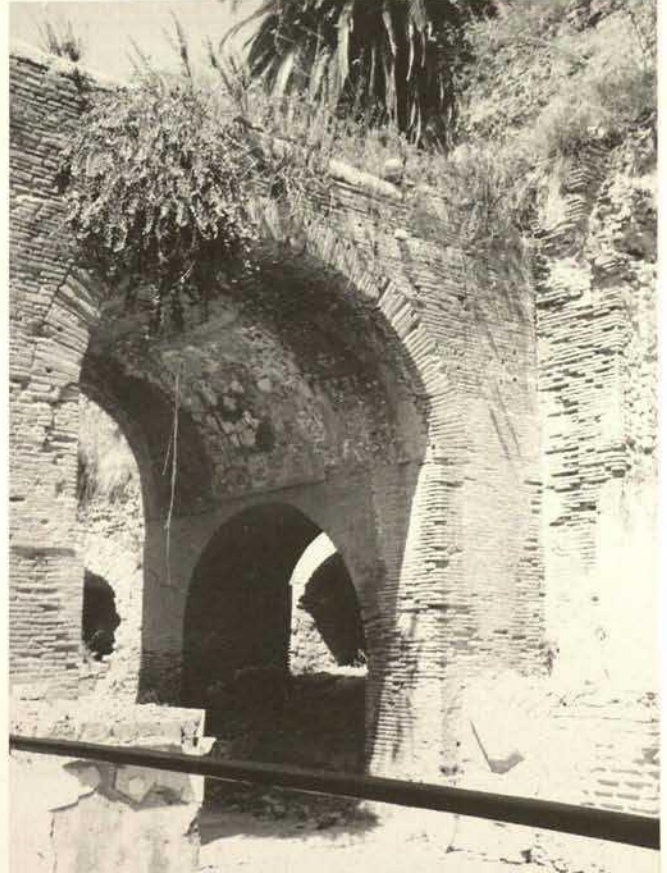
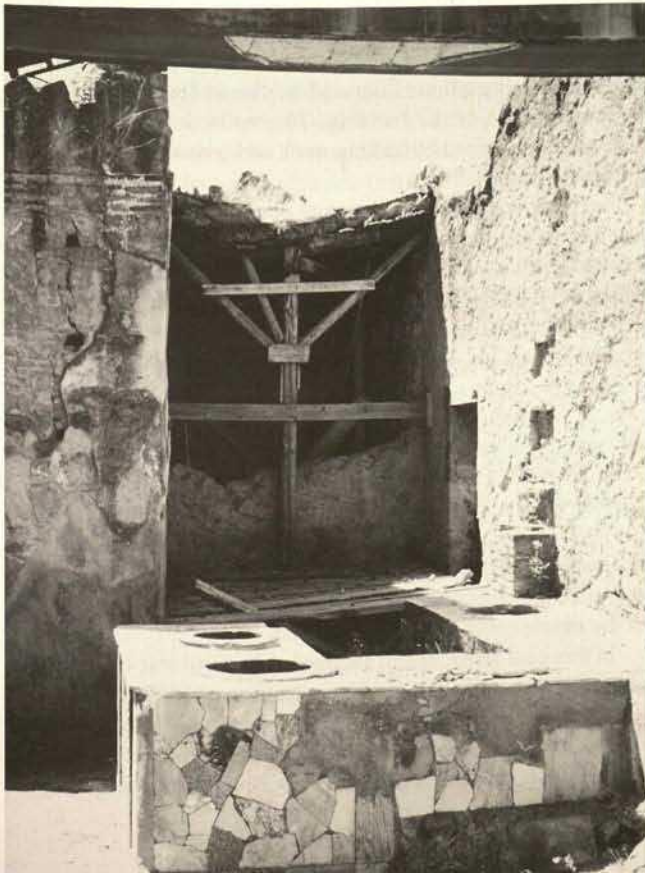
Decumano Massimo, the former shops behind the barrier are decaying

Former shop at the Decumano Massimo with modern ceiling, partly collapsed and only provisionally supported



Collegio degli Augustali, recently restored. Underneath the antique ceiling joist on the left a fibre glass pane has been installed to catch falling pieces of wood.

Archway of the so-called Basilica at the Decumano Massimo, open on four sides, now blocked off due to severe damages caused by plant growth and penetrating water. Particularly dramatic efflorescence on the stuccoed vault.





Casa del tramezzo di legno, crumbling wooden bed frame

restored; on the opposite, south-east side of the street is the large complex of the 'palestra' and the 'sala absidiata', with shops and workshops in front. Here, the decay caused by growth and damp walls is particularly severe. Pictures in the *Itinerario* of 1997 show buildings that are intact and rooms that are accessible; today the 5th Cardo is blocked off, the two-storey front of the buildings is threatened by collapse, at the rear most of the modern roofs have already collapsed or are badly damaged, the plant growth continuing unhindered. Apart from street barriers for the protection of visitors, no emergency measures can be seen.

Unfortunately, this situation is noticeable to an even greater extent at the 'decumano massimo' in the area of the former forum. Here, too, the photos in the *Itinerario* show antique buildings that

Women's changing room in the municipal bath: tourists are allowed to walk on the antique mosaic floors



are still intact and particularly impressive for the many (sometimes even wooden) details in the shops and entrances to the houses. Today both rows of buildings are blocked off by steel scaffolds, with only a narrow lane for tourists kept open in the middle of the wide 'decumano'. The buildings on the north-eastern side are not accessible, those on the south-western side only partly.

The important 'Collegio degli Augustali', which was restored a few years ago, needs to be mentioned, as it raises a number of questions. It is noticeable that the wooden parts, preserved here in an astonishingly high number and only superficially charred, have been surrounded by four layers of glass or fibre glass, a questionable method in view of the evolving micro-climate. Furthermore, it is obvious that no attempts have been made to stabilise the surfaces of these wooden parts, whether under glass or exposed. The consequence is that ceiling joists, door lintels, supporting beams and bed frames are crumbling and will therefore be lost forever. For instance, this can clearly be seen at the ceiling beams under fibre glass in the 'Collegio degli Augustali'.

A positive regulation in the 'Collegio' is that the central, richly painted room is not open to visitors, which is, however, an exception in Herculaneum. The standard is that tourists are allowed to walk on the antique floors – either composition or mosaic floors. Consequently, these floors suffer, especially since parts that are beginning to break off are not immediately repaired. An efficient and complete protection of the floors would not be easy to implement; some of the lavishly designed mosaics would not be entirely visible anymore, also the appearance and visual character of the rooms would be affected. But in many cases – at least where rooms are not passageways to others – a simple barrier at the entrance would be very effective, without impairing the visibility and appearance of the rooms. Of the 'first room on the real side' of the 'Casa del Atrio Corinzio' (House of the Corinthian Atrium) Mario Pagano writes in his *Itinerario*: 'beautiful mosaic floor with geometrical pattern'. With a barrier similar to that in the 'Collegio degli Augustali' this room could be viewed from the atrium and would have long-lasting protection.

Among the particularly lamentable buildings is the 'Casa Sanitica' in the 4th Cardo, characterised by Mario Pagano as 'one of the best preserved and oldest (2nd century BC) houses in Herculaneum'. Today we see the most primitive supports for the modern ceiling above the ground floor and for the architrave of the loggia on the east side of the building. The walls show clear signs of water damage caused by leaking roofs and considerable damage to the plasters and paintings.

Regrettably, this negative picture could be extended. We would just like to mention the 'Casa del Atrio a Mosaico', described in the *Itinerario* as 'one of the most luxurious houses of Herculaneum'. The richly ornamented mosaic and marble floors are particularly remarkable, as is the wooden frame construction of the glassed-in veranda. Even in 1997 Mario Pagano wrote that it was only partly accessible because of danger of collapse. In the meantime, it has been closed entirely for visitors. The wooden frames are supported, otherwise no stabilising measures are noticeable. The modern steel ceiling above the big salons, which used to be open to the sea, has fallen down; the rich marble floor mentioned in the *Itinerario* is covered by rubble, and one can only guess as to the current state of the marvellous wall paintings. In view of this situation, the elaborately painted and durable sign warning people of the unsafe building seems a mockery.

In this case study, Mario Pagano's *Itinerario* was quoted several times – not only to compare the situation of 1997 and today, but also because he describes the partly excavated 'Villa dei Papi' originally outside the urban settlement of Herculaneum, which is underground and only open to access by professionals. He com-



Casa sannitica: provisionally supported ceilings and severe water damages due to leaking roof



Casa dell'atrio a mosaico, salon facing the sea, collapsed modern ceiling

plains that the goal to excavate the entire villa and open it to the public is still far away (one would have to demolish all the buildings above, dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, a whole town quarter). Nevertheless his opinion is that 'the complete excavation

is one of the most urgent tasks of Vesuvian archaeology'. From a scientific point of view this may be right, but in view of the state and rapidly continuing decay of the already excavated parts of this World Heritage site such an initiative would be irresponsible.

Giulio Marano
ICOMOS Germany