The (in)complete ruin:
Shaping a potential narrative

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Dedication

To my family, for their unending support and encouragement.

Acknowledgements

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I take full responsibility for any shortcomings in this dissertation.

Abstract

Recognizing the powerful ability of the ruin to stimulate our imagination, this study questions what the trigger for this might potentially be. In the literature review, the ruin is discussed as an open paradox and expands on the notion of (in)completeness as a possible instigator of narratives. Compared to what 'complete architecture' evokes, the ruin is explored as a subset of 'incomplete architecture' in the way it influences the visual perception and imagination of the viewer. This forms a framework illustrating how incompleteness potentially shapes a narrative.

Based on the literature addressed, the study examines case studies in Gozo, chosen for the varying levels of fragmentation they exhibited: Ġgantija and Santa Verna, as contrasting prehistoric remains; Ta' Kenuna Tower, as a contemporary intervention on a 19th-century semaphoric tower; and Ulysses Lodge in Xagħra, as a 20th-century abandoned hotel. The research compares the different biases held by the interviewees, all coming from different areas of expertise, and how they both define the ruin; and interpret and react to the case studies. For each site, a set of narratives is gathered from each interviewee.

Results reveal how different levels of familiarity, when correlated with an incremental level of fragmentation and age of case studies, produce varying natures of narratives. It was noted how the 'individual' narrative is partially a product of our relationship with the 'true' narrative. The results are analysed in relation to incompleteness: through a discussion of the background knowledge and memory of the interviewee and in the level and nature of fragmentation and the extent of intervention at the site in question. These elements represent the roots of the potential narratives and resulted as being interdependent in determining how powerful the rupture could be.

Ultimately, the recognition of incompleteness in a ruin, especially where fragmentation is high, acts as a rupture for the viewer. This adds value to a site seen as a narrative device. This study is an inquiry about the meaning and perception of incompleteness of 'architecture' in our current environment, highlighting its relevance in architectural discourse.

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Glossary

Affordances   Affordances are what the environment offers to a cognitive organism. It is a concept introduced by J. J. Gibson (1979) and his ecological theory of perception. Perception involves viewing the organism as being engaged in its surroundings.

Bricolage   Making use of a repertoire a set of pre-constrained tools to create a project (Gjermstad, 2015).

Cognitive   All mental operations involved in the receiving, storing and processing of information. Arnheim (1997) includes perception as cognition.

'Line of destruction'   The jagged and disrupted line in a ruin, a result of the accident by which the ruin came to be. "The unanticipated angular irregularity of the exposed edge is entertaining, as it engages the exercise of our eyes. Unevenness gets even with the world that we have organized to exhibit regular lineaments" (Ginsberg, 2004, p. 26).

Perception   The top-down way our brains organize and interpret information and put it into context. "A direct reflection of an objective stimulus, a low-level cognitive psychological phenomenon of human psychological process" (Liu et al., 2019, p. 2). Visual perception is the detection of present scenes, objects and events (Markovich, 2002, p. 3). According to Arnheim (1997), perception extends to include cognition.

(Potential) Narrative   A story deriving from our experience of the ruin. Could be in the form of mental imagery, linear process or hybrid process with loops (Coppolino, 2017), expressed through art, words, photographs… A narrative is also an un-conscious of place (Kahane, 2011b) and relates to the experience surrounding the encounter of a ruin. Therefore, it is not solely about imaginative reconstructions, but concerns one's experience and interpretation.

Rupture   An interruption in our flow of thinking, triggering the imagination (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013).

Synecdoche   A rhetorical device where a part represents a complete object or vice versa. An example is the use of the word 'wheels' to refer to a car (Handa, 2014).

Thinking   Belonging to the category of rational cognition, is an indirect reflection of objective things, a high-level cognitive psychological phenomenon in the psychological process with the characteristics of generality and abstractness. (Liu et al., 2019, p. 2)

Visualisation   Visual imagery, e.g., closing one's eyes and seeing an apple in the 'mind's eye'. (Nanay, 2007, p. 1333).

Chapter 1: Introduction

"A ruin is a dialogue between an incomplete reality and the
imagination of the spectator; as they strolled between the colonnades
his visitors would recall the Roman Forum, Ephesus, or Palmyra,
each completing a picture of their own."

(Woodward, 2001, as cited in Trigg, 2009, p. 180).

Ulysses Lodge, collage by author.

1.1   Background and Context

1.1.1   The ruin as a narrative device

The ruin is persistently described as a 'stimulus' or a 'prompt' that captures our imagination (e.g., Chan, 2009; Handa, 2014; Schönle, 2017). It is a place where fantasy is not just possible but an inbuilt, inevitable consequence, where "imagination and the metaphysical make structures grow and change from rusting machines into creatures, fantasy characters and animated ghosts" (Chan, 2009, p. 24). Schönle (2017) describes how the ruin not only enables, but is defined by individual freedom, imagination and subjectivity. He cites Freud's theory, where ruins are able to release powerful subconscious energies, being an archaeology of the unconscious. We also ask: what has happened? Who has lived here? What were their lives like, and what were their stories? Thus, the ruin is an instigator of countless narratives, concerning its historicity and how it came to be, as well as what it could become and our own personal storyline as spectators within a ruinous environment.

To Gjermstad (2015), "the view of an incomplete and partially destroyed object, gives us the urge to repair it, to reanimate, to complete it" (p. 23). The relationship of what is there and what is missing pushes us to fill in the blanks so that "the becoming of new forms, orderings and aesthetics can emerge" (Hell & Schönle, 2010, p. 7). Handa (2014) echoes this notion, where the missing parts entice us to fill in the gaps. Therefore, there is potentially a link between this stimulation and the ruin's incomplete form, where the parts that remain work towards a new whole.

The missing parts thus represent an absence that leads to a narration (Coppolino, 2017). In this study, the narrative does not solely concern the story of how the ruin came to be or the history of its former 'complete' form. The narrative is the story one would retell of their encounter with the ruin: it is not solely about imaginative reconstructions but concerns one's experience and interpretation.
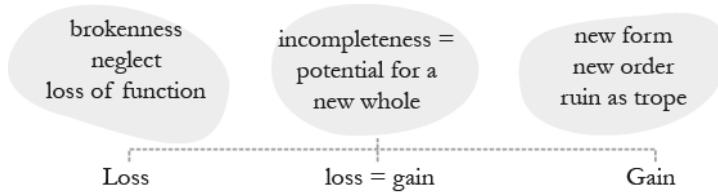
1.1.2   The ruin as a definition

As a definition, 'ruin' is associated with the embodiment of collapse, decay and loss of function (Boym, 2008). Zill (2011) differentiates between the ruin as the result of a gradual process of deterioration following abandonment or the ruin as the outcome of an act of destruction, which could also deteriorate with time. In the latter, the ruin has been 'murdered' (Zill, 2011) and represents a place of trauma (Trigg, 2009), adding another dimension to how they are perceived. The latter issue of trauma will not be the focus of this study.

In viewing the ruin as a loss, Murchadha (2002) remarks that "only on the basis of decay can the essence of the ruin be made visible" (p. 10). Decay of form, function and meaning in the present proclaims time as the architect of the ruin (Nieszczerzewska, 2015). Thus, the ruin is also a process that shifts with time, reflecting the etymology of the word, from the Latin *ruina*, from *ruĕre*, meaning 'to precipitate, to reverse' (Coppolino, 2017).

However, the discourse on ruins reveals how their very definition is not so clear-cut (Hell and Schönle, 2010). The ruin is not solely defined by signs of decay, since contemporary ruins may have not reached an advanced state of deterioration. Nor is it necessarily defined by a loss of function, since ruins have been rehabilitated (Schönle, 2017).

Contrasting a loss, the ruin symbolises the conception of new orders, meanings and form (Fig. 1). Its meaning transcends physicality: the ruin becomes a trope to navigate the relationships between the 'self', space, history and politics. As Stead (2003) describes, it becomes a critical tool, something stripped bare for us to dissect. The ruin is thus instrumentalised and allegorised, as Benjamin (1977) famously stated: "allegories are, in the realm of thoughts, what ruins are in the realm of things" (p. 177–178). However, Schönle (2017) questions whether we are interpreting the ruin correctly, or are we reading more into it? "Does the wind that erodes the ruin blow from the faraway reaches of universal history or is it the result of local weather conditions?" (p. 93). Therefore, the ruin is very much defined by our perceptions and conclusions, thus this collective social significance informs the ruin as a social and cultural construct (Schönle, 2017).

Figure 1: The ambivalent nature of the ruin becomes immediately present when exploring the definition of the ruin.

1.1.3 The ruin as an evolving cultural construct over time

Ruins and their representations have held a fascination throughout history (Stead, 2003). As a direct link to the past, ruins are approached according to the era's political, social and cultural beliefs. With the passing of time, our relationship to the past changes, and the significance of the ruin, as an embodiment of this connection, is continuously changing.

When ruins started to appear in medieval paintings, the earliest existing representations depict them as a humble background to the birth of Christ (Zucker, 1961) (Fig. 2). There is a shift in the Renaissance, or the 'Ruin-aissance,' (Hui, 2009) when the appreciation of the value of the ruin as a ruin leads to its preservation (Schönle, 2017). In line with the emerging humanist beliefs, the ruin is valued for its ability to mature, age and die like a human body (Hill, 2016). During this period, "the ruin [is] first of all a legible remnant, a repository of written knowledge," since it is a means to explore the uncovered language and culture of the Classical times (Dillon, 2005, para. 1).

Figure 2: Nativity by Fra Filippo Lippi. 15th century. The ruins have circumstantial meaning here.. The importance is to the state fragmentation rather than the structure. Image source: https://www.magnoliabox.com/products/the-nativity-xir902568

The ruin as a vehicle for emotion is also expressed throughout the Baroque period, which witnesses the ruin as a rich allegorical reference (Stead, 2003). Mannerism and Baroque saw the ruin as more than a mere prop, as it becomes the object of interest (Figs. 3–4). In the Enlightenment, the ruin emerges as a symbol of human progress during the era of historical consciousness, exacerbated by the discoveries of Pompeii and Herculaneum, and was the onset of ruin lust (Schönle, 2017; Kushinksi, 2016). In the 18th century, the ruin as depicting decay reaches the pinnacle of Romantic aesthetic appreciation (Fig. 5), witnessed through the follies erected as an element of garden design, aimed to create intellectual narratives and engage the spectator emotionally (Stead, 2003). The ruin, as an emblem, symbolises artistic creation, and the fragment becomes more important than the finished, unified work (Dillon, 2005).

Figure 3: Saint Sebastian by Andrea Mantegna. ca. 1480. The ruin served as a backdrop upon which to superimpose and compose the frail human body. Image source: Dillon, 2005, p. 4.

Figure 4: Marine Landscape with Towers by Salvatore Rosa. 1645. Ruins depicted as mood-creating props on one level with trees, clouds and nature. Image source: https://www.wikiart.org/en/salvat or-rosa/marine-landscape-with-towers-1645
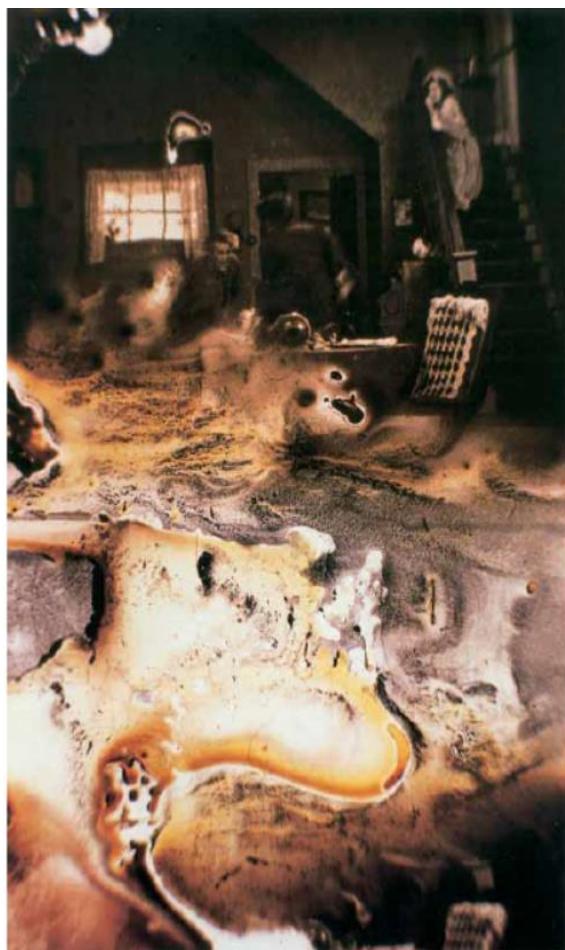
Figure 5: Ancient Roman Monuments by Giovanni Paolo Panini. 1734. Depicting an expression of Romantic element, poetic imagination. Image source: https://artuk.org/discover/artworks/roman-capriccio-ruins-with-the-colosseum-76751

Figure 6: Arch of Titus by Giovanni Battista Piranesi. ca. 1760. A powerful and emotional Romanticist, but also conscious of architectural and spatial values. Image source: https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/363083

The 19th century interventions on ruins by Viollet-le-Duc present the notion of the wish and ability to reconstruct the past in its totality. Moreover, we see the onset of the ability for nature to be ruined, therefore the ruin, with its return to nature, signifies the triumph of the natural world (Schönle, 2017; Dillon, 2005).

The 20th century looks at the ruins from a philosophical lens, as a "cipher of temporality" (Schönle, 2017, p. 87). Its age value is appreciated through the works of John Ruskin and Alois Riegl, who recognized the importance of the embedded historical layers. At the moment, we are in the midst of a "strange ruinophilia" (Boym, 2008, p. 58), reconsidering ruination discourse in terms of waste, natalism and in the realm of architecture, not solely aesthetics (Kushinski, 2016). Ruins are as powerful as they were centuries ago, but rather than representing a heroic confrontation with disaster or an image of lost knowledge, they could represent our willingness to expose ourselves to an uncanny and ambiguous experience (Hell & Schönle, 2010) (Fig. 7), towards a reflective nostalgia (Boym, 2008), "mourning the loss of aesthetic itself" (Dillon, 2005, p. 5).

Figure 7: The Trio (Moires series) by Eric Rondepierre. ca. 1996. This series contains frames that are deteriorating, providing the images with a sinister atmosphere. Rondepierre is looking at the images as cinematographic archaeology, where he gives back the images the feelings evoked by materiality. Image source: Dillon, 2005, p. 8

1.2 Aims and objectives

This dissertation, fuelled by the researcher's fascination with the complexities of ruined spaces, questions why the ruin is a 'prompt' to the imagination; why it 'stimulates' the beholder; and why one feels an 'urge' to 'complete' it in the mind's eye. It is an attempt at understanding what happens at the moment of encounter to trigger this process.

Thus, this study seeks to explore the way the ruin is defined by its ambivalent and paradoxical nature and how this links to its role as a narrative device. Compared to what 'complete' architecture evokes, the ruin is analysed as a subset of incomplete architecture. Here, the intent is to examine the notion of incompleteness in the ruin and whether this quality, if recognized as such, instigates a narrative. Thus, this dissertation examines how incompleteness, as a phenomenon in itself, affects our perception and imagination. The narrative is a subjective way of interpreting the ruin, thus the aim is not to solely identify its different forms, but to investigate the potential for its formation.

This is carried out by:

> Establishing a theoretical framework that explores the ruin as a set of binary oppositions, expanding on the notion of incompleteness and its role in instigating a narrative.

> Gathering different narratives and reactions instigated by a set of local case studies based on different areas of expertise and familiarity. This is done through a set of in-depth interviews.

> Analysing the narratives and their nature with respect to incompleteness in the ruin to find their possible roots.

Although part of the research involves exploring how the ruin is defined, establishing a definition for a ruin is beyond the scope of the study. Also, it is not about specifically delving into the archaeological aspect of building a narrative close to the 'truth' (which, although evidence-based, is still at times subjective), but on how people experience the ruin and build their own story with their relationship to how that narrative is presented.

1.3 Research questions

How is incompleteness perceived in the ruin? Is incompleteness in itself a source of intrigue, and why are ruins (if perceived as incomplete) such powerful 'prompts' to the imagination?

What are the elements surrounding the ruin and the 'self' that shape a potential narrative?

1.4 Structure

Chapter 1: Introduction

Presents the aims, objectives and research questions, and introduces the ruin as a narrative device and discusses the definition of the ruin and the evolution of its interpretation through history.

Chapter 2: The (in)complete ruin

In the first section of the literature review, the ruin is investigated as a series of binary oppositions. The paradox of incompleteness and completeness is expanded in the second section, where incompleteness is investigated as a phenomenon in itself that potentially shapes a narrative. It outlines the conceptual framework against which the results are analysed.

Chapter 3: Methodology

Addresses the methodology for this study, the choice of case studies, the research instruments, how data is analysed and limitations of the research.

Chapter 4: Results

Presents the results of the research: it describes how the term 'ruin' is interpreted and organises the narratives and their nature are gathered from each case study as described by the interviewees.

Chapter 5: Discussion and Conclusion

Discusses the results through the theoretical framework: how or whether incompleteness is perceived in a ruin, and its role in shaping a potential narrative. The narratives are thus deconstructed to investigate their roots. Finally, a concluding statement and recommendations for further research are presented.

The structure of the dissertation is shown diagrammatically with respect to the process in Figure 8.
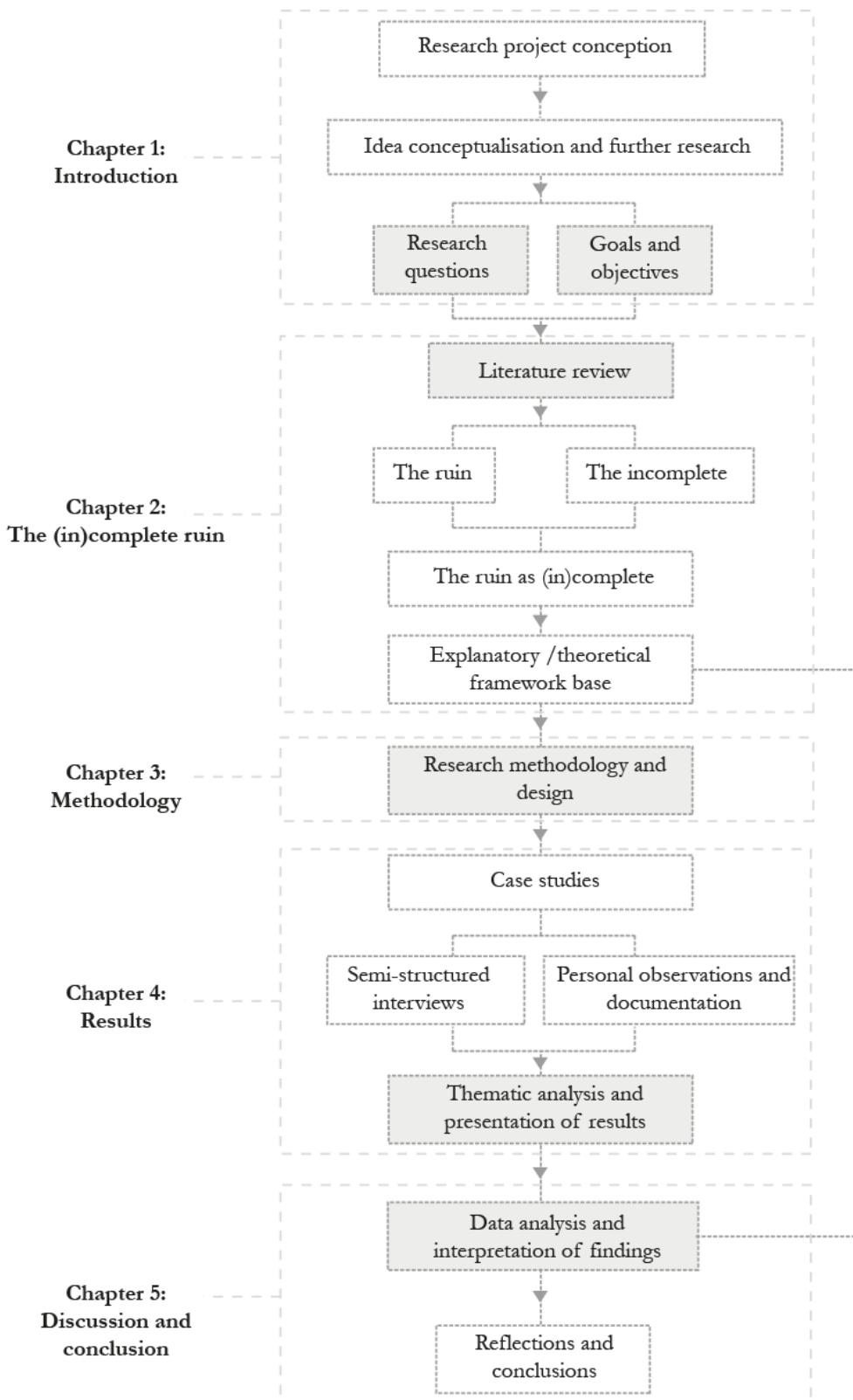
Figure 8: The structure of the dissertation alongside the process throughout.

Chapter 2: The (in)complete ruin

"What does it mean to see something that is not there, say,
a ruin?"

(Hui, 2009, p. xi)

Santa Verna, collage by author.

2.1 Introduction

Although the ruin gaze is continuously shifting through time, the intrigue surrounding the ruin is still present, albeit in a different light. This intrigue has inspired and shaped infinite narratives. This chapter investigates and outlines what potentially gives rise to a narrative in a ruin. In the first section, the ruin reveals its ambivalent and paradoxical nature through a series of binary oppositions. This includes the tension between completeness and incompleteness, reinforcing the idea of the ruin as a part of something else, which is expanded in the second section. The links between incompleteness and the ruin as a stimulus to a potential narrative are explored, which includes how incompleteness works in the visual field and is applied to the ruin. The discourse forms the basis of an explanatory framework that seeks to uncover the roots of the potential narrative.

2.2 The ruin

2.2.1 As a series of binary oppositions:

Understanding the intrigue surrounding the ruin involves recognizing it as an ambiguous set of "contradictions and open paradoxes" (Kahane, 2011a, p. 632). Its complex nature revolves around its multifaceted temporal qualities and the dynamics between what exists and what doesn't. Thus, the ruin can be seen as a series of temporal and (meta)physical binary oppositions.

2.2.1.1 Temporal paradoxes

2.2.1.1.1 Past, Present and Future

As Kahane (2011a) states, the ruin does not conform to a linear timeline of the past, present and future. These are all merged in the energy it exudes. The ruin embodies the past since it communicates a particular event and how it fell into ruin, but it also signals that the past is gone. The ruin belongs to the present as much as it does to the past, since it is the past existing in the present (Kahane, 2011a). It represents a way of reading the past through the powerful presence of the present. (Benjamin, 1977; Stead, 2003).

The ruin tantalises us with the future that never happened (Boym, 2008) and the future that can take place now, given the ability of the ruin to survive until now. The ruin becomes a window to the future or potential futures (Schönle, 2017; Minkjan, 2015), where the past and present are intertwined.

2.2.1.1.2 Temporality and atemporality

The ruin, in the present, captures a frame from our temporal continuum. As seen in Pompeii or Herculaneum (Figs. 9-10), time is suspended, the world seems frozen (Thomas, 2003) and the ruin stands still and quiet (Murchadha, 2002). To Burke (1998, cited in Schönle, 2017) the ruin represents a static spectacle, with their meanings and narratives controlled as a way to manipulate society.

On the other hand, in Herculaneum, the very transience of time is captured. The ruin does not belong to the present or past, but to transitoriness, indicating the passing of time (Murchadha, 2002). It is associated with a process along time, in contrast to a framing of a solitary moment. Hegel associates the ruin with a dynamic process into the future, as the meaning of the ruin shifts with time (1970, cited in Schönle, 2017).
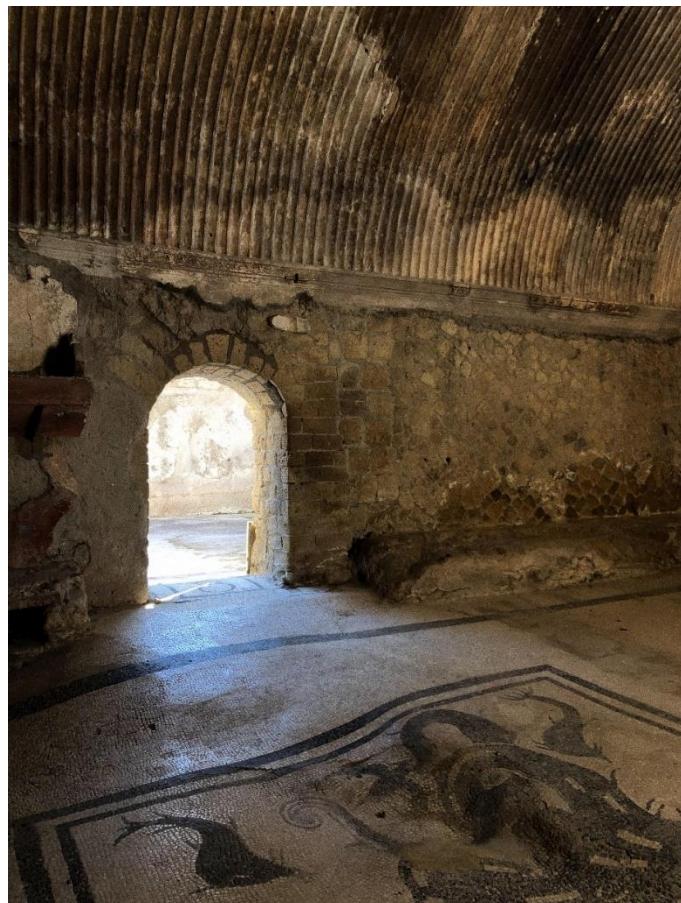
Figure 9: Herculaneum: a static spectacle? Image source: Photo by author, taken February 15, 2020.

Figure 10: Bed in Herculaneum, frozen in time. Image source: Photo by author, taken February 15, 2020.

2.2.1.1.2 Death and immortality

This dialectic of temporality versus atemporality inadvertently pushes the notion of the ruin as "a sign of mortality and a claim to immortality" (Murchadha, 2002, p. 15). Within a ruinous environment, one is confronted with their own mortality: the decay, symbolising the demise and impermanence of the building, becomes a reminder of the futility, frailty and insignificance of human life. It is a reminder of our place in the universe (Kahane, 2011a). Furthermore, the decay of monuments built to immortalise human action becomes a testimony to their transience (Chan, 2009). In the poem Ozymandias by Percy Bysshe Shelley, the initial wish for the 'king of kings' to have his reign immortalised is shattered, of which nothing but fragments remain. This is a meditation on the transience of human life and the power of time as expressed through a ruin.

> […]
> And on the pedestal, these words appear:
> My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
> Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
> Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
> Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
> The lone and level sands stretch far away. (Shelley, 1977, p. 194)

To Ruskin (1849/1892), the ruin becomes a noble and truthful witness for the passing of time. It is through ruination that the building assumes its true character:

> [...] the greatest glory of a building is not in its stones, nor in its gold. Its glory is in its Age, and in that deep sense of voicefulness, of stern watching, of mysterious sympathy, nay, even of approval or condemnation, which we feel in walls that have long been washed by the passing waves of humanity. (Ruskin, 1849/1892, p. 290)

In interpreting Ruskin, Muñoz-Vera (2012) states that in the struggle between the stones and nature, the ruins remain funereal, thus a symbol of death and melancholy.

On the other hand, the survival of the ruin against time, elements and surrounding context immortalises the powerful human action that built it. So simultaneously, it becomes a reminder that we or our actions are immune to death. Our fascination with a ruin could relate to our innate wish to be immortal (Ginsberg, 2004). This is an inherently political approach, witnessed during a totalitarian regime through Speer's theory of ruin value. Here, designing specifically for a building that becomes an impressive, fragmented ruin in the future is the way for a political ideology as a totality to survive and flourish. The individual's mortality is contrasted with the immortality of a political reign (Stead, 2003).
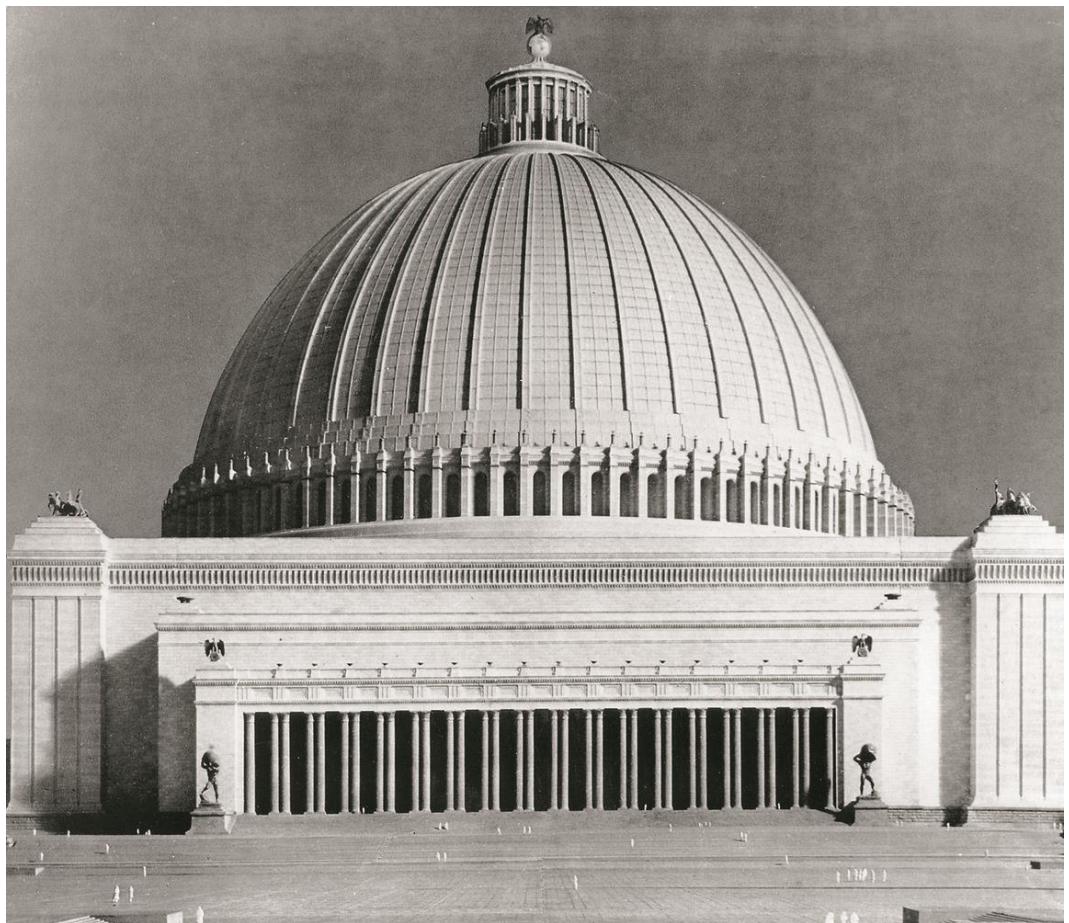
Figure 11: Volkshalle: a play on the Roman Pantheon. Designed by Speer through the theory of ruin value: a way of overcoming the inevitability of death and thus reach immortality.
Image source: https://www.archdaily.com/806680/unbuilt-nazi-pantheon-unpacking-albert-speer-volkshalle-germania-jonathan-glancey

2.2.1.2 Physical and metaphysical paradoxes

2.2.1.2.1 The ruin as a fragment or whole

The ruin's paradoxical nature extends to the physical and metaphysical experience of the space. In deciphering the spatial experience, the ruin is inherently fragmented: it becomes a juxtaposition of fragments (Hoffman, 2012). A fragment, as part of the ruin, signifies a part of a whole that is lost: it can have its own significance (notion traced from 19th century) or act as a sign of an incomplete whole (Tronzo, 2009).

However, the ruin itself can be seen as a fragment, a sign, a remnant of something else, as a part detached from a whole (Murchadha, 2002; Kahane, 2011a, Hoffman, 2012; Handa, 2014). Hence, when understood in this way, the ruin and the fragment are interchangeable. According to Murchadha (2002), a ruin is a symbol that becomes whole only if the lost unity is restored. Identifying something as a fragment brings forward the presupposed notion that the whole precedes the parts, and the meaning of the part is determined by the whole. When the ruin is perceived as a fragment, the associated whole refers to the physical aspect of the object (Handa 2014). But what happens if that whole is inexistent? How do we get from the existing part to the whole? (Tronzo, 2009).

The whole can exist in a different manner. Contrasting the understanding of ruin as a fragment, the ruin can be interpreted as a synecdoche. This is a rhetorical device where a part represents a complete object or vice versa (for instance: 'wheels' refer to a car). The whole is not necessarily a reference to the pre-existing whole, but a whole which can be imagined (Handa, 2014). The whole could otherwise form irrespective of the fragments, as they emancipate themselves from it. This means that there is no need for the separate elements to form a whole, since the whole can be constructed nonetheless in the very lack of unity (Burger's theory of the avantgarde, cited in Chatterjee, 2017).

The underlying belief is that there is more to the ruin than undeciphered fragmentation, as the "ruin is always a ruin of …" (Murchadha, 2002, p.10), and the ruin is interpreted as part of a whole, whichever that may be.

2.2.1.2.2 Form and deformation

The form of the ruin is based on the deformation of the intent, function and structure of the original building. The ruin is a tribute to the original construction, thus its creation, and the undoing of that creation. It becomes similar to stone and earth, the (de)formation of the architectural work bringing about a surreal sculptural form (Simmel, 1958). Viewing the ruin as a process of creating, "a form simultaneously exists and does not exist. It doesn't exist because, as formed, it can appear actually after the process is done. It exists, because it is working in an initialised process of forming" (Pareyson, 2009, cited in Nieszczerzewska, 2015, p. 392).

Attention to form and the pure architectural experience is depicted in Figures 12–13 (15th and 18th centuries), recognized as a way to express the power of the ruin's pure spatial configurations (Zucker, 1961). The form of the ruin in the present depends on how the ruin came to be: whether destroyed by nature or man; and by the constituent materials present and interventions, affecting the rate of decay. The form translates to a continuously shifting architectural expression, precisely determined by an ongoing process of deformation.
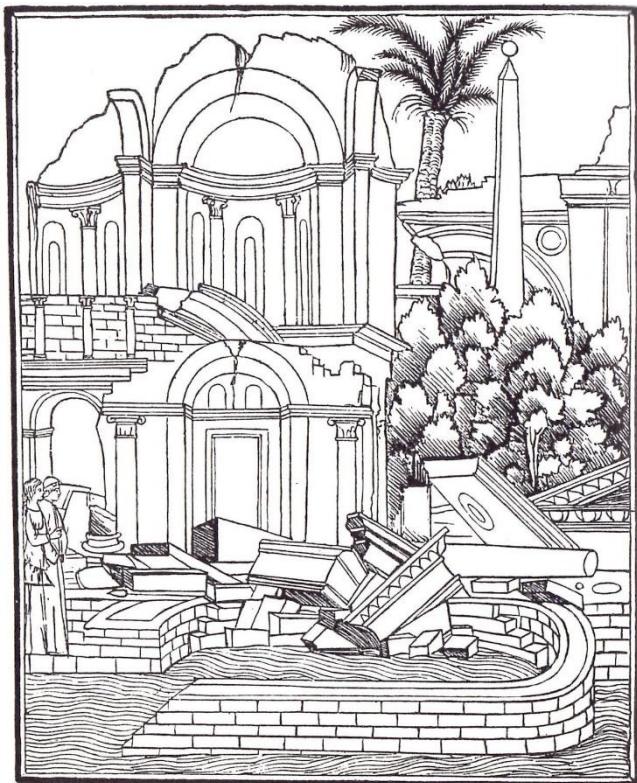
Figure 12: Hypernerotomachia Polifili. The polyandrion by Fra Francesco Colonna. A stimulation of our spatial imagination. Image source: Zucker, 1961, p. 128.

Figure 13: Temple of Jupiter Ruins in Spoleto by Robert Adam. It is about capturing the shape of the void. Image source: Zucker, 1961, p. 128.

2.2.1.2.3 Nature and spirit

The ruin, as a process of deformation, breaks the predetermined programme (determined by the building's function) as nature takes over. Simmel (1958) describes the ruin as the triumph of nature over spirit, which represents our domination of nature through a set programme, versus the free-flowing order of things that nature is associated with:

> The instant the building crumbles […] the balance between nature and spirit, which the building manifested, shifts in favour of nature […] Nature has transformed the work of art into material for her own expression, as she had previously served as material for art. (pp. 379-381)

In this view, the ruin symbolises the revenge of nature on human interventions, the return to our source of energy. These emerging new strengths of nature form a new unity as nature continues to exist in spite of our attempts to dominate it. It is this struggle that has rendered the ruin as romantic and picturesque. Ruskin (1849/1892, p. 86) states that "there is not a cluster of weeds growing in any cranny of ruin which has not a beauty in all respects nearly equal, and, in some, immeasurably superior, to that of the most elaborate sculpture of its stones." Thus, the interwoven nature becomes an architectural element as important as the stones. However, for Benjamin, nature is seen as a continuous process of decay, rather than a triumphing creative force as interpreted by Simmel (Schönle, 2017).

Contrasting the notion of nature versus spirit, Dillon (2005) views the ruin not as the triumph of nature, but a fragile moment of equilibrium between persistence and decay. Murchadha (2002) contests Simmel's (1958) strict boundary between nature and spirit by stating that we can understand ruins from the point of view of dwelling. In this case, architecture can be understood in a non-functional way, and does not demarcate where the function (spirit) stops. Therefore, the boundary between nature and spirit is blurred, and thus the ruin exists in its lack. If one analyses a building not from a point of view of architecture, but from its metaphysical capacity and relation to being (Heidegger, 1971, cited in Murchadha, 2002), then, spirit and nature become intrinsically linked within the building. From this point of view, nature and spirit are no longer clearly defined elements, but merge in the name of a new unity.

2.2.1.2.4 Absence and presence

With the loss of the predetermined function and deformation, as well as the complex temporal qualities, the ruin represents a juxtaposition of voids and fragments, of the visible and the invisible. Thus, the ruin haunts, or spooks the viewer, since "it is present without belonging to the present. Ruins are neither present nor absent, neither *techne* [skill/making] nor *physis* [nature]: a place where everyone is a stranger" (Murchadha, 2002, p.15). To Murchadha, the ruin, in its ambiguity, is a place where you stay without belonging.

The ruin lets you see without showing you anything, its interpretation of what is present is through its absence. Therefore, the present ruin is defined by what is absent (Derrida, 1993; Trigg, 2006). Alluding to Benjamin's (1977) definition of ruins as allegories, the ruin comes to mean the non-existence of what it presents. This reference to absence is interpreted in Khan's architecture (Figs. 14-15) where he defines the ruin as absence, as something that nothing lives behind (Hill, 2016). However, Simmel (1958) notes an immediate perceived presence from the traces of past life. Therefore, ruins are indicators of both absence and presence (Irving, 2015).
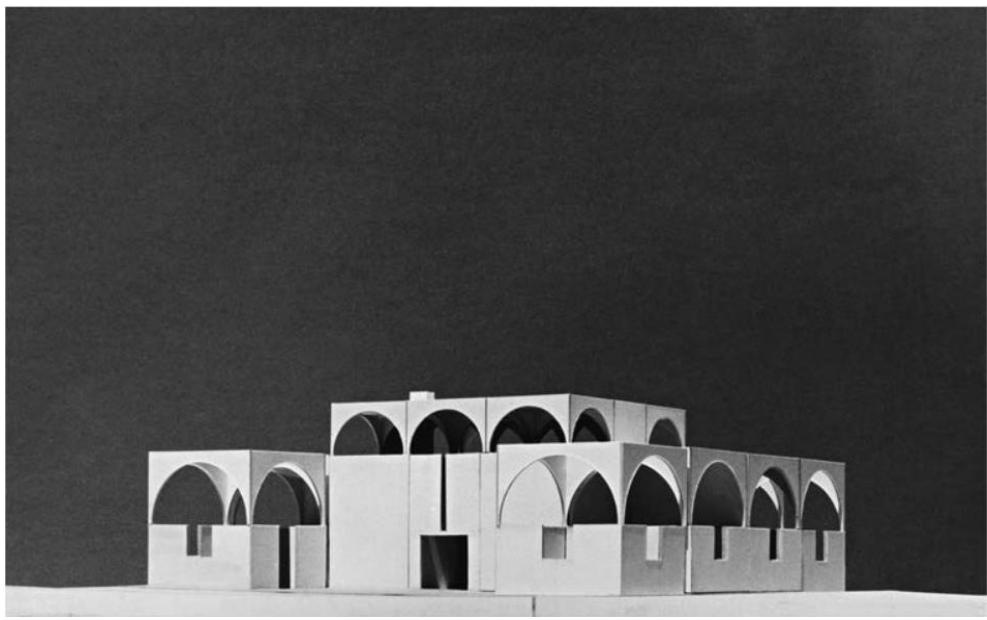
Figure 14: Model of Fleisher House, Pennsylvania, by Louis Kahn. 1959. Wrapping ruins around buildings primarily as a means of protection from the elements. However, continuous application in contrasting climates meant that wrapping became symbolic: a means of veiling which charges unveiling with discovery and excitement. Image source: Hill, 2016, p. 97.

Figure 15: The Salk Institute, by Louis Kahn. 1965. Hill (2016) compares the wrapping of ruins as similar to Piranesi's Carceri. Through the use of glass (representative of windows and thus human gaze) and prioritisation of monumental unframed openings, Kahn is emphasising the ruin, not the building. Image source: Hill, 2016, p. 100.

2.2.1.2.5 Stillness and violence

The paradoxical presence defined by absence evokes the notion of something being displaced, of having arrived at a scene too late. The ruin evokes another duality between the sublime serenity and silence that the place offers, and the violence it embodies. The resulting tension that exists from the association with suffering and pain, creates a quiet, strained stillness. This stillness is not the current lack of movement, but is a stillness that has evolved over time, "a stillness played out against a past that is no longer accessible and yet intensely fused with the environment" (Trigg, 2006, p.98) (Figs. 16–17).

However, when the ashes are not smouldering, this stillness can be "in a mysterious way a source of calm and peace" (Tanizaki, 2001, p. 12), and according to Simmel (1958), the ruin comes to represent something "that is stable in its form and endures peacefully" (p. 384). Balanced reflection becomes possible when the ashes are cold (Kahane, 2011a).

2.2.1.2.6 Completeness and incompleteness

Tying to the notion of the fragmentation and deformation, the ruin is automatically defined as incomplete (Zucker, 1961; Chan, 2009; Handa, 2014). This alludes to its continuously changing form recalling both an original 'complete' version and a new constructed whole. Incompleteness could be what fuels the emerging new whole, the rest of the picture.

> Since ruins are only *partial information* [emphasis added] the remnants of a much larger, more layered and complex living entity, it is left to us to complete the whole picture. And it is in this colouring in the details, that our fantasies, self-interest and delusions come into play. […] The crumbling remnants of monasteries became intertwined with stories of druids and ancient stone monuments in a confusing mix that only time and detailed study can unravel. It is this *blurry state of half-knowledge* [emphasis added] that can produce the most interesting results. ("The inspiration of ruins", 2019, para. 3–4)

Throughout the ruin discourse, it is also stated that in defining ruins as incomplete, ruins become complete: in their fragmented state, they achieve perfection, and in "their incompletion, they are already complete" (Nieszczerzewska, 2015, pp. 393–394). This reinforces the paradox of a complete incomplete ruin. Incompleteness in a ruin, albeit contested, implies that it is fundamentally a part of something else. Being a potential trigger for completion of a 'new' whole, this notion of the ruin as (in)complete is further explored in detail.

Figure 16: The streets in Herculaneum: Stillness. Image source: photo by author, taken February 15, 2020.

Figure 17: The ruins of Hiroshima: The Genbaku Dome. A very pronounced mark of violence. But simultaneously very still. Image source: photo by author, taken September 16, 2019.

2.3 Incompleteness

Expanding on the latter paradox, the notion of incompleteness is investigated as a powerful instigator of a 'new' whole, of a narrative.

2.3.1 Exploring (in)completeness in a ruin

2.3.1.1 Incompleteness versus completeness in a ruin

The inherent mutability of architecture means that architecture is in a state of constant change, resisting labels of perfection and completeness. The notion of complete architecture as construction ceases is emphasised in the Renaissance through Alberti's (1458/1988) theory of beauty, where "beauty is that reasoned harmony of all the parts within a body, so that nothing may be added, taken away, or altered, but for the worse" (p. 156). Applied literally, this implies any future change as degrading. In this scenario as described by Alberti, architecture is in a state of incompleteness (Handa, 2014). With this in mind, the ruin is mostly defined, as discussed throughout the ruin discourse, as incomplete. Therefore, incompleteness becomes a relative term, with respect to architecture that is not defined as ruins.

However, this statement can be challenged through considering one side of the ruin as a series of binary oppositions. A ruin that is still, static, a place of reflection and where time seems frozen through the overpowering feeling of the present, manifests itself as being at peace. Considering the Simmel's (1958) triumph of nature over spirit, the ruin is complete as it becomes adorned with vegetation (Gilpin, 1808, as cited in Thomas, 2003), distancing the cause of destruction to allow the individual to reconnect with nature. This is a Romantic view, where the ruin is appreciated as a ruin. The ruins of the Colosseum to Byron are complete in their incompletion: "But the gladiators' bloody Circus stands, A noble wreck in ruinous perfection" (Byron, 1817, cited in Handa, 2014, p. 47).

Considering these assumptions, it implies a delicate position (recalling Alberti's theory of beauty) where anything that is added or subtracted disturbs this balance, but this time, applied on a future version of an architectural piece. The ruin has thus reached a peak of harmony and beauty:

> But it is difficult to image the roof on, and the sky shut out. It all looks right as it is; and one feels, somehow, that such columns should have nothing between them and the infinite blue depths of heaven. (Edwards, 1989, cited in Ginsberg, 2004, p. 315)
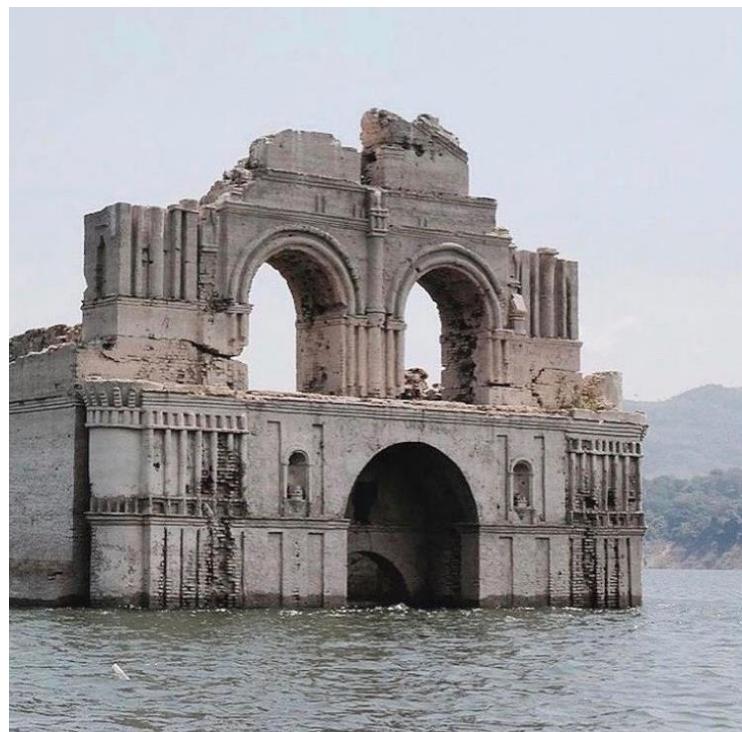
With this notion of perfection, completeness and being one with nature (thus reading the ruin as natural (Dillon, 2005)), the contradictory concept of ruining a ruin is created. Thus, the ruin is compartmentalised as a typology, meaning it has ticked all the boxes to be defined as such. Paradoxically, the ruin (as a typology) appears unclassifiable in itself, due to its continuous transformation.

In its "incompletion, [it is] already complete. But the seeing eye can easily recognize in fragmented ruins the idea of a whole, even if this whole is called nothingness" (Nieszczerzewska, 2015, pp. 393–394). Thus, the transformation and continuous shifting of the ruin, its incompleteness, is what is intrinsic in recognizing it as such.

2.3.1.2 Incompleteness in a ruin as physical or otherwise

Incompleteness can be interpreted beyond the physical realm. Alexander (2002) states that the whole is made up of its parts, which in turn act as 'centres'. Architecture, with its ability of supporting life by acting as a whole, can be understood as a system of 'centres', layers or entities that intensify each other. A layer ('centre'/entity) does not necessarily mean a physical configuration of space, but can be "a source of the living power and the essence of phenomena" (Iba & Sakai, 2014. p. 436). Therefore, these are not merely physical, but include the social, cultural and immaterial layers, that build up the whole. These layers may or may not interact with each other to create coherence and thus, wholeness (Hijazeen, 2018).

One can argue that some layers or centres that structure a ruin are causing an imbalance. In a ruin, layers ('centres'/entities) – such as, the functional, social, historical or physical – have been tainted or have disappeared. This causes a rupture, puncturing the coherence of its context, punctuating and interrupting strongly the experience of the city (Fig. 18).

Figure 18: Incomplete physical layer: a 16th century church emerging from a reservoir in Mexico. Image source: @the_lane via Instagram post, retrieved March 20, 2021.

2.3.1.3 Incompleteness in a ruin as an instigator of narrative

Incompleteness, as an imbalance in the multi-layered ruin, is potentially a powerful source of intrigue and fascination. Interpreted as a state of half-knowledge, the ruin as an incomplete entity instigates us to 'complete' the missing information in our mind's eye, connecting the remnants to potential futures or the past. The ruin's "incomplete lack… leads us to reflection" (Kahane, 2011a, p. 635), forcing us to hover and contemplate. "Eyes roam backwards and forwards, and up and down, between the fragments and the gaps in a manner analogous to the way a body occupies a building or a city, forming and understanding through movement" (Hill, 2016, p. 87). Since the ruin represents a void, "an absence that needs to be narrated" (Coppolino, 2017, p. 3), it possesses certain narrative skills. Narratives may be linear, consequential and chronological - in the form of a story (Shanks, 2016). However, Coppolino (2017) believes narratives are "hybrid and incoherent […], made up of breaks, of interruptions, of continuous returns, of splinters from the past that re-emerge as pieces of unconscious, exactly like memories come to mind" (p. 3). Thus, the narrative is not solely a static, ordered 'image', but it concerns the dynamism of experience derived from the space and how we perceive it.

This can be contrasted to something 'complete', which does not instigate our imagination to such power, since "to present the utmost to the eye is to bind the wings of fancy and compel it" (Lessing, cited in Dillon, 2005, para. 5). In his etchings (Figs. 18–19), Piranesi shows that brokenness and vulnerability in architecture is powerful and emotive. The lack of completeness is directly linked to the stimulus to the imagination (Hill, 2016).
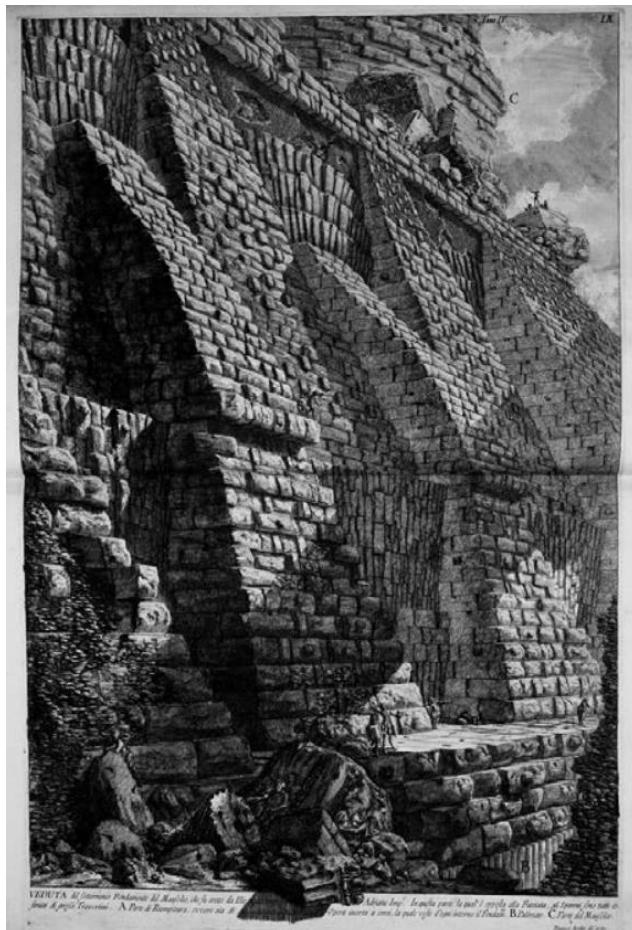
Figure 19: Hadrian's Tomb, by Piranesi. 1756– 1757. UCL Library Special Collections. The depicted structures were often distorted from reality, stimulating the viewer to interpret the ruins themselves. Image source: Hill, 2016, p. 86.
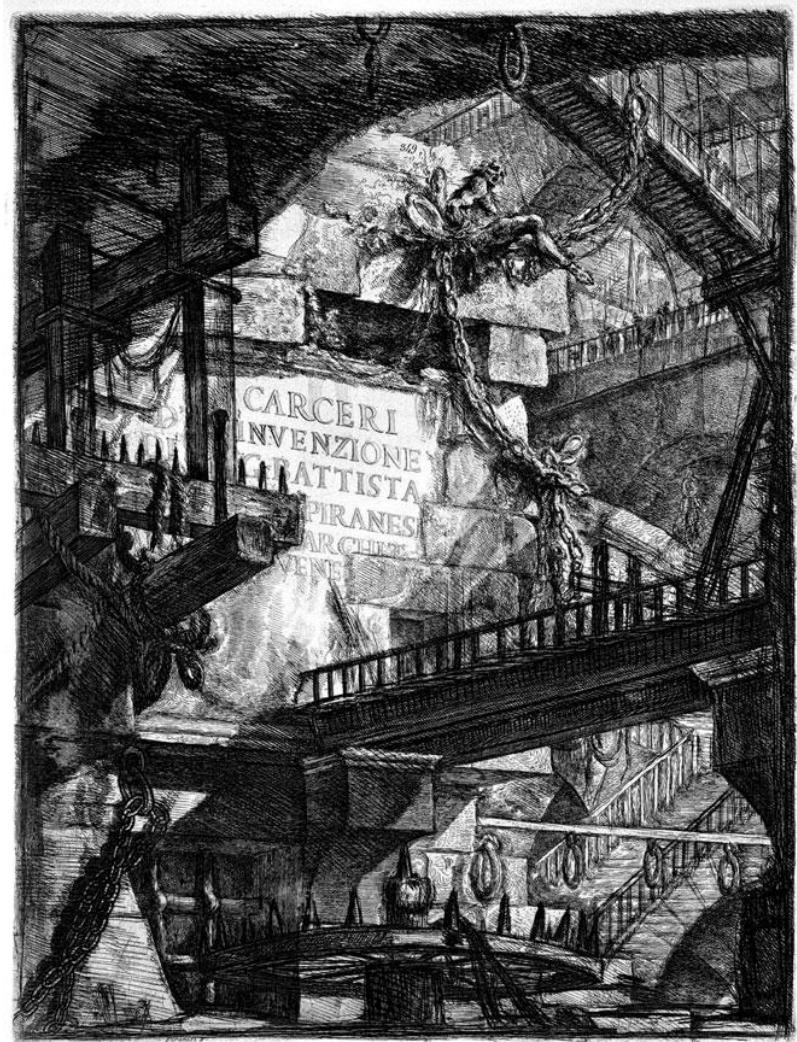
Figure 20: Piranesi, Carceri series, ca. 1745. These depict ancient Roman or Baroque
ruins converted into fantastic, visionary dungeons. Image source:
https://www.italianways.com/piranesis-imaginary-prisons/

2.3.2 Incompleteness in a visual field (in perception and cognition)

The notion of something incomplete stimulating our imagination has emerged as a recurrent theme (e.g., Ginsberg, 2004; Trigg, 2006; Handa, 2014; Hill, 2016). However, it is necessary to delve deeper by going a step back and investigating what incompleteness means in the visual field, in order to explore what sparks or rather, further enables, the potential of a narrative. What role does the incomplete play in the processes of perception and imagination? Is filling the gap perceptual, imaginative or both?

2.3.2.1 Perception

2.3.2.1.1 Visual perception and thinking

According to Arnheim (1997), a perceptual psychologist, architecture is an extension of perceptual experience. The way we experience architecture starts with how we process what we see and how raw data is organised into something coherent. This becomes important in this case of perceiving ruins since the way we interpret the stimuli we receive may directly affect our reading of them. The visual language of the ruin and its context allow a specific interpretation and narrative to form.

When one observes their surroundings, vision is more than simply watching. The argument put forward by Arnheim (1997), is that vision does not involve passively intaking raw data, but processing it. This concept breaks the traditional boundary between sensation and perception, since here, vision possesses all the skills required in thinking. Thus, vision is an intelligent activity and becomes visual thinking. (Arnheim, 1997). Similarly, Gombrich (cited in Liu et al., 2019) also believes that seeing is a reaction in itself to the light entering our eyes. Our eyes have evolved for survival, so seeing is more than passively receiving sensory stimulation.

There are various theories on how we perceive our surroundings namely, cognitive, connectionist and ecological approaches. The ecological approach by Gibson states that the optical information provided by the ambient light supplies all the necessary visual information. This approach looks at an active perceptual system, where we make sense of our environment through recognizing invariants. Here, the link between the environment and the observer is given more importance as the conceptual framework is shifted from inside the head to the outside (Markovich, 2002). In his theory, Gibson coins the term 'affordance,' referring to the way the environment provides opportunities for particular kinds of behaviour for the animal that perceives it.

> The affordances of the environment are what it offers the animal, what it provides or furnishes, either for good or ill… [a space may be] climb-on-able or fall-off-able or get-underneath-able or bump-into-able. Different layouts afford different behaviours for different animals. (Gibson, 1979, p. 68)

Affordances capture how perception can shape the close relationship between cognitive organisms and their environment. They are part of how we make sense and assign meaning to our environment.

2.3.2.1.2 Organizing what we see: incompleteness

We further understand our surroundings through Gestalt psychology and laws of perception. This involves recognizing lines, shapes and volumes as a composition and states that what we perceive is greater than what we see. Each component or fragment that we visualise contributes to the formation of an experience. However, the whole is not the sum of its components, but rather perception is the result of the dynamic relationships between them. Gestalt laws of perception state that we perceive a whole through structuring and organizing components through grouping principles: Figure and Ground; Proximity; Similarity; Closure; Symmetry; Continuity; and Simplicity (Fig. 21). Thus, sensory information (outside stimuli or raw optical data) is gathered and interpreted as a perceptual set (Todorovic, 2008).

The Gestalt law of closure relates strongly to the notion of incompleteness. The closure principle states that we perceive incomplete elements as being whole, and our perception fills in the gaps as a way to regulate the surrounding stimuli (Todorovic, 2008). Incomplete components "will provoke an impulse to supplement or restore individual elements to the complete state that they should have" (Liu et al., 2019, p. 2), since we follow the instinct to pursue perfection, harmony, symmetry and simplicity. Something incomplete breaks this frame, becoming 'illegal' and arousing people's visual vigilance (Liu et al., 2019).
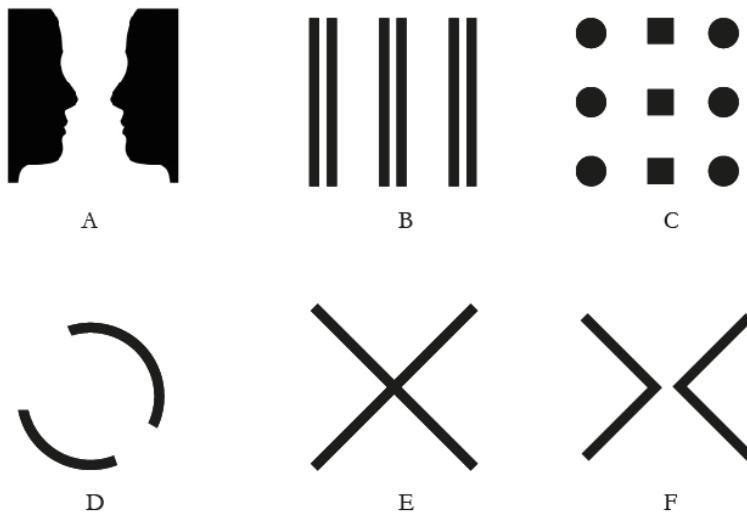
Figure 21: (A) – Figure Ground; (b) – Proximity; (C) – Similarity; (D) – Closure; (E) – Continuity; (F) – Symmetry

Tononi (2020) considers visual perception in 3d objects, where in observing an incomplete sculpture, its marks left by its nature of fragmentation (in his case, including tool marks by the sculptor) activate the motor system of the viewer's brain, including mirror neurons. These simulate the creator's gesture in making those marks and one is able to retrace their process of the creation. This enables empathy and intersubjectivity, providing a link between the self and the other as the neural network containing mirror neurons is activated. This activation allows the viewer to become immersed in the work of art, and thus activate mental-body faculties including simulation and imagination.

2.3.2.2 Imagination

2.3.2.2.1 Cognitive filling-in processes: the role of mental imagery

When we see an incomplete object, inadvertently we also project parts of it that are not visible. This refers to both the facets that are out of sight, or components that are occluded, and thus invisible.

While there are theories for stimulus-driven (or cognitive) completion, there is another point of view, where imagery or imagination comes into play. The imagery theory presents different conditions to how an incomplete object is represented. This refers to the role of imagination, which according to Strawson, it is the power by which perceptions of multiple components come together. It also allows different perceptions of the same object to be linked. Since the missing pieces do not provide any sensory stimulation, this gap is filled by imagination (Brown, 2016).

Markovic (2002) interprets gestalt closure as the result of the automatic process of amodal completion. (Fig. 22). This process blurs the boundary between perceptual and imaginative processes, since the mental imagery (imaginative process) created is partly based on what visual clues are provided (perceptual process). Amodal perception in this study refers to the representation of occluded or missing parts of an object that do not offer sensory stimulation. Nanay (2007) states that amodal perception is a large part of perception in general, since we never see all the facets of a complete object. His theory states that non-visible parts of objects are represented through visualisation, by means of mental imagery. Therefore, this becomes a cognitive process.

Nanay (2007) also notes that amodal perception relies strongly on our background knowledge about the occluded or missing part as we cannot visualise an existing object without knowing how that object is defined and how it looks. As discussed by Brown (2016), Strawson ties it to concepts, as interpreted by Kant, where imagination connects an object with the concept it is related to.

Alternative to the imagery theory, Nanay (2007) considers the belief theory, where we assign properties to the missing part from the information we gather through the components that are visible. However, this is problematic since based on this theory, the occluded parts should have been completed to match the rest of the background (Fig. 23). Thus, he concludes that the representation of the occluded shape is unlikely to be based on belief, and thus reverts to the imagery account.
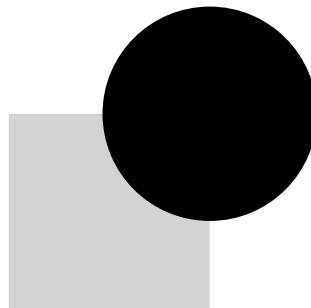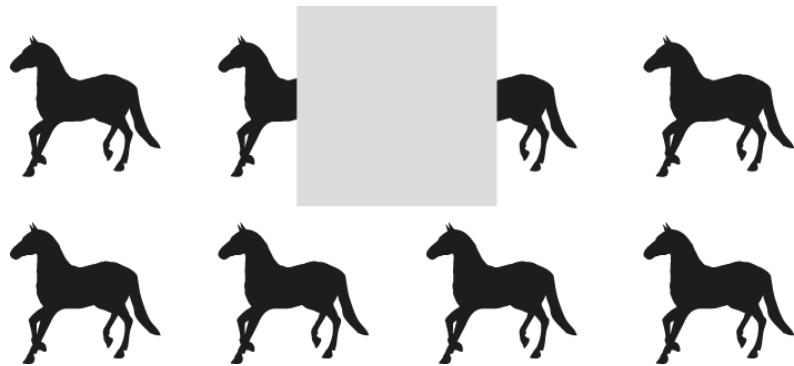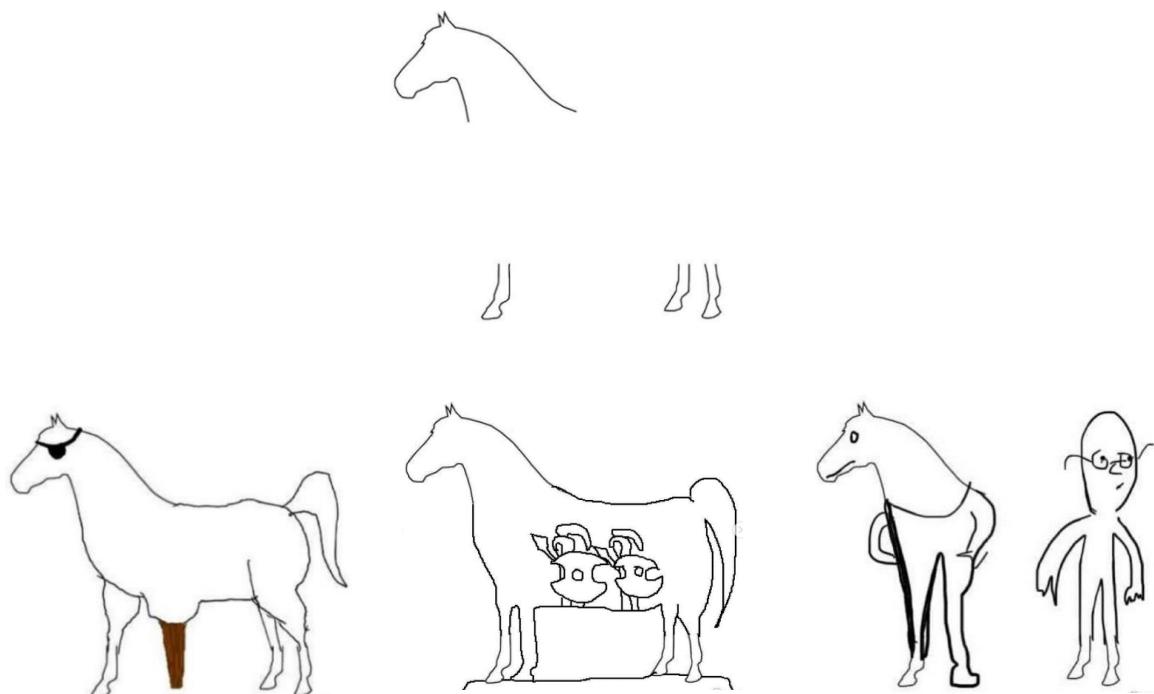
Figure 22: Amodal completion: the occluded grey figure is read as a square.

*Figure 23: The belief theory: We represent the horse as one long one, despite the evidence
that there are two horses there.*

Looking at the example in Figure 24 in shaping a narrative out of a perceived incomplete image, the absent becomes an opportunity upon which to build this interpretation. In the first example, the missing leg is interpreted as literally absent, thus forming a specific narrative around it. The absent middle section becomes the base for the second narrative, assimilating the Trojan horse's focus on the middle section to the missing part. In both cases, people referred to their knowledge of horses and horse anatomy to complete the image. In the last example, the fragments become quasi autonomous, and new wholes are created. The proximity and similarity rule could have been a protagonist, grouping the rear leg fragments together. Hence, filling-in processes are also intrinsically related to memories and background knowledge.

*Figure 24: An exercise in cognitive filling-in processes. The images below depict how people interpreted the top prompt.
These interpretations depend on what is missing (the front leg and the mid-section of the horse) as well as what is
present (the third interpretation views the proximity principle in interpreting the image).
Image source: @memes via Instagram, retrieved on May 11, 2021.*

2.3.2.2.2 Mental imagery (imagination) as necessary for perception

In these recent theories, imagination is necessary for perception. As we have seen, Nanay (2007) claims that mental imagery is likely present in perception, but Strawson (as cited in Brown, 2016) claims that imagination is "a necessary ingredient in perception itself" (p. 16). Since perception is associated with imagination, and imagination is a cognitive process, then this may be in line with Arnheim's thinking, where visual perception is visual thinking (or cognition). This directly contrasts Gibson's belief where he stated that perception does not involve cognitive processes at all, where memory and imaging (being cognitive processes) have no role in perceiving.

2.3.2.2.3 Imagination as expansion of experience

Mental imagery, as seen, can be a result of direct sensory experiences. As we try to make sense of our surroundings, mental imagery becomes an integral part of our perception.
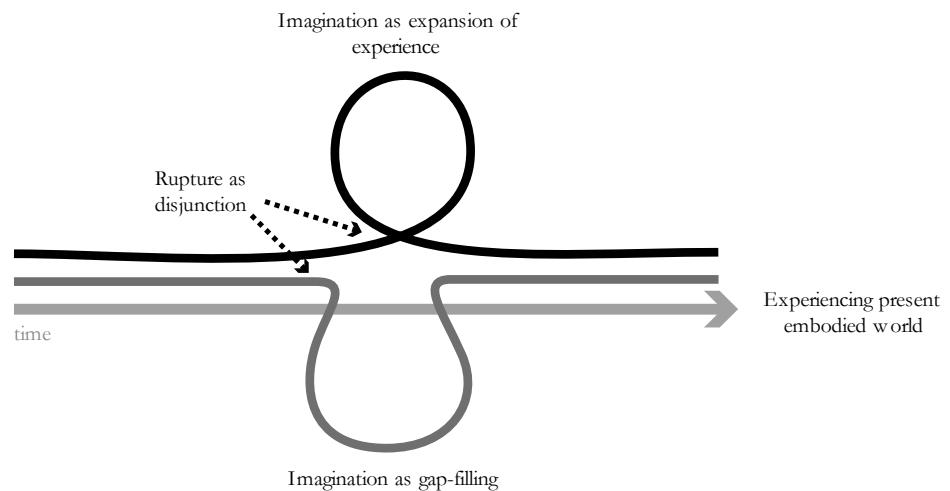
The role of imagination is not limited to understanding our fragmented (physical) reality, thus "filling the gap" (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013, p. 307) and creating a stable image. Imagination is also its own process, it:

> allows to consider alternatives, to reread the past or to open possible futures; at times playful, it can be seen as rich in emotions, or as basis of invention; it is then associated with daily creativity, as well as with aesthetic experiences and scientific or political explorations. (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013, p. 307)

Therefore, imagination is an integral part in our lives, allowing us to expand our current reality. It becomes an expansion of human experience.

Kant (cited in Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013), sees imagination as the bridging term between perception and concept. He distinguishes between reproductive imagination (the ability to represent objects in their absence, thus connecting memory and perception) and creative imagination (freely operating based on reality and combining images in a new way). Therefore, through imagination, it is possible to create images based on reality, as well as new creations. However, considering the irreversibility of time, all representations become new constructions (Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013). The boundary between reproductive and creative imagination, as concerning the ruin, is quite blurred. Reproductive imagination depends on how the past manifests itself in the present. Creative imagination deals with what could be, or a freer 'what could have been', which is about searching for novel experiences or different world views, and is about how the past and future come to terms with the present.

To Zittoun and Cerchia (2013), imagination is represented by a loop in the flow of thinking (Fig. 25) which is triggered by a rupture, or disruption, between how we are experiencing the world and our flow of thinking. A rupture can occur when our reality is provoked. It could be triggered unintentionally or deliberately created. Fiction and literature serve as triggers for the imagination. 'Alive' metaphors, like "the earth is blue like an orange," meshes our perception of the shape and texture of oranges to a new aesthetic application. Here, a disjunction is created when seemingly illogical references are used instead of ordinary language. One can question how this can extend to the paradoxical nature of the ruin, where one might abandon their grip to reality, triggering the loop of imagination.

Imagination as expansion of
experience

Rupture as
disjunction

time

Experiencing present
embodied world

Imagination as gap-filling

Figure 25: Two conceptions of imagination.
Image source: Image reinterpreted from Zittoun & Cerchia, 2013

2.3.3 Incompleteness in the ruin as an entity in the visual field

2.3.3.1 Level of fragmentation and perception

There exists within the ruin an overall gestalt, which is as real as the fragmented elements. Recognizing the ruin as such means that there exists an organic structure with an inner unity which conveys a whole. The juxtaposition of voids and fragments interact to form an underlying configuration.

When viewing the ruin as an incomplete component, perception inevitably comes into play. Considering the theories where perception is strictly non-cognitive, this leads to an automatic amodal perceptual process resulting in Gestalt closure. Within a ruined building with broken lintels and interrupted frames, this allows completion of an incomplete doorway, for instance. However, visualisation of surrounding walls, furniture and the rest of the building, as well as streets, urban background and people is a cognitive process based on other levels of completion, based on memory and background knowledge. This would involve mental association between the completed objects and its usual context encompassing the rest of the scene. In this scenario, the completed door is a perceptual (definition excluding cognition) while the associated objects are cognitively or mentally visualised entities.

As explored in the previous sections, there may not be a sharp divide between perception and cognition, as the theory of visual thinking links perception and cognition directly. Therefore, what is traditionally labelled as automatic perceptual processes could be cognitive ones. Moreover, as mental imagery could be inherent in perception, then experiencing a ruin would involve the activation of mental imagery at different levels. Mental imagery is part of perceiving the stimuli and organizing the objects we see, but also add to, or expand, our experience.

Imagination thus comes into play at the different levels of incompleteness in the ruin: it allows the completion of missing or incomplete elements, while simultaneously builds the narrative for how we choose to interpret the space.

2.3.3.2 Nature of fragmentation

The notion of incompleteness translates to fragmented pieces and lacunas within the ruin. It is not just the fragmentation that instigates our imagination, but also the nature of the fragmentation. Simmel (1958, p. 384) states that "the stumps of the pillars of the Forum Romanum are simply ugly and nothing else, while a pillar crumbling, say, halfway down, can generate a maximum of charm." In a similar manner favouring a low, albeit present, degree of decay and incompleteness, Brandi speaks about the "potential oneness" of the whole as found in the fragmentary state of the ruin. This exists "in direct proportion to what has survived" (Brandi, 2005, p. 57). Therefore, the more that is left standing, the more the ruin can be interpreted as one whole.

Within the ruin, the way a fragment is separated from the rest of the built fabric also influences our perception. Ginsberg (2004) refers to this phenomenon as the 'line of destruction', which engages the eye in its irregularity and defiance of order. Arnheim (1969) notes that in representations of art, if the cut happens at the joints (shoulders, elbows, knees), it is likely to be perceived as visual amputation. Therefore, if the cut is in a simple relationship to the object, the fragment is more likely to exhibit an inorganic completeness. At the other end of the spectrum, an object that we know is fragmented might still look complete. For instance, we see the crescent moon as a form in itself, not as an incomplete part of the moon. Therefore, the point of interruption becomes crucial in our reading of the fragmented ruin. One can hypothesise that different points of interruption provide different stimuli.

2.3.3.3 Background knowledge and memory

Our background knowledge and memory directly influence our perception and imagination, and thus the shaping of a narrative. According to Handa (2014), the more complete the ruin is, the viewer is more drawn to the historical value. The more historical knowledge the observer has, the more they tend to be drawn to the ruin's historical value. She cites Caruso, who suggests that when the viewer has limited knowledge, it is probable that they read the palimpsest. The narrative is also based on what value we subconsciously (or consciously) see:

> When we wish the building as perfect or even read perfection into the eroded surface, then we are dealing with […] the historical value. When we see more of the incomplete state, we tend instead to see its age value. (Handa, 2014, p. 145)

Ginsberg (2004) believes that memory and knowledge are core components in our interpretation of the ruin. We draw from our knowledge of construction, material technology and other similar works:

> We can fill in by imagination the missing roofs and shattered walls, because we have seen these parts in similar worlds. We may have seen one of the series with intact upper parts. One ruin reconstructs another. Each is a piece in the whole civilisation. We study the background of that civilisation to better understand, explore, apply and envision. (Ginsberg, 2004, p. 322)

However, knowledge is not solely gathered from publications and descriptions. The bodily understanding of our surroundings in directly experiencing the spaces represents another layer of knowledge that is difficult to gather from representations (Tilley, 2004).

2.3.3.4 Architectural interventions as narrative treatments

As it has been laid out, the ruin becomes a strong narrative device. This relates to the 'voice' of the ruin: do the stones speak or are they silent? Ruskin (1849/1892) associates a "deep sense of voicefulness" (p. 290) with the ruin's age value, but Kahane (2011a) believes the ruin speaks only because of the silence of the material remains. In this case, the ruin prompt us to make them speak through our narrative, which is affected by the intervention. Therefore, the nature of intervention has certain implications on the potential narrative: we are reading the ruin through the 'voice' of the architect.

Conventional interventions include removal, recycling, repair, reconstruction, replication, replacement, curation and no intervention at all (Moshenska, 2015), forming a "spectrum of narrative treatments" (Chan, 2009, p. 23). Each conservation decision regarding how and to what extent one intervene will affect the ruin's values and significance; and its potential for a narrative, as well as the narrative itself is irrevocably altered. For instance, Chan (2009) points out that by being designed and defined, the ruin can lose its ambiguity and complexity.

One way of understanding the impact of interventions on the narrative capacity of the ruin is by recognizing them as cinematographic postproduction techniques (Coppolino, 2017). An architectural intervention on a ruin should add meaning, nourishing the narrative by allowing juxtapositions of fragmented images (Fig. 26). For instance, allowing framing of the ruin (Fig. 27); combining spaces, signs and layers (Fig. 28); and alternate mounting (Fig. 29). Another technique is the decoupage and recomposition of fragments, where fragments are reassembled into a new relationship with each other and with their surroundings (Fig. 30). With this rearrangement, the original meanings become intertwined with the new ones.

Any intervention is a form of bricolage, be it physical or intellectual. A bricolage alludes to a work composed and constructed from a range of existing objects. Lévi-Strauss (1966, cited in Gjermstad, 2015) describes intellectual bricolage, where fragments are recomposed into a 'mythical thought'. This is the creation of a myth from the fragments of other stories. This emphasises the idea of subjectivity within an intervention, where the architect has the power to ignite or shape multitudes of mythical thoughts. The value of the ruin deeply depends on the new meaning it is (or it is not) given, depending on how we recompose the fragments.

Figure 26: Castelvecchio, intervention by Carlo Scarpa. 1957-1975.
Image source: https://divisare.com/projects/332703-carlo-scarpa-federico-puggioni-museo-di-castelvecchio

Figure 27: The New Acropolis Museum by Tschumi. 2009.
Image source: https://www.archdaily.com/61898/new-acropolis-museum-bernard-tschumi-architects?ad_medium=gallery

Figure 28: Hamar Museum, Norway, by Sverre Fehn. Completed 2005.
Image source: http://architectuul.com/architecture/hamar-museum

Figure 29: Fondazione Prada torre by OMA. 2008-2018. A contrast between the new and old: two separated narrations in the same building, in the same story.
Image source: https://www.archdaily.com/892898/fondazione-prada-torre-oma
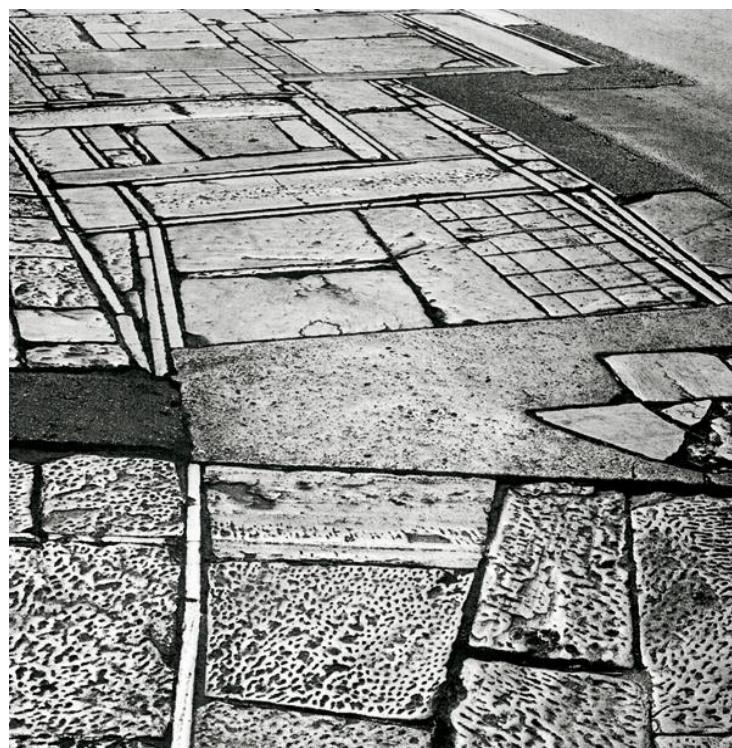
Figure 30: Pikionis Trails by Dimitris Pikionis. 1954-1957.
Image source: https://www.fbsr.it/en/landscape/the-international-carlo-scarpa-prize-for-gardens/sites-awarded/the-paths-by-pikionis-opposite-the-athens-acropolis/#&gid=1&pid=7

2.3.3.4 A narrative derived from fragmentation

A narrative is thus inspired from the incompleteness within the ruin, nurtured by background knowledge, memory and level and nature of fragmentation. Walter Scott's historical novel 'Kenilworth: A Romance' (1821) is a literal narrative based on his interpretation and of the ruin of Kenilworth Castle (Fig 31). Scott's reconstruction (his 'whole') is based on the nature of the fragments, which act as synecdochal devices, where he was able to imagine his version of the building in its previous state. For instance, he is able to reconstruct the wooden roof based on the notches where hammer beams could have possibly supported it. By applying one instance of battlements to other buildings, he reimagined castellated architecture all over the site. Scott was also informed by historical documents, which provided limited information. In this case, "limited physical presence within the incomplete, imperfect and impermanent" (Handa, 2014, p. 108) allowed a reconstruction based on how the castle was perceived, imagined and visualised, as well as historical knowledge and cultural background (Figs. 32–34).

Figure 31: Kenilworth Castle as depicted by Ruskin. 19th century.
Image source:
https://www.huntington.org/verso/2018 /08/beautiful-ruins

Figure 32: General view of keep, Kenilworth Castle.
Image source: Handa, 2014, p. 61.

Figure 33: Detail showing part of the number 1570 referring to construction, along with the remains of ornamental carvings, including a Tudor rose.
Image source: Handa, 2014, p. 62.
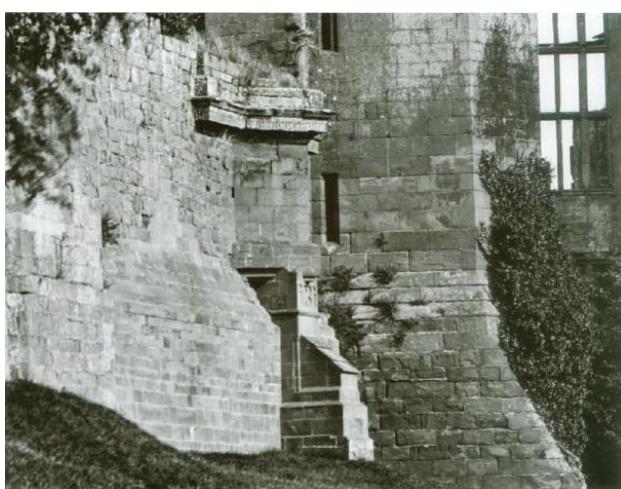
Figure 34: Scott mentions the "scutcheons" of the Clintons from the time of Henry I and Simon de Monfort.
Image source: Handa, 2014, p. 62.

2.4   Conclusion

"The ruin is present and past, living and dead, a product of making and in the process of decay, a sign of mortality and a claim to immortality" (Murchadha, 2002, p. 15). Its paradoxical nature includes the tension between completeness and incompleteness, marking the ruin as a stimulus to our imagination. Given that architecture "speaks through the silence of perceptual phenomena," (Holl et al., 2006, p. 41) incompleteness in itself triggers multiple perceptual processes that prompt cognitive completion. Imagination, which is potentially a necessary part of perception, is provoked as the ruin becomes a rupture in our apprehension of reality.

Therefore, the potential narrative in the ruin may strongly revolve around the notion of incompleteness and how it is manifested; the level and type of fragmentation; the associated cognitive and imaginative processes; background knowledge and memory; and extent of intervention. This forms the base of an explanatory framework illustrating how incompleteness can be seen as the root of the intrigue surrounding the ruin.

Chapter 3: Methodology

"Ruins exist through the look that is on them."

(Augé, as cited in Coppolino, 2017, p. 1)

Ulysses Lodge, collage by author.

3.1 Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodology and research design for this study. The role of the preceding literature review lies in grouping themes, synthesising ideas and investigating different schools of thought. A gradual explanatory framework is constructed, allowing "a new way of looking at old facts or existing phenomena" (Groat & Wang, 2013, p. 387). In this case: how can the ruin, if perceived as 'incomplete', be a stimulus to the imagination? Through this research, the aim is to understand the nature of shaped narratives, and the elements that potentially build them up. It includes understanding how and whether incompleteness in itself is a rupture that stimulates the formation of a narrative.

In testing out the theoretical framework on a local level, the link between the physical and spatial qualities and the individual with specific perspectives is investigated through qualitative research methods. The research is mainly carried out through in-depth semi-structured interviews centred around the reaction to local case studies.

3.2 The case studies

The study is based in Gozo and the sites were chosen based on their different level of fragmentation and familiarity to the interviewees. The case study becomes "an empirical inquiry that investigates a phenomenon or setting" (Groat & Wang, 2013, p.418), allowing the testing out, refining or dismissal of the framework.

Ġgantija (Fig. 35) and Santa Verna (Fig. 36) in Xagħra, as prehistoric megalithic remains, were chosen as they offered an immediate contrast in terms of fragmentation, context, and presentation to the public. Santa Verna, a lesser-known megalithic site within a different context, is considerably more fragmented than Ġgantija (see Appendix A).

Ulysses Lodge (Fig. 37), in Xagħra as well, is an instance of a 'modern' ruin from the late 20th century, for which the historical and age values differ significantly from the prehistoric ruins. This site was selected because it represents a different level of fragmentation and contrasting values than prehistoric remains (see Appendix A).

Any intervention has a role in how the narrative is shaped, as is investigated through these three sites along with the mid-19th-century Ta' Kenuna Tower (Fig. 38), where the intervention upon a semaphoric tower that was falling into ruin is an example of how the architect guides the interpretation of the building (see Appendix A).
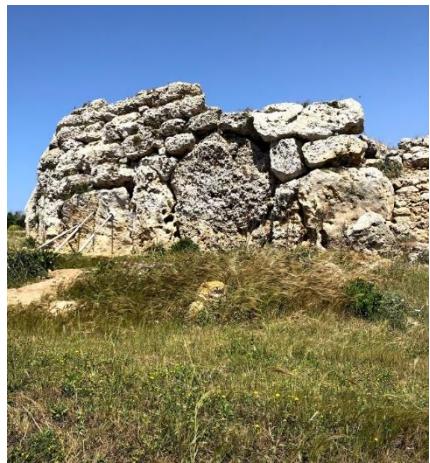
Figure 35: Ġgantija. Image source: photo by author, taken 2019.

Figure 36: Santa Verna. Image source: photo by author, taken 2021.

Figure 37: Ulysses Lodge. Image source: photo by author, taken 2021.

Figure 38: Ta' Kenuna Tower. Image source: photo by author, taken 2021.

3.3 Research instruments and participants

For each case study, photo-documentation and observations of visitors in the spaces are compiled in order to allow the researcher to become more familiar with the fabric of the sites. A desktop study was carried out to further investigate the historical backgrounds of the sites (Appendix A).

These case studies are thus presented to participants through virtual, face-to-face and on-site semi-structured in-depth interviews. This qualitative method of research (Table 1) is chosen since it allows an interpretive, naturalistic approach to data collection. One qualitative strategy is the phenomenological inquiry, where the researchers "aim to clarify the essential or underlying meaning of experience," based on memory, image and meaning (Groat & Wang, 2013, p. 227). It is about becoming aware of experiences in architectural spaces within the everyday flow of life. As a social-cultural construct, the interviewees' understanding of the term 'ruin' is sought out both through direct questions and general comments throughout the interview. The interview questions (Appendix B) thus revolve around the interviewees' understanding of a ruin; their reaction to the chosen sites; and whether they feel restricted or free to build up their interpretations. This is done via showing unedited photographs of the sites. A portion of interviews are held on site to further understand the reaction to the materiality of the space, the relation to context and the dynamics of the moment of encounter.

The interviews are semi-structured, in the form of open-ended questions to allow a holistic view and a constructive conversation to emerge, with opportunities to expand on additional thoughts and concepts. The flexibility of the interview structure and the nature of the interviews allow interviewees to further elaborate on any point they consider important. The researcher is also able to add, omit or prioritise questions based on how the conversation unfolded and on the interviewee's area of expertise. An information letter and consent form are given to the interviewees prior to the interview (Appendix B). All interviews are then recorded and transcribed (Appendix C). The interviewees are invited to sketch out their impression of the space with respect to their built story, allowing an interesting reading of the link between the physical elements of the sites and their thoughts.

Tactics	Interactive	Non-interactive
Interviews and Open-Ended Response Formats	Virtual and face-to-face interviews Interviews with task-oriented formats: sketching	
Observations		Non-participant observation of visitors in the space
Artifacts and Sites	In situ observation & analysis of artifacts/buildings/urban context/landscape sites	Photos, drawings or virtual representations of artifacts and sites
Archival Documents		Public documents, site documentation; Personal photo albums of participants

Table 1: The four types of information gathered. Adapted from Groat & Wang, 2013 and Creswell, 2009.
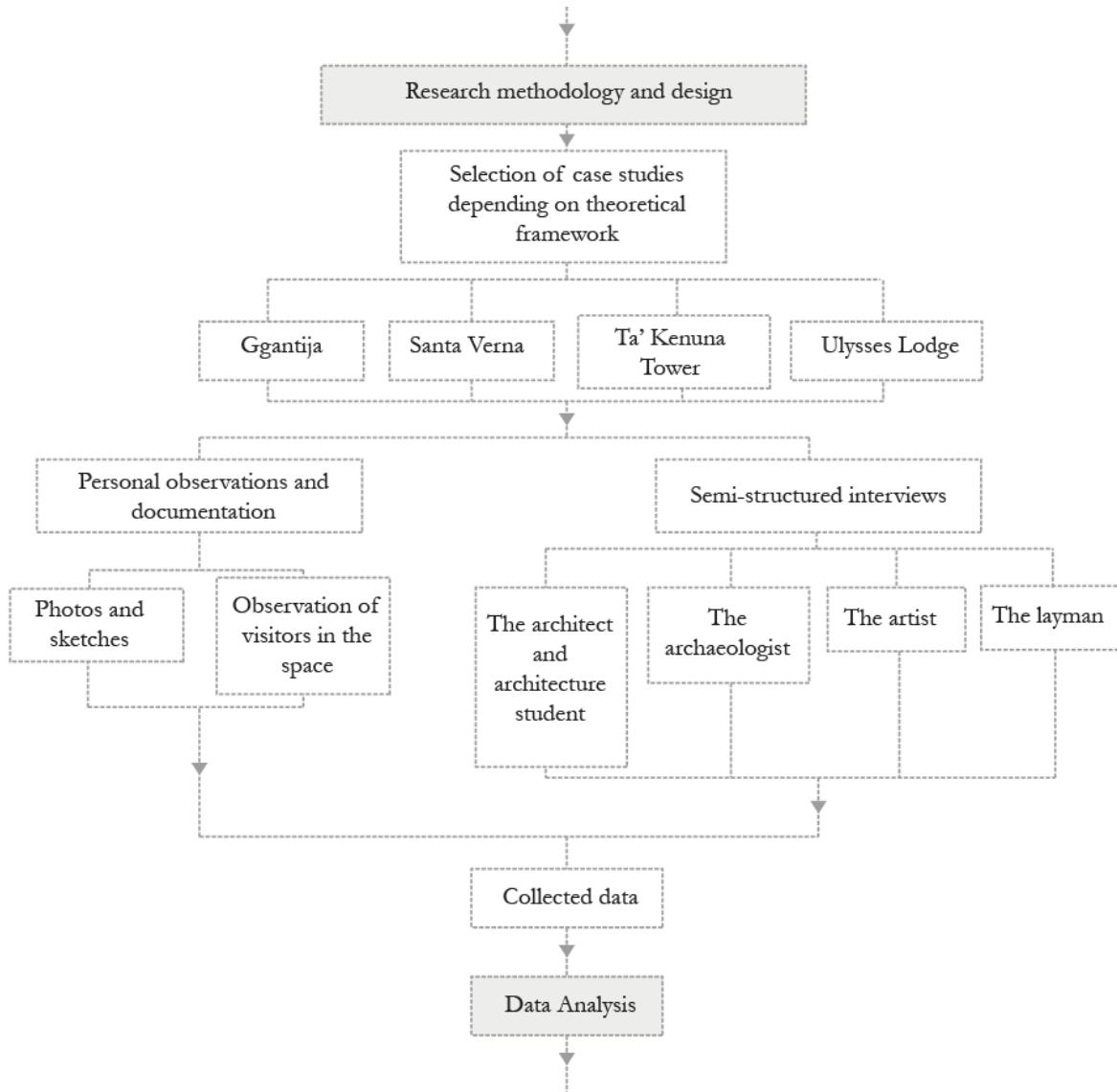
Sampling and selection of interviewees is based on their professional background or area of expertise. This allows a diverse array of insights through different perspectives, reflecting different ways of one's understanding of the world. The interviewees' professional backgrounds (Table 2) ranged from academics, architects, architecture students, archaeologists, curators, artists and laypersons. The interviewees may interpret the ruin from specific points of view, ranging from forensic to aesthetic interpretations.

Participants		Area of expertise	Reason for choosing area of expertise	On-site, face-to-face, virtual
Architects	Ar1	Architect	The architect is sensitive to materials, construction, the life cycle of buildings and the relationship of the old and the new. The architect's insights are imbued with his/her architectural practice and teaching.	Virtual
	Ar2	Restoration Architect		Virtual
	Ar3	Architect		Virtual
	Ar4	Architect specialised in conservation		Face-to-face
Architecture students	As1	Architecture student: Conservation stream	The architecture student is sensitive to existing site considerations when designing, albeit with limited practical knowledge. The architecture student is exposed to evolving and current methods of learning and theoretical approaches, as well as perceptions of the built environment, possibly serving as a contrast with practicing architects.	Virtual
	As2	Architecture student: Design stream		Face-to-face
	As3	Architecture student: Conservation stream		Virtual
	As4	Architecture student: Urban design stream		Virtual
Archaeologists	Arc1	Archaeologist, academic and curator	The archaeologist is sensitive to chronology, stratigraphy, and the presentation of archaeological sites. The archaeologist's narrative revolves around evidence and derives from a forensic exploration of the ruin.	Virtual
	Arc2	Archaeologist		Virtual
	Arc3	Archaeologist and curator		Virtual
Artists	Art1	Artist and sculptor	The artist is sensitive to form, aesthetic considerations and materials. The artist is creative in producing a work of art that elicits a reaction, which may affect his/her interpretation of the world.	Virtual
	Art2	Artist and sculptor		Virtual
	Art3	Digital Artist		Virtual
Laypersons	L1	Local Layperson	Laypersons not in the architectural, archaeological or artistic field ranged from people who had direct experiences on site (L1 and L2 wed in Ulysses Lodge) to having limited knowledge of Maltese history.	On site
	L2	Local Layperson		On site
	L3	Local Layperson		On site
	L4	Foreign Layperson		On site

Table 2: The interviewees and the rationale behind choice; and interview location.

Therefore, from gathering distinct points of view through interviews, contrasting perspectives can be observed and it becomes possible to draw parallels and differences (Judd, 2006). The first interview serves as a pilot test to gauge the questions used and to further structure the flow of the following interviews, but it is still relevant and thus used in the study.

Figure 39 summarises the data-collection process.

Figure 39: Research methods.

3.4 Data analysis

After transcribing the interviews, the narratives surrounding the case studies are identified and illustrated based on a process of multiple readings, coding and identification of themes. The natures of the narratives are depicted graphically as a summation of tabulated data from each transcript in Appendix C. Throughout this process, raw data is organised and reduced until interconnected thematic data emerges, ultimately reaching towards a theoretically meaningful understanding (Groat & Wang, 2013). From a descriptive analysis of what the ruin means to the interviewees, the researcher adopts a more critical and interpretive approach when discussing these results along with the elements that potentially influenced the narrative. Data analysis (Fig. 40) thus involves a double hermeneutic approach. Hermeneutics, as the theory of interpretation, comes into play twofold as the researcher is interpreting the interviewees' interpretation (Smith et al., 2009), including literary and visual data (sketches). The emergent themes are discussed through the theoretical framework, and as Creswell (2009) describes, related literature is used to compare and contrast the results emerging from the study. By interrelating themes and descriptions and grounding them in discussion, the underlying meaning is explored. Apart from analysing results through literature, a combined use of inductive and deductive approaches allows
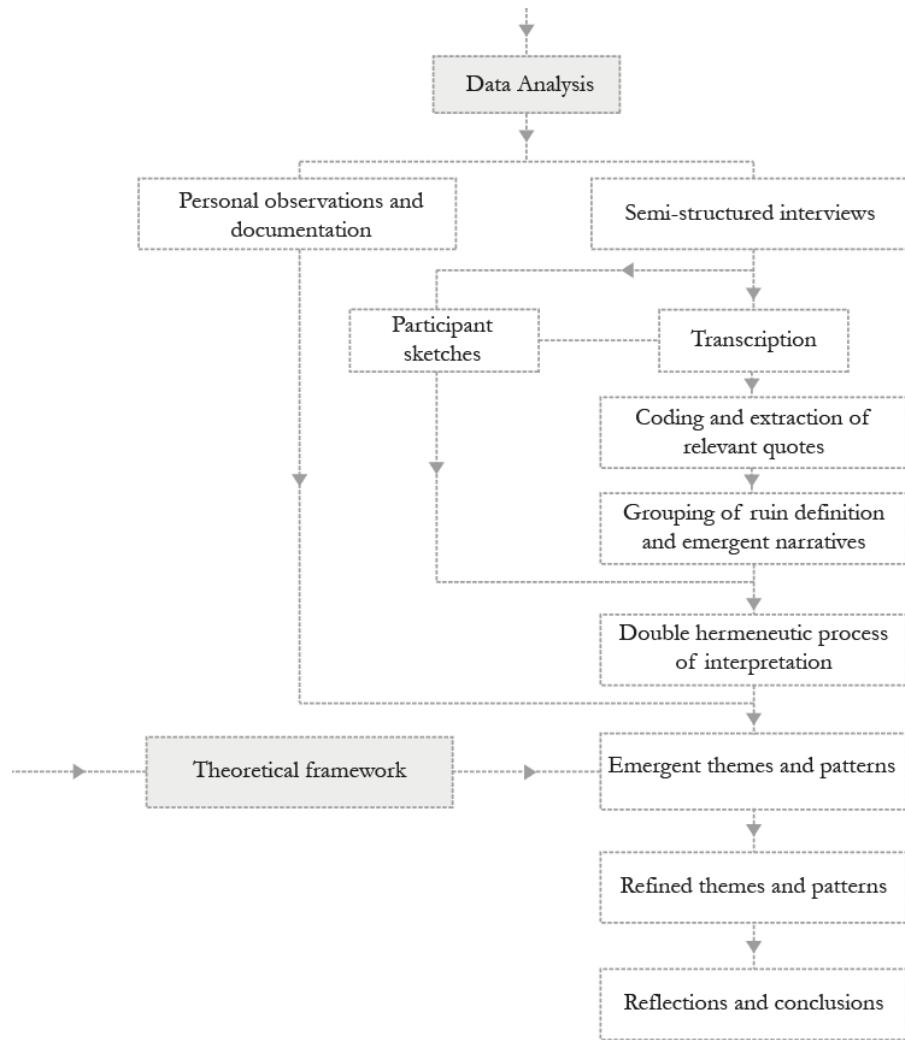
Figure 40: Data analysis

the researcher to explore new dimensions. The research questions continue to develop along the research process, marking it as interactive (Maxwell, 2005, cited in Groat & Wang, 2013).

3.5 Limitations

The chosen case studies are diverse but may not be representative of the entire complexity of our ruinous environment. Furthermore, given a limited time frame, the number of interviewees was limited.

The experience of a ruin eludes capture and changes every time we visit (Pétursdóttir, 2016). It is even more challenging when not directly experiencing the site. Here, the interviewee relies on memory of prior experiences or from the reaction to raw photographs presented in the interview, and the choice of photographs may have framed the insights of the interviewees. The research aims to partially mitigate these limitations by having a portion of the interviews held in Xagħra and Nadur. However, due to the current Covid 19 restrictions, Ġgantija was closed.

Upon experiencing the sites, the researcher's views are 'bracketed' to allow as much objectivity as possible when analysing the results. However, the nature of interpretation means that the researcher's judgment may not be completely excluded. This reflects the challenge of phenomenological research, which faces the paradox of arriving at an objective understanding of a subjective experience (Groat & Wang, 2013).

The researcher recognizes the complexities involved in the theme of ruination, and this study touches upon many themes that could have been expanded but, owing to various mitigating circumstances, could not be explored here to their full extent. This includes the theme of trauma inflicted from war or natural disasters, which is not explored in the chosen case studies. Another example is an in-depth investigation of how incompleteness could factor in the design process, which could form the basis for future research.

3.6 Conclusion

This study uses a phenomenological approach to capture the essence and underlying meaning of the experience and narrative surrounding the ruin. The methodology aims at understanding how people make sense of their environment through their distinct perspectives and the methods are chosen on the basis that the ruin becomes a narrator. The literature review paves the way for a theoretical framework, which is tested through qualitative tactics aimed at identifying the narratives surrounding the case studies. These are then deconstructed and analysed to understand how incompleteness is perceived within the ruin and how that perception could potentially shape a narrative.

Chapter 4: Results

"[…] disparate fragments, juxtapositions, traces, involuntary memories, uncanny impressions, and peculiar atmospheres cannot be woven into an eloquent narrative. Stories can only be contingently assembled out of a jumble of disconnected things, occurrences, and sensations. Bits of stories suggest themselves through halting speech, which trails away into silence."

(Edensor, 2005, p. 846)

Ta' Kenuna Tower, collage by author.

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the results of the interviews as objectively as possible (interviewees are referred by acronyms, as stated in the previous chapter). The first section centres around the ruin being a socio-cultural construct, where the interviewees are asked to define a ruin from their point of view. The second section presents the potential narratives, or the stories deriving from one's experience of a ruin, that have emerged from discussing or visiting the case studies. These narratives represent the common themes that emerged from different viewpoints (full transcripts in Appendix C). Tables 3-6 showcase the main themes as put forward by the interviewees and organized by the researcher.

4.2 Defining the ruin

Several interviewees define the ruin as a loss, where the terms "fallen stones" (L3), "missing corners" (L1), "incomplete volume" (Art3) and a comparison to the "remnants of a skeleton, [where] you see the decomposing remains" (Ar4) symbolise a physical loss. To the archaeologists, the ruin also represents an immaterial loss: it is seen as "a trace, a vestige, of an order which is no longer there. It is a trace of another way that things used to be, which has not, in that other way of being, survived into the present" (Arc1). On these lines, the ruin symbolises a loss of information: it is defined as "an open book, a book with missing paragraphs, at times written in a language or scripts that we don't understand" (Arc2). Similarly, to an architect (Ar3), the ruin represents a "fragment of a building which does not give you all the information of that building," and if fragmentation is so minimal that all the information is there, then it is not a ruin. The loss is also functional and social, as the ruin is described also as a "remnant of a past narrative […] that had a former peak in its existence but is no longer in the peak period of participation in the social narrative" (Ar1).

While for some, the ruin has a negative connotation, others see beauty in the ruin's aesthetic, aura and imperfect nature. According to an artist, this appreciation for the picturesque quality of the ruin could be rooted in the Romanticism, since "our idea of beauty is not an idea of beauty that is generated by our own consciousness and our own thoughts but is also informed by our genetics and society" (Art2). From an artistic perspective (Art1, Art2, Art3) special attention is paid to the ruin's materiality: for Art1, it becomes a sculptural artefact, where it is more powerful now in the way that engages the viewer, rather than its prior 'complete' state. In its natural state of transformation, the ruin is defined by one artist as a man-made term. It is trying to return to its original form by collapsing the human control on nature's material, and in doing so, it is providing us with a sensory experience. This experience allows the ruin to move us, it "sings, it speaks to the heart" (Ar2 in citing Richard England).

Interviewees mention "a spectrum of ruins" (As4), with differing values, including the historic and artistic value as put forward by the restoration architect (Ar2). The establishment of values and significance of the ruin may assign it a monumental quality. However, there is also the opinion that the ruin is not a monument:

> A ruin could be something without the status of the monument in some sort of way… If you see an old farmhouse in the middle of a field, even if it was spectacularly built for that time, that's a ruin now. (Art2)

These views correspond to the scale of loss and gain in Fig. 41, interpreted from Chapter 1, and the numbers are assigned to Table 3, depicting direct quotes from the interviewees.
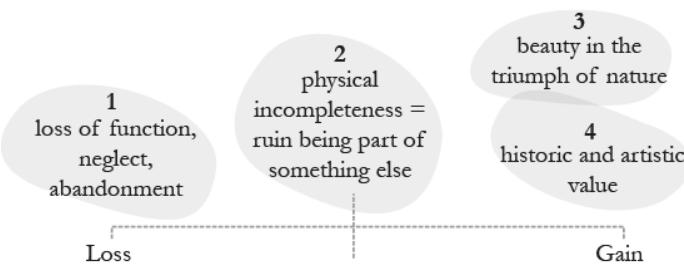
Figure 41: The ambivalent nature of the ruin: corresponding to the interviewees' views to the scale.

Participants		Definition of a ruin	Main theme
Architects	Ar1	"A ruin, to me, is an image, or a remnant of a past narrative. So by talking about it in the term narrative, I am not necessarily referring to the physical aspects, but also to the complete contributing factors to its conception in the first place."	1, 2
	Ar2	"The ruin as a fragment, that was once whole and partially lost at some time. A ruin is a fragment […] but still retains value"	2, 4
	Ar3	"A ruin is a fragment of a building which does not give you all the information of that building. So, a ruin assumes a personality of its own, because the original is completely lost. If a building had a little bit missing, and you can reconstruct that little bit based on the information you have from the rest of the building, I wouldn't personally consider that a ruin."	2
	Ar4	"The most romantic form would be the ancient ruins, but more commonly would be buildings which have been abandoned and fallen in disrepair, and nature is conquering once again."	1, 3
Architecture students	As1	"The first thing that comes to my mind is 'old' and 'neglect'."	1
	As2	"I think when I mention the word 'ruin', I understand it in a negative way. [...] So, as a definition, something abandoned, something that is not being used, definitely, and not at its full potential, since the term ruin implies that it must have been better than what it is right now.	1
	As3	"A ruin I feel is something that is not complete. So if it's a building, you would have missing pieces of the building, you wouldn't see the volume complete, you would just see broken pieces everywhere."	2
	As4	"The ruin, obviously as something abandoned, which is many times not always structurally sound. It could be an abandoned house in the village, where no one lives, it's there, crumbling."	1
Archaeologists	Arc1	"Ruin as a trace, a vestige, of an order which is no longer there. It is a trace of another way that things used to be, which has not, in that other way of being, survived into the present."	2
	Arc2	"A ruin is a fragment, a remnant, they mean similar things, but they are something incomplete. […] The ruin as an open book, a book with missing pages, missing paragraphs, at times written in a language or scripts that we don't understand. So it is a quest for exploration, not of finding new sites, but of finding the meaning, and reinterpretation."	2, 3

	Arc3	"From an archaeological aspect, it is about a site that is not whole and can never be whole."	2
Artists	Art1	"What we are calling ruin is a man-made term. For the planet, that is its normal cycle of reclaiming what's hers. … [the ruin] is trying to go back to its original form, or it is ruining the human control on nature, on nature's material."	3
	Art2	"That's complicated… at first you think about ruins as something that is destroyed. But then, … it is part and parcel of a preserved environment… A ruin could be something without the status of the monument in some sort of way."	3
	Art3	"Something that was once complete, that is not complete anymore, that has the potential to be complete again."	2
Laypersons	L1	"A ruin for me is a building that has one of its corners torn away, and it is abandoned. I think after something is restored, like this windmill, I don't see it as a ruin anymore."	1, 2
	L2	"For me, ruins make me think of something historical"	4
	L3	"'*Gebel imwaqqa'*. [Fallen stones] An abandoned place that was someday more available than it is today. It could be looked after or not before it had value, and now that is no more. When I say abandoned, I mean the original use. […] it is organic."	1, 2, 3
	L4	"Something that is abandoned."	1

Table 3: The interviewees' perception of the ruin.

Key from Fig. 40:
1. Loss of function, neglect, abandonment.
2. Physical incompleteness & part of something else.
3. Beauty in the triumph of nature, organic.
4. Historical and artistic value.

4.3 A potential narrative

Recalling Hell and Schönle (2010), the ruin, being a socio-cultural construct, is incomplete without the beholder's interpretation. The narratives derived from the interviews are presented in both text and visual form.

4.3.1 Prehistoric case studies: Ġgantija and Santa Verna

4.3.1.1 Ġgantija

One narrative (no. 5 in Table 4) involves understanding Ġgantija as a symbol of the great unknown. In understanding it as a historical document, it is about asking questions: how was it built; how did it look; what did it mean? To decipher remains, the archaeologists take a contextual and stratigraphic approach that does not solely look at the building (Arc1, Arc2). One archaeologist (Arc2) describes four views: the giants, the Phoenicians, the aliens, and today's version of what we consider the temple culture. In another manner of relating information to the space, to an architecture student (As2), Ġgantija represents "pieces, not in terms of stone by stone but more like one area and another area." Distinct facts are related to particular spaces, and the temple is understood in fragments that are autonomous: "if there is a slit in the stone that allows the sun to pass, for me that is a 'piece' that does not merge with the rest of the space." The space is described as abstract, a place that is hard to relate to. As a reaction, they assign a use in the present to an unfamiliar space configuration (Fig. 42). This trend is common to the architecture students, as another interviewee links the rituals with today's religious events, asking: "Did they get the sheep and kill it with a knife, and burn it? Or did they have a simple mass like we call it today?" (As3) Therefore, relating an unfamiliar spatial configuration or practice to the present is a way of understanding the past or relating to a place.
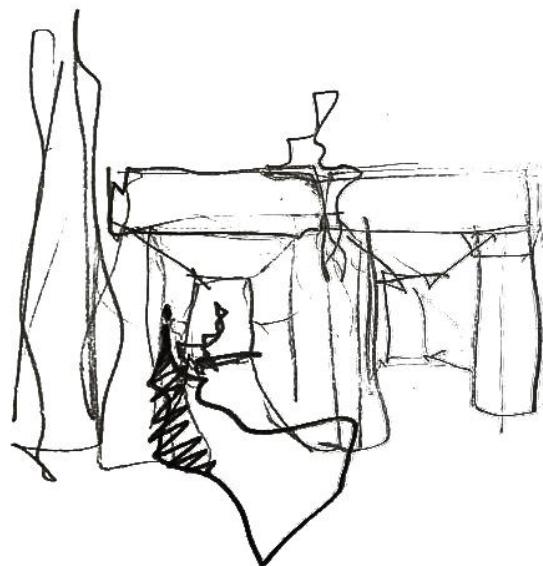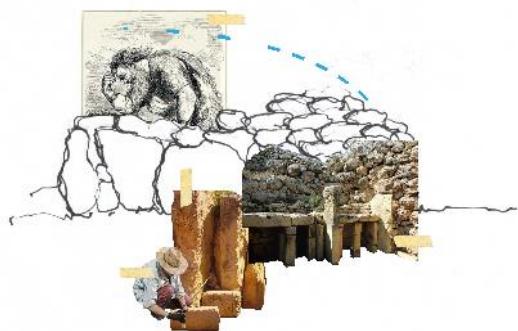
Figure 42: An interviewee's (As2) sketch of her interpretation of Ġgantija, assigning unconventional uses to unfamiliar spatial configurations.

In another narrative (no. 6 in Table 4) Ġgantija represents "a question of awe" (Art2) at different stages in life, given the scale, monumentality and age of the remains. For an architect, the scaffolding, albeit unsightly, shows that "the wall is as the temple builders left it," (Ar4) which he relates to Ruskin's (1849/1892) view: "better a crutch than a lost limb" (p. 304).
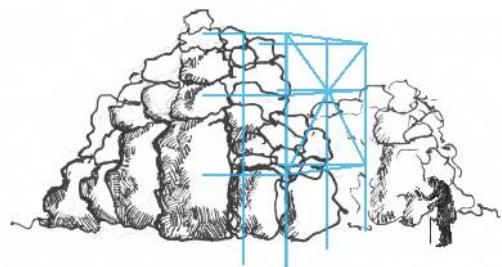
The third narrative (no. 7 in Table 4) interprets Ġgantija as a dark, sacred space. An architect (Ar1) describes "the stillness, the mere present moment […] the feeling of uneasiness" that resonates in all the senses, as the ruin may force us to explore a repressed part within us and this becomes the narrative that one fights to suppress. The presence felt imbues a sense of reverence for the temple builders themselves. For others (e.g., As1), the roof closes in, the temple is "shadowed, dark" with flickering candle lights and Ġgantija emerges as an intimidating place. Tales in literature recalled in the interviews evoke such narratives, as in the poem by George Pisani (1963) in which he describes how "*fis-skiet tax-Xagħra* […] a young girl […] offers herself as a sacrifice to the gods to relieve the Gozitan population from the draught" (Ar2).

In the fourth narrative (no. 8 in Table 4), Ġgantija represents a necessarily curated experience, shared by archaeologists as curators of prehistoric sites: "if it weren't for Ġgantija, many visitors wouldn't go to Gozo. Not because Gozo doesn't have its heritage, but Ġgantija has a special allure" (Arc2). Some interviewees (Art2, Art3, L1, L3, As4) recall the 'freer' experience pre-touristification of the site, whereas now, the feeling now of being restricted is felt, where they "would even think twice of calling it a ruin, since it is not organic… Everything feels artificial. Now it just feels like a place you would visit, like a church" (L3). It is also noted (As3) how the potential social value of the site in the past has now been lost as one is unable to gather naturally in the spaces. In this narrative, time is suspended, and the ruin represents a frame from our temporal continuum.

5

The great unknown

6

Awe, a symbol of mortality and immortality

7

A dark place of ritual in the past

8

A curated experience/a transaction

Figure 43: The narratives surrounding Ġgantija gathered from interviewees.

Participants		Ġgantija	Main narrative
Architects	Ar1	"I think that the main feeling that lingered was the stillness. Perhaps I was lucky to visit at a time where there were not many people present, but the stillness, the mere present moment, the solidity of the structure that is now the ruin, and again the aura of the place. It is not just what the eye takes in, but what the whole senses tend to absorb from the place, from actually being there."	7
	Ar2	"But then as an architect, you try to imagine how it was when it was actually used as a temple, like was it plastered over and decorated, was it roofed over? How was it roofed over, like today's girna?" "So monumental and once again, awe inspiring."	5, 6
	Ar4	"In Ġgantija there is the scaffolding there, and for me it is really special. It is perhaps seen as ugly, but I know that that wall is as the temple builders left it."	6
Architecture students	As1	"Shadowed, dark" "there's more than one stacked on top of each other, so I would start thinking, how are they still on top of each other, how did they get them on top of each other."	6
	As2	"I would describe it as pieces. And pieces not in terms of stone by stone but more in terms of an area and another area. … I feel intrigued, definitely. However, I do not feel part of the space. I feel as another 'piece'. … I read it as abstract."	5
	As3	"They tell you that there were sacrifices being made there, and a religious ceremony happening over there. When I start thinking, how did they build them, or what did they use to do in this particular spot? Did they get the sheep and kill it with a knife, and burn it? Or did they have a simple mass like we call it today? You try to come up with different things based on what you know, and your current experiences, and at the same time on history lessons, where people can tell you, no they didn't have mass like we do now."	5
	As4	Today, with the visitors centre, the site feels more important in a way. When you enter, the label of UNESCO greets you immediately, you know what you're going into. […] As a site, I still feel a certain sadness, since I say, they exposed it, out here for the elements, where it is eroding. But as a site, it is very interesting. Again, there is the allure of mystery. No one knows or knows everything on it. So it does leave something to the imagination. You start thinking, how did people use the space, how did they build it. I cannot imagine moving such a big boulder. General awe.	5, 6, 8
Archaeologists	Arc1	"There is the moment of encounter in Ġgantija when coming down from the visitors centre you see that rear wall, with the headers and stretchers, which incidentally is a viewpoint which may also have been one of the ways which people used to encounter this in the past, there is an engraving by Jean Houël, from that sort of angle. So the likelihood in Ġgantija, as one of the most visited sites in Malta and Gozo, of having Ġgantija to yourself are much lower. So it is a different kind of encounter."	5, 8
	Arc2	"People travel purposely to Gozo because of Ġgantija. If it weren't for Ġgantija, many visitors wouldn't go to Gozo. Not because Gozo doesn't have its heritage, but Ġgantija has this allure, a special allure. […] And it has a different allure than the other temples in Malta. It is expected, and this is where heritage managers, architects and planners, have to look at Ġgantija as ruins or remains, but also the landscape settings, approaches, the amenities, and also the urban areas and land uses around it."	8
	Arc3	"But if you had to ask me about perception of the sites, for instance in Ġgantija, the fact that you can see a lot more of the site; you can see where the entrance is; and where the apses end and begin; it will help you more to form your narrative around the site regarding how it was used."	5, 8

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Artists	Art1	"Ġgantija, we are reading elements that are closer to architectonic elements that we see around us. Here we are associating the structure with building, with a man-made shelter."	6
	Art2	"The experience is different according to my stages in life. Mainly, it was a question of awe. When I was younger, those set of holdings were not there, so the human intervention was not that visible. In those days we could even climb up the rocks. I know it's a question of conservation, but sometimes, they tend to put a barrier between us and the building itself and are a bit intrusive. So the ruin is not seen as a ruin per se, but something far away from us."	6, 8
	Art3	"Very Maltese looking, I don't know why. … I would wonder what happened here, who was here before me, why were these built, what were they used for. … I would think of BC times"	5, 7
Laypersons	L1	"I remember when I went last, every time I go I am amazed at how the prehistoric people managed to construct something that is still standing today."	5
	L2	"I remember there were a lot of tourists, but the new interpretation centre is quite modern and provides a lot of information."	5, 8
	L3	"I would even think twice of calling it a ruin, since it is not organic. There is the boutique, there are scheduled times. Everything feels artificial. It lessens the authenticity it had before. Now it just feels a place you would visit, like a church."	8
	L4	"I am reminded of the Stonehenge, and before you told me, I did not know that there is chance these structures might be roofed. I imagine there were places of sacrifice and rituals"	5, 7

Table 4: Narratives revolving around Ġgantija: Ġgantija, as depicted in Fig. 42, representing:

5. The great unknown;
6. Awe, a symbol of mortality and immortality;
7. A dark place of ritual in the past
8. A curated experience/a transaction

4.3.1.2 Santa Verna

The first narrative (no. 9 in Table 5) centres around an artistic perception, where the megaliths are regarded as visual objects and forms in their own right. "A historic temple gives me not only a historical connection, but a visual experience… for me they are sculptural, and they occupy a certain order in space and time, for others it is material to be bulldozed" (Art1). Another artist notes that the megaliths are no different from common boulders, which becomes a problem in recognizing their importance. Therefore, the ruin's value as sculptural forms regardless of their history is possible only when appreciating nature. The ruins are ruins no more, but autonomous sculptures part of the landscape. However, when Santa Verna is recognized to be a part of something, the boulders become further distinguished from the landscape. As another artist states: "the fact that it is a ruin makes it special" (Art 3). But even then, its high level of physical fragmentation for some proved to be "hard to place them in a meaningful category" (Ar1), so even considering their history, their status as ruins is being questioned. The level of fragmentation and lack of knowledge of the site is considered a restriction in creating a story for the place, and the site is linked to a similar site with more fabric. From autonomous boulders in the landscape, the megaliths are considered to be "in the shadow of a larger one" (Ar4), and should not be looked at in isolation, as they represent a typology (Arc3).

The second narrative (no.10 in Table 5) revolves around the word *kairos* - a moment of discovery (Shanks, 2016). The immediate reaction of interviewees on site, prior to knowing this was part of a temple but knowing this is the site in question, is to decipher the remains as they are currently. Therefore, the notions of menhir, a burial site or a resting place are contemplated (Fig. 44). While some felt restricted by the scarcity of remains, others felt more freedom: "it's like my mind can create its own narrative now" (Ar1). Once the significance of the site is explained, questions shifted, and related to how it is so fragmented, where the rest of the boulders are, and how it is in this state today. To the archaeologists, Santa Verna presents further opportunities for study and excavation. Ongoing excavations uncovered a substratum beneath the temple, so as an archaeologist comments: "underneath those ruins are further ruins" (Arc2).
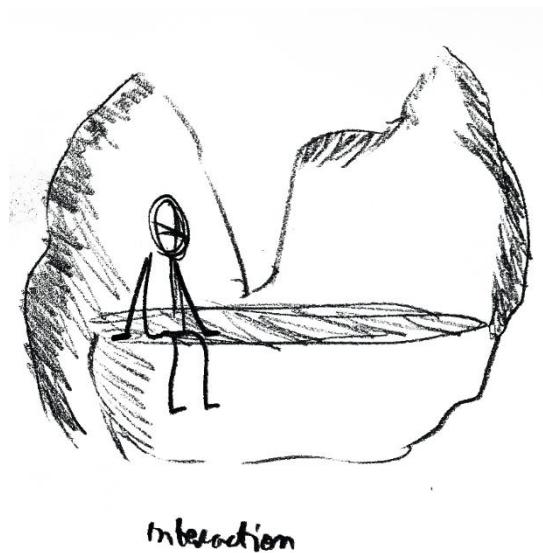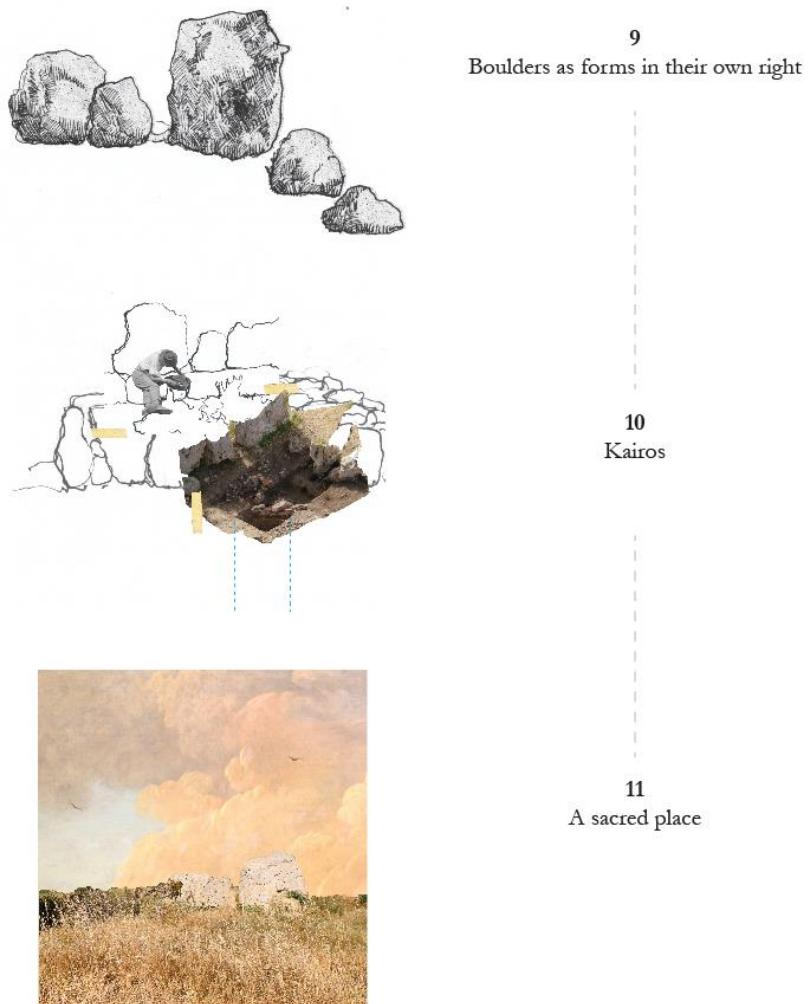
Figure 44: Sketch by interviewee L3, where the ruins are perceived as a bench, both in the past and in the present. This was common to other interviewees as well.

The third narrative (no. 11 in Table 5) shifts to Santa Verna's peaceful aura and natural setting. For instance, an archaeologist notes some scrolls left on a tree close to the site by visitors with diverse spiritual beliefs, for whom, in its current state, Santa Verna offers a meaningful, spiritual encounter. They are subconsciously repeating what the medieval community did in burying their dead here: they recognized it as a sacred site (Arc1). The context is contrasted with Ġgantija's, since here the walk to the site sets the stage for the moment of encounter. Architects explore the aura of peace and calm, where for them, Santa Verna has "a certain rawness, it's bare," and it has a pure relationship with the sun: "it's beautiful" (Ar2). It is about the "psychological effect of a ruin, [it's] aura, derived from the fact that the ruin is man-made, and it is overtaken by nature, which is not man-made" (Ar2). For an architect (Ar1), due to the scarcity of remains, the stillness and unease experienced in Ġgantija is not felt here.

9
Boulders as forms in their own right

10
Kairos

11
A sacred place

Figure 45: The narratives surrounding Santa Verna as gathered from interviewees.

Participants		Santa Verna	Main narrative
Architects	Ar1	"Is it even a ruin anymore, or is it just a collection of physical objects or stones randomly or haphazardly placed there" "Sometimes there's so little left that it's hard to place them in a meaningful category." "I cannot but think back to the original makers of the space, the builders, who assembled the boulders to create shelter, enclosure, to define territory, to mark what for them is a sacred space. There is almost a sense of calm and peace, that is not there when I visit a more complete form of the ruins that you showed me earlier. The more ruined the place is the more distance there is between myself and the possibility of the actual materialisation of the place when it was built. Somehow I do not experience the same sense of dread."	9, 11
	Ar2	"What remains of the whole is very very limited. So, I find it difficult to go beyond what there is. […] In this case, I find it difficult. If I try to imagine what there could have been at Santa Verna, my mind would switch to Ġgantija. I try to link this site with a similar site that has more fabric." "From the photo you are showing me, is still in an unbuilt context. This photo [refers to photo] is nice because the temples had a relationship with the sun."	9, 11
	Ar3	"I think that going on a hike and stumbling across a ruin just like that is much more of a story to create than buying a ticket and being surrounded by busloads of tourists. It is much more romantic, individual, adventure and experience." "There's like the sun coming in through the two stones, and looking at the light in the horizontal bench, it's beautiful."	11
	Ar4	"One can look at it romantically and say, Santa Verna and so many others, Tar-Raddiena comes to mind, in Birkirkara bypass, the fact that they are anonymous and there's no interpretation, and it's within the shadow of a larger one, there is that sense of intrigue, as well."	11
Architecture students	As1	"But it's hard to relate to, because there's so much missing of it"	9
	As2	"…I still read it as an object, a fragment. It's a smaller object, maybe it can give me more freedom in that sense that the negative space is bigger, so I can fill up more. The sky, the sides of it, is the negative space. But in the sense of a narrative, I would still go all the way in both cases, imagining it as something else."	9, 10
	As3	"So you say, this might have been part of a wall, and then you start thinking, how did it become part of a field."	10
	As4	"So you think, maybe it was larger, maybe it was this shape, where was the altar, where was the orientation? There are a lot of things that go through your mind."	10
Archaeologists	Arc1	"With Santa Verna, if you're lucky to have the site to yourself, which is not difficult, even spotting the remains from the alley and then walking those 50/40m to the site, is a very different kind of encounter." "[…] speaking as an archaeologist, the archaeological deposits at Santa Verna, as the site has been interfered with less, gives opportunities that are harder to find at Ġgantija, since Ġgantija has been excavated more thoroughly." "One thing I remember noticing at Santa Verna in a field just south of the lane, in one of the trees there were these little bows and scrolls tied in the leaves, like little bundles, put there by visitors who are into the New age, or mother goddess or crystal movement, for whom this was a meaningful encounter with the site."	10, 11
	Arc2	"Underneath Santa Verna there is a substratum of other earlier structures, possibly domestic structures of more ephemeral construction, of smaller stones, shallower	10, 11

		deposits. Here we have layers, and in this ruin, only a part of it we can see, since parts of it are concealed by vegetation and debris. And underneath those ruins are further ruins. So here the narrative could be wider."	
		"Usually people at sites like Santa Verna, although they are overgrown and seeing these bits and pieces of large stones, they say: 'how peaceful this place is! But what is this?' But it's also about the landscape, the atmosphere. They would have already answered my question: Why would they have built the temple here? Because of the landscape, because it's peaceful, and you start a conversation"	
	Arc3	"If I look at it in the present, what intrigues me in Santa Verna is that we had the opportunity to carry out excavations, the result of which may also inform what we know about other sites. From that aspect, this site will give us more, as excavations are made closer to the actual remains. You asked whether Santa Verna restricts me or gives me more freedom. It is difficult to answer because from one end, if you look at it from face value, you have a small part of it and so you can be more creative. But at the same time, I do not think you can look at it in isolation, since it is one of a type."	10
Artists	Art1	"A historic temple gives me not only the historical connection, but a visual experience" "For me they are sculptural and they occupy a certain order in space and time, for others that is material to be bulldozed and put out of the way so material can be used for another purpose"	9
	Art2	"The problem with Ta Verna, the ruins are boulders, not worked boulders, like sculpture. Boulders are everywhere. There is no distinction between a boulder which is an architectural and historical element or a boulder that you find anywhere. So, it is difficult for someone to make the distinction. Imagine that in Santa Verna there was the fertility goddess sculpted, that would have made it different. The human intervention is more than placing stone"	9
	Art3	"Where did it all go… why is it not protected" "The fact that it is a ruin makes it special"	10
Laypersons	L1	"What if this part was roofed over, to have a little house here? This seems like a bench, people could sit over and look at the sun rising. Let's check the orientation… Yes! It is perfect to watch the sun. If those apartments were not there, you could see most of the island around you, we are very high up here." "But what about the other stones? Did they remove them?"	10
	L2	"If you hadn't told me, I would not have noticed them. Granted, they are relatively bigger than other stones, but still quite unnoticeable."	9
	L3	"What are those? How did you find them? This looks like a bed where people would lie on it. But it feels peaceful, there are only me and you here. These look like they buried a body beneath. I believe they used to do that. I would say this was some sort of temple, but more like a menhir."	10
	L4	"If this was a ruin, I wonder where are the rest of the stones."	9, 10
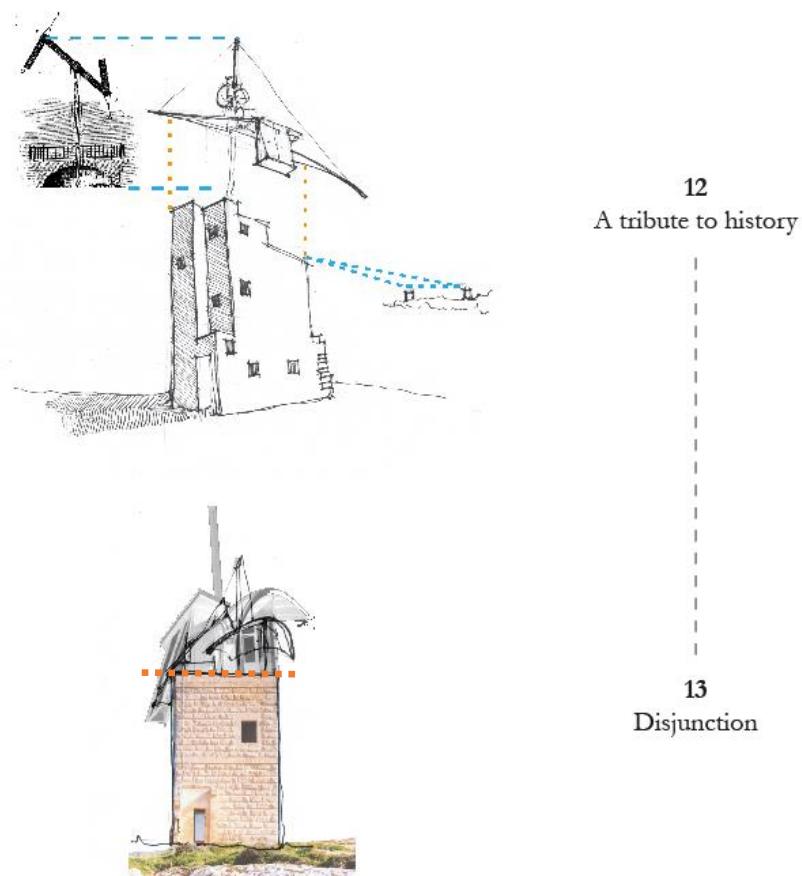
Table 5: Santa Verna, as depicted in Fig. 45, represented as:

9. Boulders as forms in their own right;
10. Kairos;
11. A sacred place.

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4.3.2 19th-century case-study: Ta' Kenuna Tower

For the architects, the intervention on the ruined tower "is about continuing the narrative rather than obstructing it" (Ar1). The new use was a "seamless continuity with its original purpose, which was to communicate" (Ar3). This narrative revolves around the link between the tower's previous form and how the mast is interpreted in a contemporary, reversible way. In this narrative (no. 12 in Table 6), the tower is a tribute to history.

However, the younger interviewees' immediate reactions were to criticize the intervention, and it is described as "distracting" (As1) and "weird" (Art3). For an interviewee from Nadur, it "took [them] years to realise that it was a tower" (As4). The intervention in this narrative (no. 13 in Table 6) takes over, rather than continues, the story of the tower. Although it is felt by an architect (Ar3) that the ruin feel is retained since the form seems like something is growing out of the existing stone, it was contrastingly felt by an architecture student (As2) that the intervention disregards the time it was in ruins.


Figure 46: The narratives surrounding Ta' Kenuna Tower as gathered from interviewees.

Participants		Ta' Kenuna Tower	Main narrative
Architects	Ar1	"[…] rather than the new intervention existing solely for the purpose of giving some thing back to what the ruin used to be, I think the new intervention is now continuing that narrative, not necessarily in line with what the original intent of the ruin used to be, but possibly in a totally different direction" "Somehow the new intervention takes advantage of the potential afforded by the old site, and enhances that I believe, since it managed to retain legibility"	12, 13
	Ar2	"I am not against the reuse of an old building; on the contrary it is one of the ways to preserve such old buildings."	12
	Ar3	"where the fragment was preserved exactly as it was. Nothing was reconstructed, and then we built something contemporary on top which was completely different in terms of materiality and in terms of form. And it is designed in such a way that together they created a new image and a new unity. But you can recognize right away the old fragment of the building, because this sort of steel and copper roof floats above it, and glass. So you see the original outline of the building. And at the same time it is reversible, because it's holding onto an inclined mast which goes into the centre of the building and it's almost like a tree that can be removed from the building. That was like almost after having studied the charter of Venice and understanding restoration in the Western sense before it started changing in the nineties. I think it was the most representative of the philosophy you learn in restoration schools, based on the Italian schools of Cesare Brandi." "Somehow, Kenuna tower, because of that strange shape and distorted lines, retains this ruin feel, it's like something grew out of the existing stone"	12
	Ar4	"So let's say if it was in a ruinous state, and there were parts of the wall that were missing, and they were left like that and refilled with steel and glass, that would have been very true, very honest"	12
Architecture students	As1	"I don't know if they added new stonework, but to me I think that the contemporary intervention distracts from the original building, since I would look much more towards the structure on top rather than the shape of the building which is interesting and quite unique I think, especially the way the windows are placed, and the gaps. It looks like it has gone too far because it distracts from the ruin rather than enhancing where it needs to be to create that experience."	13
	As2	"[…] Ta Kenuna Tower, it completely disregards the period from where it was completely abandoned. It's trying to push forward a part of its history."	13
	As3	"[…] Compared to the solidity and volume that was left of it was much more than there's left at Ġgantija, so probably, before the intervention, people could already see the volume there, like that there's a square."	13
	As4	"For me, the Kenuna tower approach is controversial. It took me years to realise it was a tower."	13
Archaeologists	Arc1	"I enjoy the fact that the intervention is legible as distinct to the historic building, and giving it a new use is positive, it ensures the conservation of that tower."	12
	Arc2	"Originally there were other structures made of wood, mainly a large pole with two long flaps, which like the arms of a human beings were used to send semaphore, that means signals, where the two flags, like the hour and minute hands of the clock, were raised and lowered in different positions to imply letters. Semaphore was used in the military, on ships, to send signals from one ship to another, or from distant points in the landscape, like in this case." "Here the architects interpreted the verticality."	12

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Artists	Art2	"For me, I am all for contemporary interventions where there is a contamination between a ruin and making the ruin accessible or more legible. But then again it depends on the status of the ruin."	12
	Art3	"Feels weird, its ugly, they don't match"	13
Laypersons	L1	"It seems to me it used to be a tower overlooking the rest of the island. This is a very high place. Maybe the addition represents sails?"	12
	L2	"I think it was a tower to look over towards the sea in case of attack from the sea."	12
	L3	"I know the tower was a telegraph tower. It's peaceful and gives you a view of Malta and the channel and a large part of Gozo. It's very nice to relax and unwind for the senses. Also, it is kept nicely and maintained, it's a public garden after all, and I think they did a good job. You don't have just a tower, but they elevated it. It makes you want to stay longer."	12

Table 6: Narratives surrounding Ta' Kenuna Tower: Ta' Kenuna Tower, as depicted in Fig. 45, represented as a:

12. Tribute to history.
13. Disjunction

4.3.3 20th-century case-study: Ulysses Lodge

For the couple that was wed here thirty years ago (L1, L2) the lodge represents pain: "it is as if I am going to die with it" (L1). They pointed out the rubble, for them "it is dirty, it is not an enjoyable place" (L2). Some interviewees feel the place is disrespected, hence the reference to "broken glass, graffiti and windows out of their place" (As3). Thus, this narrative (no. 14 in Table 7) is about understanding its destruction: "it's opening up. […] It's understanding how nature takes its course, how the plasticity of the clay layer is ripping the building apart" (Arc1). The restoration architect makes a distinction with Ulysses Lodge when defining a ruin: no value is attributed to it. Other architects have noted it is intrusive to the landscape and its architecture is not unique.

A second narrative (no. 15 in Table 7) relates to the Lodge's past peak. A layperson on site "[feels] that that sometime ago, this was beautiful" (L3). The level of fragmentation is described to be of a different type, "of intent, of services" (Art2) and of function. Interviewees state the ruin is close to us in terms of construction and understanding the previous uses to the space is easier and we are thus "drawn in trying to understand what it was like in its heyday" (Arc1). Interviewees imagine people dancing, a stately atmosphere with "a romantic feel to it as one imagines what went on" (Ar4) (Figs. 47-48). The familiar architectural elements and relatively low level of fragmentation allow us to read the space, and since "it is not as much in ruins for you to need to join too many dots. It does not leave too much to the imagination" (Ar1). Therefore, with such proximity to the present, the ruin mirrors an alternative past/present/future (Trigg, 2006).
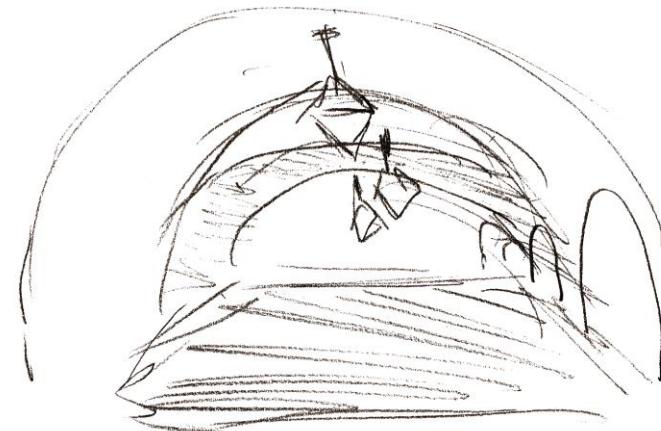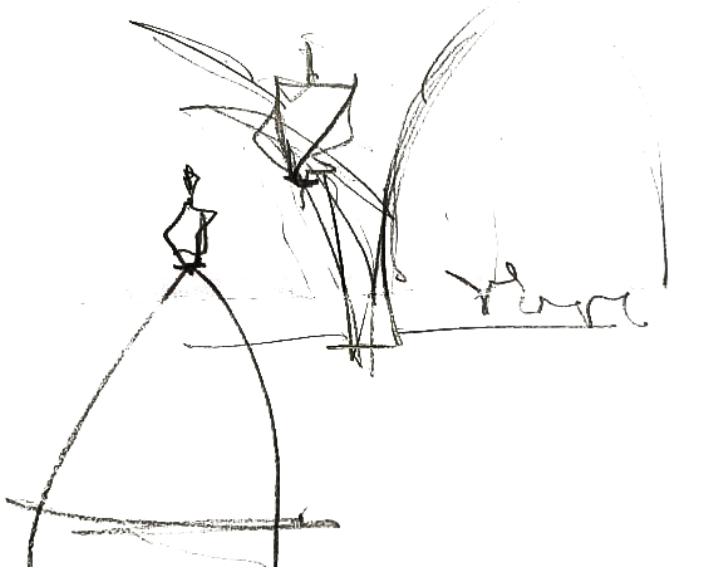
Figure 46: Lamps and a carpet added to the main hall. Sketch by interviewee L3.

Figure 47: A similar concept, this time depicting an individual. Sketch by interviewee As2.

A third narrative (no. 16 in Table 7) represents an escape, both to and from. Through the graffiti, vandalism and waste, a presence is felt. Interviewees feel that people are present in the present as this ruin represents a temporary haven and an opportunity for illicit activities. The lack of surveillance is noted, and the individual manipulates the "forbidden, impermanent and dangerous nature" (Sammut, 2017, p. 125) of the space, which in turn becomes a way to manifest our fantasies. The ruin is likened to a playground with a view where one is in search of an adventure, and a layperson on site feels a sense of freedom "that you don't feel anywhere else" (L3). She reflects on how nature is seeping in, enhancing the now inherent organic nature and recalls enjoying exploring the ruin at her own pace where you do not have to worry about dirtying any glossy floors. Contrastingly, others feel like trespassers, where lingering too long becomes uncomfortable. Therefore, the lodge also becomes a place to escape from.

Unseen in the other case studies, interviewees were interested to explore the future of the ruin. Even the couple who were wed there did not solely focus on its putrefied state but saw possibilities in the fourth narrative (no. 17 in Table 7): "if it is restored, you can decorate it beautifully, with bamboo umbrellas, pools" (L2). In fact, first reactions centred around why the building is not used. The architects valued the sensitivity of the site and formed a vision where the relationship between the building and the surrounding is reclaimed.

14
A suffering lodge

15
A ballroom

15
An escape to and from

17
A vision for the future

Figure 48: The narratives with respect to Ulysses Lodge, as gathered from interviewees.

Participants		Ulysses Lodge	Main narrative
Architects	Ar1	"I see the building itself and how it might have been in its former glory." "It is too close to our time for comfort. I feel more comfortable in the temples somehow, here I feel if I am intruding, as if I'm not supposed to be here. There is a sense of being an intruder in the space …. Almost the term trespasser comes to mind, because it's part of a more recent past, perhaps."	16, 17
	Ar2	"I would say this is a recent building that has collapsed, it has suffered structural damage, has been abandoned and is in a state of disrepair. But I wouldn't use the word ruin to describe it." "I sort of link it to the fact that I know how the building functioned. The story, rather than imagining things, I would link it to the use that the building has."	14, 16, 17
	Ar3	"Fascinated by the original fabric, by the new forms which are created by the ruin, by the presence of all the people who've been there doing all that graffiti, and light, which plays much more in a completely sealed building. It's raw, which is so nice. It's real, it's just it. There's no addition, no furniture, I like it." "[…] it would be nice if somebody had to do something with the lodge, he would kind of preserve this moment in its history when it was a ruin, without finishing it too much, so it becomes like a villa."	16, 17
	Ar4	"Offers a romantic feel to it as one imagines what went on." "I've seen it before from a distance, and I'm like that is a site which needs to be redeveloped in a super sensitive way. It's too much of a special site to be left like that. It could also be an option to clear everything and take it to its pristine state."	16, 17
Architecture students	As1	"How was this not restored yet?"	17
	As2	"My description would be 'rooms' and 'halls'. […] For this, I would dare say that there are a lot of rooms, halls, doors leading to each other and corridors, so it feels more as a whole. I can read it much more. On the other hand, it is much less unique."	14
	As3	"I think this is more free. The space is bigger, there is more room to roam around."	16
	As4	"Before, it was characterised by the stone, now it is characterized by the fact that there is broken glass, graffiti and windows out of their place. It's given less respect" "For instance, if this was a hall, you would imagine people dancing here or having parties."	14, 15, 16
Archaeologists	Arc1	"It's opening up. Even that dynamic, that's one of the things that I enjoy the most on a site like this, its understanding how nature takes its course, how the plasticity of the clay layer is ripping the building apart, and how it was clear from the start that this would happen. Even building it here is an act of short-sighted hubris."	14
	Arc2	"Does not have an essentially historic story to tell." "And perhaps being a ruin gives more credit to the landscape rather than if it was used. Because nature is reclaiming it back. The patina, the overgrowth, the lack of human activity within it. It is morphing into the landscape."	14
	Arc3	If I had to stay silent, what is the place telling me? And I would look at these things: the style of architecture; the method of construction; the way these balconies are built. Therefore, things that you can see."	14
Artists	Art2	"For me, it's a playground. I have this tendency when I visit places I have never been, of discovery. And in this case, since it's close to you in terms of construction, so seeing it in that way, you try to solve what were the spaces, and what are the spaces. Here, fragmentation is not that obvious, but in this case, it would be a fragmentation of intent, of services."	16

	Art3	"Why are we leaving it like this? It is dirty and it is not safe"	16, 17
		"You can build on it, make it a historical site, or do so many things on it."	
Laypersons	L1	"Seeing it like this really hurts, it is as if I am going to die with it."	14, 16
		"I remember at this corner, there was someone sitting who did not like the food."	
	L2	"I would prefer it was capable of receiving people, imagine coming here for a coffee, but not like this. It is very sad for me."	14, 17
		"For me, it is the place where we got married, where we celebrated with people we love. On the one hand, it is very sad, but it has so much potential! Now, I wonder how it could host outdoor BBQs"	
	L3	"I feel that someday, this was beautiful. I mean, it is still beautiful, it has its own charm, as a place that is abandoned."	15, 16
		"… residence for a rich person, someone like a duke. … I imagine it was grand, I imagine chandeliers, and a higher class of people. I imagine carpets decorating the space, and everything polished""	
		"I like that it is abandoned in the sense that you can see it at your own pace, [*"bla frilli"*] It is not somewhere where you have to walk cautiously because you would dirty the glossy floors, you can just enter and wander."	
	L4	"Although I get this weird feeling, I still like how nature is creeping in. I can even hear the birds from inside. Or can I even call it inside? It is like being outside. For me, this would be a place to come on my own, especially when I want to be away from everyone else."	14, 16

Table 7: Narratives surrounding Ulysses Lodge: Ulysses Lodge, as seen in Fig. 48, is represented as:

14. A suffering lodge;
15. A ballroom;
16. An escape to and from;
17. A vision for the future

4.4 Conclusion

The case studies are organised in terms of their age and physical fragmentation, which are proportional (Fig. 50). The nature of the emerging resulting narratives emerged out of an emotive and intellectual experience (Chan, 2009) and thus varied from being technical, material-based/aesthetical, historical, contextual, associative, nostalgic and self-introspective. These are summarised from each transcript and mapped against an increasing level of fragmentation and time and with the interviewees' familiarity with the ruin (Fig. 51). For interviewees first encountering the sites, their accounts generally revolved around the direct impact of materials and aesthetics. For interviewees very familiar with the site, it represented an opportunity for further study and exploration.
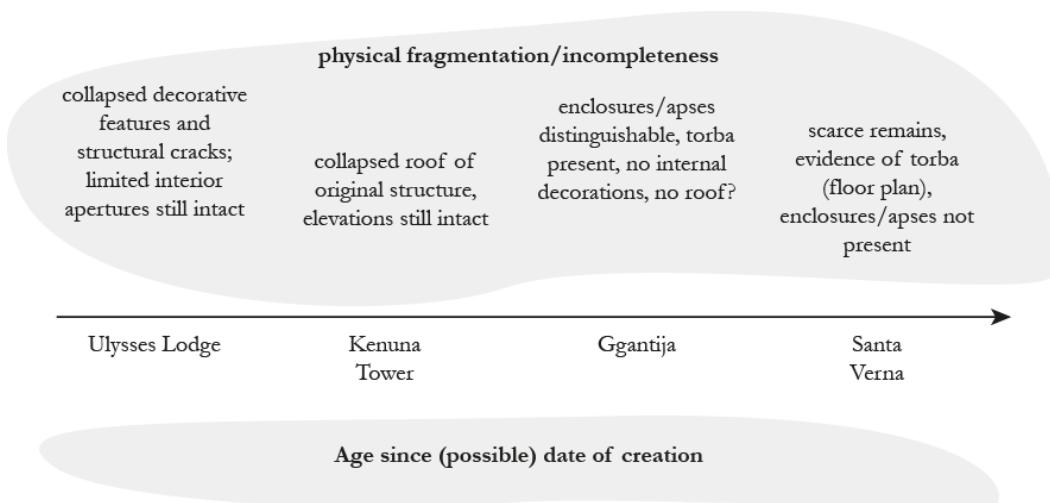
Figure 50: Organising the case studies in terms of their level of fragmentation of the 'original' structure and age.
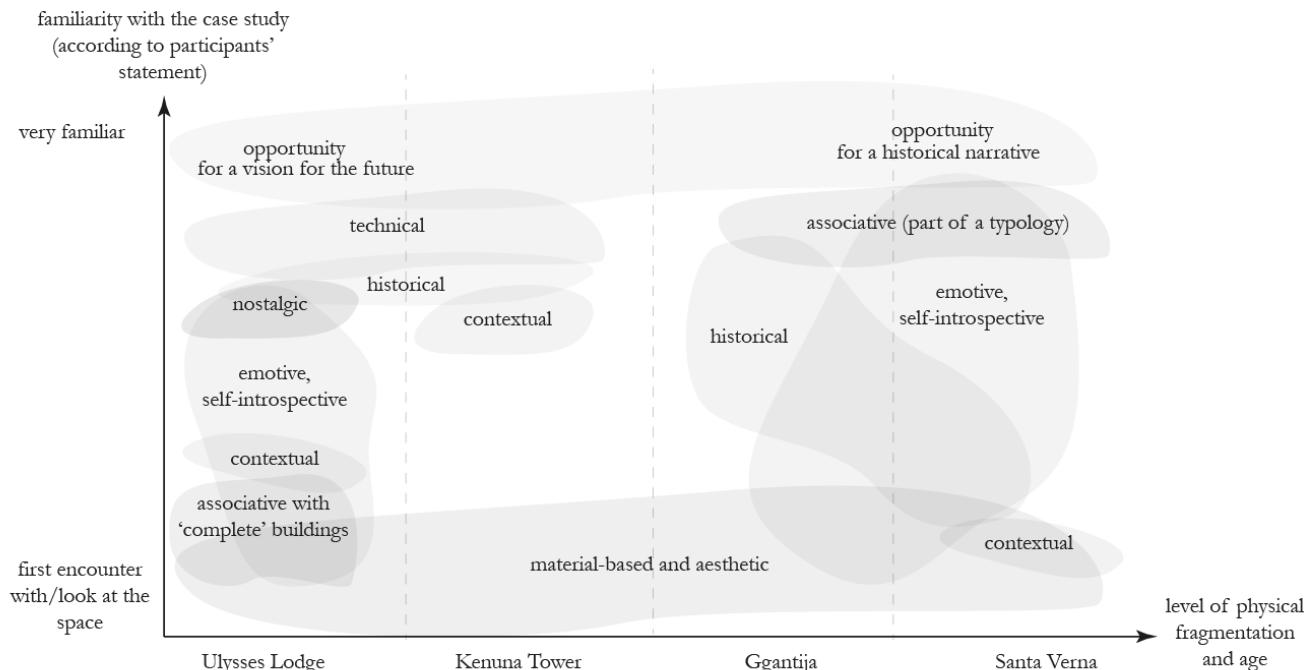
Figure 51: The nature of fragmentation mapped, summarising the narratives generated. It depicts main patterns noticed. The process is seen as after every transcript, the nature of the narratives is noted (Appendix C).

Although the potential narratives were the result of commonalities in different viewpoints, patterns regarding the overall perception of ruins have emerged:

1. The architect's views are heavily based on theory and learning, with the mention of Ruskin, restoration charters and English and Italian philosophies of conservation.
2. The architecture students understand the ruin in the present, possibly a result of recognizing the value in existing sites before proposing an intervention.
3. The artists pay special attention to materiality and its transformation as a visual stimulus. They were aware that the mind reacts differently to different impulses, and we approach the world with different sensitivities.
4. The archaeologists' view is not solely a technical, evidence-based approach to remains, but involves an understanding of how the landscape and context shape the moment of encounter.
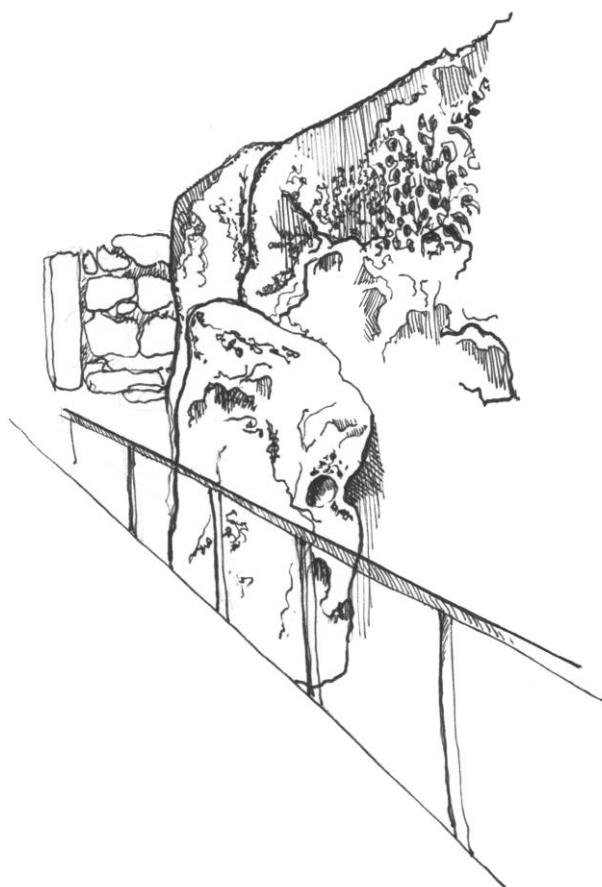
The emerging potential narratives are shaped from elements surrounding the ruin and the 'self', which are explored in the next chapter.

Chapter 5: Discussions and Conclusion

"No one is likely to assert that imagination makes him
actually see the whole thing. […] What happens is that the
visible object is seen as incomplete - that is, a part of
something larger"

(Arnheim, 1969, p. 319)

Ġgantija, sketch by author.

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5.1   Introduction

By analysing the resulting narratives as interpreted by the interviewees' experiences and recollections, it is possible to investigate the roots of a potential narrative. From the notion of a 'freer' individual narrative, the discussion evolves into analysing the relationship between recognizing incompleteness in a ruin and the emergence of this narrative based on elements surrounding the ruin and the 'self'.

5.2   Multiple facets to the narrative

From the research carried out, there seems to be an underlying division between the 'true' narrative, revolving around historical accuracy, and a 'freer', individual narrative, informed but not restricted by the former, described by interviewees as an account of the site which is "less true" (Ar1) and "less accurate" (L3). The 'true' narrative is based on chronological events in the past, relating to Shanks's (2016) definition of a narrative: a plot, or a story of what happened, which is often unattainable. In deciphering this narrative, one looks at evidence, and where there are gaps in knowledge, multiple hypotheses emerge. The archaeologists describe how this includes "testing hypotheses or alternative interpretations by others, disproving them or building further arguments" (Arc2), while keeping in line with the physical evidence (Arc1), which are then presented, or offered, to society. The 'freer' narrative is based on the relationship with the evidence-based narrative. This is interpreted from an interviewee's statement describing how the encounter with the ruin "is affected by the way the history of the place is explained to [them], and the way [they] know small facts, which [they] relate to a particular part of the space" (As2). Although interviewees regard them as separate, our relationship to the 'true' narrative forms the basis of our individual narrative – that is, the potential narrative of the site (Fig. 52).
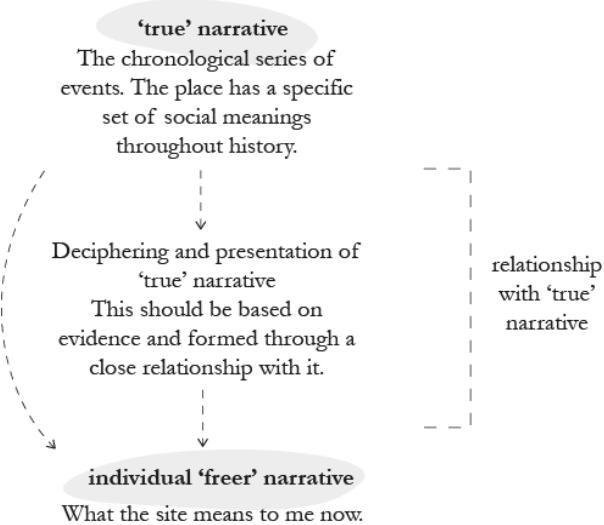
Figure 52: The 'true' narrative and one's relationship with it as determining the nature of the narrative.

5.3   Understanding the ruin as (in)complete

Understanding the ruin as a paradox as part of defining a ruin sets the stage for the way it is perceived and how it potentially interrupts our flow of thinking.

5.3.1   The ruin as a paradox

The interviewees' definition of the ruin reflects its aesthetic and conceptual blurred edges and ambiguity in its definition (Hell & Schönle, 2010). Potential professional deformation allows the archaeologists' definition to relate directly to the past; the artists to see the ruin as a natural process of creation in its deformation; and the architects' search for aesthetic and historic value.

Interpreting the interviewees' responses, the case studies present the ruin as a series of open paradoxes (Kahane, 2011a). These include the tensions between:

1. mortality and immortality, as simultaneous mentions dying with the ruin and awe in its ability to 'survive';
2. the simultaneous experience of past, present and future. For instance, in Ulysses Lodge, the potential narratives mainly center around the present and future. A stillness as a product of unease is experienced, centering around the presence of the present. At the other end of the spectrum, the narratives revolve around understanding the past (Fig. 53).
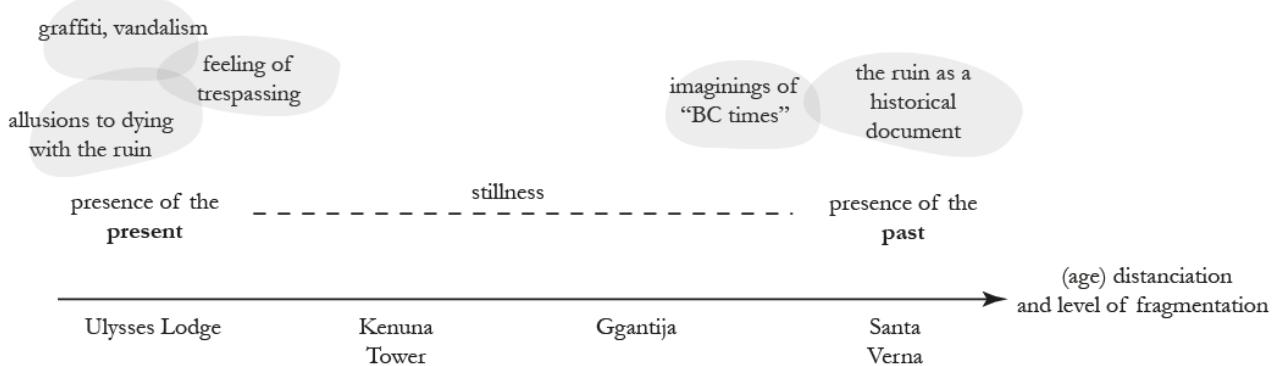
Figure 53: Presence of the present and presence of the past.

3. the processes of formation and deformation, as they are merged.

Expanding on the last paradox, the ruin is seen as the result of a natural process, described by an artist as "a set of materials that deteriorate and reform on the base of the accidental" (Art1). While in Santa Verna, the distinction between nature and the human's intervention is continuously blurring, in the case of Ulysses Lodge, the introduction of nature upon such a clear human intervention almost makes the ruin more natural:

> And perhaps being a ruin gives more credit to the landscape rather than if it was used. Because nature is reclaiming it back. The patina, the overgrowth, the lack of human activity within it. It is morphing into the landscape. (Arc2)

Therefore, nature is seen as destructive only when it impinges on the values we assign to it: if the Lodge's value were functional, then, linking to Benjamin's (1977) view, nature is a detrimental force.

5.3.2 A state of completeness

One of the binary oppositions explored in this study occurs between completeness and incompleteness. The interviewees' assertion of the ruin's inherent beauty alludes to a complete state, or an order, that can be ruined. This implies that in defining a ruin as such, it is assigned values. If the ruin combines age and historical value, as seen in the megalithic remains, the ruin becomes an 'unintentional monument', as defined by Riegl (cited in Hill, 2016). This monumentality becomes the way we value the ruin, thus, for the restoration architect, it "does not transmit a sense of incompleteness" (Ar2). The ruin, as a 'complete' monument, can be destroyed, or 'ruined', becoming a monumental ruin.

Furthermore, Edwards's (1989) description of the broken colonnade is reflected in several interviewees' views: that "it all looks right as it is" (cited in Ginsberg, 2004, p. 315) in the megalithic remains, as:

> Even the first time we considered that the temples may have had roofs, this felt like a strange possibility, since we had experienced [them] without the roofs, full of sunlight, with the elements penetrating freely inside these sacred spaces. […] Sometimes it is difficult to recreate a vision of when the ruin was still intact, so our version of the competed state is almost synonymous with the way it is now. (Ar1)

> But for us, and for everybody, those are the way they are. In our mind, we cannot see it as covered, since for us it is a ruin but a monument in itself. It triggers in the subconscious that it is complete in its own right. (Art2)

In our lack of experience with the ruins' former complete state and attachments with their present state, or our inability to 'complete' them, they feel complete as they are. A contemporary ruin, where we relate to the architectural style, programme, materials and technology, has a certain rawness in its bare state: "it's real, it's just it" (Ar3).

This, and some interviewees' linking of nature and the ruin, can be associated with Dillon's (2005) observation that in viewing the ruin as nature, it could be also ruined in itself. As the ruin becomes part of its surrounding environment, it assumes a delicate balanced position – a complete stance between persistence and decay. This is toppled if destroyed again. Therefore, one can argue that, if a ruin can be ruined, it has reached this delicate temporary state of equilibrium where its state of ruin is perceived as complete.

5.3.3 A state of constant incompleteness

Physical incompleteness presents different levels and natures of fragmentation. Within the fabric of the city, the ruin poses as a lacuna (Sammut, 2017), where the incompleteness may also be immaterial. For instance, in Santa Verna, the ruins become a synecdoche: a representation of the sacredness of the site, traced back to the medieval period. Another example is in Ulysses Lodge, where an interviewee's (As1) first reaction centred around why the building is not used. Therefore, the loss of the original function and the lack of 'formal'/lawful function in the present accounts for its immaterial incompleteness. The social lack can also be interpreted from an interviewee's observation of Ġgantija, where due to the surrounding interventions, it has lost its social value. The notion of incompleteness can thus be relinked to the layers or centres in architecture in Alexander's (2002) theory of wholeness, in which the social, functional, physical and informational layers are in a precarious state of disappearance or transformation (Fig. 54).

physical fragmentation/incompleteness

collapsed decorative features and structural cracks; limited interior apertures still intact

collapsed roof, elevations still intact

enclosures/apses distinguishable, torba present, no internal decorations, no roof?

scarce remains, evidence of torba (floor plan), enclosures/apses not present

informational incompleteness proportional with physical incompleteness

loss of original function throughout & transformation of functional layer

transformation of social layer

new social place: illegal activities, photoshoots

new social significance: the Tower as a symbol of Nadur

WHS, tourist hub

limited social activity

Ulysses Lodge   Kenuna Tower   Ġgantija   Santa Verna

Figure 54: Types of incompleteness as a result of loss or transformation of immaterial layers.

The incompleteness of the ruin is relative, as one must remember that the inherent mutability of architecture (Handa, 2014) makes the complete, untarnished state in architecture "a grotesque impossibility" (Edensor, 2016, p. 363). Moreover, as an archaeologist (Arc2) described, even perceived 'complete' objects are incomplete, since we shift our cone of vision and viewpoint and observe our surroundings to varying levels of detail. As they stated: "anything that we see is temporary, it is a fragment of a whole." This sentiment is echoed by Tilley's phenomenological approach to materiality (2004), by which, due to this state of transience, the experience of a place depends on the structure of one's encounter with it.

5.4   Roots of the potential narrative

In perceiving the ruin as incomplete, certain processes start taking place in shaping a potential narrative. The narratives from the interviewees' responses are discussed based on the theoretical framework and the roots shaping the potential narrative are investigated through:

1. background knowledge and memory;
2. level of fragmentation giving rise to perceptual and cognitive processes;
3. nature of fragmentation; and
4. extent of intervention.

5.4.1   Background knowledge and memory

Each narrative is a result of some type of memory or background knowledge, whether it is scientific, historical, aesthetic or associative (i.e. knowledge of similar ruins).

> There is a big chunk of memory involved, past experiences, past fragments of images, that are stored in my human mind. [...] it is all in the mind of who is seeing [the ruin]. And who is seeing it is subject to their past history. (Art2)

Background knowledge – gathered from literature, site visits and direct bodily experience and memories – relates to one's familiarity with the ruin and other ruins of the same typology. An aspect of this familiarity depends on how close a structure is to oneself in terms of construction, technology and use. We do not directly relate to the megalithic remains, being "part of a culture that is so far apart from our own" (Ar1). In Ġgantija, one is does not have direct experience with the prehistoric culture, but as resulted in this research, familiarity is experienced by relating the current architectural forms to uses in the present; by relating ancient practices to today's; and by relating to the ruin's rubble wall-like characteristics, where Ġgantija is described as "very Maltese" (Art3) (Fig. 55). Therefore, we tend to find familiarity in even unfamiliar places that are, as interviewees described it, "hard to relate to" (As1, As2) and this forms the basis of a potential narrative.
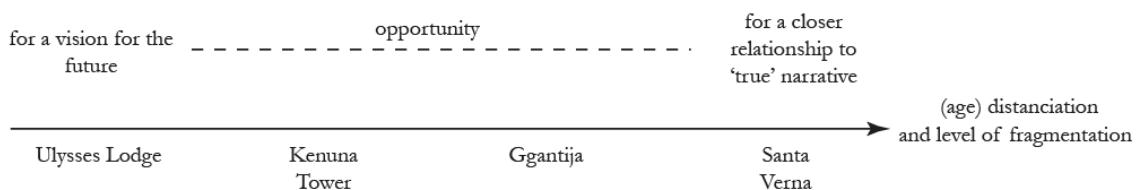
Figure 55: Ġgantija, described by one interviewee (Art3) as "very Maltese," most likely due to the link with rubble walls.
Image source: photo by author, taken 2019.

This distanciation, as described by Handa (2014), accounts for the unfamiliarity with the ruin in its former use, and is less visible in Ulysses Lodge. In contemporary ruins, even when interviewees are unfamiliar with the ruin, the relationship with the 'true' narrative is stronger as the chronology can be immediately understood without the need for an offered narrative. When interviewees had direct memories of the site when in use, the narrative revolved around recollection – "I remember when Mr. X sat near the window, and they were discussing the food" – and a projection of a better future for the site.

Where interviewees are very familiar with the ruin, the resulting narratives centre around opportunity of building a closer relationship with the 'true' narrative by further investigating the space and by considering options for intervention (Fig. 56).


Figure 56: A narrative of opportunity. With a high level of familiarity, the case study was viewed in terms of an opportunity, the nature of which was different with varying levels of fragmentation.
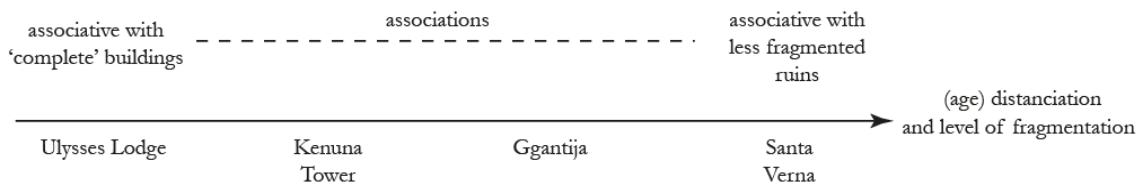
Prior knowledge of the ruin is sometimes considered a bias in experiencing a "pure aesthetic, visceral impact" (Art2). Rather than a bias, it affects the experience of encountering a ruin. An archaeologist (Arc3) notes how even the common and subconscious use of the word 'temples' shapes the narrative. In this case, a stronger relationship to the 'true' narrative is limiting. A weaker relationship allows a more creative individual narrative, but in cases where fragmentation and distanciation are high as seen in Santa Verna, some information is needed to trigger the visitor's imagination and allow them to ask questions. It is through the knowledge that Santa Verna are remains that the ruin can be conceived as incomplete: a baseline of information, or some link with the 'true' narrative, is required to distinguish the site from boulders in the landscape, and thus to reidentify it as comprising *significant* boulders in the landscape.

5.4.2 Perception and level of fragmentation
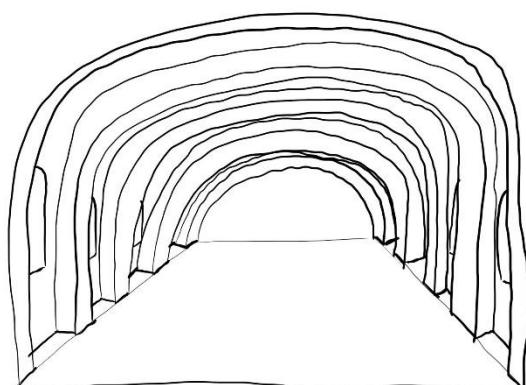
Although Simmel (1958) asserts that a stump, when compared to a half column, does not generate a metaphysical-aesthetic charm, some of the narratives generated by Santa Verna, which presents an extreme level of fragmentation, are emotive nonetheless. To those who were unfamiliar with the site but were told that the boulders are prehistoric remains, their narratives are more concerned with environment, context and aura. As in a gestalt composition, the surrounding landscape is not the ground, and the boulders in the foreground are not interrupting the sky and surroundings but, rather, merge together. Nature acquires the same level of importance. Here, the potential oneness which exists in proportion to what remains (Brandi, 2005) takes a different form from a ruin where the fragmentation is minimal. Cognitive reconstruction of the original form takes on lesser primacy than an understanding of what is present.

The inability of the remains of Santa Verna to represent enclosed spaces, unlike Ġgantija, makes it, as an interviewee stated, "difficult to go beyond what there is" (Ar2). On the other hand, the very lack of defined architectural enclosures from which one can associate Ġgantija or other ruins of the same typology, could mean less "constraints" to the emerging narratives. An interviewee explained how "the more ruined the place is, the more distance there is between [themselves] and the possibility of the actual materialisation of the place when it was built" (Ar1), and with it the unease and dread they associate with prehistoric ruins as a typology. However, freedom itself may be a constraint, "since the less restrictions you have, the more paths you can pursue" (Art2). Depending on how strong the relationship to the 'true' narrative is, the site is described by interviewees as both having more and not having enough to 'play' with.
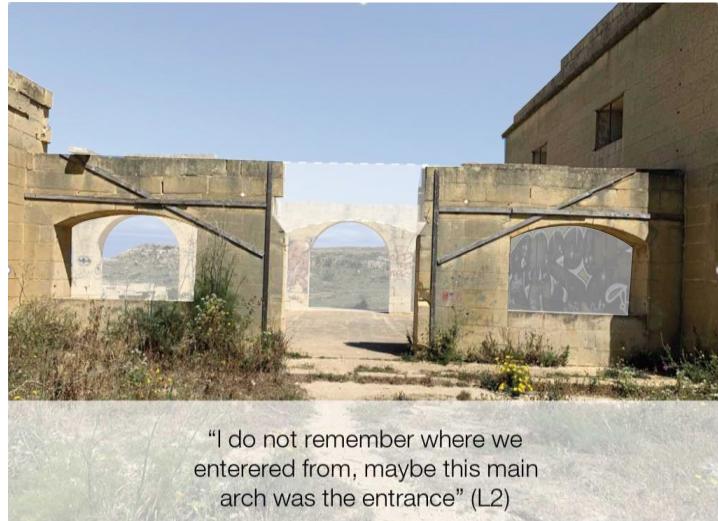
Filling-in processes were noted with how the interviewees described the site back to the researcher. Completion does not solely concern the architectural fabric but include people and activities. In Ulysses Lodge, memory completion involves visualisation of possible activities in the present and past based on real-life experiences. Therefore, less physical fragmentation as in Ulysses Lodge requires less "joining of the dots," (Art2, As4) and memory completion is employed more actively, hence, the 'ballroom' narrative (no. 15). However, it requires less work, as the spaces are 'complete', or distinguishable, in form. Therefore, associations are made towards existing typologies not in a ruinous state (Fig. 57). Completion processes such as the closure principle are noted as the internal arches are drawn as complete (as some are collapsing) (Fig. 58), and an exterior arch is visualised based also on the similarity principle (Fig. 59). In Santa Verna, for instance, memory completion is witnessed at a different level, as no one has direct experience of possible uses of the space in the past. Therefore, completion is based on memories or knowledge of the place as well as associated places. Here, the closure principle is applied on an architectural level, as interviewees started questioning the alignment and piecing together the boundaries of the prehistoric structure (Fig. 60).

Figure 57: A narrative of association: Associations at different levels of fragmentation. In both cases, one tends to associate a more 'complete' work.
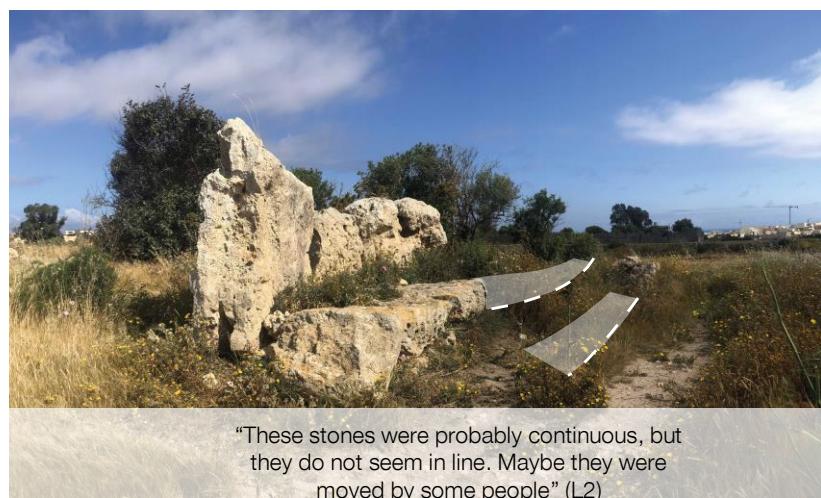
Figure 58: Complete arches in Ulysses Lodge, sketch by interviewee As4.

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"I do not remember where we enterered from, maybe this main arch was the entrance" (L2)

Figure 59: Completion of exterior arch in description of site.
Image source: photo by author, taken April 12, 2021.

"These stones were probably continuous, but they do not seem in line. Maybe they were moved by some people" (L2)

Figure 60: Attempt at completion of stones; part of coming to terms with the knowledge that the site was a prehistoric temple.
Image source: photo by author, taken April 24, 2021.

5.4.3 Nature of fragmentation

5.4.3.1 Materiality

Material decay can be viewed as a sign of physical incompleteness when compared to the 'original' state of materials when ready to use. From an artistic point of view, the morphing material of the ruin results in the beauty of the "error, chaos or chance" (Art2). An artist (Art1) discusses the 'accidental' as the final form itself which stimulates the artist and viewer in its search for a hidden order. Rather than looking at the ruined as Benjamin's (1977) process of destruction, or Till's statement that "all architecture is but waste in transit" (2009, as cited in Bille & Sørensen, 2016, p. 343), he alludes to Simmel's (1958) view of the return to mother nature, with ruination, including material decay, being a natural process. Therefore, if the ruin is seen as sculptural (narrative no. 9) irrespective of its history, and thus not 'incomplete', it is still seen as being part of a transformative process, and thus in a state of incompleteness. The architectural shape and colour is being transformed, rendering the ruin close to stone and earth (Simmel, 1958). The ruin looks like a "specific, accidental surrealistic sculpture" (Nieszczerzewska, 2015, p. 391), serving as a "platform for stimulus" (Art1). Moreover, according to Stokes (cited in Nieszczerzewska, 2015), the way that limestone weathers is the most vivid, alluring the interviewees to want to touch the monument. The material and its transformation has taken over. As Handa (2012) describes, in complete buildings, the function transcends the material, but as soon as one is liberated from that formal function, we turn to textures, colours and composition.

Recalling Gibson's ecological theory of perception (1979), affordances are part of the act of perception and thus a strong shaper of narratives. An environment is made up of a spectrum of potential activities, where affordances exist in the relationship between the perceiver and the environment. Santa Verna's horizontal stones are linked by several interviewees to a seating or sleeping area rather than with the platforms in Ġgantija and Ħagar Qim, which was noted solely by an archaeologist (Arc3). With respect to the prehistoric remains, one way that interviewees sought to relate to them was to associate form with function. This takes a different direction in Ġgantija, where, as described in Chapter 4, an architecture student interprets the affordances in the present, rather than what they meant in the past (As2).

5.4.3.2 'Line of destruction'

Applying a facet of Arnheim's (1969) critique of art to architecture, in Ġgantija, the 'line of destruction' is at a joint seemingly between the wall and the roof (Fig. 61). Therefore, it reinforces 'completeness', and the roof itself was a "strange possibility" (Ar1). An interviewee unfamiliar with Maltese prehistory (L4) considered the megalithic structures to have been unroofed as he compared them to Stonehenge. This could mean the 'line of destruction' is perceived as an amputation, in itself depicting Simmel's (1958) new formal unity. The accidental, in its lack of structural logic, opens a new set of rules, characterized by "the continuous motion of the border, by the non-closure of the form" (Speroni, 2002, cited in Coppolino, 2017, p. 3).

Figure 61: A simplified general observation: the 'Line of destruction' at a simple relationship with the structure. Image source: photo by author, taken 2019.
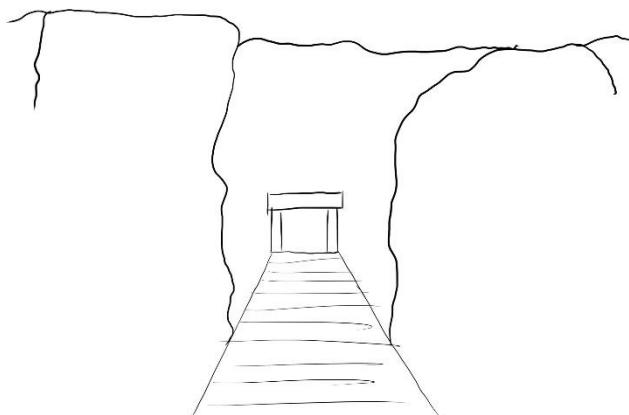
The restoration architect (Ar2) describes the intervention of the Ċittadella ruins, where the way the 'line of destruction' was treated could have potentially distinguished between reading the ruins as rubble walls or as dwellings, thus directly shaping the narrative.

Ta' Kenuna Tower (Fig. 62) presents an interesting case, where the glass additions, although legible as a newer intervention as per the Venice charter, blurs the 'true' narrative. This means that through the intervention, the original elevation line is sometimes read by interviewees as a 'line of destruction', with glass representing the continuation of the tower's outline. The intervention and our ability to recognize it as separate may have unintentionally transformed the original outline to a line of destruction. Two interviewees mentioned the notion of removing, or mentally dismissing a newer intervention, especially when made out of glass (As3, Ar2). The misinterpretation of the original outline could also happen since the visible shape of the tower may indicate a simpler pattern if it is continued, or filled-in (Arnheim, 1969).

Figure 62: The line of destruction is the original outline in Ta' Kenuna Tower.
Image source (left): Nadur Local Council; (right) photo by author, taken 14 June 2019

The line of destruction is embedded in the fabric itself, in the way the material is (de)forming (Fig. 63). In an archaeologist's comparison of the experience of archaeological ruins to the Belvedere Torso, especially the way he "imagine[s] that the sculptor is working on it, blowing off dust, touching it" (Arc2), reflects Tononi's (2020) assertion that an incomplete work activates the motor system in the viewer's brain, including mirror neurons. Applying this theory to ruins, the nature of fragmentation, including materiality and the 'line of destruction' activate a sequence of events in which the fragments give us another level of information.


Figure 63: An interviewee's (As4) sketch of Ġgantija. The rough stone edges can be noted. One can also note the lack of boundary (versus Fig. 6), possibly a reflection of how close to earth the structure has become. In contrast, the pathway is sharp and distinguishable from its environment.

5.4.4 Extent of intervention

The extent of intervention affects the nature of fragmentation (thus, perception) and background knowledge, including the bodily experience on site, thus the relationship with the 'true' narrative.

In Ġgantija, some feel the pathways to be a barrier, a restriction, that it is "dictating" (As4) to you what the building once was. "Now it just feels like a place you would visit, like a church," (L3) as the organic nature is lost. With such well-managed sites, the visitors are provided with aesthetic and epistemological security by controlling the possibility of encountering things (Edensor, 2016), which Trigg (2009) refers to as the domestication of ruins. However, considering the reality of Ġgantija being a World Heritage Site, related practicalities come into play.

In Santa Verna, the moment of encounter is contrasting, as one is more likely to have a quiet and less commercial experience. The walk towards the site, as emphasised by the archaeologists and those directly at the site, is part of the experience itself, as one comes to terms with their natural surroundings. The context forms an important part of the narrative. However, to people unaware of the remains, they become indistinguishable from the surrounding landscape, and interviewees on site had difficulty in recognizing where they were until it was pointed out to them. Its value would rely in one's respect for nature.

Comparing the two prehistoric sites, an interviewee states: "with Ġgantija, you have Heritage Malta giving you the information. With Santa Verna, you have the stones giving you the information, and then you can decide what you want to decide" (As4). With Santa Verna, the layman rarely has any relationship with the 'true' narrative, whereas in Ġgantija, there is the opportunity to build a relationship on site, when entering and when leaving. Albeit different approaches, an archaeologist describes how "in diversity is happiness" (Arc1), and different experiences and encounters are provided, that may satisfy different needs.

The legibility of Ta' Kenuna Tower allows one to distinguish between the old and the new. The intervention supports the 'true' narrative but becomes a dominant part in the individual narrative. This could be a result of the interviewees' unfamiliarity with the specifics of its former use. The tower is itself a bricolage, where a new narrative is shaped, with the aim of continuing the 'true' narrative, where spaces, signs and layers are combined to form a collage of different layers (Coppolino, 2017).

Similar to Santa Verna, Ulysses Lodge is bare, though not scheduled for conservation. Contrasting to a well-preserved site, one encounters the site without human control and conservation, and the safety net is non-existent (Pétursdóttir, 2016). The individual can have a different kind of spiritual experience, where the contemporary ruin's programme is now abstract.

5.5   Interdependent elements: rupture triggering the imagination

Imagination, if interpreted as a necessary part of perception, is an integral part of our daily life experiences. Recalling Zittoun and Cerchia (2013), imagination, as an expansion of our experiences, stems from a rupture in our flow of thinking. When encountering the ruin, the temporal and physical paradoxes instigate this rupture, which is enhanced when the ruin is perceived as incomplete. The interviewees' use of the words "provoke" and "triggers you to explore" could reflect this interruption. As interpreted from the research, common disjunctions include the new formal unity as a result of deformation; the recognition of death's looming presence with a heightened sense of existence; and the material decay reflecting (meta)physical and temporal paradoxes.

In viewing the ruin as incomplete, the roots of the narrative work interdependently, and their interaction determines whether there is a rupture and how powerful it can be. The rupture is less powerful, or is soothed, when there is a lesser interruption in our flow of thinking or when our thoughts are guided.

In Ġgantija, the rupture lies in the scale; the ability to decipher closed spaces and allow the distant past to materialise; and unfamiliarity in distanciation. It is soothed by the controlled context; the 'touristification' of the site; and the drawing of parallels to contemporary life. Interestingly, an archaeologist (Arc3) notes how the site becomes more valuable as these parallels are drawn, but in providing a value for the site, the rupture is soothed. Contrastingly, in Santa Verna, the lack of information is a rupture in itself, set in motion when the visitor becomes aware of the site's historical significance; as well as the sudden moment of encounter when approaching the ruin. The rupture is soothed by the very same lack of knowledge, since the visitor might not recognize the site as the megalithic remains, a medieval burial ground and more.

The intervention on Ta' Kenuna ruins is in itself a rupture as we are faced with a contrast or disjunction between the old and the new, and between the tower as a whole and its built context. Similarly, to Santa Verna, the rupture is mitigated by not recognizing its historic value.

A powerful moment of encounter is possible in Ulysses Lodge, where the rupture also lies in the rift between a structure that looks close to functional, and remains so still, albeit representing a new type of dwelling (Heidegger, 1971, in Murchadha, 2002). Its "pestering materiality" (Pétursdóttir, 2016, p. 381) forces an encounter with the fabric that is different from our daily use of similar establishments. The rupture would be soothed by sanitisation and excessive control of nature around the site or establishing a new use.

5.6 Conclusion

The potential narrative constructed around a ruin is rooted in how we perceive the ruin and its paradoxical qualities. When it is considered **incomplete** (in a sense beyond materiality: informational, social, functional), the ruin presents a rupture, or an interruption in our flow of thinking, that stimulates the imagination. Non-physical incompleteness (e.g., functional or social) provide a contrast with the city. Physical incompleteness allows filling-in and completion processes depending on:

1. background knowledge and memory;
2. the level of fragmentation;
3. the nature of fragmentation, including materiality and the 'line of destruction'; and
4. extent of intervention.

It is observed in Chapter 4 how the correlation of different level of familiarity and an incremental level of fragmentation and age produced varying natures of narratives. What is revealed is how contrasting points of view and levels and perceptions of incompleteness create narratives of different natures, ranging from material-based and aesthetical narratives where familiarity with the site was low, to narratives of opportunity where familiarity was the highest. These points of view also represent different relationships with the 'true' narrative, ultimately shaping a different 'individual' narrative.

These four elements form the identified roots of a potential narrative, and they work interdependently. Their interaction determines how powerful the rupture could be. For instance, the extent of intervention directly impacts the nature of fragmentation, which in turn affects the perception of the site. It also presents the possibility of offering further background knowledge (which should be evidence-based), through which a relationship with the 'true' narrative could be built. However, a curated experience that adds individual value to the site provides a sense of security that could soothe the rupture.

Another example is the interaction of the level of fragmentation and background knowledge. Santa Verna, at an extreme level of fragmentation, is described as "three boulders in a landscape" (As4), but through the recognition of the site as incomplete, and association with less fragmented ruins, a narrative is instigated. Therefore, the recognition of incompleteness in ruins with high levels of fragmentation gives them value: Santa Verna "is special *because* it is a ruin" (Art3, emphasis added). It is what distinguishes the megaliths, for now they are recognized as be part of something else: they become more than a fragment (part of a megalithic structure), and thus a synecdoche (representing also the immaterial aspects and being part of a typology). In this case, the extent of intervention should be enough to ensure a baseline of information from which the visitor recognizes that it was part of something else. Therefore, a weak relationship with the 'true' narrative is limiting and the rupture is soothed. To others with more background knowledge of the site presents an opportunity to build a closer relationship with the 'true' narrative, hence triggering a rupture.

This study investigates of how incompleteness in itself is a rupture that triggers the imagination, including perception itself and imaginative reconstructions. As Hell and Schönle (2010) state: "the beholder defines the ruin, and the ruin could not exist without such creative appropriation" (p. 7). Therefore, the potential narrative, which becomes necessary for the ruin to exist, adds another layer to valuing the ruin.

5.7 Recommendations for further research

Aware of its limitations, the study explores a theoretical framework within a local context. For further research, a greater number of participants can be included, along with additional case studies. The chosen case studies represent two ends of the spectrum of the level of fragmentation, but by no means represent the entire complexity of our ruinous environment. In this study, the level of fragmentation and the distanciation are proportional. Further studies of contemporary ruins with higher levels of fragmentation might be carried out to test the nature of narratives that emerge, the associated processes and the type of rupture, if any.

The notion of complete versus incomplete is also experienced in abandoned, unfinished architecture typologies, or "ruins in reverse" (Smithson, 1967, p. 4) that ultimately were not addressed in this dissertation. These ruins have a different energy which may produce contrasting emerging themes or results.

The impact of the extent of intervention, could be further tackled with respect to valuing the narrative potential of a ruin. Coppolino's (2017) study could be a starting point in understanding how any intervention is part of the narrative of the site, as an architect (Ar3) stated, "life is about stories, and buildings are messages coming from the past."

In understanding incompleteness as a rupture that contributes to the shaping of a narrative, its implementation as a tool in design could be further studied. This is reflected in the statement by Corpo Atelier (2020, p. 170):

> To consciously renounce completeness is to allow (the possibility of) wholeness.
>
> If one accepts this premise, incompletion becomes a foundational requirement for any work to be significant.
> Therefore, in the process of creating something, there is but only one truly critical moment to be attentive to:
>
> when
> to
> sto[p]

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