"TOPOGRAPHY OF WORK" IN POMPEII: COMMERCIAL AND PRODUCTIVE SPACES IN *INSULAE* 15 AND 16 OF *REGIO VI*

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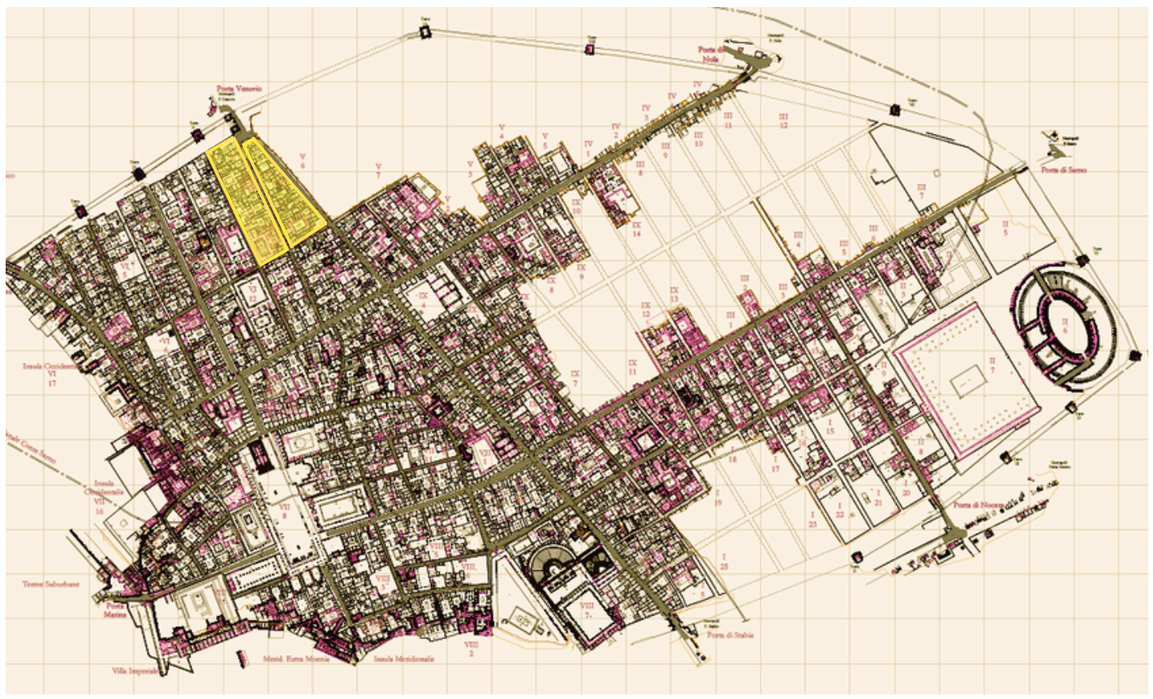
Introduction

The aim of this study is to reconstruct the "topography of work" within *insulae* 15 and 16 of *Regio VI* in Pompeii. The research explores the commercial and productive dynamics of this urban sector through the analysis of archaeological contexts and material culture, with the goal of reconstructing the system of relationships linking workshops, shops, and storage facilities with residential areas, public spaces, and infrastructure. From this perspective, these insulae occupy a particularly dynamic zone within the Pompeian urban fabric: overlooking two main thoroughfares and situated near Porta Vesuvio, they represent a key interface between the city and its surrounding territory. A preliminary survey has identified numerous spaces devoted to commercial and productive activities, which, however, have not yet been examined through a systematic study integrating multiple categories of evidence. Particular attention will be devoted to reconstructing the transformations that took place after the earthquake of 62 CE, when several residential units were repurposed for productive and artisanal activities.



Map of Pompeii: insulae 15 and 16 highlighted in yellow (Morichi et al. 2017).

Current state of research

The two *insulae* were uncovered between the late 19th and early 20th centuries during excavations directed by A. Sogliano, although they were not investigated in a systematic manner. Only the northernmost sector of Insula 16 has been the subject of a comprehensive study, carried out as part of a project on the urban development of the Porta Vesuvio area. On that occasion, architectural surveys and stratigraphic excavations were conducted within units VI 16, 19; 20–24; 25; and 26–27 (Seiler 2005). In addition, the Casa dei *Vettii* and Casa degli Amorini Dorati were studied (Seiler 1992). Although the main focus of these works was the iconographic analysis of wall paintings, the study of the Casa degli Amorini Dorati also made it possible to define the construction phases of the dwelling and of the associated fullonica (VI 16, 6). Targeted investigations have focused on contexts related to textile production: VI 15, 3 (Flohr 2007), VI 16, 3–4, and 6 (Flohr 2011; Monteix et al. 2020, 2022). These studies, which involved surface cleaning and stratigraphic excavation, have proven valuable both for understanding the functioning and architectural organization of the productive installations and for refining the chronology of their establishment.

Main objectives

- To identify the productive, commercial, and residential contexts that make up *insulae* 15 and 16;
- For the productive and commercial spaces, to determine their specific functions and reconstruct the segments of the "chaîne opératoire" carried out within them through the study of material culture and architectural structures;
- Based on the analysis of standing remains, to determine the construction phases of the commercial and productive complexes;
- To reconstruct the connections between productive-commercial areas and residential spaces within each *insula*;
- To assess the extent and significance of the well-known phenomenon of transformation and economic repurposing of *domus* (La Torre 1988), particularly in the post-62 CE phase;
- To reconstruct the spatial relationships, functional logic, and socio-economic dynamics linking workplaces, domestic environments and the urban context, ultimately leading to a definition of the "topography of work."

Methodology

The research will be structured in several phases, combined within an integrated approach that brings together the study of relevant bibliographic sources, the analysis of ancient and antiquarian documentation, direct fieldwork and the digital processing of data. In the first phase, excavation reports, diaries, inventories, materials unearthed during the early excavations, as well as historical graphic and photographic documentation, will be examined with the aim of reconstructing the original discovery contexts. Particular attention will be devoted to the analysis of archaeological materials preserved in storage facilities, which will serve as a key element for the functional identification of spaces, following an approach already tested in previous studies (Allison 1993; 2004). All collected data will be integrated into a purpose-built GIS database, designed to test interpretative models. Subsequently, data collection in the field will include a detailed analysis of the standing structures, aimed at understanding the spatial relationships between complexes and defining their main construction phases. This work will make it possible to examine the relationships between these types of spaces and their surrounding context, with particular attention to road networks, hydraulic systems, and residential areas, in order to clarify the nature of the economic and social connections among them.

Expected Results

The research aims to provide an in-depth and systematic understanding of the commercial and productive spaces within *insulae* 15 and 16 of *Regio VI*. This work will allow for a more precise definition of their functions and roles, not only in relation to the internal organization of the insulae but also to their surrounding urban context. More broadly, the study seeks to contribute new interpretative insights into key historiographical issues: to assess whether the insulae display specific commercial or productive vocations; to examine, in relation to the distribution and layout of these spaces, the degrees of segregation or integration with adjacent structures; to analyze the relationship between domestic and public-commercial spheres, the interactions between elites and lower social groups, the organization of labor and the economic and social functioning of these environments. Finally, the research will highlight the post-seismic transformations and evaluate their significance within the broader framework of urban life in Pompeii.

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