A new entrance to the Ninfa Garden. For a better understanding of the medieval city

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Extended Abstract – this talk will be delivered in Italian.

The Garden of Ninfa, it was only under this name that its visit was promoted as this stands today and it was begun at the beginning of the 20th century.
An inscription installed by Gelasio Caetani in the hall of the Town Hall reports the year 1920. This is setting the time when he began the restoration works of the city and the planting of trees and flowers.
At first, and for many years, the Garden was a private site where only friends of the House of Caetani were welcome. Only at the end of the 1960s, it began to be opened, on rare occasions, to the public. Initially, on special days, free of charge, for the people of the surrounding villages. From the late 1970s onward, the Garden began to be opened to visitors for very few days over the year. Later on, after the establishment of the Foundation, following the death of Lelia Caetani, and that of her husband, Mr. Howard, who served as its first presidents, every first Saturday and Sunday of the month from Easter to September the Garden was opened to the public.
As attention for the Garden grew, especially fostered by numerous newspaper articles and television reports, there were numerous drawbacks such as excessive pressure due to over-tourism during the flowering season of April and May, complicated management of the ticket office and the entrance circulation - also due to the fact that people entered and exited from the same point.
However, above all, it was the concentration of people and the attention almost exclusively on the plants which caused a total state of neglect of the remains and the city of Ninfa. In fact, investments, studies and research were almost exclusively focused on the botanical aspects of these.
In 2018, when I was appointed president of the Foundation, the visit to the Garden was the one that had been run for several decades. It was the same itinerary and the same way of visiting, and guides strenuously repeated a bit of the history and were providing visitors with a lot of info on plants and flowers without any attention to the ruins.
Then, it was decided to change the way of approaching the visit to the site. At first by intervening in the form of visiting by means of online reservations

according to time slots - thus, setting a maximum number of visitors, and opening all weekends and holidays, as well as continuous opening hours.
Under the new management of the Garden, it become clear that the suffering and degradation was not due to the overall number of tourists, rather, this was due to their concentration in a few hours and days.
Therefore, it was decided to allow for a maximum number of 200 people so as not to exceed 80,000 visitors per year.
However, a more important and decisive fact was to act on the mode of touring the site by highlighting the specificity and uniqueness of it through its blending with the ruins.
To achieve this goal, it was needed to start the visit from the entrance that was not the one directed towards the old town hall, which had become the countryside residence of the family, but from the historical entrance of the medieval city, which was oriented towards north (Rome). This was identified by means of historical iconographic research.
To this point an access bridge was reconstructed over the moat running along the walls by means of modern elements using natural materials.
The visit, in this way, has partially changed the route with an immediate approach to the urban and architectural structures of the medieval city so to offer to visitors a new view and reading of the Garden.
This also resulted in an improvement of the circulation by differentiating the entrance from the exit.
This would have not been possible if the new Management of the Garden - despite its great naturalistic and botanical expertise - would have not welcome with enthusiasm this change, which was primarily aiming at enhancing the remains of the city.
We did not limit ourselves to this aspect related to the visit path. Research activities fostering awareness and a new understanding of the site were started, which had never been undertaken before thanks to the valuable contribute of Professor Matheus. His research activities were used to carry out a great number of restoration works.

Relationships were established with different Universities (i.e. Faculties of Architecture of Rome La Sapienza, MIT, TUM and Mainz) and institutions (Ministry of Culture Directorate of Education, Superintendence of Monuments, National Research Council of research) that are still continuing even these days with the works financed by the PNRR.