

# Il Santuario Ritrovato at San Casciano dei Bagni: a project of “civic” and digital archaeology

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## Abstract

The excavations and research at the Etruscan-Roman sanctuary of Bagno Grande in San Casciano dei Bagni (SI), carried out under a permit to the Municipality of San Casciano, with the scientific coordination of the University for Foreigners of Siena and the protection of the Superintendence for the provinces of Siena, Grosseto and Arezzo, structurally integrate **archaeological research, dissemination of results and community engagement**. The research began in the 1990s, when the area was placed under protection following the request made by the local community itself, a process subsequently continued with a geophysical survey campaign that prepared the ground for systematic excavations beginning in 2019.

The archaeological investigations, launched by the Municipality, have brought to light a sanctuary connected to thermo-mineral waters and their healing properties, whose votive deposit has yielded bronze statues, hundreds of ex-votos, coins, and archaeobotanical remains. From the outset, the project developed a strategy that combined active involvement of the **local community with communication methods capable of ensuring the site's protection while maintaining scientific rigor**.

This methodological approach, resulting from synergy among the institutions involved, has generated an **integrated system that interweaves in-person events, publications, and digital media communication**.

Public meetings, educational activities, and guided tours are complemented by consistent editorial output, including three volumes dedicated to the excavation, exhibition catalogues, and outreach publications, which ensure the dissemination of results at multiple levels of depth. Alongside this, **social media are used consistently as a space for public documentation and dialogue**.

This experience illustrates how research and dissemination can be configured not as separate dimensions, but as components of a unified project, strengthening the bond between archaeological heritage and community.



Fig. 1: Public lectures for the local community in San Casciano dei Bagni

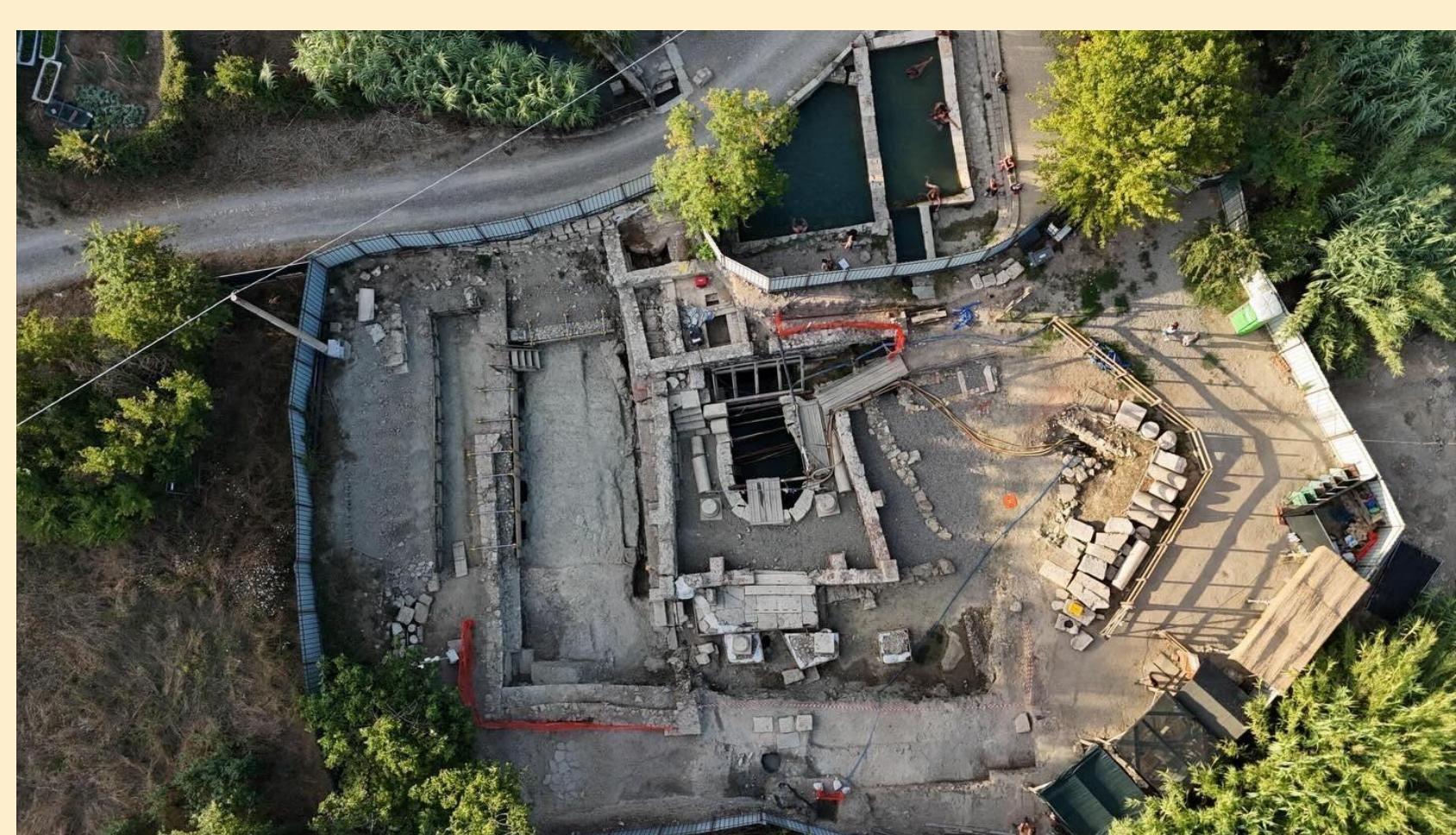


Fig. 2 The thermo-mineral sanctuary at Bagno Grande, San Casciano dei Bagni



Fig. 3 The museum housed in the entrance of the town hall and inaugurated in 2021

## An ongoing process

The experience of San Casciano dei Bagni demonstrates how **“civic” archaeology can develop along both physical and digital dimensions**, keeping the **local community at its center** while progressively expanding its audiences. Communication through social media, originally conceived to inform residents about activities on-site and throughout the year, has evolved into a channel capable of reaching students, scholars, and publics at national and international levels, extending the impact of the project without undermining its civic aims. **Social media profiles have taken on the role of a shared memory of the research**, preserving the stratification of activities and interactions over time. Each post becomes part of an ongoing narrative that accompanies the project, documenting not only discoveries but also the people, contexts, and processes that make them possible. The community that has formed around the project, where the citizens of San Casciano remain active interlocutors who themselves share and produce content and narratives circulating within their own networks, illustrates the potential of digital platforms when integrated into a strategy that unites scientific rigor, heritage protection, and public participation. Data confirm the effectiveness of this approach: **online interactions continue to grow steadily, while guided tours bring dozens of visitors to the site each month, demonstrating how digital storytelling translates into concrete local engagement**. Published materials, systematically collected, will flow into the project website as an integrated archive of the project's work. The activities at the Bagno Grande will increasingly interweave with those of the **CADMO - International Hub of Research of the University for Foreigners of Siena**, which coordinates the excavation alongside other research projects. The hub will be headquartered in San Casciano, further strengthening the territorial anchoring of the research and creating new opportunities for dialogue. The challenge for the coming years will be to consolidate this model in which civic archaeology and digital communication mutually support one another, adapting to technological developments without losing focus on the relationship with communities and promoting an increasingly democratic and participatory relationship between cultural heritage and society.

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Fig. 4: Kids from local schools visiting the archaeological site