



# Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

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**INTERNATIONAL WORKSHOP**  
DIGITAL INTEGRATED STRATEGIES TO SAFEGUARD  
HERITAGE CONSTRUCTION TECHNOLOGIES  
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FOR HERITAGE SCIENCE

# Data, Information, and Knowledge

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**Data:** Raw facts and figures without context. Examples: numbers, dates.

**Information:** Processed data that has context, meaning. Example: a date associated with an event.

**Knowledge:** Information combined with experience and insights, allowing for informed decision-making.

# Dealing with a Knowledge dilemma

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Assertive



La Madonna della Pietà,



Map of Rome carved on the facade of the church of Santa Maria del Giglio, XVII cent.

Pluri-semantic



Giano Quadrifronte

Multi-probabilistic



Pietà Rondanini, Michelangelo

# What is Semantic Web?

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

The **Semantic Web** is an extension of the current web, where data is structured in a way that it can be understood and processed by machines. It uses standards such as RDF and OWL to represent data in a way that both humans and machines can interpret.

# What are Ontologies?

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In the ICT context **ontology** is...

**a formal representation of concepts and their relationships within a specific domain.**

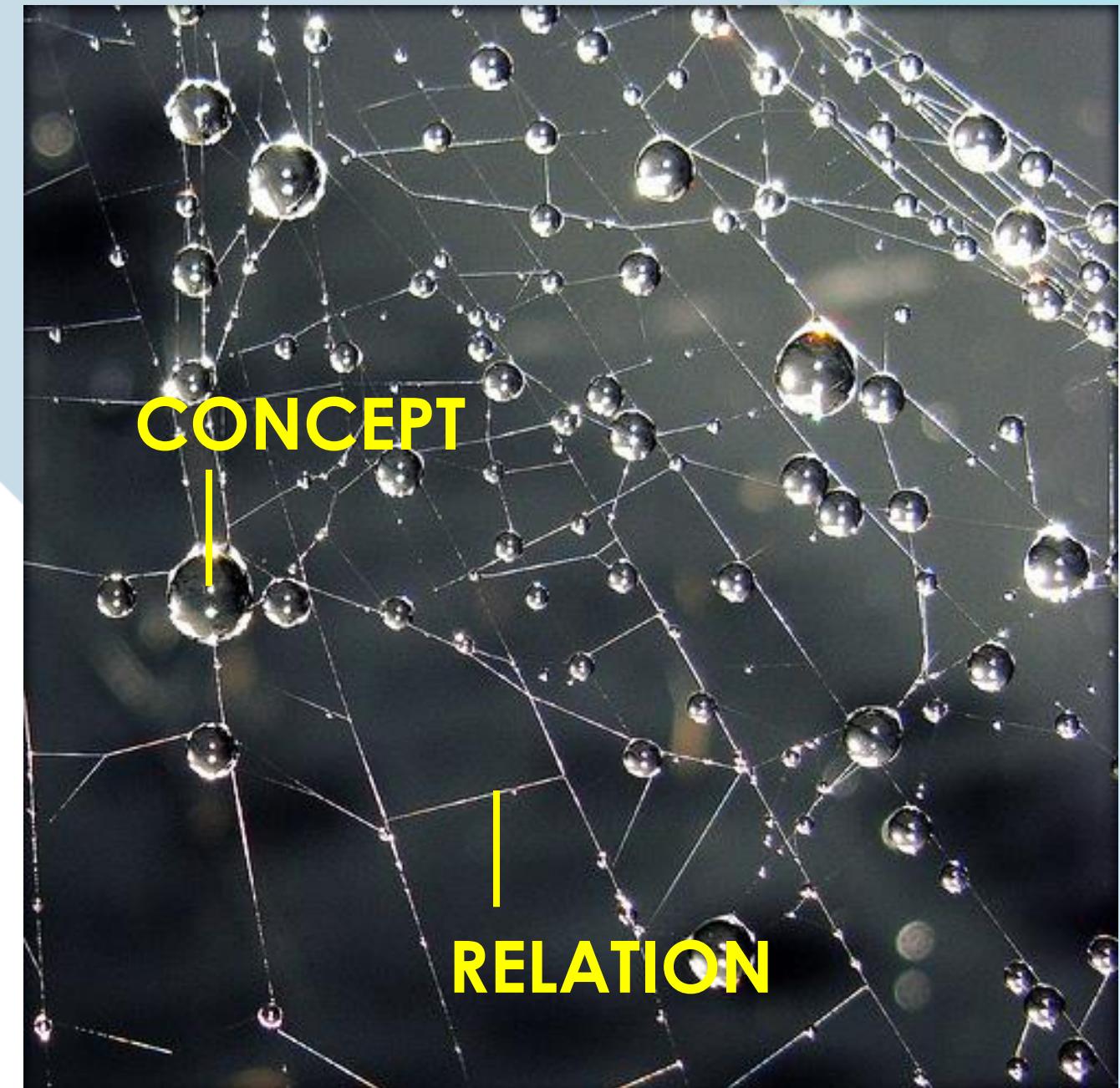
It defines a common vocabulary so that information in a particular domain can be shared.

Enables machines to read and interpret that information facilitating tasks such as data integration, etc..

It provides a common framework that helps sharing and reusing knowledge across different applications and domains.

“An ontology is a formal, explicit specification of a shared conceptualization”

(Gruber, T. 1993)



# How Ontologies and Semantic Web Work Together

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

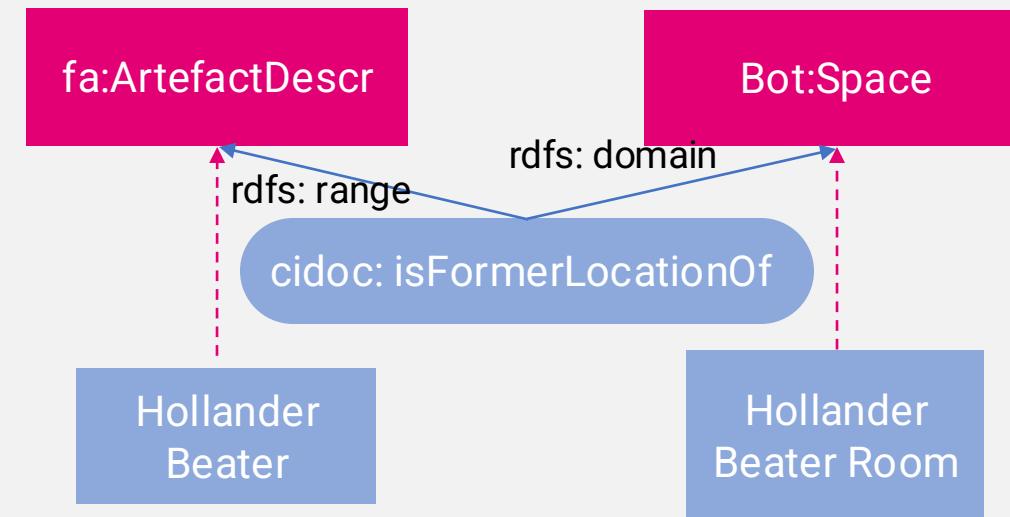
### RDF Triple Representation



```
@prefix ex: <http://example.org/> .
@prefix fa: <http://example.org/artefact/> .
@prefix cidoc: <http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/> .
@prefix bot: <https://w3id.org/bot#> .
```

```
ex:HollanderBeater a fa:ArtefactDescr .
ex:HollanderBeaterRoom a bot:Space ;
  cidoc:isFormerLocationOf ex:HollanderBeater .
```

### OWL Representation



```
<rdf:RDF xmlns:rdf="http://www.w3.org/1999/02/22-rdf-syntax-ns#"
  xmlns:owl="http://www.w3.org/2002/07/owl#"
  xmlns:rdfs="http://www.w3.org/2000/01/rdf-schema#"
  xmlns:fa="http://example.org/artefact/"
  xmlns:cidoc="http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/"
  xmlns:bot="https://w3id.org/bot#">

  <owl:Class rdf:about="fa:ArtefactDescr"/>
  <owl:Class rdf:about="bot:Space"/>

  <owl:ObjectProperty rdf:about="cidoc:isFormerLocationOf">
    <rdfs:domain rdf:resource="bot:Space"/>
    <rdfs:range rdf:resource="fa:ArtefactDescr"/>
  </owl:ObjectProperty>
</rdf:RDF>
```

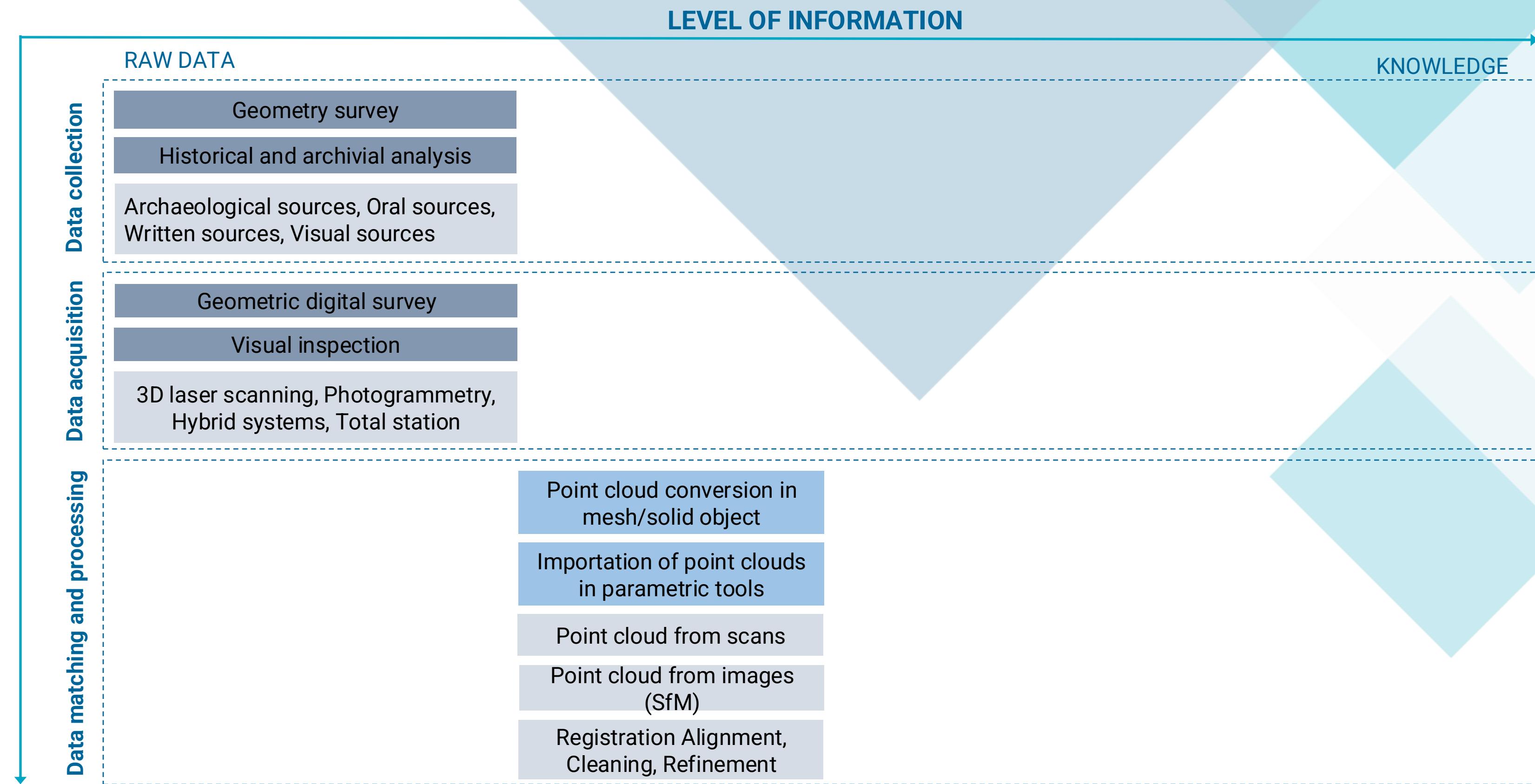
### Query SPARQL Protocol

```
PREFIX ex: <http://example.org/>
PREFIX fa: <http://example.org/artefact/>
PREFIX cidoc: <http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm/>
PREFIX bot: <https://w3id.org/bot#>
```

```
SELECT ?artifact
WHERE {
  ex:HollanderBeaterRoom cidoc:isFormerLocationOf
  ?artifact .
}
```

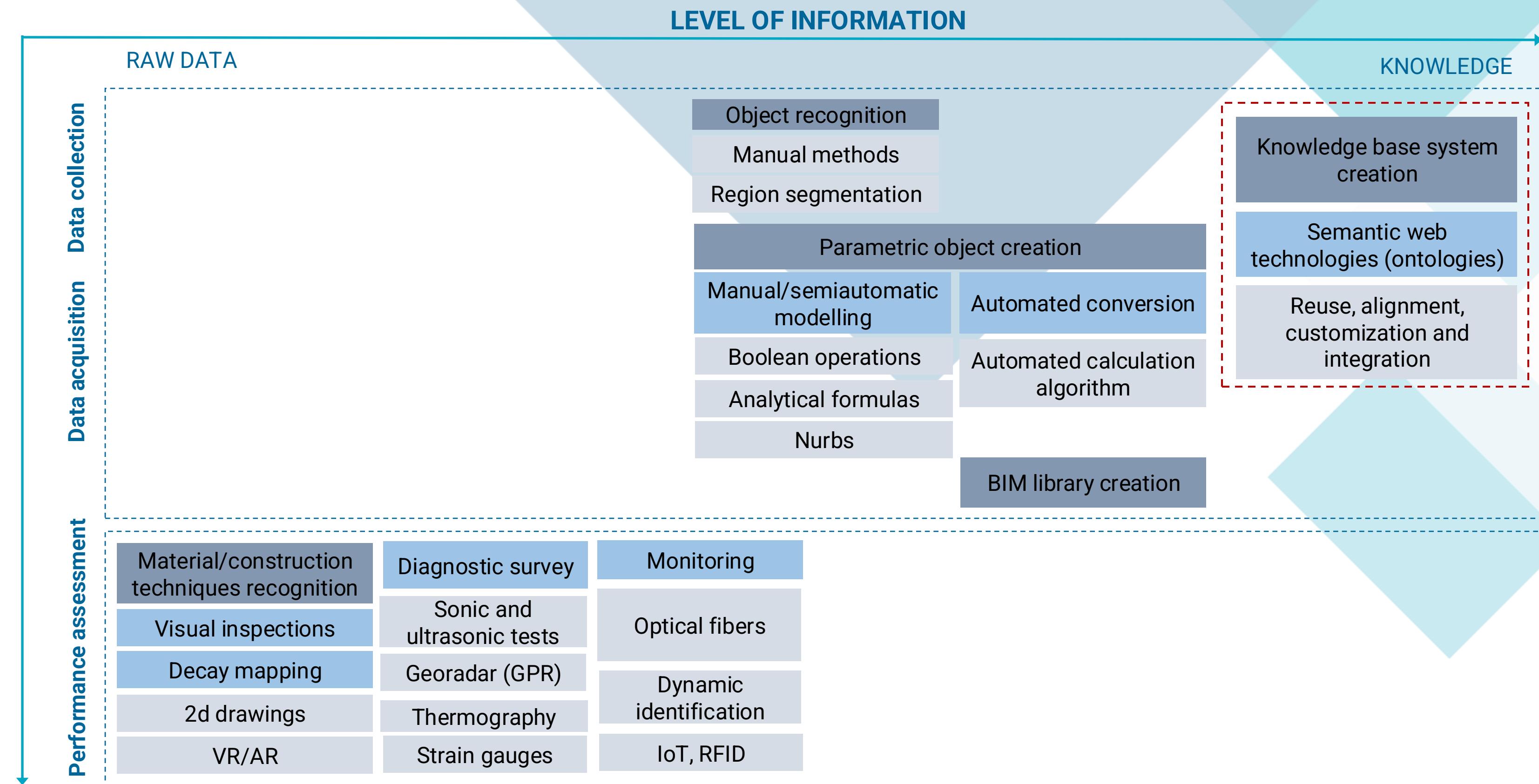
# Built heritage representation process

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



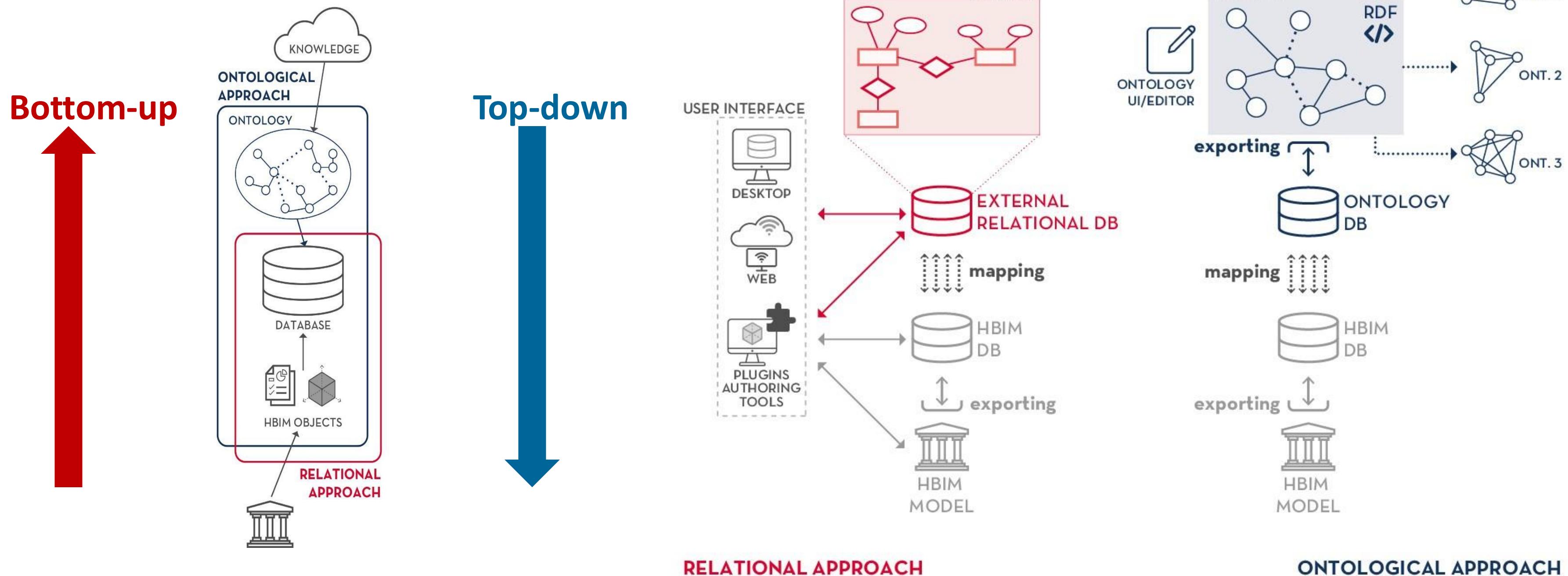
# Built heritage representation process

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



# Approaches for HBIM Semantic Enrichment

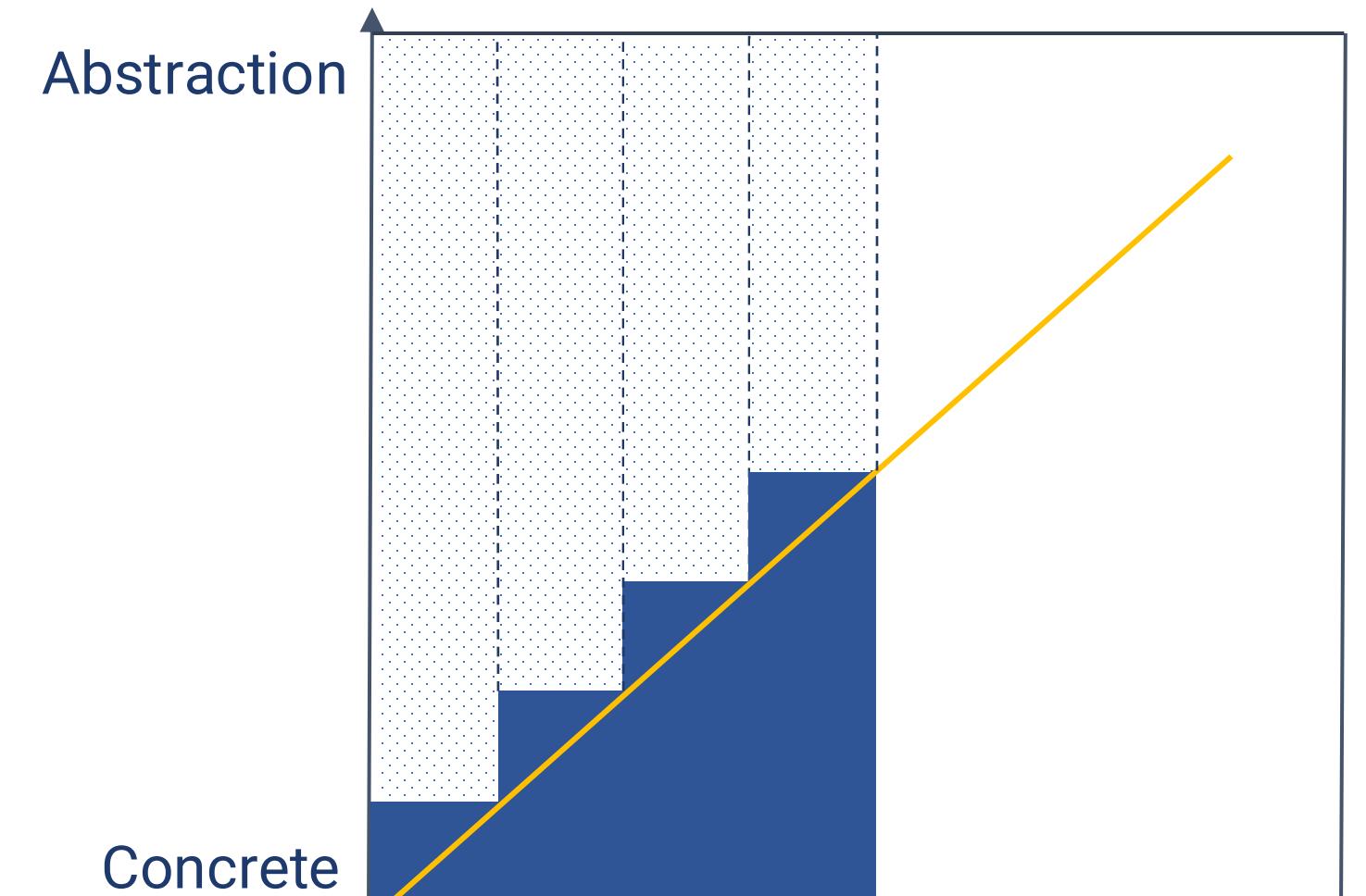
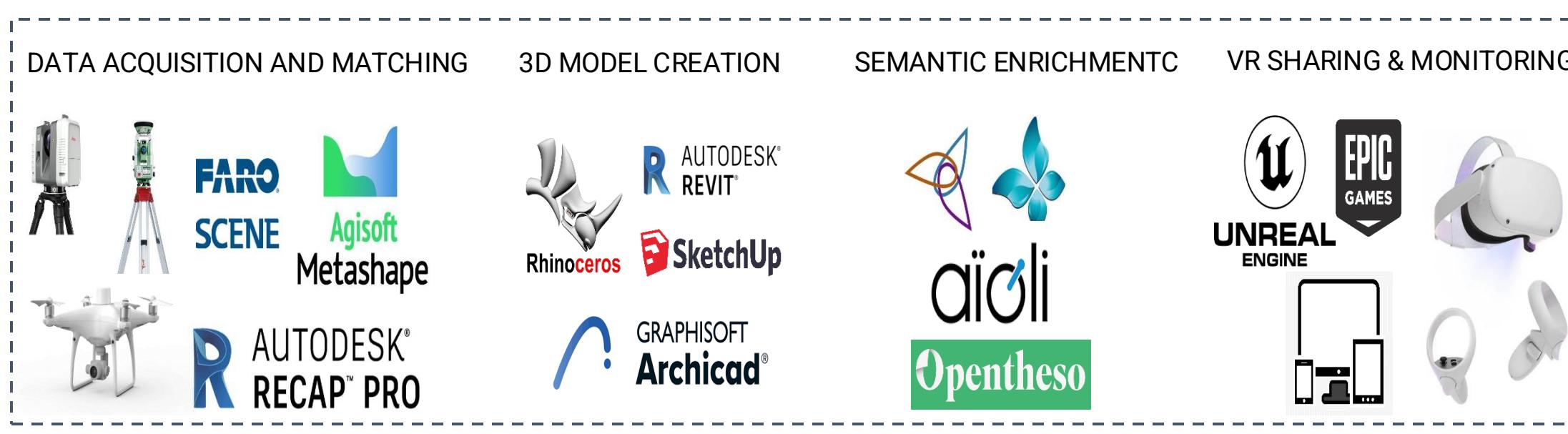
Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



# Challenges in current applications

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

- **Interoperability, alignment** of cataloging systems
- Lack of representation of some domains and limited **semantic description**
- **Rigidity** of representation structure Family, type, instance
- Each type of interpretive process has its own different representation. These are processes that are not represented at the level of **logical connections**
- Processes in which there is a lack of unambiguous information definition. Approaches that have difficulty in supporting **management** and **collaboration** processes in decision-making stages



Machine contribution  
Human contribution

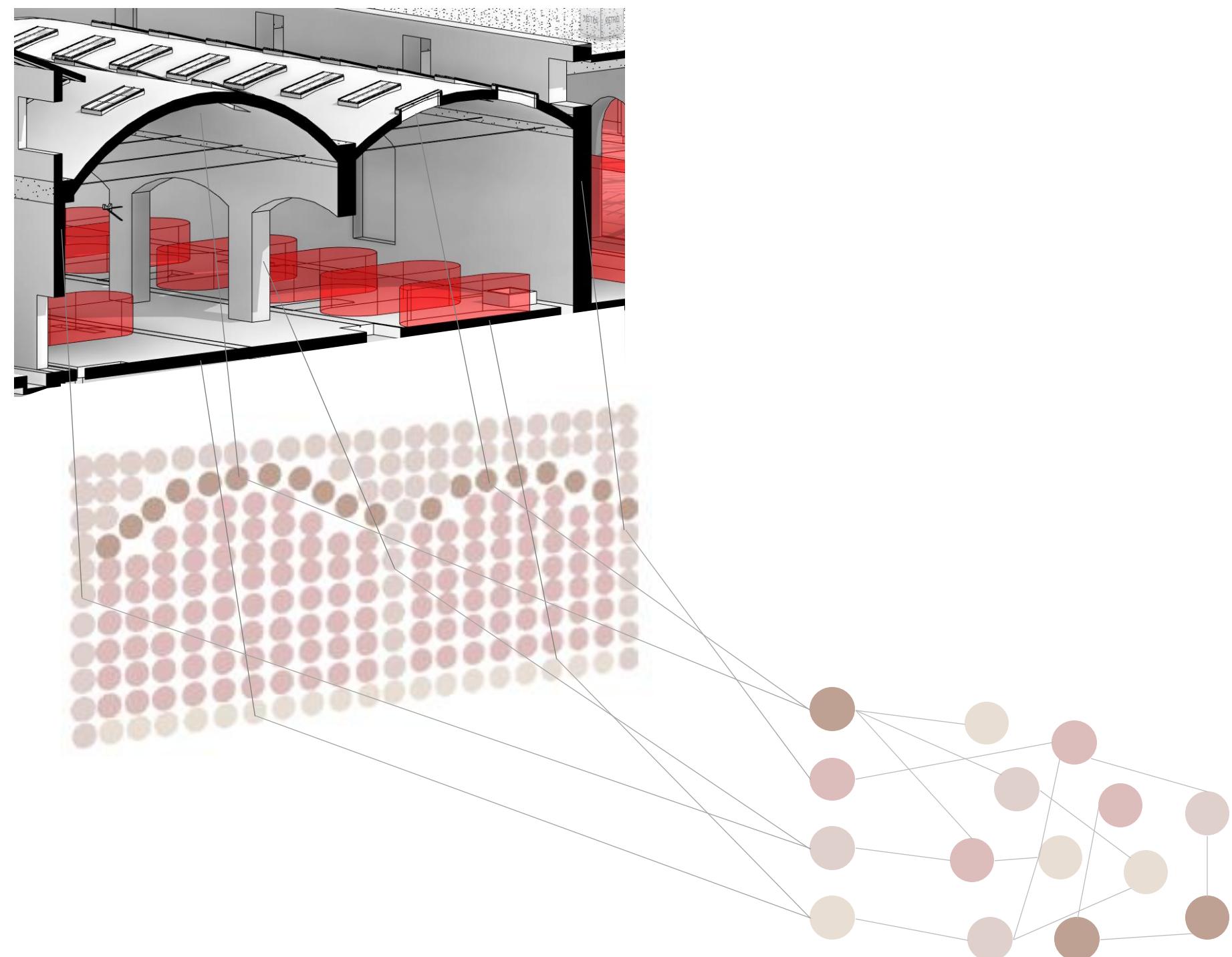
# Ontologies for HBIM Semantic Enrichment

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

## Benefits of Semantic Enrichment in HBIM

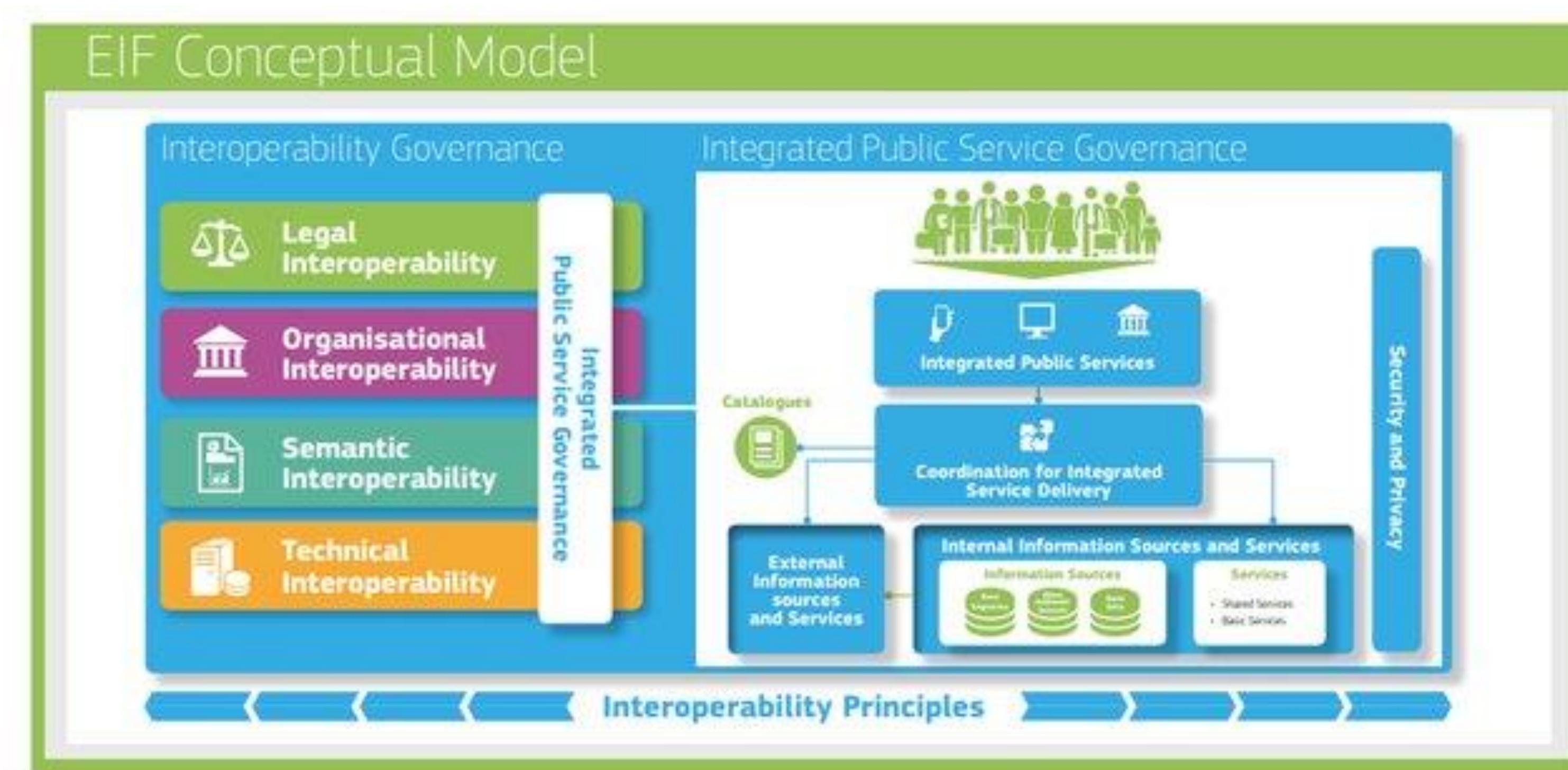
- Enhanced **Data Understanding**: Information about historical buildings is better connected.
- Improved **Decision-Making**: Allows experts to access more relevant and context-aware data.
- **Interoperability**: Facilitates better communication between systems using a shared structure.

From web of Documents to Web of data



# Ontologies for HBIM Semantic Enrichment

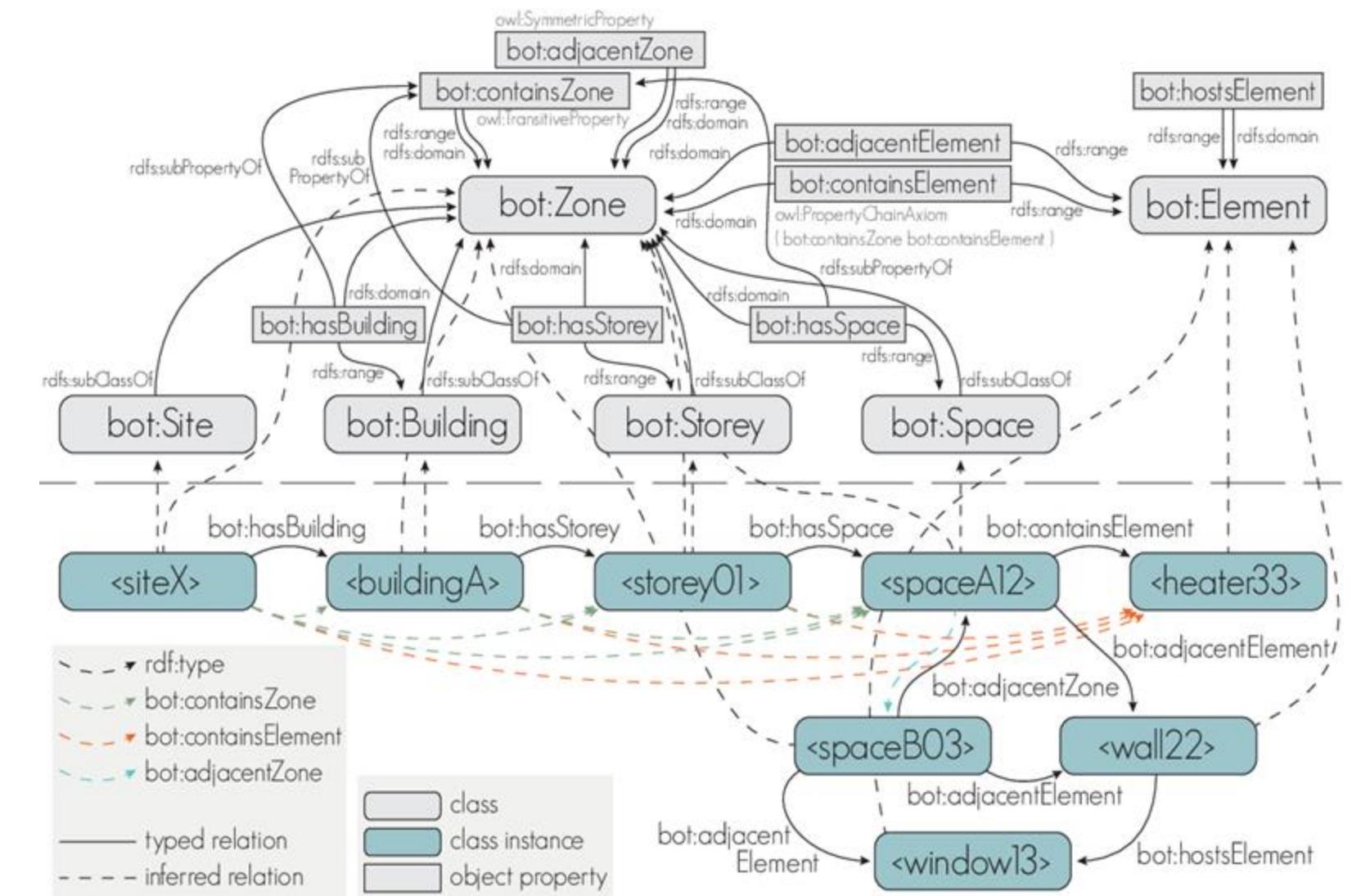
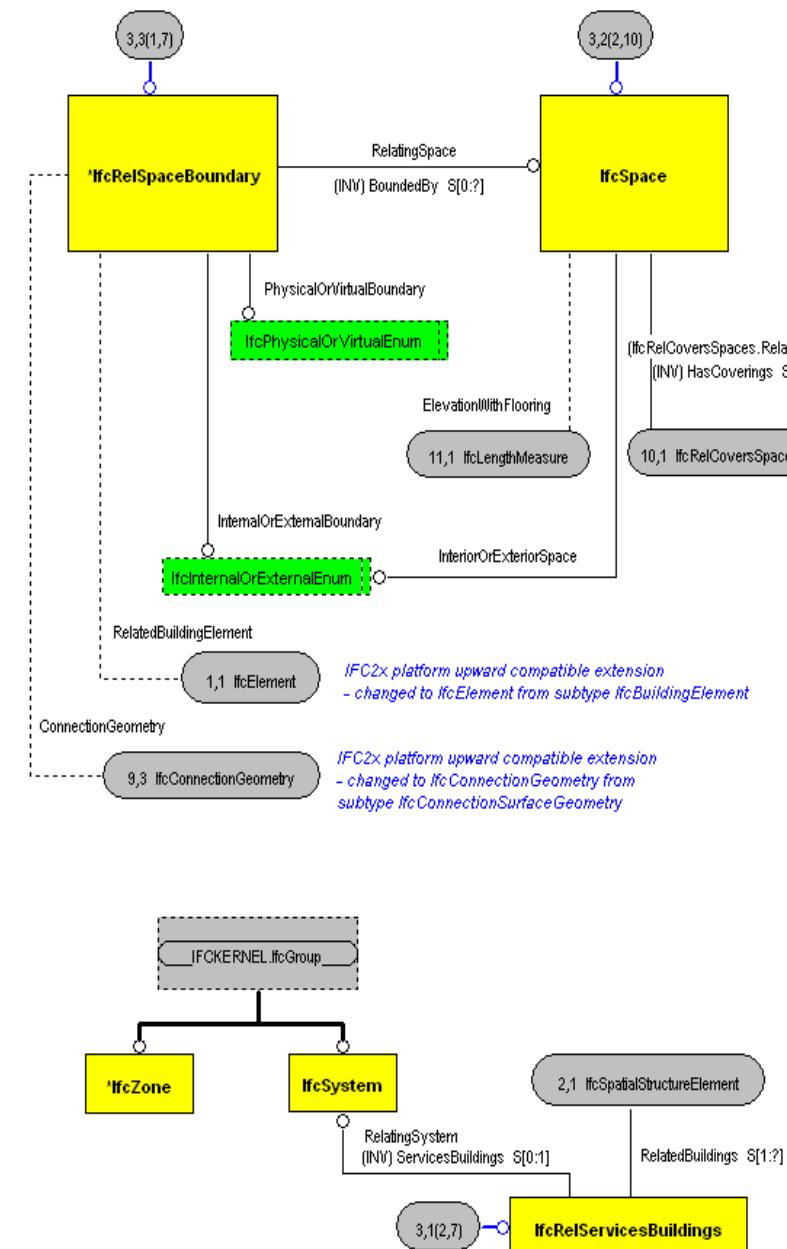
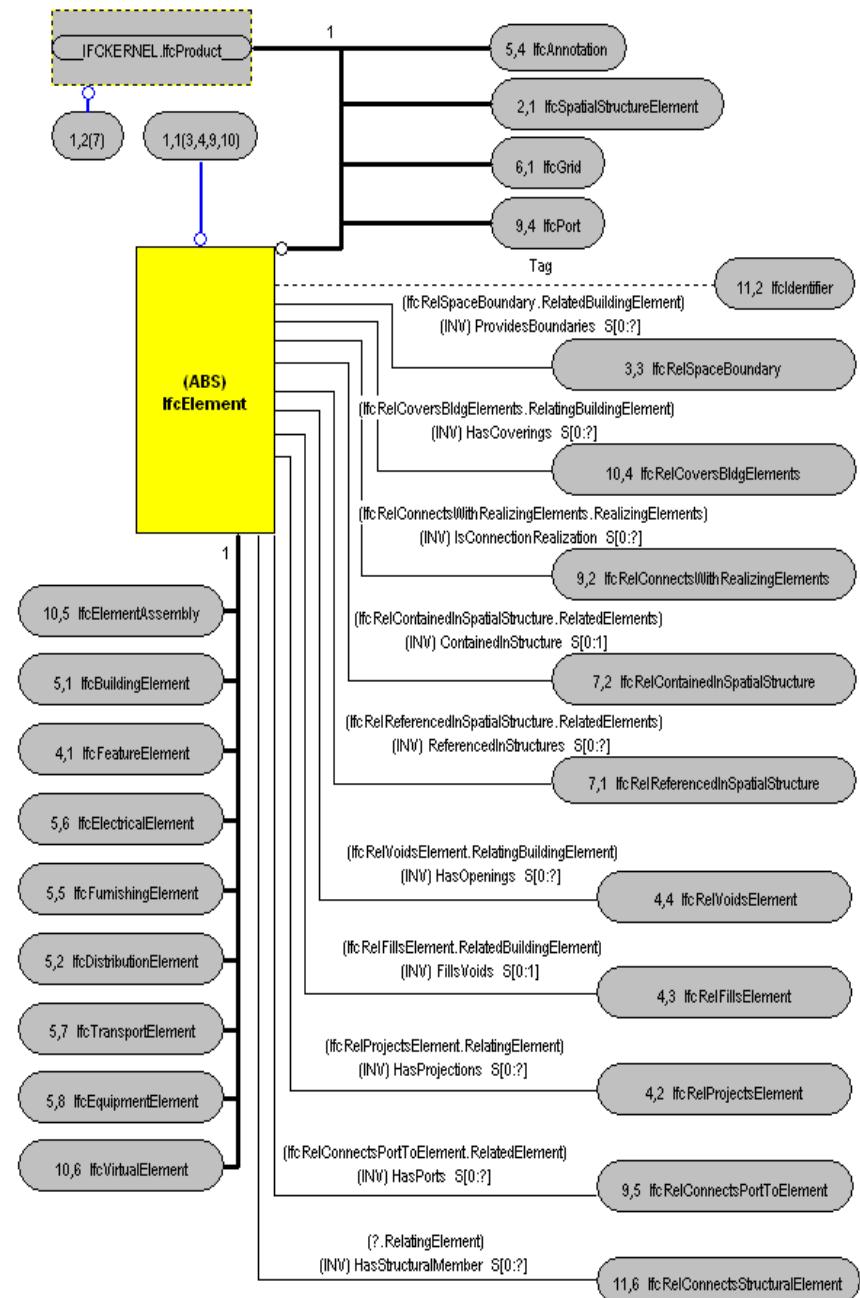
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# Ontologies in different Domains

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## AEC INDUSTRY



# Ontologies in different Domains

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## CULTURAL HERITAGE

### Spatial – Temporal Relationships

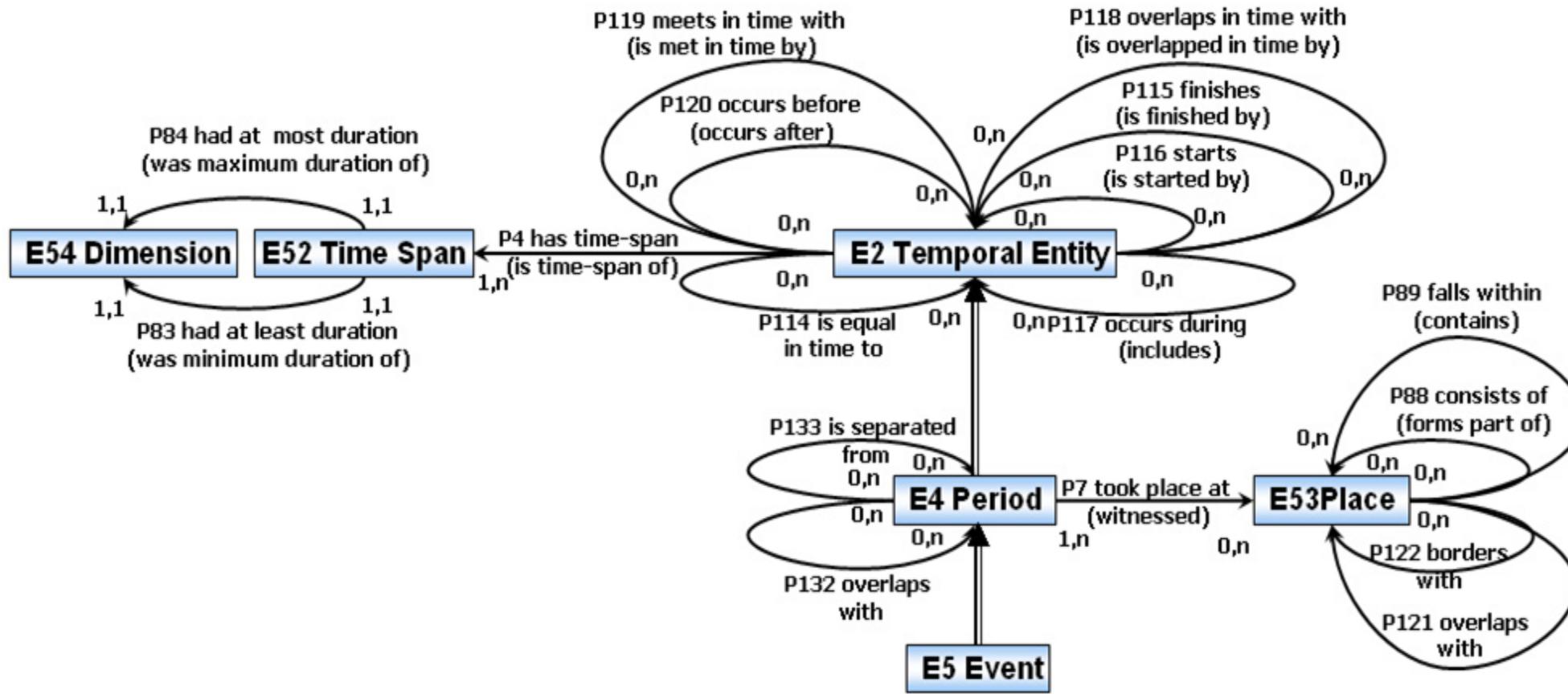


Fig. 4 – CIDOC-CRM for Spatial and Temporal Relations- © 2009, Martin Doerr et al.

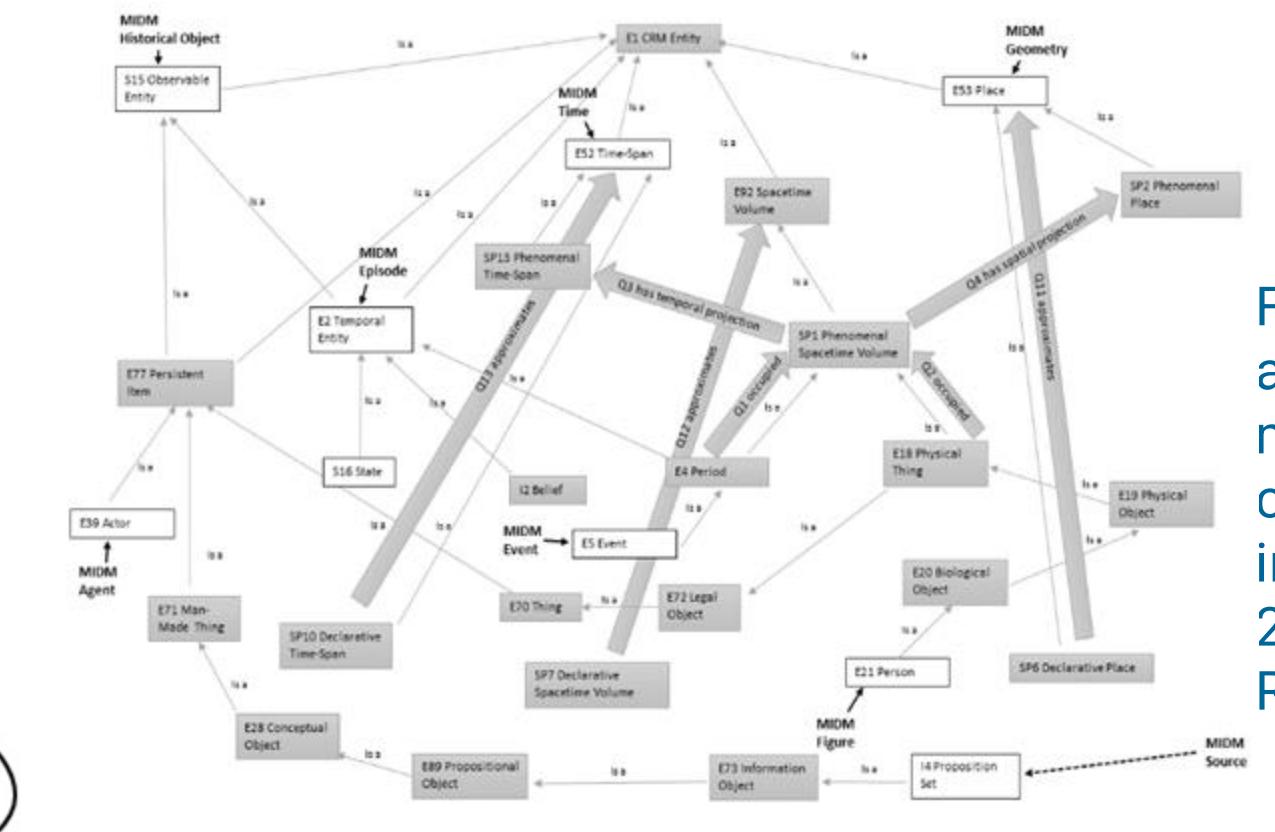


Fig. 5 - CIDOC-CRM and compatible models with the concept of multiple interpretation - © 2017, Muriel Van Ruymbeke et al.

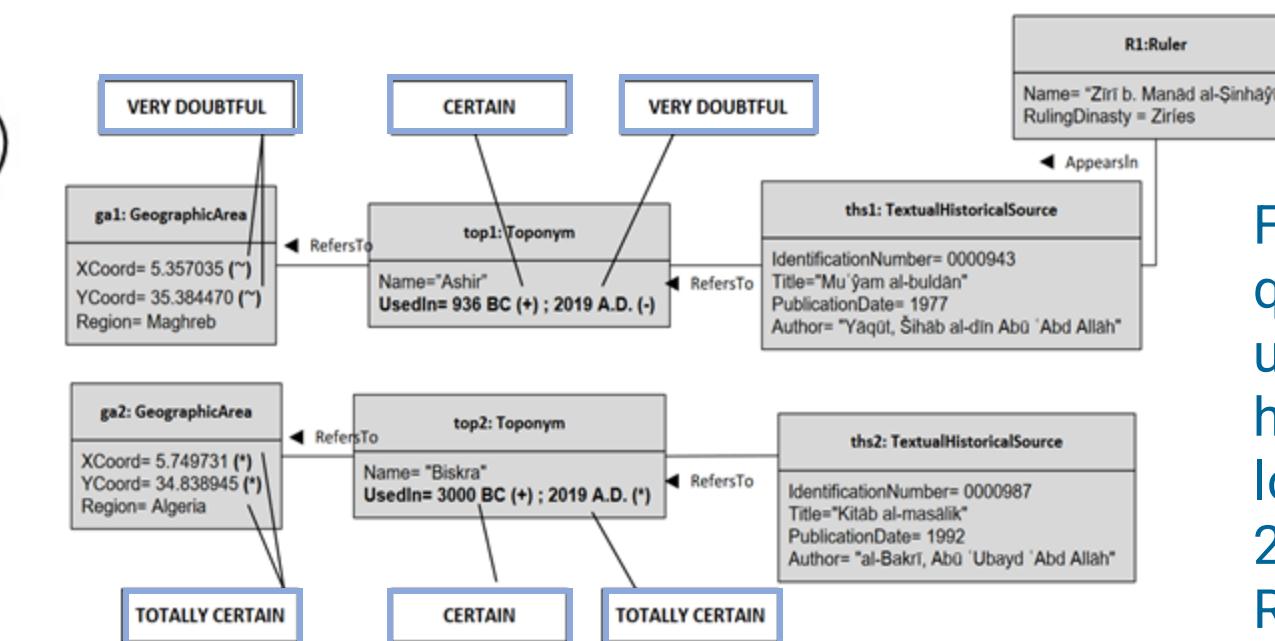
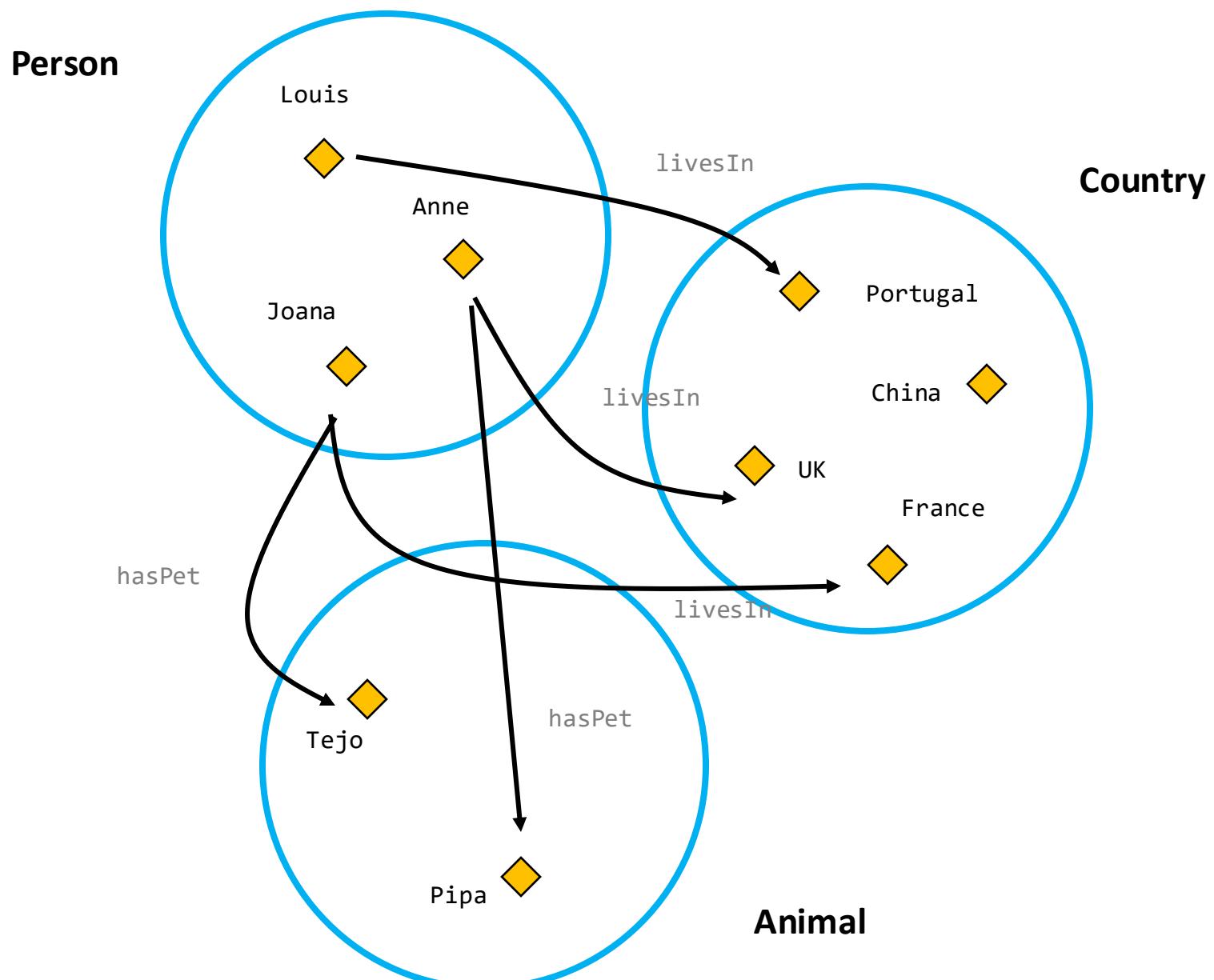


Fig. 6 - Qualifying and quantifying uncertainty in digital humanities: A fuzzy-logic approach. - © 2019, Patricia Martin-Rodilla et al.

# What is the structure of an OWL ontology?

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Ontologies have the following components:



**CLASS** It contains individuals and defines the requisites for them to belong to a certain class.

**INDIVIDUAL or INSTANCE** Represents objects in the domain of interest

**PROPERTY**

*Object property or Relationship*  
relates individuals to each other

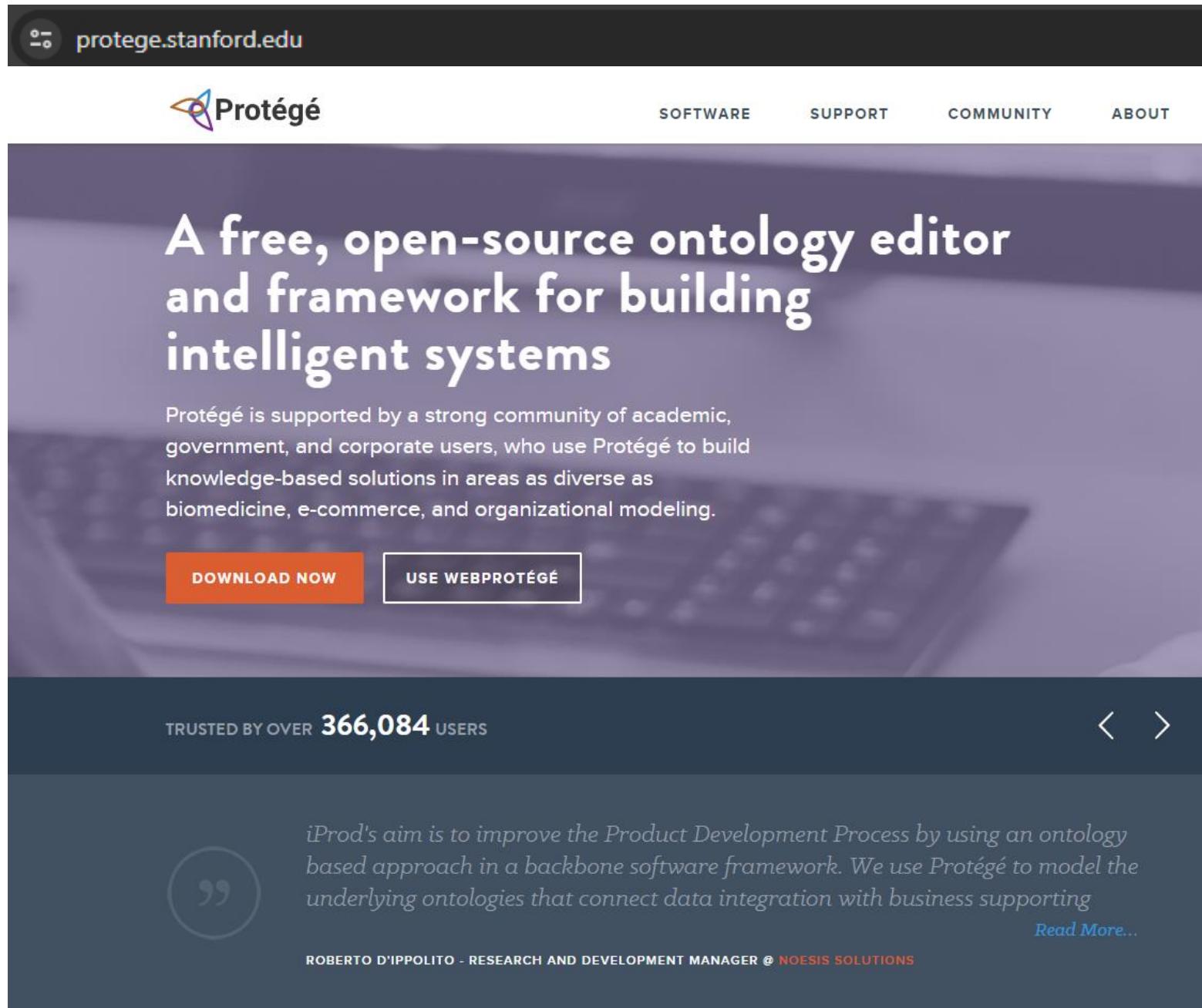
*Datatype property link individuals to data values*

any of its components is called an **Entity**.

The fundamental construct is a triple Similar to a phrase construction (subject + predicate + object)

# How to create an OWL ontology?

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Protégé is one of the most common software applications for creating ontologies.

It is OWL-based.

<https://protege.stanford.edu/>

# How to create an OWL ontology?

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Some fundamental rules in Knowledge-Engineering design:

- a. There is no one correct way to model a domain.
- b. Ontology development is necessarily an iterative process.
- c. Concepts in the ontology should be close to objects (physical or logical) and relationships in your domain of interest.

# How to create an OWL ontology?

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The main steps for creating an ontology are:

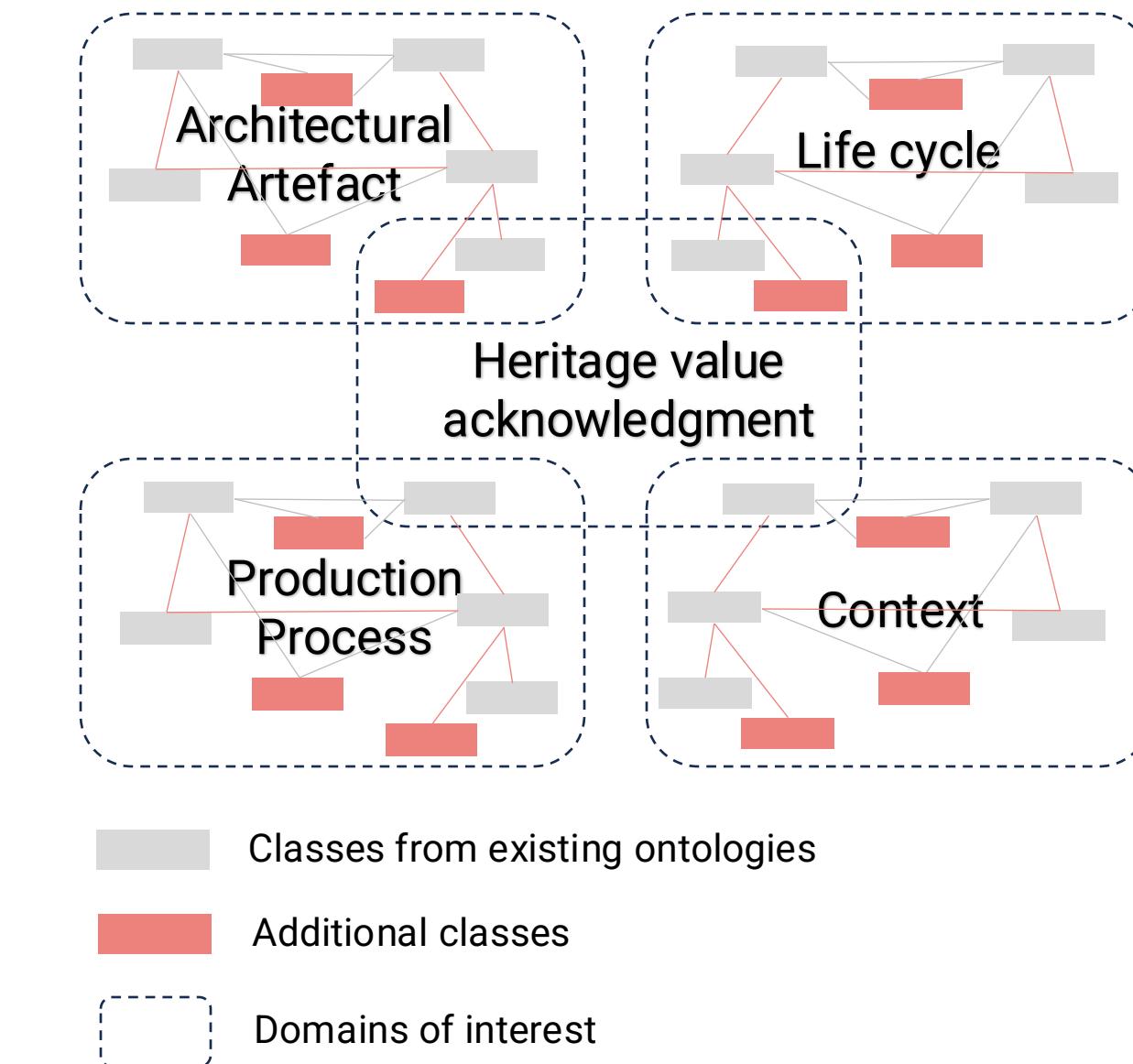
1. Determine the domain and scope
2. Reusing existing ontologies
3. Enumerate important terms in the ontology
4. Define classes and their hierarchy
5. Define properties and characteristics
6. Define property restrictions

# How to create an OWL ontology?

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**Ifc:**<https://standards.buildingsmart.org/IFC/DEV/IFC2x3/FINAL/OWL>  
**ifcext:** [http://www.ontoeng.com/IFC4\\_ADD1\\_extension#](http://www.ontoeng.com/IFC4_ADD1_extension#)  
**bot:** <https://w3c-lbd-cg.github.io/lbd/bot/>  
**fa:** <http://www.ontoeng.com/factory#>  
**cidoc-crm:** <http://www.cidoc-crm.org/cidoc-crm>  
**CRMgeo:** <https://www.cidoc-crm.org/crmgeo/>  
**CRMba:** <https://cidoc-crm.org/crmBa/>

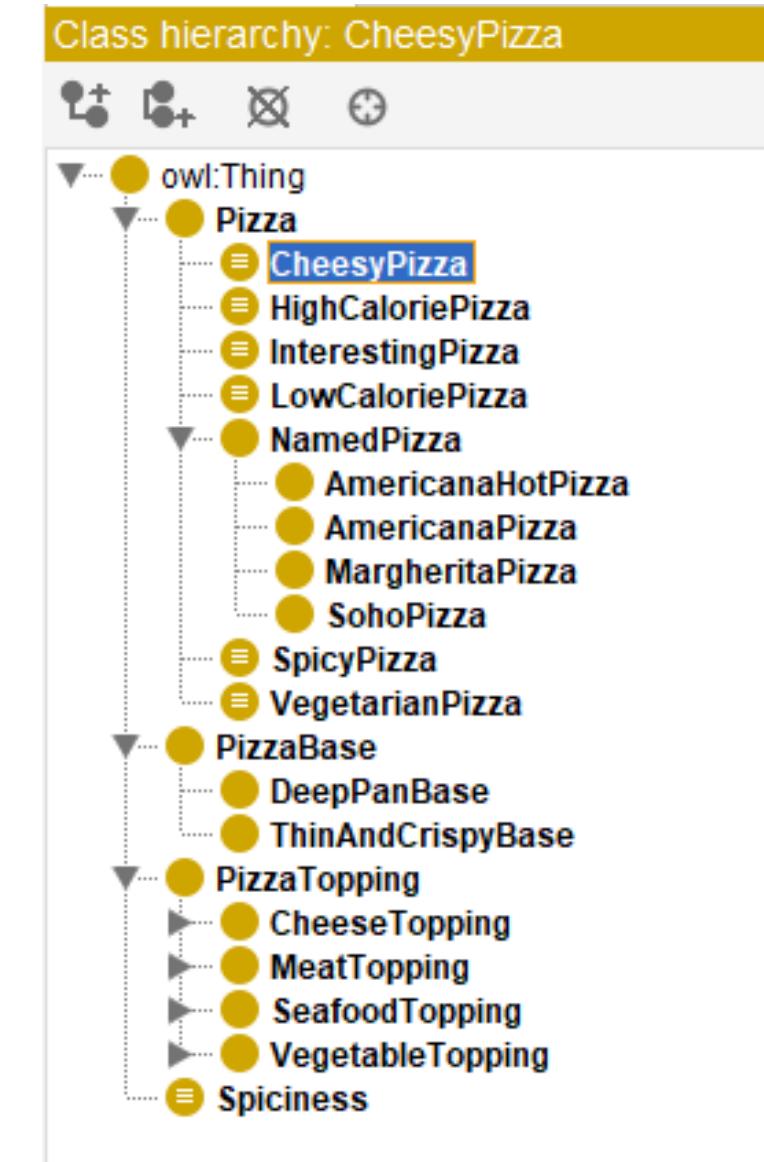
# How to create an OWL ontology?

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

The main steps for creating an ontology are:

1. Determine the domain and scope
2. Reusing existing ontologies
3. **Enumerate important terms in the ontology**
4. **Define classes and their hierarchy**
5. Define properties and characteristics
6. Define property restrictions

It is organised according to a hierarchical system:



OWL Class Hierarchy is a tree structure with additional properties and more complex relationships, mainly used for ontologies.

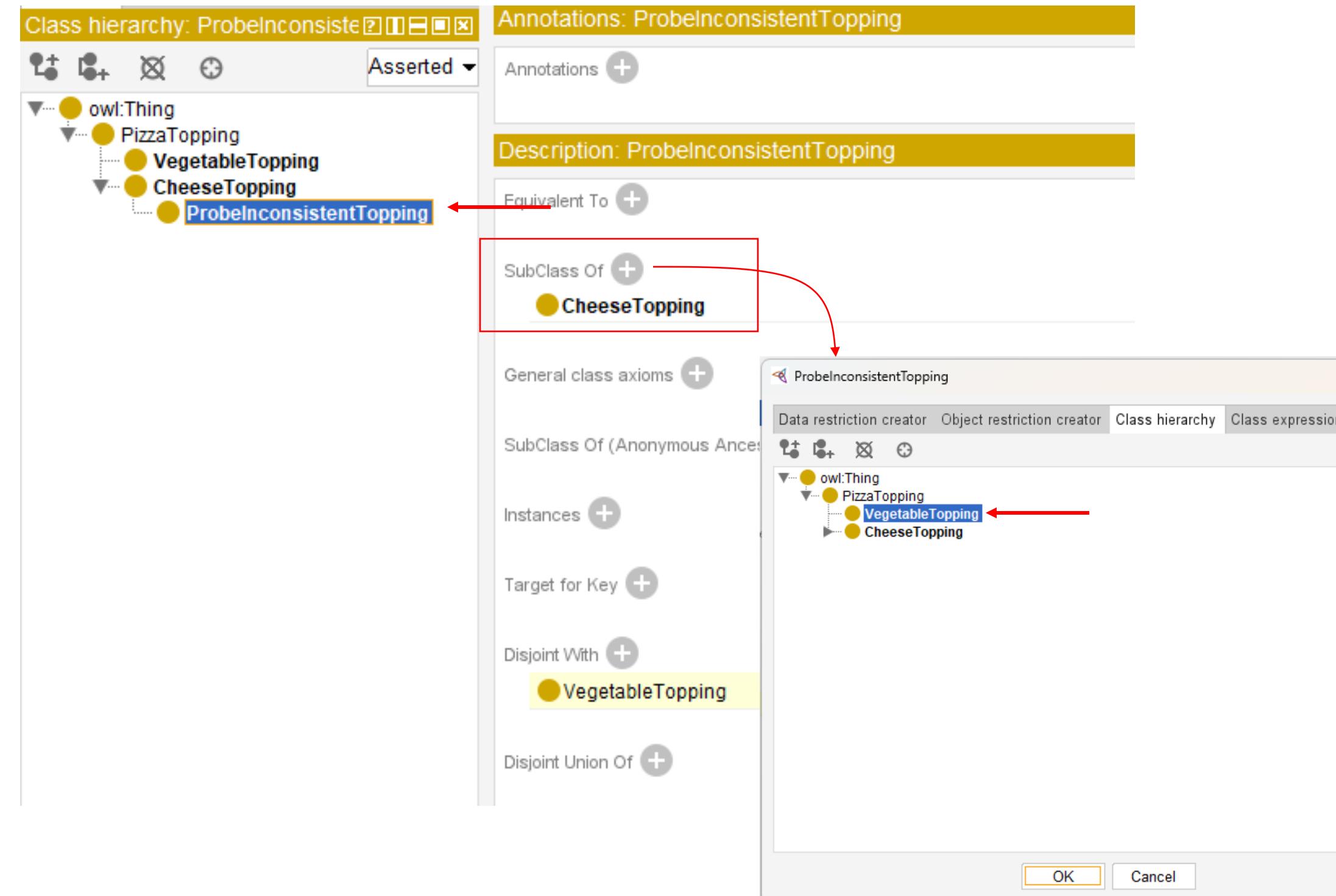
# How to create an OWL ontology?

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

### CLASSES

They can be categorised based on their characteristics and how they are defined.

- Primitive classes – Defined with necessary but not sufficient conditions.
- Defined classes – Defined with necessary and sufficient conditions.
- Anonymous classes – Defined by their characteristics without a specific name.
- Disjoint classes – No shared instances.
- Enumerated classes – Instances are explicitly listed.
- Probe classes – Temporary classes for exploration and testing.

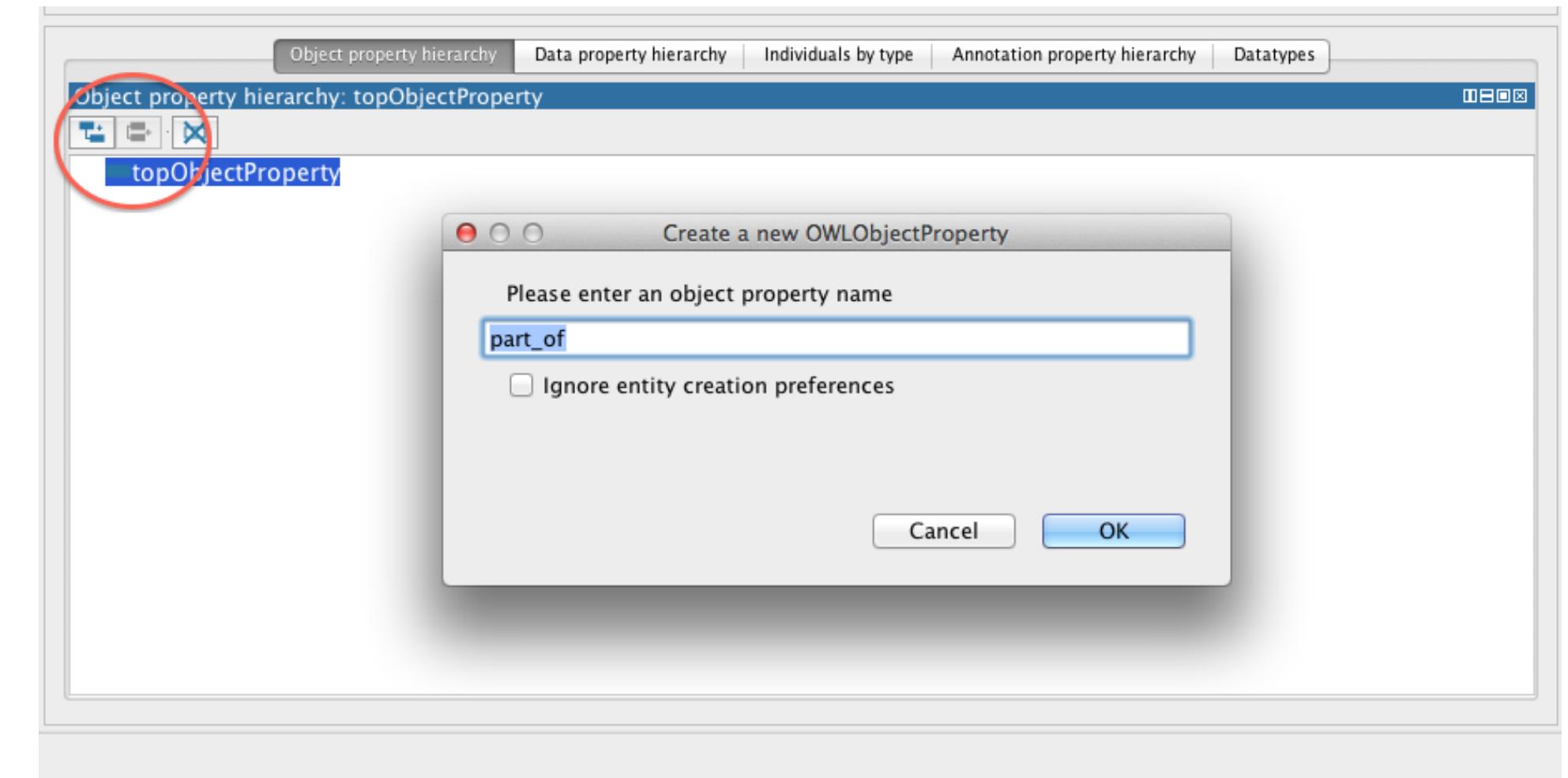


# How to create an OWL ontology?

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The main steps for creating an ontology are:

1. Determine the domain and scope
2. Reusing existing ontologies
3. Enumerate important terms in the ontology
4. Define classes and their hierarchy
5. **Define properties and characteristics**
6. **Define property restrictions**



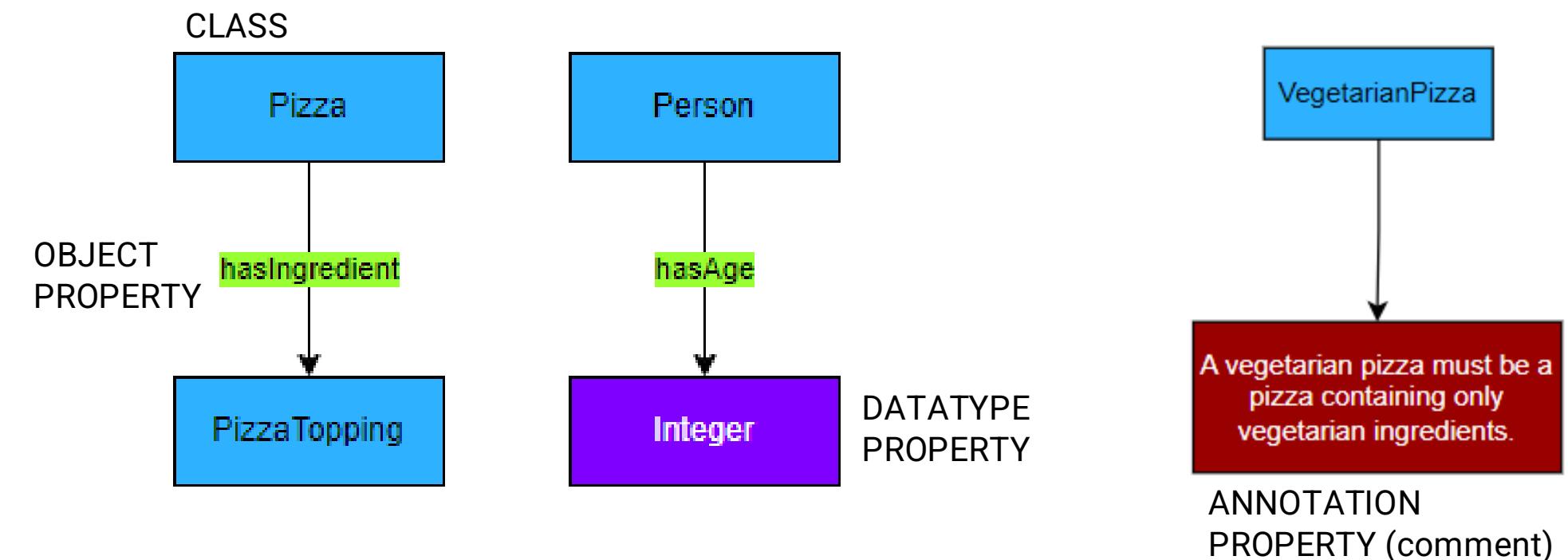
# How to create an OWL ontology?

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## PROPERTIES

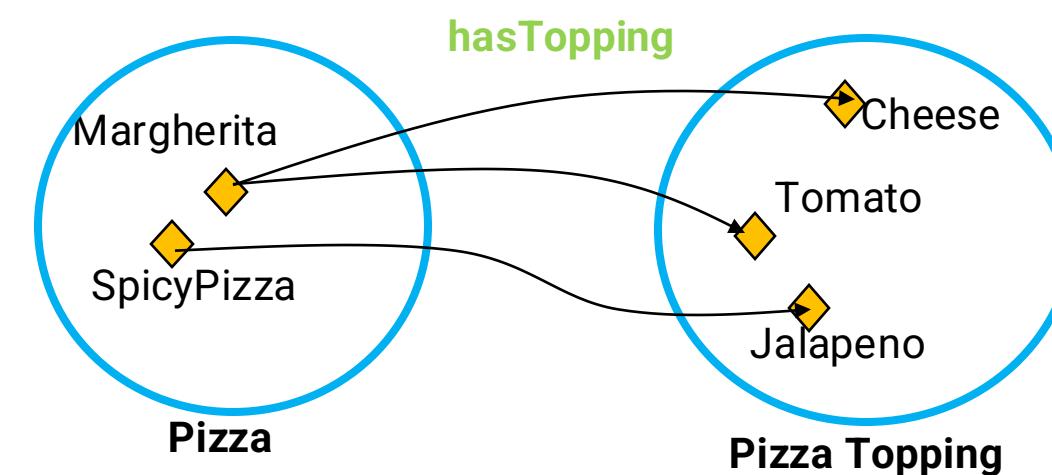
They can be:

- Object properties
- Data properties
- Annotation properties



They can have Domain and Range:

- These define the classes to which the property applies (domain) and the types of values or classes it relates to (range).
- They are optional, but recommended for detecting inconsistencies.



# How to create an OWL ontology?

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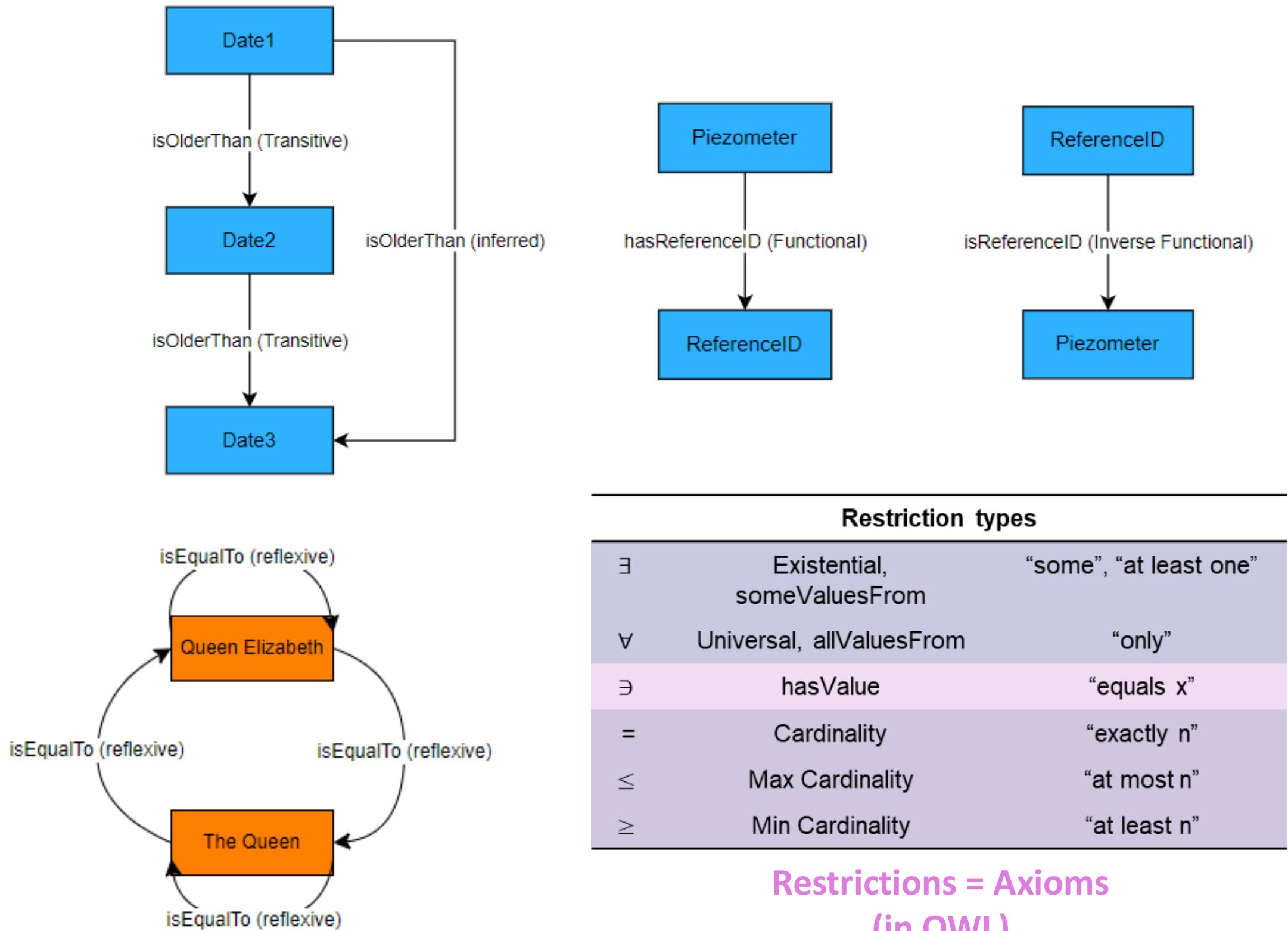
## PROPERTIES

They can have several characteristics:

- Functional
- Inverse Functional
- Transitive
- Symmetric
- Asymmetric
- Reflexive
- Irreflexive

They can have several restrictions:

- Existential restrictions
- Universal restrictions
- Cardinality restrictions
- hasValue restrictions

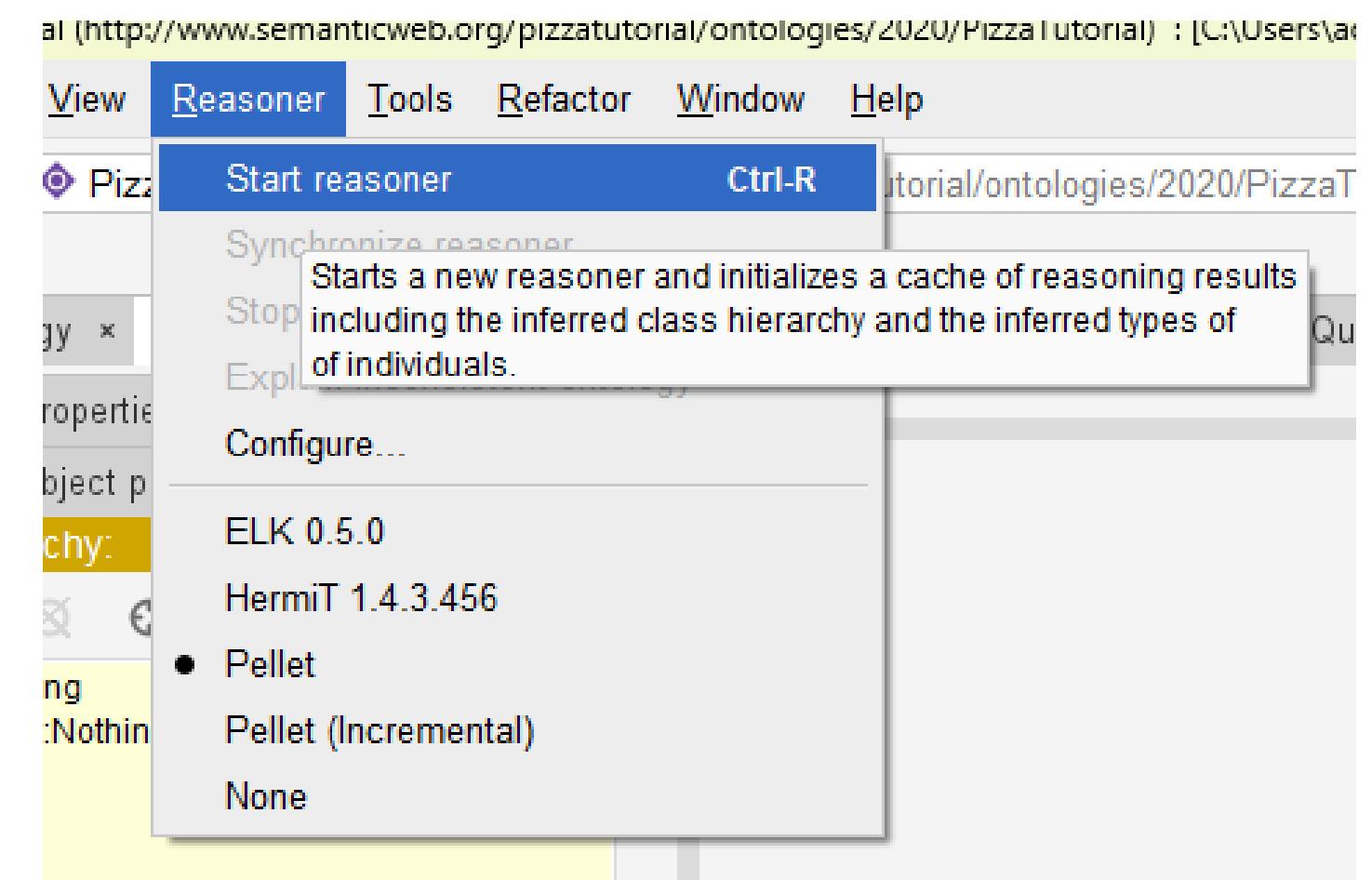


# Knowledge-Based Reasoning

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

## REASONERS

- An OWL ontology allows the use of a reasoner.
- A reasoner is a tool that enables reasoning, which is the process of concluding, making inferences or arriving at a decision based on available information, knowledge and logic.
- Its use will also allow ontology validation by detecting inconsistencies and subsumption relationships between classes.
- Only Protégé Desktop software contains this functionality (the online version does not).



# Knowledge-Based Reasoning

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

### SWRL – SEMANTIC WEB RULE LANGUAGE

```
Information_Object(?i0) ∧ Age_Attribute_Assignment(?a1) ∧ InformationObjInterpretedAge(?i0,  
?ageInterpreted1) ∧ provides_information_for(?i0, ?a1) → AttributeAssInterpretedAge(?a1,  
?ageInterpreted1)
```

((...) (omissis))

```
Artifact_Entity(?w1) ∧ Artifact_Entity(?w2) ∧ differentFrom(?w1, ?w2) ∧  
Age_Attribute_Assignment(?a1) ∧ Age_Attribute_Assignment(?a2) ∧ differentFrom(?a1, ?a2) ∧  
applied_to(?a1, ?w1) ∧ applied_to(?a2, ?w1) ∧ AttributeAssInterpretedAge(?a1, ?age1) ∧  
AttributeAssInterpretedAge(?a2, ?age2) ∧ swrlb:notEqual(?age1, ?age2) →  
Interpreted_Age_Incoherence(?w1, true) ∧ ErrorChecking (?w1, "The verification reported the  
presence of inconsistent interpreted dating attributed to the object")
```

((...) (omissis))

```
Artifact_Entity(?w1) ∧ Interpreted_Age_Incoherence(?w1, false) ∧ Age_Attribute_Assignment(?a1) ∧  
AttributeAssInterpretedAge(?a1, ?Age1) ∧ applied_to(?a1, ?w1) → ArtifactInterpretedAge(?w1,  
?Age1)
```

((...) (omissis))

```
Artifact_Entity (?w1) ∧ ArtifactCronologicalAge (?w1, ?a1) ∧ ArtifactInterpretedAge (?w1, ?a2) ∧  
swrlb:notEqual(?a1, ?a2) → ArtifactAgeIncoherence (?w1, true) ∧ ErrorChecking (?w1, "The  
verification reported the presence of incoherence between chronological and interpreted dating  
attributed to the object")
```

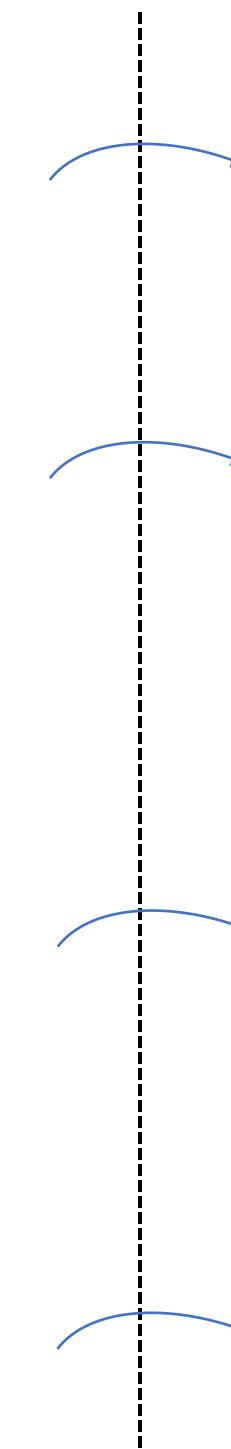
((...) (omissis))

```
Artifact_Entity(?w1) ∧ ArtifactCronologicalAge(?w1, ?a1) ∧ ArtifactInterpretedAge(?w1, ?a2) ∧  
swrlb:equal(?a1, ?a2) → ArtifactAgeIncoherence(?w1, false) ∧ ArtifactAge(?w1, ?a1)
```

((...) (omissis))

### ACTION TO VERIFY THE RELATIONSHIPS OF THE HARRIS MATRIX.

Retrieves the datatype related to dating from the Information\_Object class produced by an actor-led interpretation task



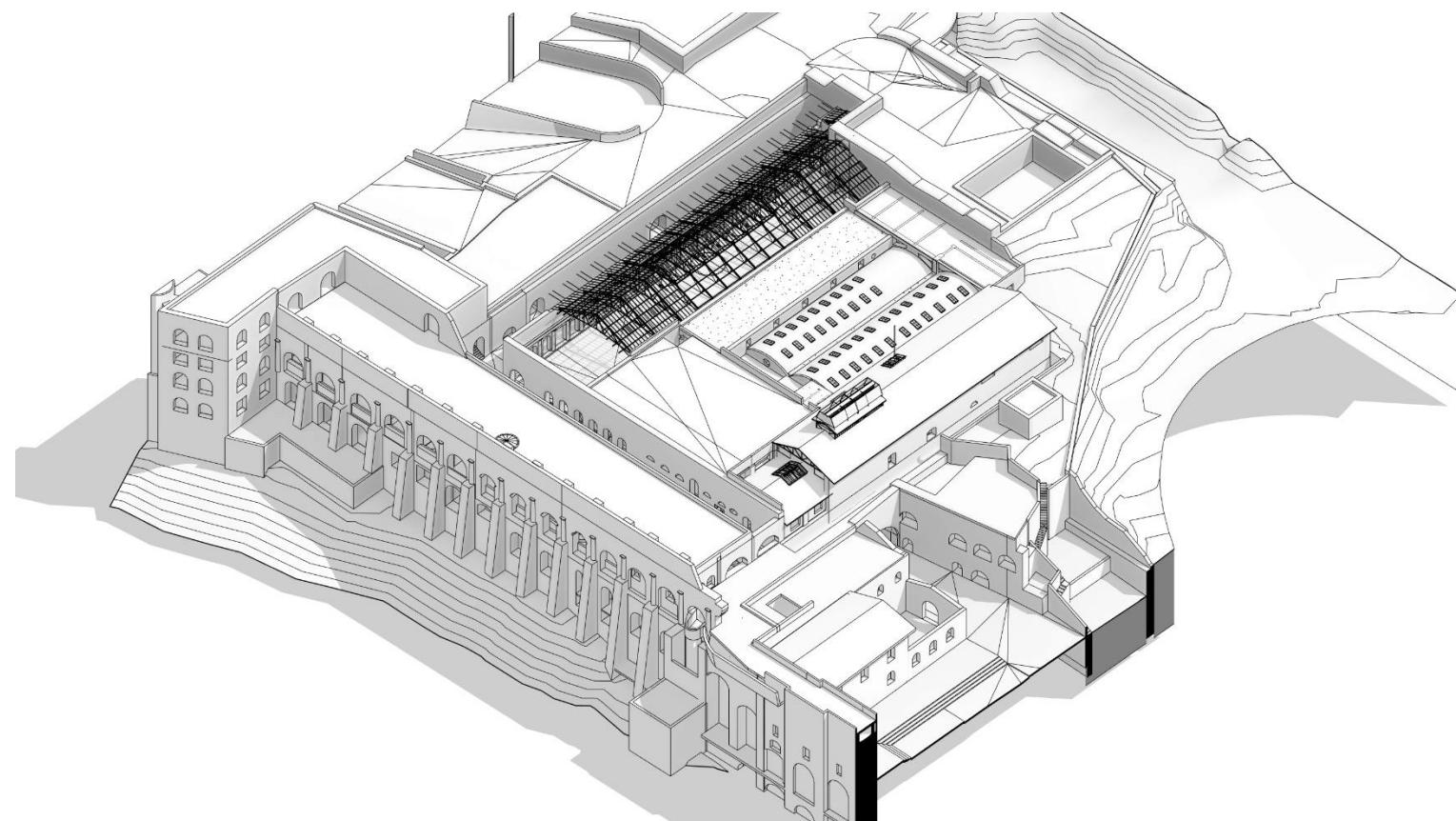
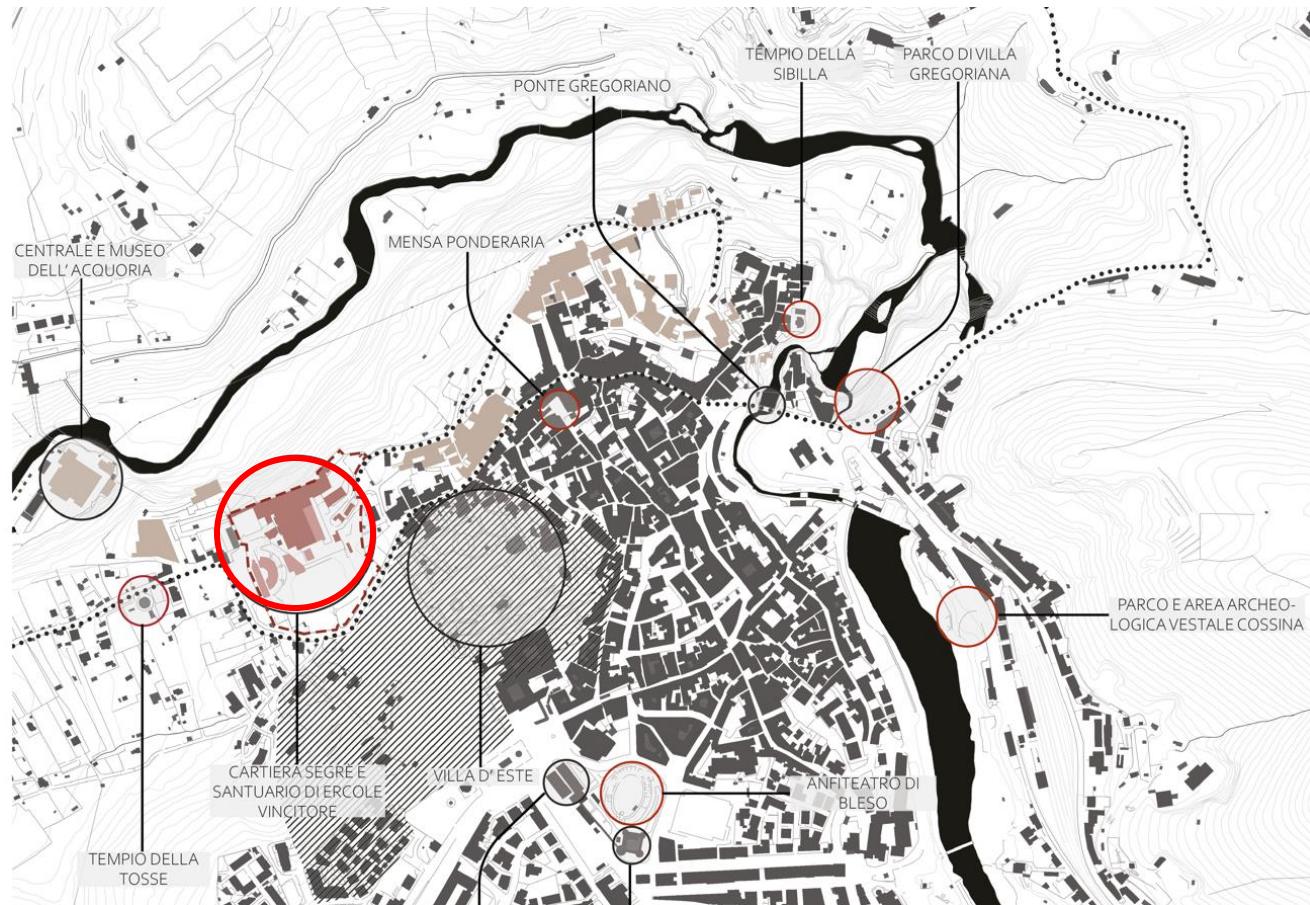
Checks and reports the presence of different Interpreted\_Age values assigned to the same object

If several interpretative Attribute\_Assignment activities related to the same object are congruent, then the dating is assigned to the Interpreted\_Age property of the instance. The same actions are performed for different chronological dates assigned to the objects (omitted).

To complete the reasoning process, the verification of consistency between the possible interpreted and chronological dating assigned to it is carried out.

# Case study and issues

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



Triporticus Area



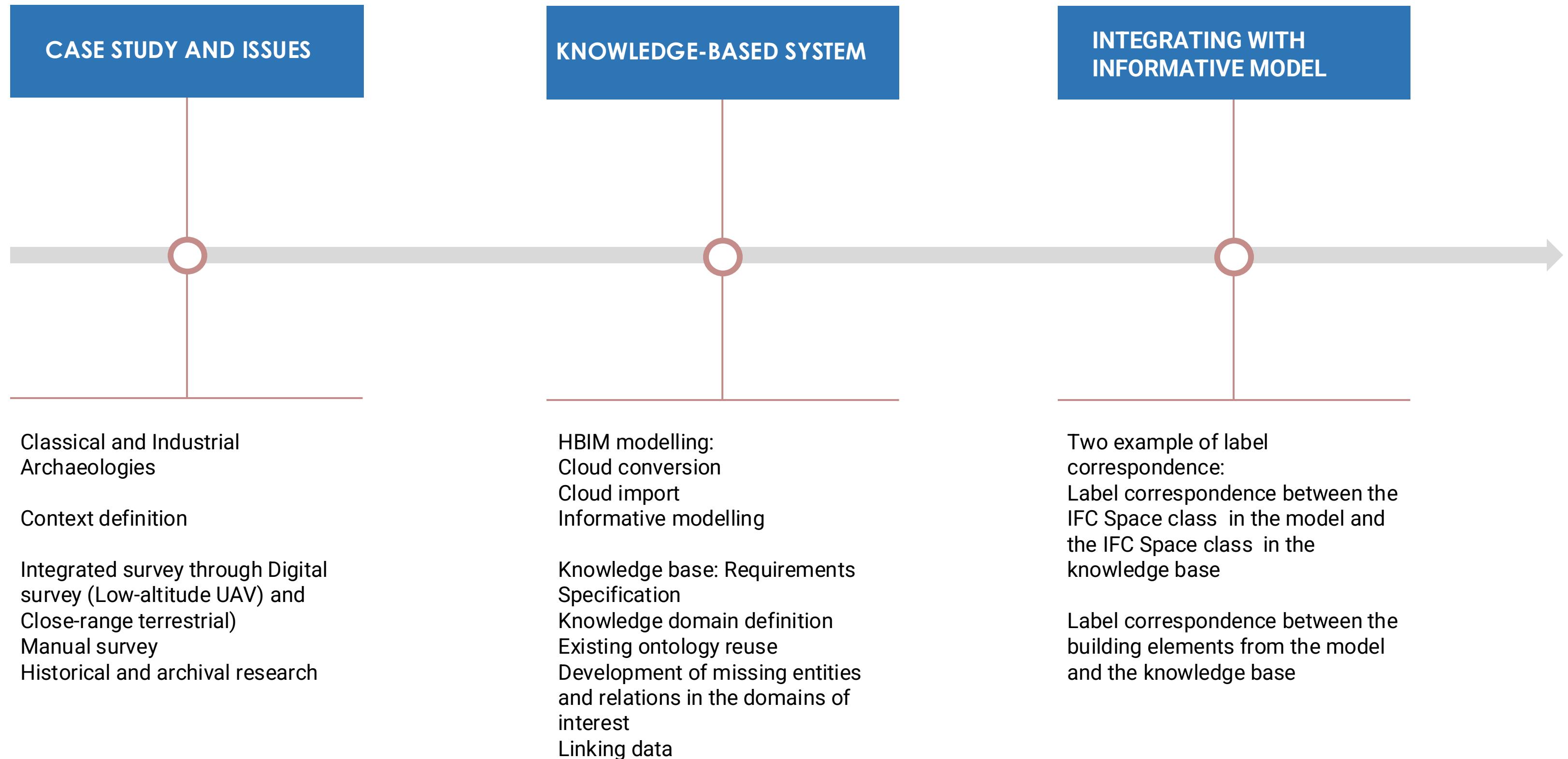
Paper storage room



Hollander Machines room

# Case Study - The Sanctuary of Hercules

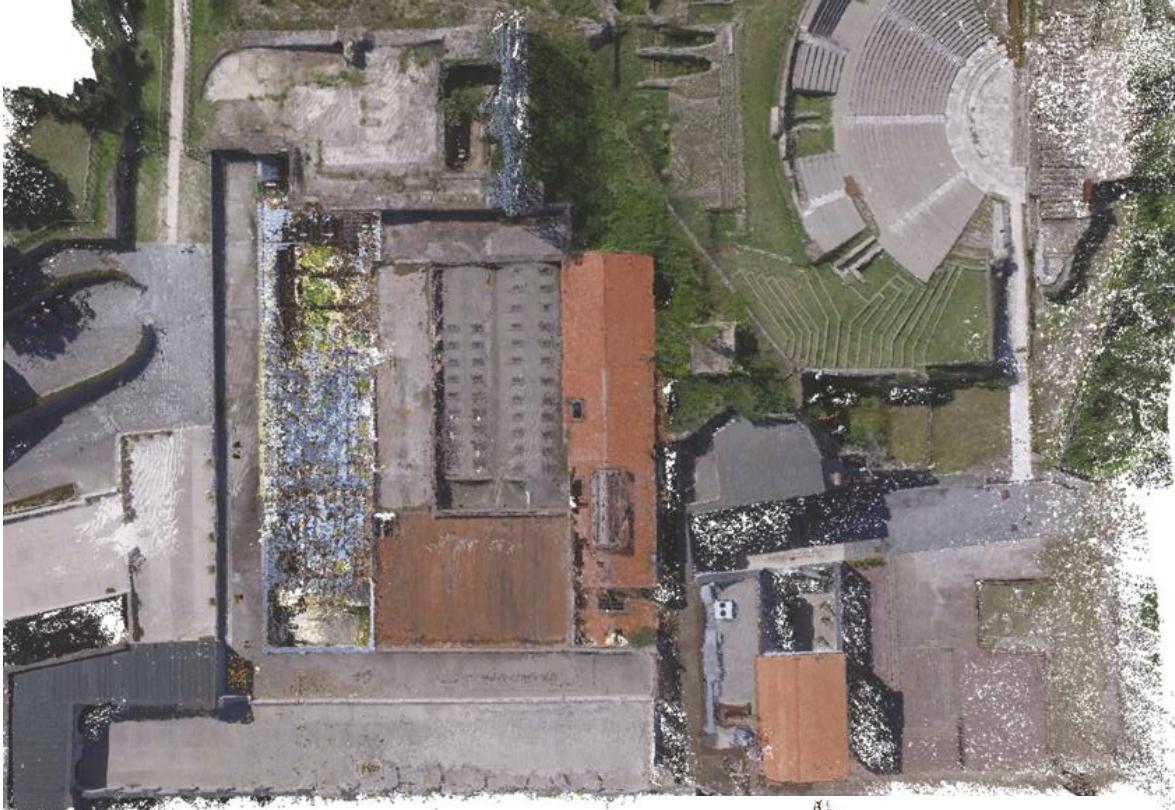
## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



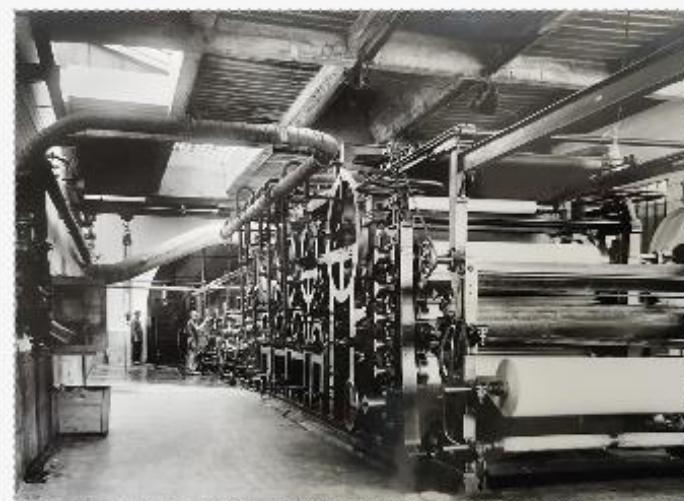
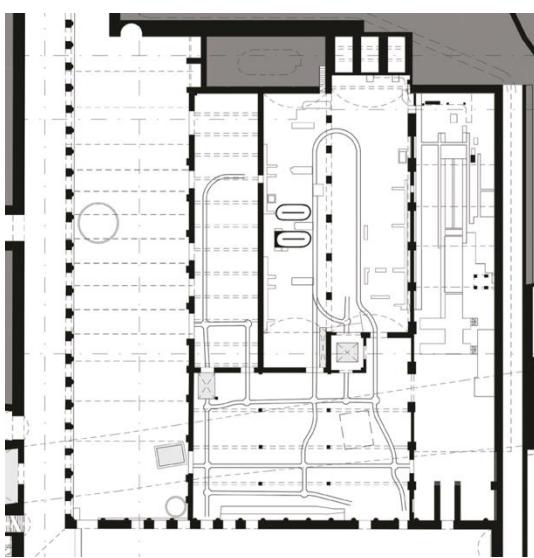
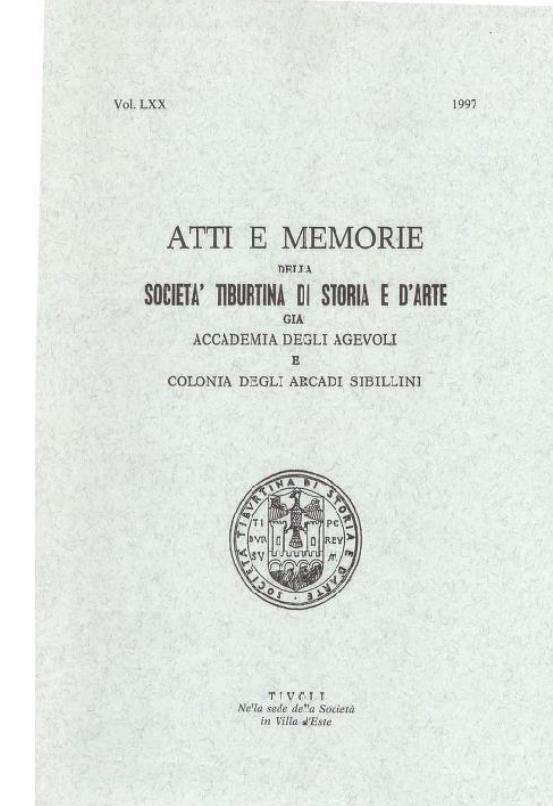
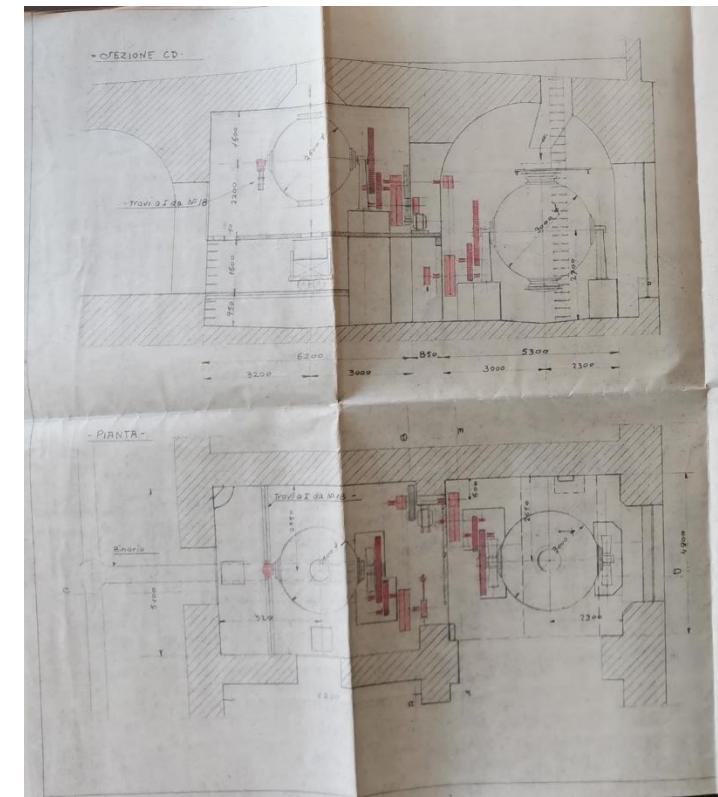
# Case study and issues

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

Data from integrated survey

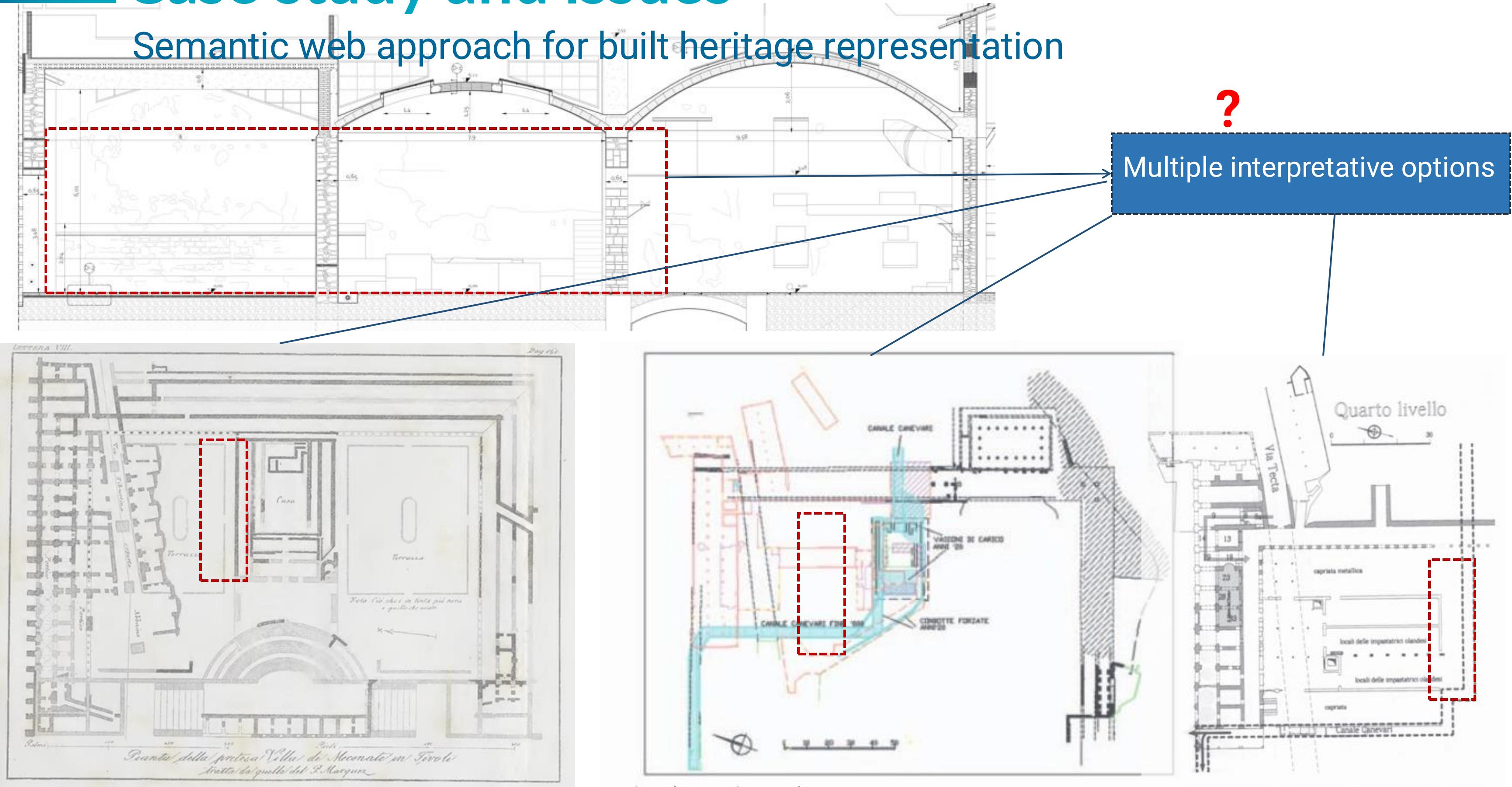


Data from historical and archival research (multiple formats and sources)



# Case study and issues

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



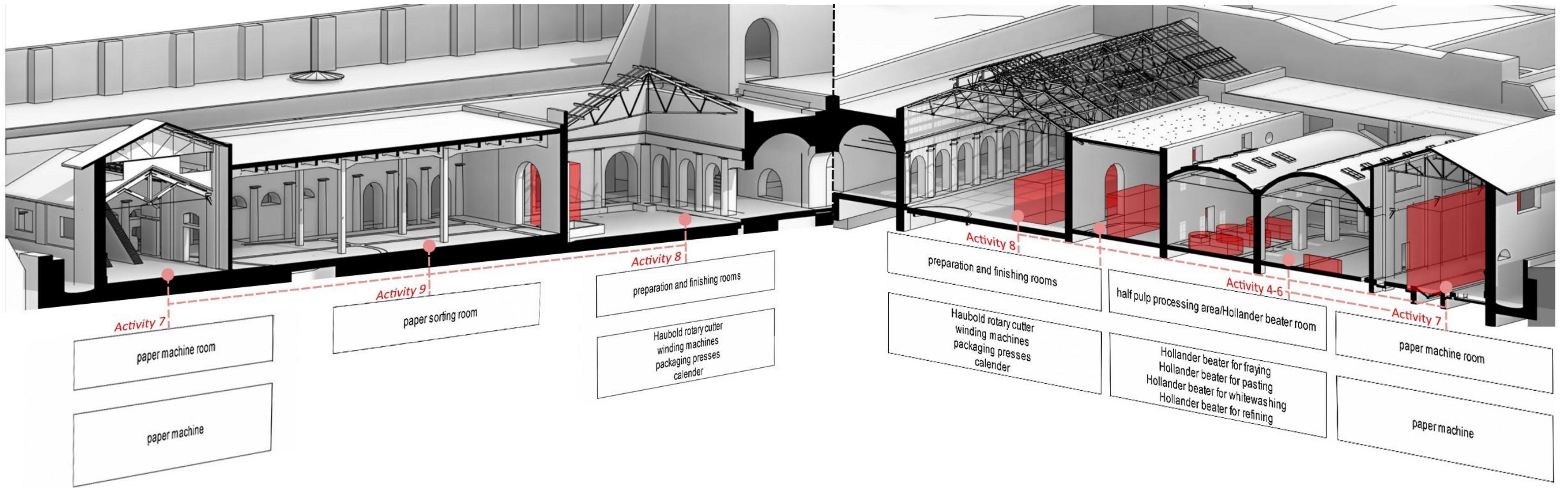
The Sanctuary of Hercules

Hydraulic and canal construction

Papermill construction

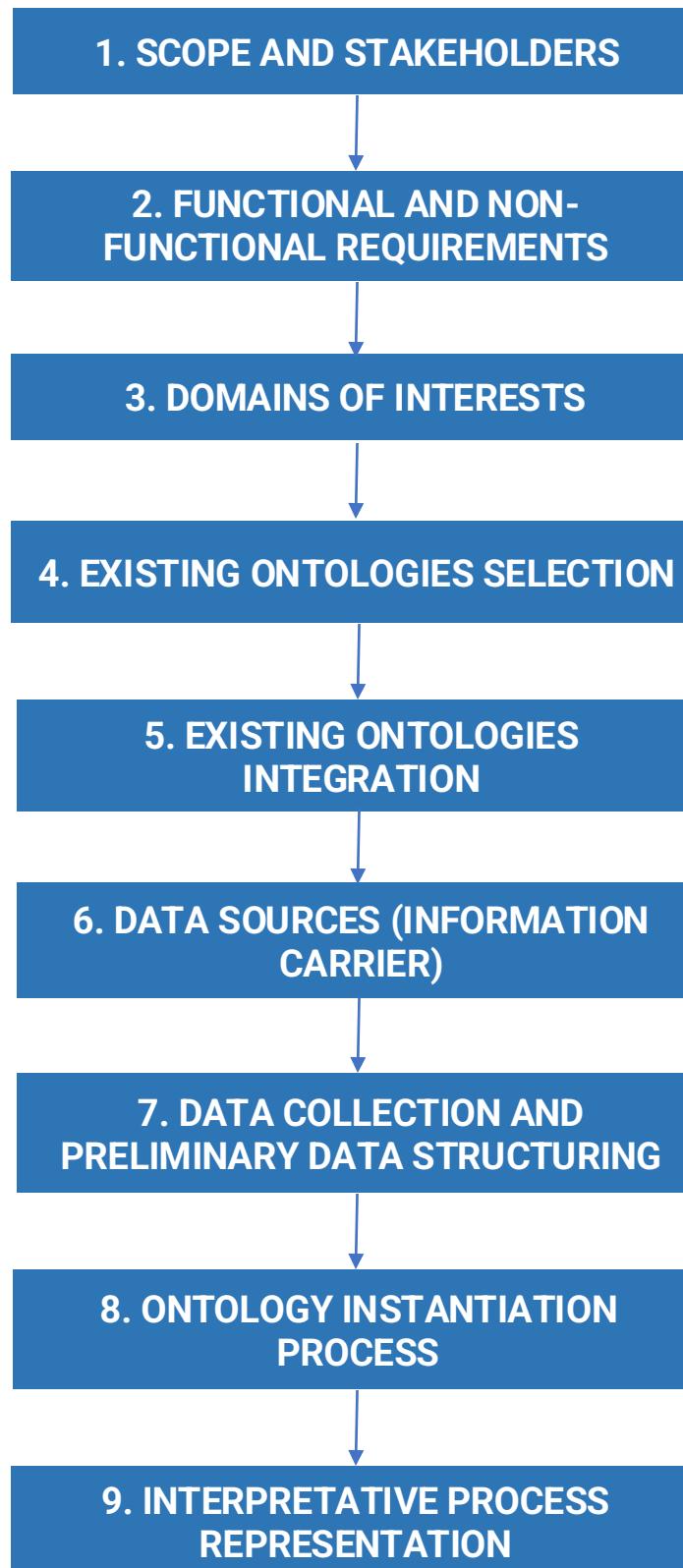
# Case study – knowledge based system

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



# Case study – knowledge based system

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



## FROM DATA COLLECTION TO THE KNOWLEDGE MODEL

### 1. SCOPE AND STAKEHOLDERS

#### Scope

Documentation of industrial archaeology in complex and layered historical sites to aid the interpretation activity

#### Stakeholders

**Heritage Conservationists (specialists).** Needs: Accurate, comprehensive data; tools for documenting and tracking conservation efforts.

**Researchers.** Needs: Access to detailed, queryable data; tools for data analysis and visualization; ability to link and integrate with external datasets.

**IT and System Administrators.** Needs: Robust, secure, and scalable system architecture; tools for system monitoring and management.

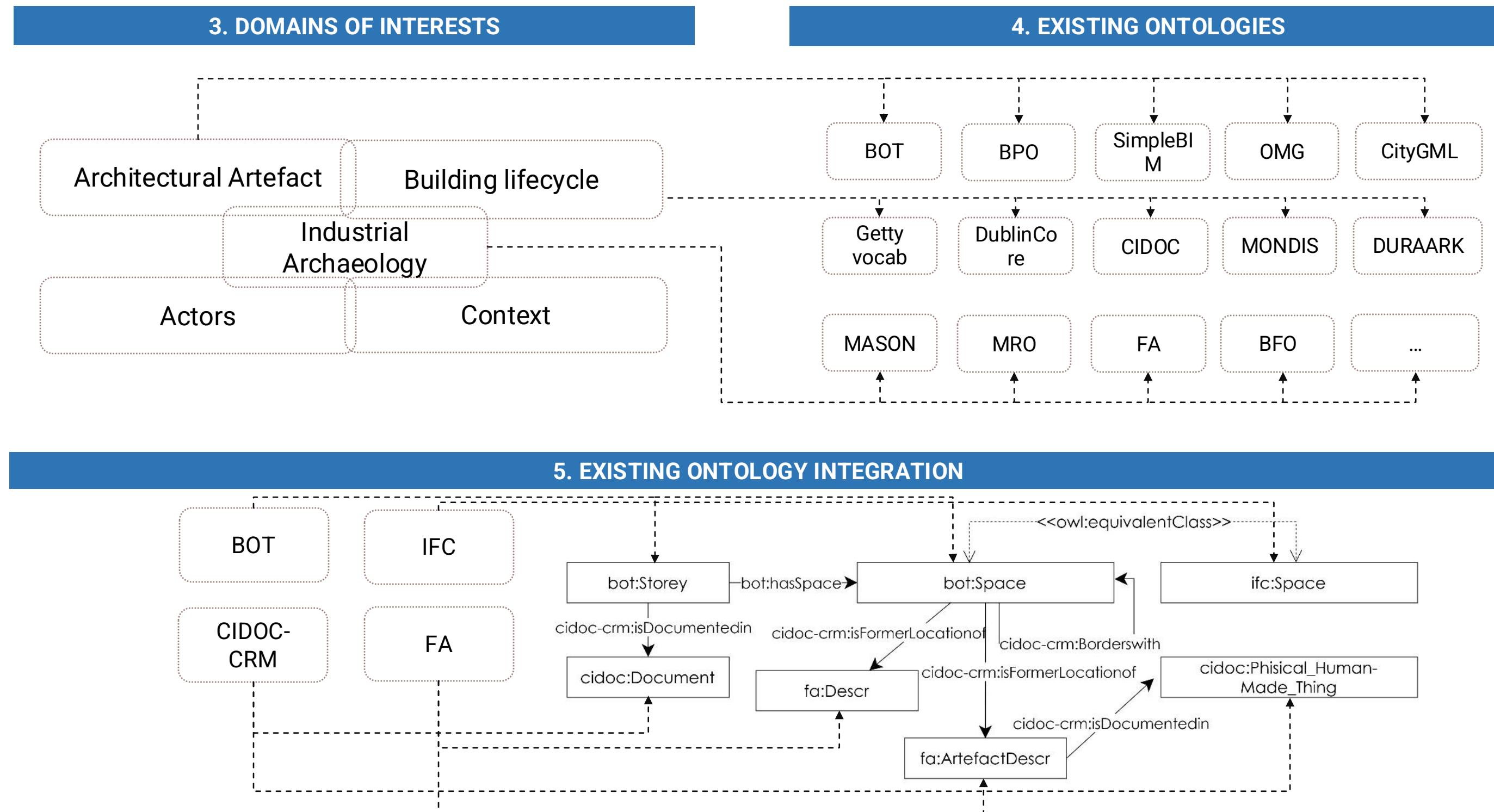
### 2. FUNCTIONAL AND NON-FUNCTIONAL REQUIREMENTS

	General requirements	Specific requirements	Industrial Archaeology	Specific requirements	Architectural Artefact
GReq-01	Data integration and Management	Req-IA-1	Description of identifying features	Req-AA-1	Topology of the architectural artefact
GReq-02	Querying and Retrieval	Req-IA-2	Identification of past uses and current use	Req-AA-2	Classification of building components
GReq-03	Visualization and Interaction	Req-IA-3	Definition of historical data with cataloging of different types of sources	Req-AA-3	Zone classification
GReq-04	Data Linking and Interoperability	Req-IA-4	Classification of the present/past machinery and the production process	Req-AA-4	Classification of building materials
GReq-05	User management and Access Control	Req-IA-5	Identification of relationships with context and system (whether it can be considered part of a larger industrial system)	Req-AA-5	Identification of quantitative and qualitative properties of construction zones, components, and materials
GnFReq-01	Scalability	Req-IA-6	Definition of the tangible and intangible aspects that contribute to the recognition of the values of this specific type of heritage	Req-AA-6	Linking with different geometric formats and different descriptions for the same component
GnFReq-02	Performance	Req-IA-7	Outlining a classification system for content description	Req-AA-7	Outlining a classification system for content description
GnFReq-03	Usability	Req-IA-8	Alignment of the content of terminologies according to different types of classification systems	Req-AA-8	Alignment of the content of terminologies according to different types of classification systems
GnFReq-04	Reliability and Availability				
GnFReq-05	Compliance				
GnFReq-06	Interoperability				
GnFReq-07	Flexibility and Extensibility				

# Case study – knowledge based system

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

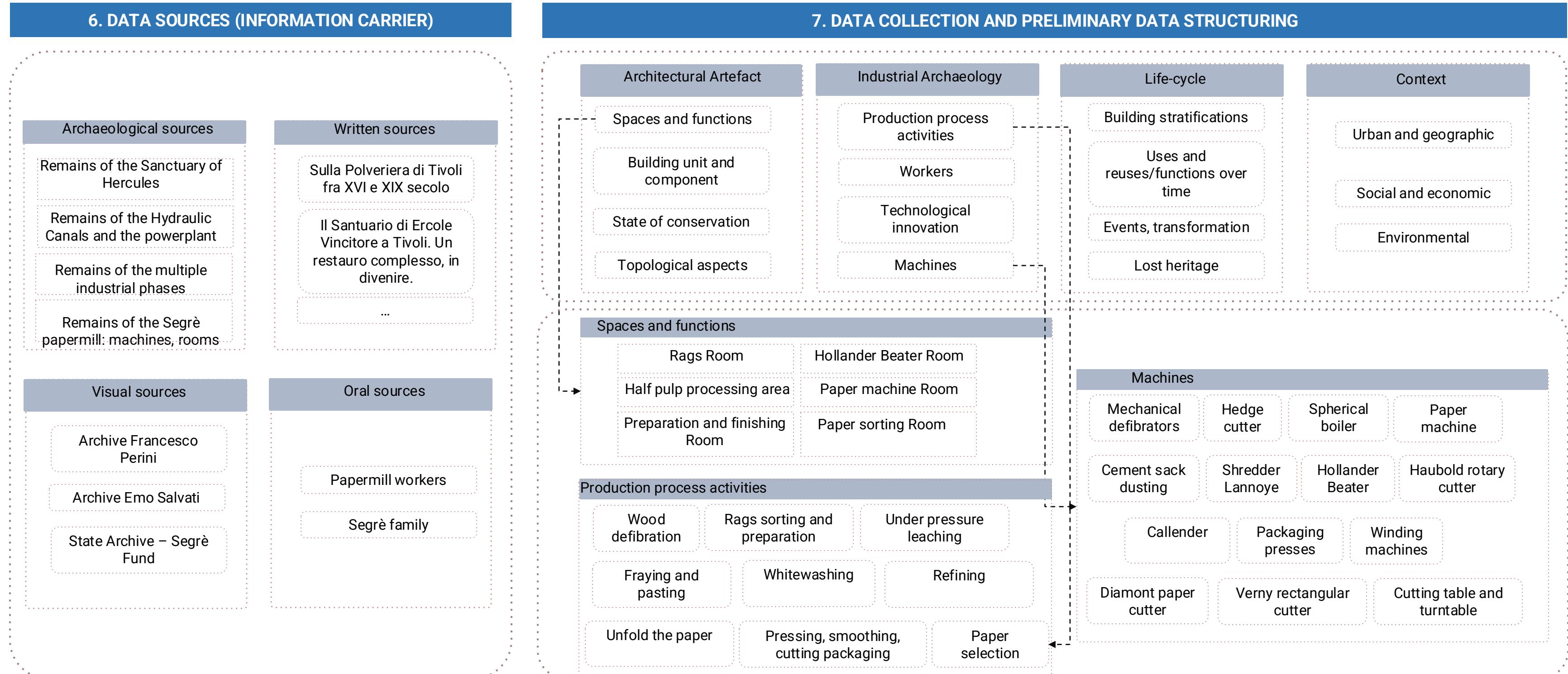
## FROM DATA COLLECTION TO THE KNOWLEDGE MODEL



# Case study – knowledge based system

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

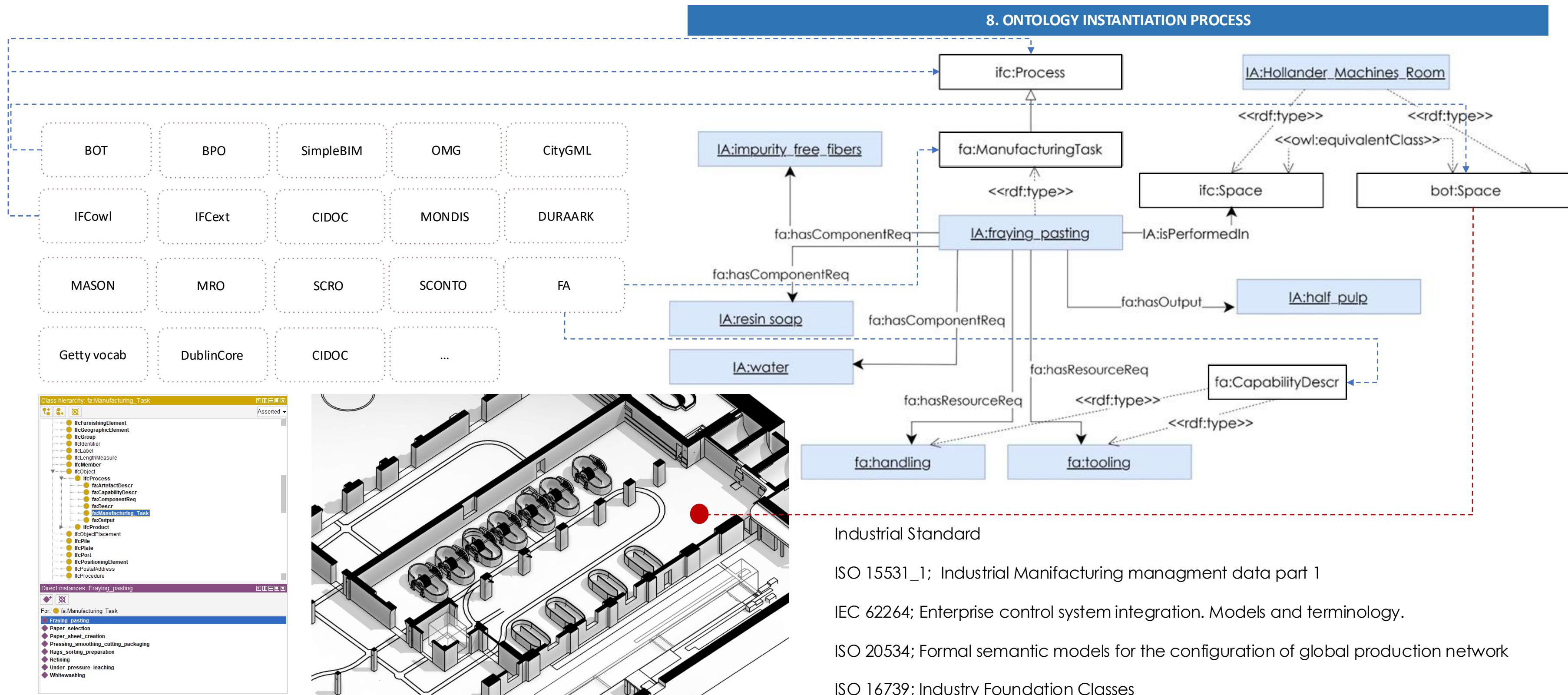
### DATA COLLECTION AND ORCHESTRATION



# Case study - knowledge based system

Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

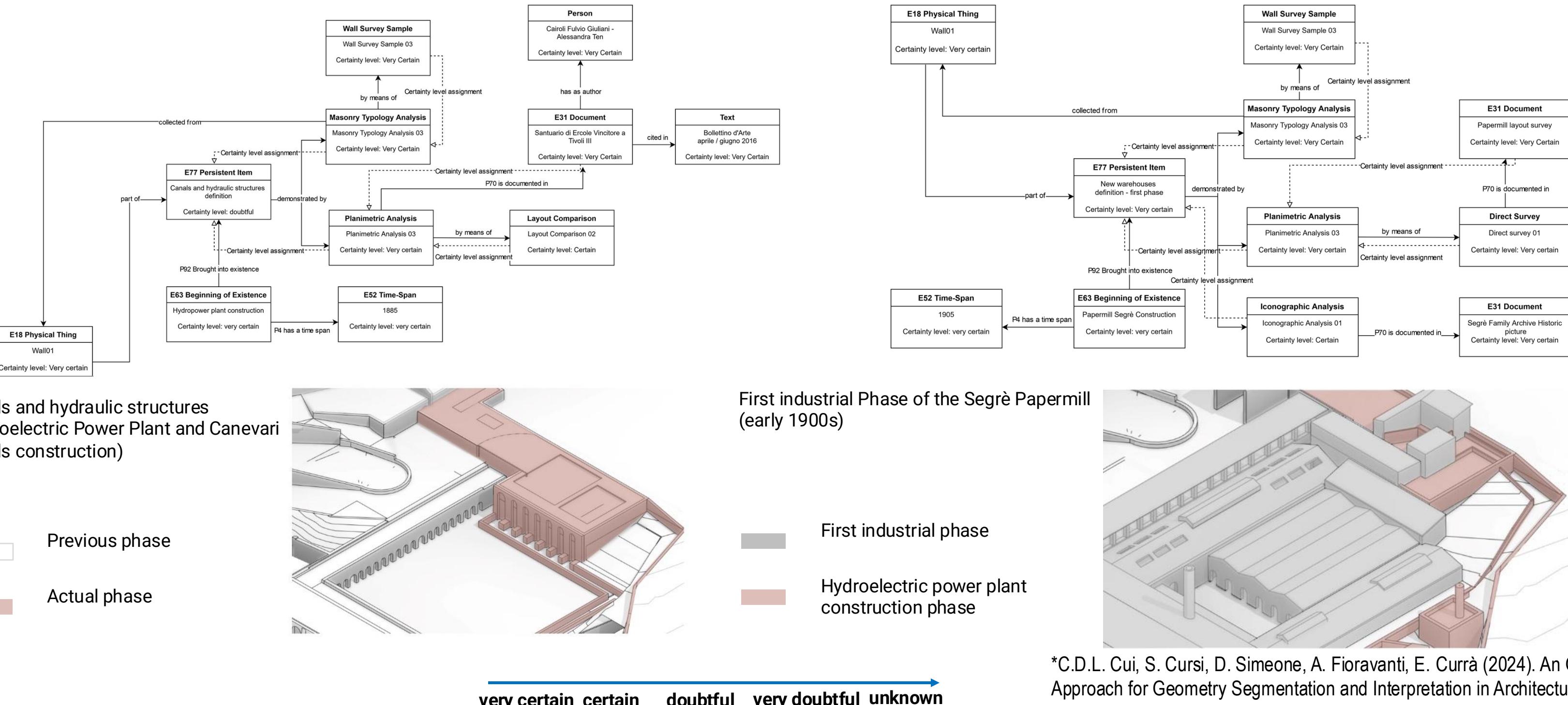
## KNOWLEDGE INTERSECTION: INDUSTRIAL PROCESSES AND ARCHITECTURAL ARTEFACT



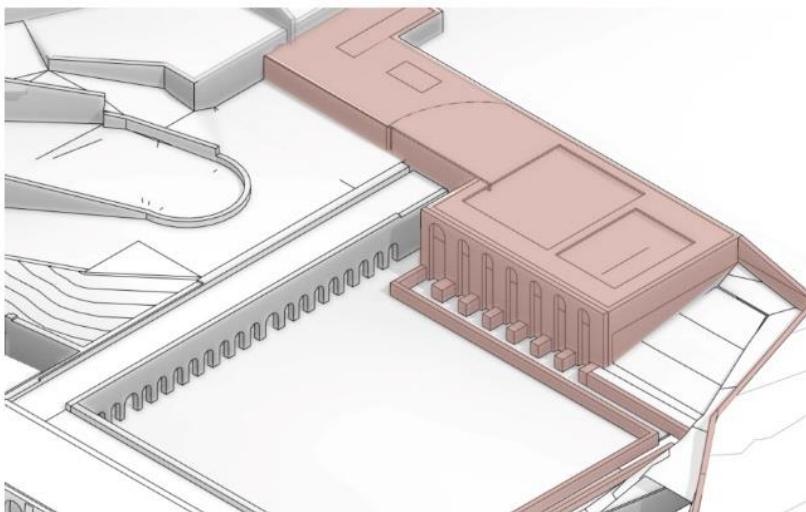
# Case study – knowledge based system

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

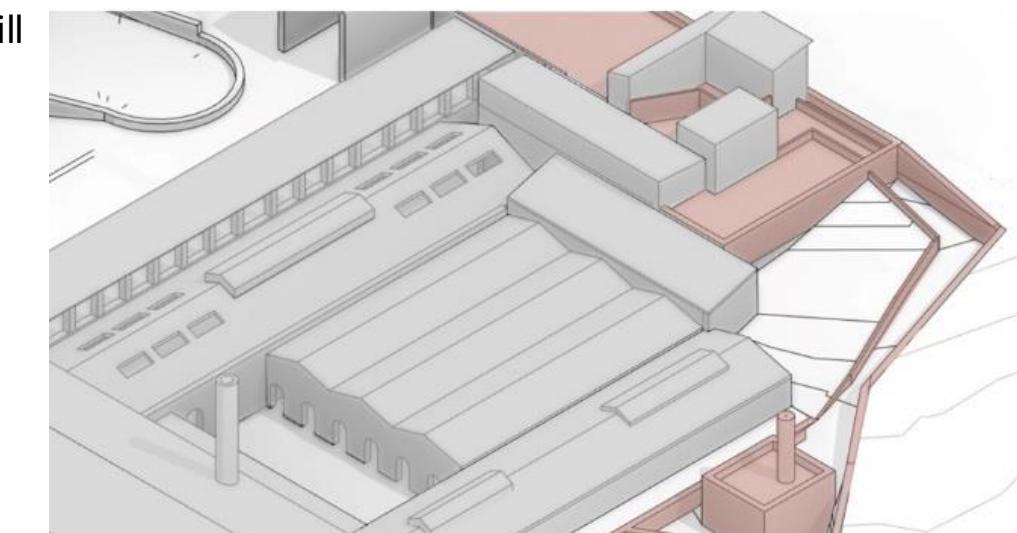
### 9. INTERPRETATIVE PROCESS REPRESENTATION



Canals and hydraulic structures  
(Hydroelectric Power Plant and Canevari  
Canals construction)



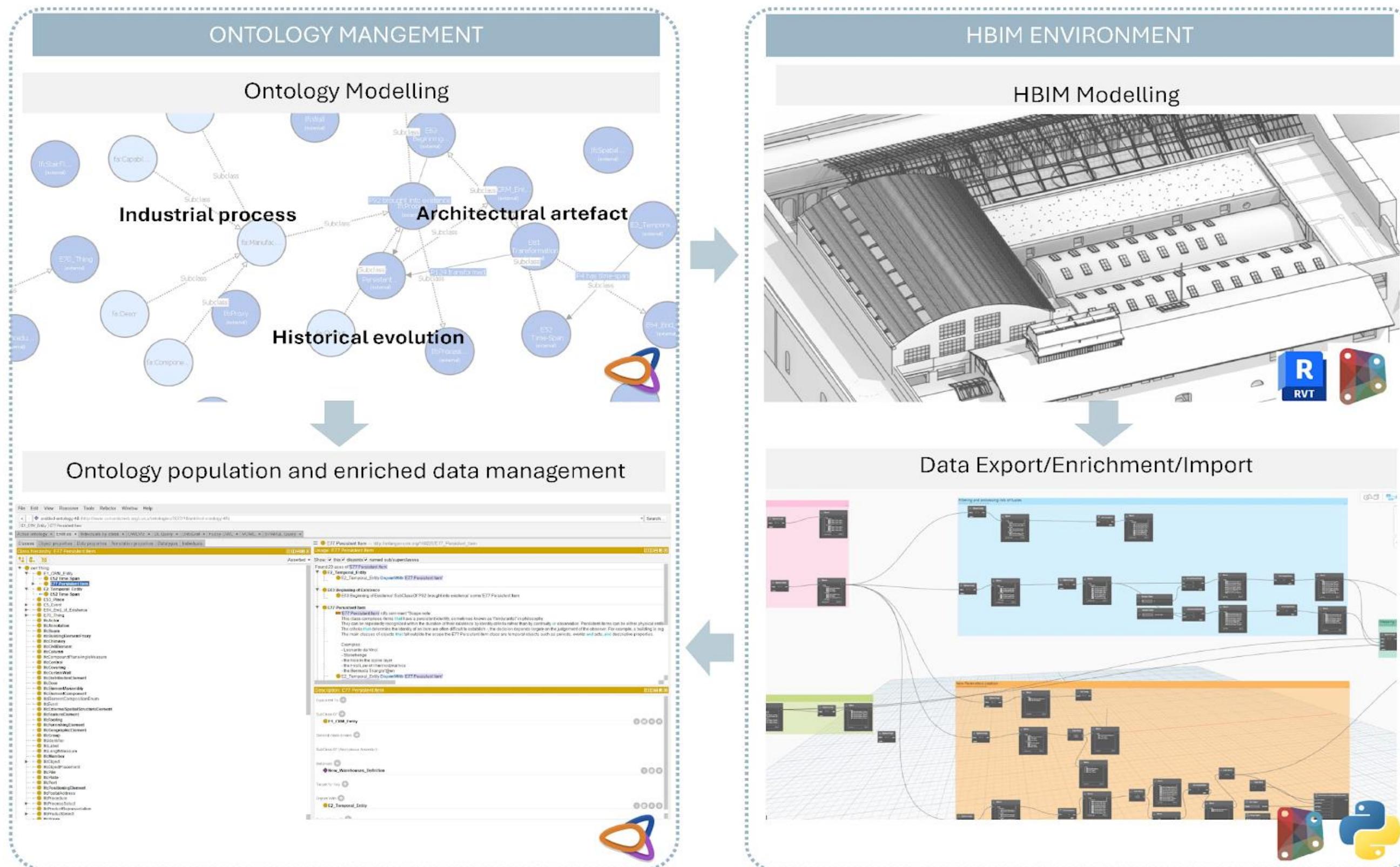
First industrial Phase of the Segre Papermill  
(early 1900s)



\*C.D.L. Cui, S. Cursi, D. Simeone, A. Fioravanti, E. Currà (2024). An Ontology-Driven Approach for Geometry Segmentation and Interpretation in Architectural Heritage/archaeology. In: Data-Driven Intelligence, Proceedings of the 42nd Education and Research in Computer Aided Architectural Design in Europe (eCAADe 2024), Volume 2, pp. 239-248. Nicosia, Cyprus, ISBN: 9789491207389

# Case study - integrating with informative model

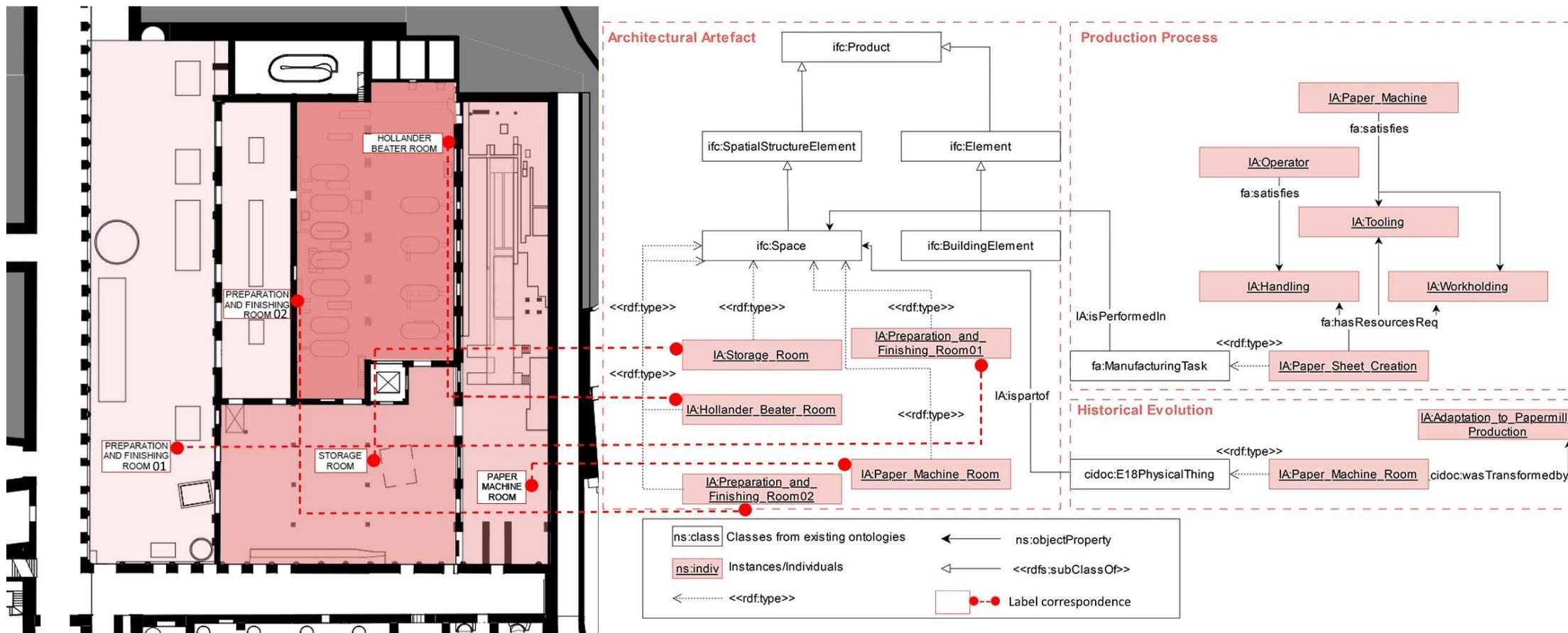
## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



\*C.D.L. Cui, S. Cursi, D. Simeone, A. Fioravanti, E. Currà. Industrial archaeologies of complex palimpsests. Application of semantic web technologies to digitalise the knowledge path from data to interpretation, Springer series. "Lecture Notes in Civil Engineering" (<https://www.springer.com/series/15087>).

# Case study - integrating with informative model

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation



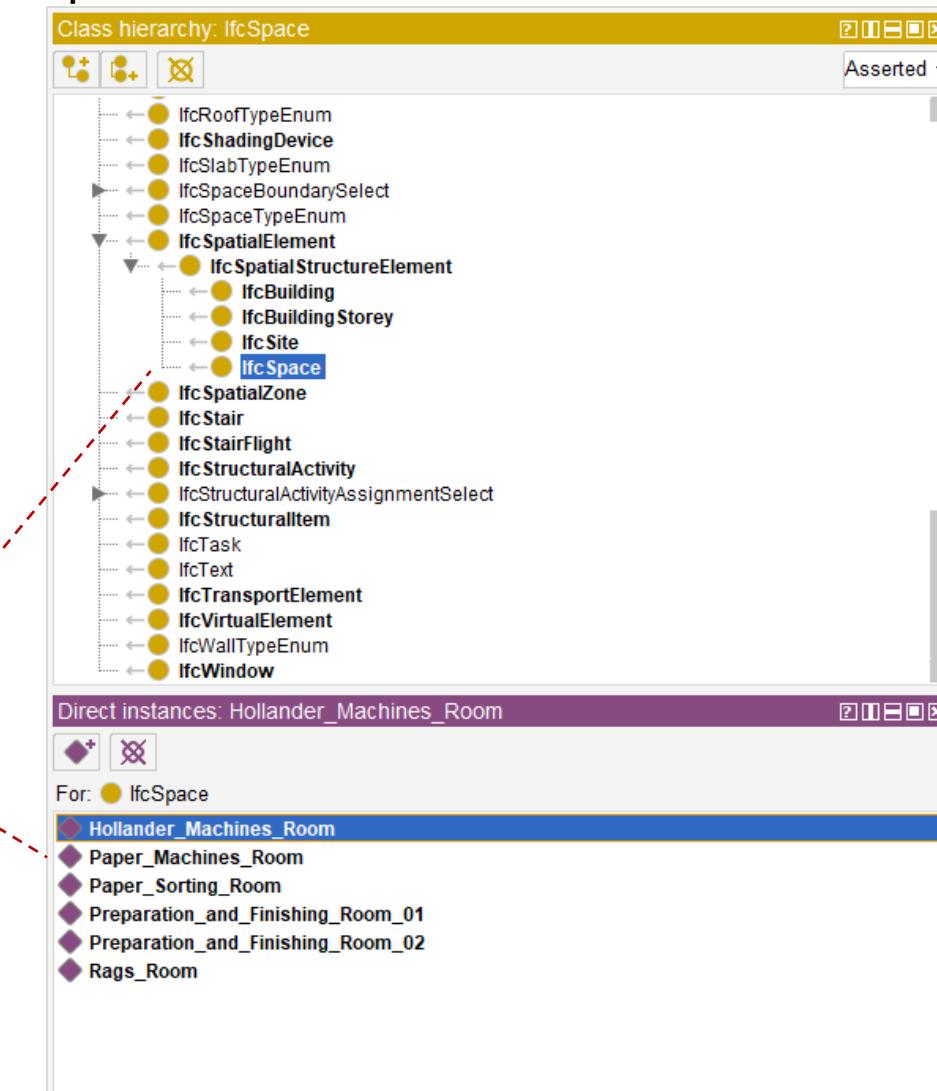
Quote	
Area	877.679 m <sup>2</sup>
Perimetro	160.2313 m
Altezza non delimitata	4.0000 m
Volume	Non calcolato
Altezza di calcolo	0.0000 m
Dati identità	
Numero	6
Nome	Preparation_and_Finishin...
Immagine	Preparation_and_Finishin...
Commenti	Lavoro meccanico svolto d...
Occupazione	Impacchettamento carta
Reparto	Finitura carta
Tipo di finitura della b...	
Tipo di finitura del co...	
Tipo di finitura del mu...	
Tipo di finitura del pa...	
Occupant	Operaio Cartiera Segré
Fasi	
Fase	Esistente
Parametri IFC	
Esporta in IFC	Per tipo
Esporta in formato IFC...	IfcSpace
Tipo IFC predefinito	INTERNAL
IfcGUID	0yrSYxS0LATwtDbyRGjVHx

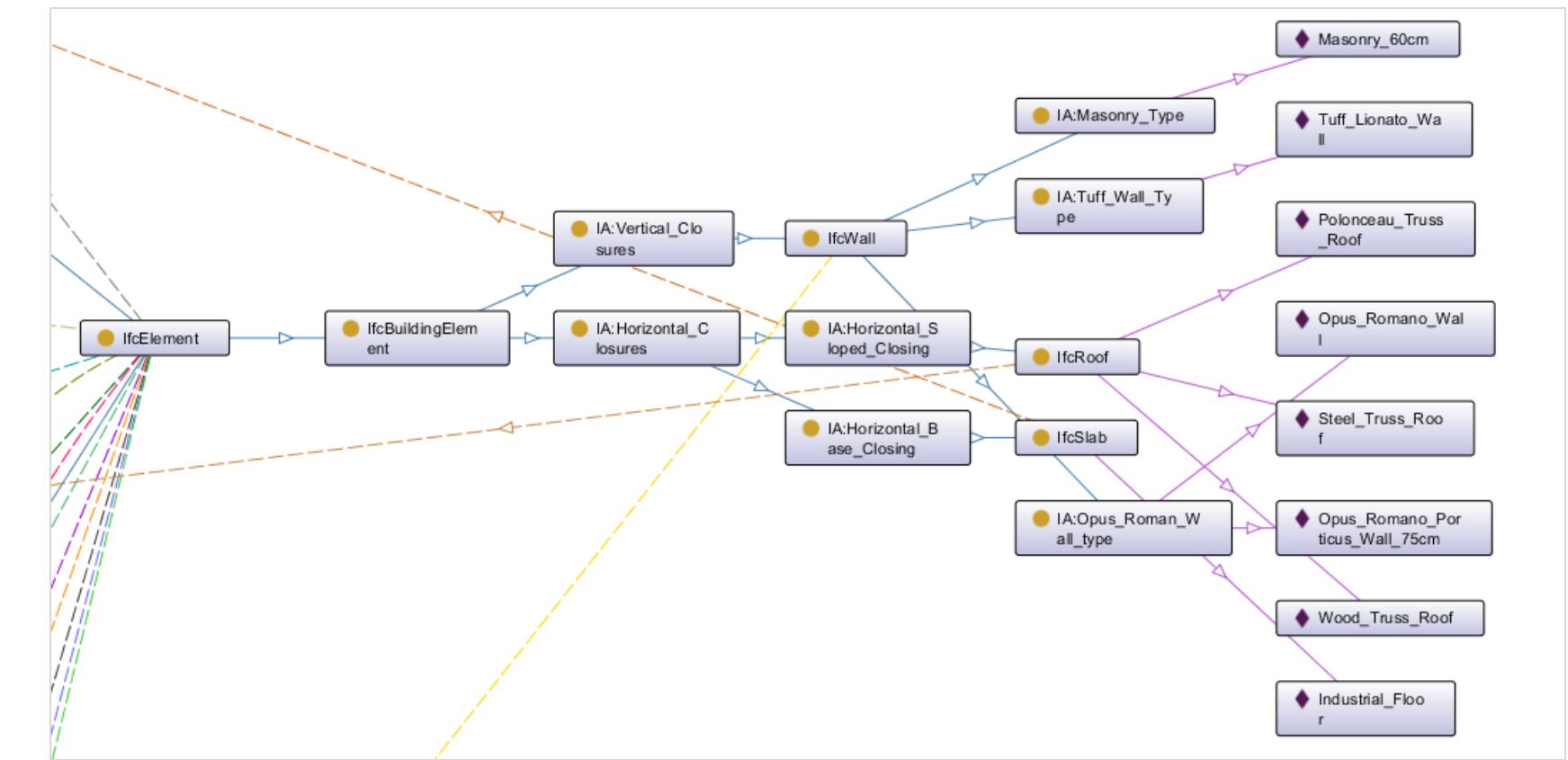
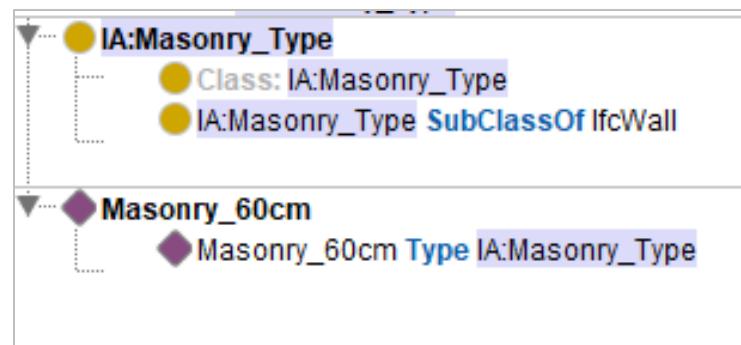
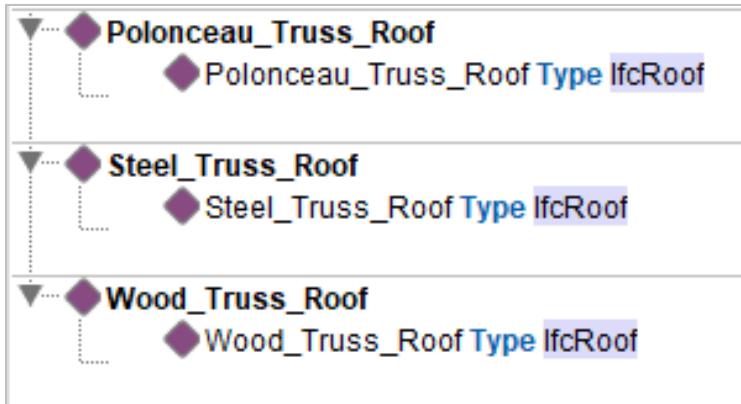
Quote	
Area	548.955 m <sup>2</sup>
Perimetro	108.7871 m
Altezza non delimitata	4.0000 m
Volume	Non calcolato
Altezza di calcolo	0.0000 m
Dati identità	
Numero	7
Nome	Hollander_Machines_Room
Immagine	Hollander_Machines_Roo...
Commenti	Lavoro meccanico svolto d...
Occupazione	Vasche olandesi
Reparto	Produzione della pasta
Tipo di finitura della b...	Pavimento industriale
Tipo di finitura del co...	
Tipo di finitura del mu...	Muro in tufo
Tipo di finitura del pa...	
Occupant	Operaio Cartiera Segré
Fasi	
Fase	Esistente
Parametri IFC	
Esporta in IFC	Per tipo
Esporta in formato IFC...	IfcSpace
Tipo IFC predefinito	INTERNAL
IfcGUID	3Dz\$\$GE55B8hNyZuiO1rq

Quote	
Area	512.039 m <sup>2</sup>
Perimetro	146.0043 m
Altezza non delimitata	4.0000 m
Volume	Non calcolato
Altezza di calcolo	0.0000 m
Dati identità	
Numero	5
Nome	Paper_Machines_Room
Immagine	Paper_Machine_Room.png
Commenti	Lavoro meccanico svolto d...
Occupazione	Macchina continua - Operaio
Reparto	Produzione della carta
Tipo di finitura della b...	Pavimento industriale
Tipo di finitura del co...	
Tipo di finitura del mu...	Muro in tufo - opus incertum
Tipo di finitura del pa...	
Occupant	Operaio Cartiera Segré
Fasi	
Fase	Esistente
Parametri IFC	
Esporta in IFC	Per tipo
Esporta in formato IFC...	IfcSpace
Tipo IFC predefinito	INTERNAL
IfcGUID	0yrSYxS0LATwtDbyRGjVHx

Example of Label correspondence between the informative model and the knowledge base through the instances of ifc:Space

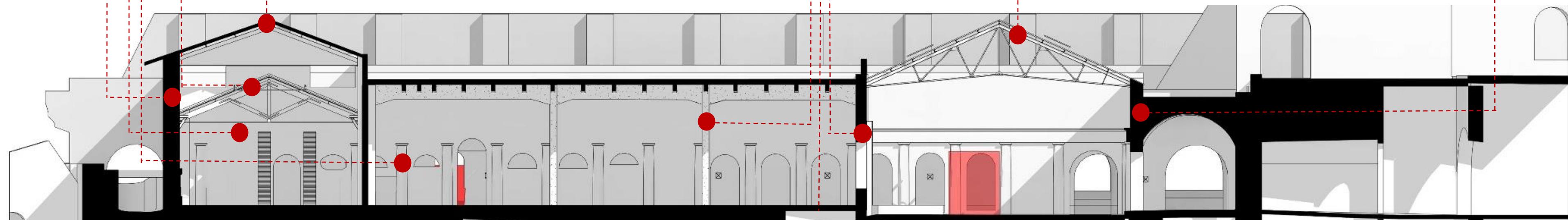
Schema from Protégè – instantiation process





	IFCGUID	Esporta in formato IFC
Tuff_Lionato_Wall	20y91n3or7ZxDmOVLcX3XP	IfcWall
Opus_Romano_Wall	0otr0kP0bFk9IG6ECVRoJh	IfcWall
Doric_Column	0FhjV\$ta90pv5VEY3Sbj6G	IfcColumn
Wood_Truss_Roof	3E7vCsOjv8BuKW6OSi0Zm4	IfcRoof
Steel_Truss_Roof	0L8p1DNUj8_hxJ9GwFFnYC	IfcRoof

	IFCGUID	Esporta in formato IFC
Concrete_Pilaster_38x38cm	0AoCpqWLFRvmmwQgkN85	IfcColumn
Industrial_Floor_30cm	0FcD2TdfDBGvMBBVfrBLvv	IfcSlab
Masonry_60cm	34\$\$klyJv6mR7k4ztpZir	IfcWall
Opus_Romanus_Porticus_75cm	2vesht1PjCpB_FliFn\$7	IfcWall
Polonceau_Truss_Roof	0MndzfoN53TBzXNBou2008	IfcRoof



# HBIM and Semantic Web challenges

## Semantic web approach for built heritage representation

- Work on different types of information granularity, **from general to specific**
- **Overcome the rigidity of the parametric model** which clashes with the heritage assets representations
- **Implementation and queries** activities
- **Defining and managing** imprecise and **uncertain data** in the interpretation process to address the three main issues related to a general knowledge dilemma

# Thanks for your attention!

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[stefano.cursi@ispc.cnr.it](mailto:stefano.cursi@ispc.cnr.it)

