HERITAGE 2022 INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE VERNACULAR HERITAGE: CULTURE, PEOPLE AND SUSTAINABILITY

Eds. C. Mileto, F. Vegas, V. Cristini, L. García-Soriano



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Preface

C.Mileto, F. Vegas, V. Cristini, L. García-Soriano

Research Centre for Architecture, Heritage and Management for Sustainable Development (PEGASO),
Universitat Politècnica de València, Valencia, Spain

"HERITAGE2022, International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability" is organized in the framework of the "VerSus+ | Heritage for PEOPLE" project, co-funded by the Creative Europe Program of the European Union (grant 607593-CREA-1-2019-1-ES-CULT-COOP1) and led by Universitat Politècnica de València (Spain) in partnership with Università degli Studi di Firenze and Università degli Studi di Cagliari (Italy), CRAterre – ENSAG (France) and Universidade Portucalense - Departamento de Arquitetura e Multimédia Gallaecia (Portugal). The "VerSus+ | Heritage for PEOPLE" project focuses on the transmission of knowledge to communities and the general public. It pays special attention to the society of the future (children and young people), as well as local, regional and national authorities in charge of heritage management, and includes specialists and experts in the field of architecture (architects, engineers, cultural managers, historians, ethnographers, university students, etc.) together with craftsmen and companies in the construction and tourism sectors, cultural and social associations, and educational institutions.

Vernacular heritage is a tangible and intangible heritage of great importance to European and global culture. This architecture, born from the practical experience of local inhabitants, makes use of local materials to erect buildings taking into consideration the climate and geography, developing cultural, social and constructive traditions based on the conditions of the surrounding nature and habitat. Above all, it plays an essential role in contemporary society as it is able to teach us important principles and lessons for a respectful sustainable architecture. These lessons from vernacular heritage for contemporary architecture have been extensively studied in the "VerSus: Lessons from Vernacular Heritage in Sustainable Architecture (grant 2012-2792/001-001 CU7 COOP7)" project, co-funded by the European Union between 2012 and 2014, and the "VerSus+ | Heritage for PEOPLE" (2019-2023) project, which follows on from the previous project, focusing on the transmission of this knowledge to society, as seen earlier. The wisdom of vernacular architecture in the field of environmental, sociocultural and socioeconomic sustainability is increasing both in interest and significance in the world today. Climate change, depopulation and the pressure of tourism all pose major challenges, as do the increasingly rapid social changes and loss of traditional trades resulting from the industrialization of the construction process. These challenges alert us to the pressing and growing need for education and increased awareness in society and for the documentation and conservation of architecture within a framework of up-to-date integration into contemporary life, managing territory and heritage assets for the sustainable development of society in the future.

The second project involved in this conference is "RISK-Terra. Earthen architecture in the Iberian Peninsula: study of natural, social and anthropic risks and strategies to improve resilience" (RTI2018-095302-B-I00) (2019-2022), funded by MCIU (Ministerio de Ciencia, Innovación y Universidades), AEI (Agencia Estatal de Investigación), FEDER - UE (Fondo Europeo de Desarrollo Regional, Unión Europea). This project is geared towards the conservation of earthen architecture in the Iberian Peninsula, both monumental and vernacular, which continues to be undervalued and barely recognized. The RISK-Terra project aims to provide scientific coverage of the study of natural threats (floods, earthquakes, climate change), social threats (abandonment, social discredit, demographic pressure, tourist development), and anthropic threats (neglect, lack of protection and maintenance), as well as the mechanisms for deterioration

and dynamics and transformation (replacement, use of incompatible techniques and materials, etc.) to which architecture is exposed. The objective of the project is to establish strategies for conservation, intervention and rehabilitation which allow the prevention and mitigation of possible damage through compatible actions and/or actions to increase resilience.

As these two projects have major points of contact, particularly in relation to the challenges mentioned above, with potential for common reflection, their main themes have been combined in this Heritage2022 conference. The topics established for the conference are: 1. vernacular architecture: matter, culture and sustainability (study and cataloging of vernacular architecture; urban studies of vernacular architecture; studies of traditional techniques and materials; sustainability of vernacular architecture); 2. heritage education (research in heritage education; heritage education and social inclusion; heritage communities; creativity and heritage education); 3. artisans and crafts of traditional construction (intangible heritage: the management of know-how and local construction culture; training in traditional construction crafts; tradition and innovation in traditional construction crafts; plans and experiences for the recovery and maintenance of construction crafts); 4. conservation, restoration and enhancement of vernacular architecture (conservation and restoration projects of vernacular architecture; materials and intervention techniques for vernacular architecture; difficulties and possibilities of using traditional crafts in conservation; management and maintenance of vernacular architecture).

The scientific committee was made up of 102 outstanding researchers from 24 countries from the five continents, specialists in the subjects proposed. All the contributions to the conference, both the abstracts and the final texts, were subjected to a strict peer-review evaluation system by the members of the scientific committee. Out of the 200 proposals submitted, 134 papers by 254 authors from 25 countries from the four continents were chosen for publication. All the articles have been published in print and online in the two-volume book "Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability".

"HERITAGE2022 (Versus+ | RISK-Terra), International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability" was held from 15 to 17 September 2022 in in-person and online modality at the Universitat Politècnica de València. The conference was under the aegis of: ICOMOS-CIAV (International Scientific Committee of Vernacular Architecture); ICOMOS-ICICH (International Scientific Committee on Intangible Cultural Heritage); IEB (Instituto Español de la Baubiologie). The organization, publication and implementation of the conference have been made possible thanks to co-funding of the Creative Europe Programme of the European Union for the project "VerSus+ | Heritage for PEOPLE" (grant 607593-CREA-1-2019-1-ES-CULT-COOP1); and the MCIU, AEI and FEDER - UE for the research project "Risk-Terra. Earthen architecture in the Iberian Peninsula: study of natural, social and anthropic risks and strategies to improve resilience" (ref.: RTI2018-095302-B-I00). Furthermore, Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura and PEGASO - Research Centre for Architecture, Heritage and Management for Sustainable Development of Universitat Politècnica de València have also contributed to the whole project.

Finally, we would like to thank all the authors who contributed to the quality, range, diversity and richness of these publications with their articles. We give special thanks to all the partners of the European project "VerSus+ | Heritage for PEOPLE" and the national research project "Risk-Terra" for participating in the conference and helping to spreading the word about it worldwide. We are grateful for the aid of all the members of the advisory committee and the scientific committee for their work throughout the process of revising the abstracts and papers. And, above all, we thank the organizing committee for the complex setting up of the whole conference, the style and language reviewers for their corrections, and all the collaborators for their invaluable work in the management and organization of all stages of the process.

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Table of contents

Preface
Organization and Committees
Conference Support
PLENARY LECTURES
A Vision for CIAV. Addressing the challenges facing the ICOMOS International Scientific Committee on Vernacular Architecture
The National Plan for Traditional Architecture as a safeguarding tool. Action programmes and projects
VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE: MATTER, CULTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY Study and Cataloging of Vernacular Architecture
The standardisation of vernacular architecture. Wine buildings in Andalusia
Vernacular architecture in Brazilian semiarid region: survey and memory in the state of Sergipe
Knowledge and conservation of Mediterranean spontaneous architecture: some of the villages of the northern Tyrrhenian coast of Calabria
Architectural and constructive characteristics of vernacular settlements in southern Italy: the Esaro's valley and the popular identity of some exemplary cases
Spanish traditional architecture abandonment and destruction: an initial analysis of social risks, phenomena, and effects in earthen architecture
A taxonomy of vernacular heritage in the mid-Adriatic: Landscape relations and architectural characteristics of the farmhouses in Tronto Valley (Italy)
Traditional houses in the South-Western Iberian Peninsula: Themes for a cross-border comparative typological study
2022, Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València

HERITAGE 2022 - International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability September 15^{th} - 17^{th} , 2022 Valencia, Spain

The Hameau de la Reine at Versailles and the reproduction of vernacular architecture
Vernacular architecture of the Amalfi coast: a medieval domus in Villa Rufolo in Ravello (Italy)
Architectural survey, realized with integrated methodology, of the complex of Walser houses in Alagna Valsesia, Italy
Modern attitudes towards vernacular architecture. Works by the Italians Luigi Angelini, Alberto Alpago Novello, Ottavio Cabiati, Alessandro Minali
Wind and the villages in Rincón de Ademuz, Spain
Vernacular features in eclectic architecture from the tropics. An analysis by means of architectural survey
Configuring, building and inhabiting the house from a gender perspective
Rediscovering tradition through representation: the vaulted house of the Amalfi Coast 133 <i>B. Messina, S. Morena, C. Ferreyra</i>
Traditional dwellings and techniques of the First Indigenous Peoples of South Africa in the Eastern Cape
Rediscovered earth heritage becomes motor for local change The Guérande Peninsula (France)
Tradition and semantics: the case of Aeolian architecture
The Italian case of Leopoldine in Tuscany: methods and issues for the cataloguing of rural building heritage
Highlighting the Heritage of Meseta Ibérica
A heritage to reveal and protect. Historical water-based paper mills and ironworks in Campania (Italy)
Architecture and Proto Industry. Watermills in the historic peri-urban landscape of Benevento (Italy)

An architectural catalogue for the study of traditional building features from their seismic behaviour in the 2016 Central Italy earthquake	197
Earthen vernacular architecture in flood-prone areas: characteristics and typologies in the Ebro basin	205
New studies for the knowledge of the vernacular characters of the ancient water mills in central Sicily	213
Identification and safeguarding of Central Sicily's forgotten vernacular heritage: elements of identity and memory	221
The particular ensemble of Mas d'en Segures: Functional and constructive analysis of a house and a barn in Tinença de Benifassà (Castellón, Spain)	229
In the shadow of Vesuvius. Sustainable and bioclimatic lessons from a vernacular heritage	237
URBAN STUDIES OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE	
The rural founding villages of the Italian Agrarian Reform in Basilicata (1950-1970): urban planning and 'modern' vernacular architecture to the test of contemporaneity. The case of Borgo Taccone (MT)	247
Vernacular architecture and written sources: the case study of the Tronto Valley	255
Urban vernacular architecture in the Middle Ages in Galicia, Spain	263
Binibeca Vell. Interpreting tradition	271
Mapping spatial social aspects of urban recovery in contested cities: a case of the historic commercial center of the ancient city of Aleppo	279
Contributions of the vernacular heritage in the current city. Case study: Santo Domingo Neighborhood, Tuxtla Gutiérrez, Chiapas, Mexico	287
The town of Collodi: the vernacular heritage	293

in the territory of Pesche in Molise	301
Light Touch on the land – continued conversations about architectural change, informality and sustainability	309
STUDIES OF TRADITIONAL TECHNIQUES AND MATERIALS	
Γhe stone as constant presence: vernacular structure of the cultural heritage of Porcuna (Andalusia, Spain)	319
From natural to artificial: vernacular housing in the Spanish Caribbean	327
Designing with water for climate change adaptation and cultural heritage preservation	335
La Vera's vernacular architecture. Structural design and climate protection in timber frame wall houses using constructive systems and local materials	341
Traditional buildings for tobacco processing in Val Tiberina (Tuscany-Italy)	349
The parish church of San Michele Arcangelo in Metelliano: the path of knowledge of a vernacular architecture	357
Indoor air quality for sustainability, occupational health and classroom environments through the application of earth plaster	363
The importance of water in traditional gypsum works	369
State of conservation of half-timbered walls in Burgos (Spain): Quantitative analysis of material and structural degradation	377
Adobe Constructions – Colonial Chilean House	385
Favignana bio-calcarenite: technological culture, knowledge and recovery	393
Examination of earthen construction in archaeological sites of the Iberian Peninsula for risk analysis	401
S. Manzano Fernández, C. Mileto, F. Vegas, V. Cristini	

HERITAGE 2022 - International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability September 15^{th} - 17^{th} , 2022 Valencia, Spain

M. M. Martínez-Barreiro, L. F. Guerrero-Baca	409
Dry Stone Wall Relics as a Part of Cultural Landscapes: A Case Study from the Foot of Mt. Hira Region in Japan	417
The paving of ancient paths, testimony of an ancient culture: recovery of a traditional route in Genoa (Liguria, Italy)	425
Constructive and earthquake-resistant aspects of modelled-earth, a technique in ancient Peru	433
Research on technique "Banzhu" used in traditional dwellings in China from the perspective of formwork	441
SUSTAINABILITY OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE	
Traditional Bukharian Houses and Mahallas: a shared vernacular heritage at risk	451
A look on the intrinsic sustainability of Aeolian vernacular architecture	459
The Z Free Home – inspired by vernacular architecture	467
Proposals for the sustainable recovery of dry stone buildings in Puglia, Italy	475
Casa Nautilus Solar – Organic contemporary Architecture based on Vernacular Heritage	483
Making our Rural Landscape visible. A way to defend Anonymous Cultural Heritage	491
Shuar architecture as a model of sustainability	499
Dry stone architecture: the survey as a tool to safeguard the risk of morphological or formal homologation	507
At the roots of sustainability: Mediterranean vernacular architecture	513
Lessons from the past, architecture for the future. Coupling historic preservation with sustainable architecture	521

HERITAGE EDUCATION

RESEARCH IN HERITAGE EDUCATION

Community School Museums as a fool for education	537
The interpretation of the vernacular in the modern work of Gherardo Bosio: the Albanian experience	545
"For sale: empty Spain" Raising awareness on abandoned buildings and depopulated villages	553
Qualitative, historical, spatial, stylistic, and social assessment of heritage buildings in Arequipa for Cultural Heritage teaching in Schools of Architecture	559
Vernacular architecture and art. The representation of traditional buildings in Lorenzo Ghiberti's Gates of Paradise in the Baptistery of Florence	567
Defensive architecture and heritage education: analysis of the National Park Service and Parks Canada actions	575
HERITAGE EDUCATION AND SOCIAL INCLUSION	
Gibellina and the identity of community. Brandi, Burri and the conservation of the 'ruins'	585
The perceptive experience of the heritage landscape	593
The Role of University in Local Cultural Development Through Vernacular Architectural Conservation Education: The Case of Havran, Turkey	599
The role of cultural heritage in urban reuse	607
Involving society in the enhancement of old city centres	615
3D Heritage as a catalyst for social participation in safeguarding cities in conflict. A Case study of Damascus in Syria	623

2022, Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València

Heritage education as an effective approach to enhance community engagement: a model for classifying the level of engagement	31
Preservation and promotion of the cultural heritage through University, public administration, and community engagement	39
'Acupuncture of Awareness': a possible path for vernacular heritage preservation	1 7
HERITAGE COMMUNITIES	
Overlooked heritage of Albania: chronicle of rescue, conservation and community involvement at Great Prespa Lake	57
The appropriation of traditional houses in Imbros/Gökçeada	53
The SDGs as a useful tool in vernacular architecture management: The case of "17 objectives and a map"	71
An Odyssey to Heritage Education: The Inspiring Example of Bergama and Its Communities	19
The role of heritage communities in local development processes through the reuse of architectural heritage. Some examples in italian rural areas	37
CREATIVITY AND HERITAGE EDUCATION	
Strategies for the recognition and the enhancement of the cultural heritage in Sant'Antioco) 7
A collaborative Web App to foster a knowledge network on vernacular heritage, craftspeople, and sustainability)3
Cultural heritage: educating the next generation. Case study analysis of the Center of Preservation Research	1
ARTISANS AND CRAFTS OF TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION INTANGIBLE HERITAGE: THE MANAGEMENT OF KNOW-HOW AND LOCAL CONSTRUCTION CULTURE	
The towns of the Popocateptl Volcano. Territorial symbolism, cultural identity and vernacular architecture	21

Methodology for mapping Intangible Cultural Heritage through webGIS integral platforms. La Fontanalla neighbourhood as a case study
The struggle for Stone-dry walling: the ambition to protect both processes and products
From intangible to tangible. Artisan Skills and Traditional Crafts for Preserving Venice's Built Heritage
TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN TRADITIONAL CONSTRUCTION CRAFTS
The Craft of Stucco Mihrab carving in Oman in the 13th to 17th AD
From prototypes to monotypes. Neo-craftsmanship in architecture and design
PLANS AND EXPERIENCES FOR THE RECOVERY AND MAINTENANCE OF CONSTRUCTION CRAFTS
Vernacular architecture and seismic risk. The case of Mugello in Tuscany
Pinnettas de pedra: a guide for the valorisation of dry-stone artifacts
Vernacular architecture and traditional trades. Social innovation and cultural heritage in rural Andalusia
G. Carrera Díaz, B. Del Espino Hidalgo, A. Delgado Méndez
The role of craftsmanship in the conservation of Venice. State of the art and perspective
CONSERVATION, RESTORATION AND ENHANCEMENT OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE Conservation and restoration projects of vernacular architecture
Is there a future for marginal communities?
Restoration of the stained glass windows of the British Cemetery of Valencia
Studies and projects for the archaeological park of the Nuraghe s'Urachi (Sardinia, Italy). From knowledge for heritage conservation to project for the community
Vernacular heritage protection by the Superintendence of the Aosta Valley

2022, Editorial Universitat Politècnica de València

Of earth, stone and wood: the restoration and conservation of a Buddhist temple in Ladakh, Indian Himalayas	839
The <i>hórreos</i> in Riaño Mountain, León, Spain. Vernacular architecture between conservation and musealisation	847
Restoration project of vernacular architecture affected for ground subsidence: A case study in Juslibol Church (Zaragoza, Spain)	855
Farmhouse interior restoration in bioconstruction	863
After the earthquake. Design processes for intervention on vernacular heritage in Central Italy	871
Implementing the lesson of early 20th century traditional buildings for a real sustainability. The examples of Corviale (Rome) and ZEN (Palermo) districts	879
From rural house to "villa of delights": knowledge and conservation of Villa Murat in the Sorrento peninsula	889
Vernacular earthen architecture. Construction techniques and restoration. From the international setting to some specific Italian regional cases	897
Rigour, methodology and use, success in heritage conservation: the tower of the St. Mary Magdalene's church	905
Strategies to value the dispersed heritage of rural Andalusia. Lagares, paseros and vineyards: the architecture of the raisin	913
Guidelines for the conservation of the ancient hydraulic mills of the Valle Sabbia, Brescia (Italy)	921
Bazaars between documentation and conservation. Case studies in Albania and Macedonia	929
Perspectives for the small historical centres at risk of abandonment. A pilot project for the Granfonte district in Leonforte (Italy)	937
Repair grants for historic farm buildings in Dartmoor National Park	945

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MATERIALS AND INTERVENTION TECHNIQUES FOR VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE H. Asslan B. Balbi, R. Bosso, G. Russo Krauss Vernacular architecture on archaeological remains. Conservation and enhancement of L. Cappelli M. Cernansky Effects of the use of plant mucilage on the physico-mechanical properties of raw earth O. M. Medina Lorente, B. Carrascosa Moliner, L. Osete Cortina Vernacular architecture and archaeological remains. Direct links in the Phlegraean R. Picone DIFFICULTIES AND POSSIBILITIES OF USING TRADITIONAL CRAFTS IN CONSERVATION Impediments to Sustenance and Revival of Vernacular Architecture in Rural Madhya A. Tamhankar, V. Gupta MANAGEMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE Ghadames, Libya. A traditional earthen settlement, resilient to crises and S. Abdulac Architectural Heritage and seismic vulnerability: mapping the available knowledge to E. Brusa, C. Chesi, S. Della Torre Analysis and regeneration strategies for the abandoned villages of the Santerno valley M. Coppola, L. Dipasquale, L. Mannucci, L. Rovero Learning from the past. The loss of vernacular heritage in the interest of hydropower development in Spain 1039 N. Fernández García Post seismic intervention strategies over the last fifty years in Italy (1968 – 2016). V Macca

HERITAGE 2022 - International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability September 15^{th} - 17^{th} , 2022 Valencia, Spain

Close to the volcan. Knowledge, conservation and enhancement of a Vesuvian vernacular heritage	. 1055
Heritage and community centre in Matta Sur, Chile	. 1063
Local materials and traditions in the conservation of vernacular buildings	. 1071
Vernacular earthen architectures. Institutionalisation and management models for its conservation in northern Argentina	. 1077
Protection and reuse of a forgotten heritage: the Parmesan cheese buildings. Notes for a widespread museum in the lower Reggio Emilia plain	. 1085

AUTHORS INDEX

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Rediscovering tradition through representation: the vaulted house of the **Amalfi Coast**

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Abstract

The Amalfi Coast represents one of the most fascinating examples of the Mediterranean landscape with a unique cultural and natural setting, resulting from its dramatic topography and the evolution of its community. The universal value of the coast, the evolutionary process of human adaptation to its production and exchange spaces, as well as its residential settlements, are very important to preserve. In this regard, the research is focused on the interpretation of these places, and in particular on the typical medieval houses, to find the main features through the representation of ancient and new designers. The observation through the drawing allows to rediscover the essential elements that distinguish and at the same time link the buildings with the Mediterranean tradition. The geographical and economic characteristics that particularized the Amalfi Coast in medieval times and the absence of terrestrial connections inevitably led to isolation towards the hinterland and an opening by sea. The owners of these artifacts were mainly merchants and, coming into contact with different cultures, brought to their territories a miscellany of traditions. Similarly, these houses are made of local stone and are characterized by their vaulted roof extrados that, depending on the type, lead back to a specific historical phase. The study and analysis of the drawings over time, therefore, aims to discover the main characteristic and rediscover the historical, aesthetic, and artistic value of the vernacular architecture of Campania. These buildings have always been a source of inspiration for great artists and architects who, following the Grand Tour along the coast, have characterized their works, and therefore represent an important heritage to be known, protected, and enhanced to safeguard the harmony and splendor of the Amalfi Coast.

Keywords: Heritage; Tradition; Houses; Drawing.

1. Introduction

The fascinating territory of Amalfi Coast has always been a source of inspiration for artists and intellectuals. From the middle of the 16th century, in particular, the Grand Tour began to spread in Europe and, starting from the 18th century, the myth of Southern Italy began to increase (Cardone, 2017). This phenomenon, therefore, encouraged educational journeys to the cities of Southern Italy; however, the harsh and wild nature of the Amalfian territory excluded the Coast from the usual itineraries, which was rediscovered only after the middle of the 18th century (Cardone, 2012). In this epoch, some romantic painters, interested in the representation of natural landscapes and picturesque images rather than urban scenarios and monuments, increasingly traveled to the Coast. The abrupt and irregular profile of its landscape and the picturesque image of its villages made it an ideal scenario for these artists (Amodio and Ghiringhelli, 2007), who appreciated the perfect integration between the

morphology of the site and anthropic interventions. This integration was the result of a slow and gradual process of transformation (Caskey, 2004). In fact, over the centuries, the territorial conformation of the Coast was significantly modified to meet the different settlement needs, while preserving the naturalistic features. Thus, the steep slopes became necessary terraces for agricultural activities; in many cases, these were then accompanied by hydraulic systems and a dense network of roads that guaranteed accessibility (Fiengo & Abbate, 2001). The orographic characteristics of the place also influenced the coastal architecture; looking, in particular, at the living space of Amalfi's villages, it is possible to observe how during the medieval period particular and authentic architectural forms were developed, evidently influenced by Roman and Oriental cultures. What particularly distinguishes the coastal residential building, preserved intact until today, is that it is a widespread and popular architecture. Therefore, it represents a heritage to be preserved as a testimony of vernacular architecture in which stylistic features and typical signs are recurring; the architecture that, by the intrinsic beauty of its spontaneous and distinctive forms, has always fascinated travelers. The analysis of some representations of artists, architects, and writers who came to the place represents then a starting point to analyze the peculiarities of rustic and rural architecture of the coast, the "aesthetic value of its functionality" (Pagano and Guarniero, 1936; p. 6) that today, unfortunately, is partly lost or abandoned, overwhelmed by the need to replace the old with the new, apparently, more effective and prestigious.

2. The vaulted house and its origins

The Amalfi Coast, in the past, showed a perfect balance between anthropic space and natural space (Sgrosso, 1984): this harmony, in the last years, has been deteriorated due to the work of man, the over construction processes, the expansions – often illegal – of the existing volumes at the detriment of a collective historical, architec-

tonic and cultural heritage. So that these "masterpieces" of popular art, as they have been defined many times, have been damaged, and even if they are punctual elements of the coast, their disappearance goes to ruin the beauty of this portion of the territory of Salerno.

An attempt at preservation, of particular interest, was the development of the urban plan elaborated in 1977 by Roberto Pane and Luigi Piccinato (but made executive only in 1987). It was an important intervention for the protection of civil and urban heritage of the Coast since it tried to deal with the process of over-building that was affecting this territory, with the aim, moreover, of safeguarding the "rustic buildings with vaulted roofs" representative of traditional building (Fig. 1). Preserving the rural houses of the Coast implies conserving the very essence of the territory: they are, in fact, in perfect harmony with the surrounding landscape and express the sense of spontaneous architecture. They are meant as the product of a constructive tradition that, even if not supported by rigorous project elaborations or by careful ex-ante studies, produces architectural forms that perfectly integrate with the surroundings. The predominant characteristic of the coastal houses is, as observed, the vaulted roof barrel, cross, sail, schifo - vaults mostly extradosed. Their uniqueness, however, lies also in the spatial organization and construction features that give plasticity, making them a spectacular product of architecture, almost as "an object of clay out of the hands of a craftsman" (Pane, 1936; p. 6). The development and evolution of these buildings are to be found, as often happens, in the socio-economic activities as well as in the characteristics of the territory. Despite the presence of the sea, in fact, the people of Amalfi carried out both the mercantile and agricultural activities, practiced at different times of the year. This interest, and the consequent need to make the land productive and accessible, inevitably led to the redesign of the impervious coastal territory into a well-structured and organized landscape, in which the typical rural houses were built.



Fig. 1. Pane R., Positano. Tav 10 (Source: Pane, 1936).



Fig. 2. Blechen k., Gebäude, einen Bach überquerend, May 1829. Sepia over graphite. Akademie der Künste (CC0 1.0).

Of questionable certainty, instead, is the Arabic influence on the constructive housing model: a hypothesis, this last one, that probably derives from the historical past and from the similarity with the Mediterranean houses of Islamic tradition, in which the extradosed vaulted roof in stone appears a typical element. However, as pointed out by Roberto Pane in his book Architettura rurale campana, the presence of ruins from the Roman period perfectly adapted and assembled in the farmers' houses, and at the same time the lack of wood as opposed to the abundance of stone material suitable for the construction of vaults (pozzolana, lapillus, volcanic scoriae), suggests the adoption of a building model consolidated locally since the Roman era (Pane, 1936).

3. Travellers to the "discovery" of the coastal territory

The interest in the coastal territory during the Enlightenment period is the consequence of an "extension" of the travel itineraries of foreign intellectuals (Mozzillo, 1982). The "discovery" of the Amalfi Coast with its intact, wild, unexplored landscape determined, started from the second half of the 18th century. The growing number of travelers arriving here were so enchanted by its beauty that they wanted to tell about it with drawings and descriptions (Messina, 2012). The Coast, therefore, became the privileged subject of several artists and writers who in those years stayed in this wonderful part of the province of Salerno (Richter, 1989). Over time, it is also possible to notice an evolution in the interest of travelers towards the environment. Initially, in fact, the attention is turned to the romantic aspect of the coast, impervious and difficult to reach, a mysterious and fascinating territory to be rediscovered and represented. The images produced by draftsmen and painters, therefore, rarely focus on the single architecture. What is captured and depicted instead is the great balance that exists between anthropic and natural space. With time, however, more and more attention is paid to vernacular architecture that, with its simplicity and at the same time austerity, enchants intellectuals and artists from all over the world, also influencing the ideals of various movements of avantgarde architecture.

3.1. The union between building and nature

On 16th May 1787, the Coast unexpectedly appears in Goethe's eyes (1749-1832) who collects his impressions in Italian Journey (Goethe, 1816), one of the first literary descriptions of this landscape: a territory rich in light and chromatic shades which generate sensations of harmony, and is able to arouse astonishment to whoever observes it. In those years, writings and representations about the Coast became increasingly widespread, so much so that they attracted famous romantic painters of the time

Among the most famous, Joseph Mallord William Turner (1775-1851), during his first trip to Italy in 1819, reproduced with a few but extraordinary pencil strokes the charm of the Amalfi Coast and the close connection between architecture and landscape. The contribution of

the German landscape painter Karl Eduard Ferdinand Blechen (1798-1840), who traveled to Italy in 1829 and visited the Amalfi Coast, is also interesting. It was during his stay on the Coast that he produced several sepia drawings collected in the famous Amalfi Skizzenbuch. Often his views depict buildings with extradosed vaults and not wide landscape views. His drawings particularly underline the simplicity of the minimalist architecture of Amalfi, whose plasticity is dictated by the openings of the windows and of the organization of space: these always explain, with great effectiveness, the strong relationship between the work of man and nature itself (Fig. 2). The documentary contribution of Edward Lear (1812-1888), an English painter, poet, and traveler who, a few years later, made several drawings and watercolors of the Amalfi Coast (Camelia et al., 2017), some of which were dedicated to housing, is also precious. Like the other English travelers of the 19th century, Lear did not focus his attention only on the architectural element itself but generally included the entire surroundings. The result are en plein air representations that the artist makes after carefully identifying the "perfect" view to immortalize. In 1844, for example, he painted a view of the town of Cetara where the Torre Saracena, the dome of the church, and the roofs of the vaulted houses that once dotted the area are clearly visible. The village is surrounded by nature and is made up of simple cores that blend into perfectly with the surrounding landscape. A similar representation, from a top view, can be found in the sketch of Pogerola, also dated June 1844. In this preparatory drawing, on which there are also notes of various kinds, it is possible to notice a composition of extradosed vaults with different geometric configurations (barrel, schifo, pavilion, to mention the most evident ones) arranged in an almost linear way (Fig. 3). The space of the houses is generally developed on two levels and the composition of the plant is organized by the combination of several rooms distributed in line.



Fig. 3. Lear E., Pogerola. 13 June 1844. (65), 1844. Drawing, MS Typ 55.26 (296). Houghton Library, Harvard University (CC BY 4.0).

This layout is necessary to cope with the presence of steep and long terraces that are not very deep and characterized by strong changes in height. The nature of rural architecture, however, generally accentuated by the absence of a unitary project, makes it difficult to date the building precisely: indeed, in many cases, the various nuclei that make up the built space, all very simple, were assembled overtime to meet the needs that arose during the years.

3.2. Analysis and properties of the vaulted house

From the early years of the 20th century, the forms of rural architecture, especially in the Mediterranean, seemed to be of particular interest to intellectuals, fascinated by the simplicity and, at the same time, the refinement of the buildings. In particular, artists and architects not only found in these places a romantic setting, but also the inspiration for the development of new ideas. The

vernacular architecture of the Amalfi Coast, together with that of the Island of Capri, thus became an opportunity for the development of new considerations by various avantgarde architects of the 19th and 20th centuries. A careful analysis of Amalfi's rural buildings is, for example, carried out by the neoclassical architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel (1781-1841) who, on the occasion of his journey to Italy in 1803, describes the unusual territory of the Coast and the existence of a great relationship between the buildings and the local environment, climate and culture (Fig. 4). The Prussian architect identifies in these architectures precise sources of design inspiration, focusing on the essentiality of the means used for their realization and on the authenticity of the forms, the building is the result not of careful design studies, but responses to human needs.



Fig. 4. Schinkel K. F., Stadt Amalfi am Golf von Salerno, 1810. Drawing, Inv.-Nr.: SM 1b.33. Kupferstichkabinett, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin (CC BY SA).

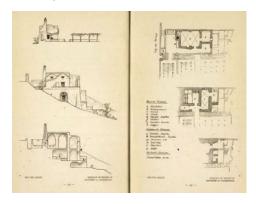


Fig. 5. Clemmensen A. L., Hus ved Amalfi, 1905-1906. Arkitekten.

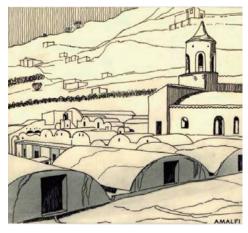


Fig. 6. Garcia Mercadal F., Amalfi, 1924. Black ink and pencil on vegetal paper. Private collection, Zaragoza (Source: Vallespín Mune-sia et al., 2019).

A further compliment comes from the Austrian Josef Hoffmann (1870-1956): he also found in the Coast signs and elements that would suggest his architecture and, in general, modern architecture. During the Tour of Italy, Hoffmann was struck by the simplicity of the rural houses, without pomp or particular style, but which nevertheless connote the Amalfi territory, making it unique (Sabatino, 2008). The influence of this harmonious laconism on the architect was demonstrated when, on his return from his trip to Campania, he proposed the Capri house as a design model in the prestigious magazine Der Architekt (Hoffmann, 1897). In 1906, a subsequent study was published by Andres Lauritz Clemmensen (1852-1928) in the magazine Arkitekten

of the Federation of Danish Architects (Clemmensen, 1906). In this short article, the architect analyses a small medieval building located along the road to Conca (Belli, 2019). The structure is built against a rock face and the elevations, sections, and plans are reproduced in detail, accompanied by a descriptive legend of the rooms (Fig. 5). The building is on three levels, with barrelvaulted and cross-vaulted spaces, and has large, scenic terraces on the outside. The spatial composition, certainly dictated by the orography of the site as well as the essentiality of the structure, gives a harmonious geometry in which functional parts, such as the eaves, are transformed into stylistic elements.

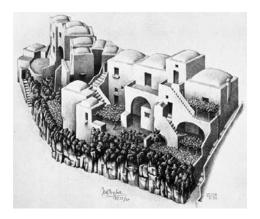


Fig. 7. Escher M. C., Old Houses in Positano, 1934.

Regarding the architectural configuration, the author hypothesizes that this is the evolution of a primitive core enlarged in a non-random manner, to respond to a series of needs and consider the coastal terrain. The building technique is also well-known, limestone masonry with lime mortar. Italian vernacular architecture also influenced many Spanish architects; among them, Fernando Garcia Mercadal (1896-1985) is noteworthy. In the early 20th century, he produced a series of drawings needed to study and analyze Mediterranean architecture. During his first year at the Spanish Academy in Rome, the architect from Zaragoza showed great interest in vernacular buildings, trying to grasp their foundations and suggestions for modernity. In a depiction of

Amalfi (Fig. 6), for example, the prevailing element in the representation is a succession of simple buildings covered by extradosed barrel vaults. His drawings from this period show a great capacity for synthesis; the well-defined contours allow us to highlight parallelism with certain characteristics of the modern movement (Vallespín Munesia et al., 2019). These drawings are the result of an initial sketch made on site, a method which nevertheless manages to underline the essential and at the same time peculiar characteristics of these architectures, with their simple volumes which together generate a fascinating view.

The architectural charm of such modest buildings is also captured by Louis Kahn who, during his stay on the Coast, designed a fisherman's house in Conca dei Marini, the only one selected for the annual exhibition celebrated by the Academy of Fine Arts in 1929 (Montes Serrano, 2005). The architect's attention is focused on the contrast between simple volumes and the rocky ground, and the appropriate use of light and shadow allows the geometry of the house to be defined without the need for an outline. Essential, devoid of any form of decoration or redundant elements, the buildings of vernacular Mediterranean architecture express, in their simple archaic appearance, their adherence to necessity and the absence of any superfluous detail. They appear humble before the eyes of the artists, but at the same time, with flowing, elegant lines, perfectly integrated into their environment. They are almost as if they were "a living product of nature rather than of art [...]; they appear to have been built without the benefit of rigorous geometry, but with a sense of approximation that is perhaps the greatest factor in their picturesqueness" (Pane, 1936; p. 7).

3.3. Beyond Real

The representation of the Amalfi Coast and its vernacular Mediterranean buildings did not only influence Romantic painters, landscape

painters, or modern architects, but also artists such as Maurits Cornelis Escher (1896-1972), who also found inspiration for his imaginary worlds in the architecture he admired during his journeys to Italy.

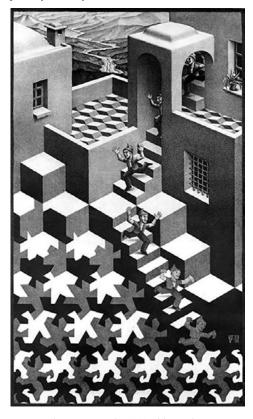


Fig. 8. Escher M. C., Cycle, 1938. Lithograph

There are several representations in which the reference to a typically Italian spatial setting is evident. In particular, Escher produced varius drawings and lithographs on the Amalfi Coast (Messina, 2014). This is the case of Houses in Positano, a lithograph produced around 1934 (Fig. 7). It depicts an agglomeration of traditional vaulted houses connected by external staircases - another typical sign of vernacular coastal architecture, which rarely has internal vertical connecting elements. Although these reproductions belong to the generally more realist period, they are the starting point for the better-known illusionary images and fantastic worlds that Escher presents in, for example, Metamorphosis II (1939-1940). The latter work, in a graphic process that could be defined as morphing, transforms the urban aggregate of the village of Atrani into a game of chess and the tower on the chessboard is a clear reference to the Norman artifact along the coast. The coastal suggestions also return in Cycle of 1938 (Fig.8): here, in fact, the buildings depicted reproduce, although in a stylized manner, the forms and geometries of the vaulted houses of Amalfi, whose terraces and staircases are also reproduced, which - as in Costa d'Amalfi – mix and evolve in an endless continuum (Van der Ham, 1986).

4. Conclusions

Camillo Jona, Giuseppe Pagano, Bruno Zevi, and Plinio Marconi are just some of the architects who over the years have focused on the relationship between utility, technology, form, and aesthetics, the origins of which can be found in residential buildings of the past. There are also countless internationally renowned artists and architects who have stayed on the Coast over time to admire, study and draw its vernacular architecture.

The journeys were taken to the South to observe the fascinating territory of the Amalfi Coast - with its vaulted houses set like diamonds in the surrounding landscape - and to rediscover the simplicity and essentiality of the architecture of its villages. These latter aspects, as John Ruskin points out in his writings, are distinctive features of Italian rural architecture capable of giving the building an air noble so that "while there is nothing about it unsuited to the humility of its inhabitant, there is a general dignity in its air, which harmonizes beautifully with the nobility of the neighboring edifices, or the glory of the surrounding scenery" (Ruskin, 1878, p. 40). An architecture that, however, too often goes unnoticed today, but which must be strongly protected, also through the knowledge that drawing, and representation help to spread.

Appendix

Author Contributions: B.M. performed and wrote "Introduction and conclusion"; C.F. performed and wrote "The vaulted house and its origins"; S.M. performed and wrote the "Travellers to the "discovery" of the coastal territory" and its subtitles.

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AUTHORS INDEX



AUTHOR INDEX

Abdulac, S., 1015 Accetta, C., 585 Achenza, M., 697 Achille, C., 247 Agromayor Navarrete, E., 11 Aguilar Prieto, B., 721 Aituganova, N., 451 Aladro-Prieto, J., 23 Alatli, H. İ., 599 Aliverti, L., 921

Alonso-Monasterio, P., 537 Ammendola, J., 703

Antunes, A., 173

Almeida, D., 173

Araújo Lima Bessa, S., 31

Asslan, H., 955

Babaev, S., 451 Balbi, B., 963 Barada, J., 1077 Baró Zarzo, J. L., 553 Barranco Donderis, A., 593 Basset-Salom, L., 615 Belmondo, S., 319 Benitez Calle, A., 507 Benkari, N., 755 Bento, R., 173 Bilotta, F., 39 Binan, D. U., 599 Blečić, I., 697

Bocci, M., 807 Bordoni, P., 773 Bortolotto, S., 247 Bosso, R., 963

Bravo Bravo, J., 763 Brusa, E., 1023

Bujalance, M., 341 Burguete Gil, C., 815

Cacciatore, I., 937 Caleca, E., 393 Camaiti, M., 349 Canonaco, B., 39, 47 Caponetto, R., 459 Cappai, S. N., 781

Cappelli, L., 971

Cardaci, A., 213, 221 Carrascosa Moliner, B., 987 Carrera Díaz, G., 789 Caruso, M., 55, 553 Castagnaro, C., 545 Castiglione, F., 47 Catuogno, R., 889 Cernansky, M., 979

Chamizo-Nieto, F. J., 729 Chaverra Suarez, M., 119 Chesi, C., 1023

Chiri, G. M., 823 Ciocchini, E., 247 Cipolletti, S., 63 Circo, C., 937 Coll-Pla, S., 559 Conejo-Arrabal, F., 729 Coppola, M., 1031 Cornadó Bardón, C., 607 Costa Jover, A., 559 Costa Rosado, A., 71 Crispino, D., 79

Cristini, V., 55, 401, 553, 657 Cuzziramos-Gutiérrez, F. A., 559

Dabaieh, M., 467 De Feo, E., 87 De La Pierre, C., 831 del Cueto, B., 327 Del Espino Hidalgo, B., 789 Delgado Méndez, A., 789 Della Torre, S., 1023 Di Paola, A., 95 Dinççağ Kahveci, 663 Dipasquale, L., 697, 703, 1031 Domènech Rodríguez, M., 607

Elnokaly, A., 335 Escamirosa Montalvo, L. F., 287

Facchi, E., 255 Farina, S., 475 Fauzìa, L. R., 213 Felix Andrade, D., 31 Fernández García, N., 1039 Fernández Palicio, A., 263

HERITAGE 2022 - International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability

September 15th-17th, 2022 Valencia, Spain

Ferrari, E. P., 703, 839 Ferrer Forés, J. J., 271 Ferreyra, C., 133

Franco Rodríguez, E., 341 Fratini, F., 349, 425 Frosini, G., 95

Frullo, N., 639

García Cuetos, M. P., 847 García López de Andújar, V., 671

Garuglieri, S., 95 Genís Vinyals, M., 287 Ghelfi, G., 357

Giuffrida, G., 459 Gomes, M. I., 363 Gómez Maestro, C., 1063

Gómez Martinez, V., 71 Gómez Mejía, S., 119

González-Sánchez, B., 369

Gracia, A., 855 Grimoldi, A., 255 Grisoni, M. M., 103, 737 Guardiola-Villora, A., 615 Guerrero-Baca, L. F., 409

Gupta, V., 1005 Hamard, E., 149

Hernández Navarro, Y., 141

Hilton, A., 149

Hueto-Escobar, A., 125, 377

Ibrahim, S., 279, 623

Jebens-Zirkel Imm, P., 483

Ji, W., 111

Jofré Troncoso, M. G., 385

Landi, A. G., 255 Lao, T. W., 631 Laumain, X., 671 Lavoratti, G., 567 Leserri, M., 119, 507

Lidón de Miguel, M., 125, 377 Li-Puma Sforazzini, V., 863

Loffredo, G., 871 López López, D., 607 López Sabater, A., 671 Ludwig, A. B., 657

Macca, V., 1047

Mahdy, H., 3

Málaga-Montoya, D., 559

Mamì, A., 393 Mancini, R., 897 Mannucci, L., 1031

Manzano Fernández, S., 401

Marino, B. G., 1055 Martinet, D., 831

Martínez Duran, A., 491

Martínez-Barreiro, M. M., 409

Massimino, M., 937 Mattone, M., 349, 639

Mayta-Ponce, D. L., 559 Mazzola, E. M., 879

Mecca, S., 697, 703

Medina Lorente, O. M., 987

Medina-Sánchez, T. B., 559

Merlo, A., 567, 697 Messina, B., 133

Mileto, C., 55, 111, 125, 205, 377, 401, 553

Millán Millán, P., 319 Minguzzi, M., 141

Mira Rico, J. A., 575 Miranda Santos, M., 149

Miranda, T., 363 Mirra, E., 929 Mollica, S., 157

Montoni, L., 703 Morena, S., 133

Morocho-Jaramillo, D. E., 499

Mouraud, C., 149 Murillo-Romero, M., 23

Navarro Ezquerra, A., 369

Nebot-Gómez de Salazar, N., 729

Nicolini, E., 393 Nocerino, I., 165 Novelli, F., 823

Ocampo García, L., 287 Ochiai, C., 417

Ors Ausín, J., 451 Osete Cortina, L., 987

Okyay, G. G., 679

Ostos-Prieto, F. J., 23 Oteri, A. M., 687

Paiva, A., 173 Palo, M. C., 247

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HERITAGE 2022 - International Conference on Vernacular Heritage: Culture, People and Sustainability

September 15th-17th, 2022 Valencia, Spain

Pane, A., 889 Parente, M., 889 Parra Zebadúa, A., 287 Penido de Rezende, M. A., 31

Pereira, S., 173 Pérez Cano, M. T., 71 Pérez, M. A., 855 Petrucci, E., 897 Picone, R., 995 Pinto, J., 173

Pisani, F., 293 Pittaluga, D., 425 Pittungnapoo, W., 335 Pollone, S., 181 Poullain, P., 149

Putzu, M. G., 897

Ragosta, A., 1055 Recla, F., 871 Reimão Costa, M., 71 Rescic, S., 349, 425 Rivera Vidal, A., 1063 Rodrigues, C., 1071

Rodríguez Cantalapiedra, P., 905 Romano, L., 189

Rosa-Jiménez, C., 729 Rosell Amigó, J. R., 369 Rossato, L., 647 Rossi, G., 119, 507 Rovero, L., 1031 Royo Naranjo, L., 913 Russo Krauss, G., 963 Russo, M., 213

Salazar Chuquimarca, W., 369

Sanzaro, D., 937 Saretta, Y., 197 Sbrogiò, L., 197 Scala, B., 831, 921 Sebastián Franco, S., 937 Sotgiu, A. V., 781 Squassina, A., 745 Suraci, N., 871

Talenti, S., 513 Tamhankar, A., 1005 Teodosio, A., 513 Testa, M. P., 301 Timón Tiemblo, M. P., 11 Tomasi, J., 1077

Torres Peceros, H. E., 433 Torrijo Echarri, F.J., 205, 855 Tortajada Montalva, E., 553 Tosco, C., 871

Trematerra, A., 929 Trizio, F., 205 Trovò, F., 797

Uixer Cotano, L., 537 Ulusoy Binan, D., 679

Valiante, C., 683 Valluzzi, M. R., 197 Varvaro, S., 1085 Vecchio, S., 95

Vegas, F., 55, 111, 125, 205, 377, 401, 553

Verona, B., 95 Versaci, A., 213, 221 Vettore, E., 797 Vileikis, O., 451

Villasante Claramonte, J., 229 Villaverde Rey, M., 491 Villers Aispuro, R., 287 Vitagliano, E., 237 Vitale, M. R., 937 Vitti, P., 521

Vlahos, E., 711 Vosloo, L., 141

Wang, J., 417 Whelan, D., 309 White, N., 945

Zambelli, M., 703 Zebadúa Velasco, S. N., 287 Zenteno Hernández, M. A., 287 Zhou, Q., 441

Zirkel Zirkel, A. J., 483

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