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ESEMPI DI ARCHITETTURA

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Le finalità scientifiche e culturali del progetto EDA trovano le ragioni nel pensiero di Werner Heisenberg Premio Nobel per la Fisica nel 1932.

... È probabilmente vero, in linea di massima, che nella storia del pensiero umano gli sviluppi più fruttuosi si verificano spesso nei punti d'interferenza tra diverse linee di pensiero. Queste linee possono avere le loro radici in parti assolutamente diverse della cultura umana, in diversi tempi ed in ambienti culturali diversi o di diverse tradizioni religiose; perciò, se esse veramente si incontrano, cioè, se vengono a trovarsi in rapporti sufficientemente stretti da dare origine ad un'effettiva interazione, si può allora sperare che possano seguire nuovi ed interessanti sviluppi.

Spazi di riflessione

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Juan Antonio García-Esparza

Local Character Assessment

Artisans, Crafts and the Historic Environment
of Penyagolosa, Spain



To Anna and Lena

Local Character Assessment.

Artisans, crafts and the historic environment of Penyagolosa.

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PROLOGUE

CONSERVATION

By Paulo B. Lourenço.

Editor of the International Journal of Architectural Heritage.
Coordinator of the International MSc on Structural Analysis of
Monuments and Historical Constructions.

CONSERVATION IS defined in the Nara Charter as “All efforts designed to understand cultural heritage, know its history and meaning, ensure its material safeguard and, as required, its presentation, restoration and enhancement”. Among other complexities of translating this concept into practice an important question is what is worth to be preserved and how can societies afford it?

Monuments tend to receive much attention from the technical community and the society in general, given their outstanding universal value from the point of view of history, art or science. On the contrary, more modest elements of the built heritage such as historical centres, urban volumes or rural ensembles tend to receive less attention, providing more relevance to the present book.

This publication focus on the communities around Penyagolosa, considered the most emblematic mountain in the Valencian Community in Spain, as the peak stands isolated and at its base is the important pilgrimage destination of Sant Joan de Penyagolosa. The book provides

extensive and valuable material grouped in four sections, from the regulatory context, survey of the built heritage, construction techniques and artisans. In this context, I would stress in particular the local inhabitants, which were involved in participatory activities. It is well known that the responsibility for cultural heritage and the management of it belongs, to the cultural community that has generated it and takes cares for it. The need to maintain and rehabilitate our built heritage for the people and with the people is key for successful reuse. I would also stress the artisans: as the traditional crafts are slowly fading away, we are facing the risk of losing the important intangible heritage of the metier of blacksmiths, carpenters and masons. The interviews gathered are important documentation for future times.

True civilization was only reached when economic and social developments had advanced sufficiently to allow the building of towns and cities, wherein a part of the population could engage in trade, industry and professional pursuits. It is about ten thousand years ago,

with the earliest civilization, that the history of construction begins. Masonry played a major role in the past, with about half of the built heritage being made with this building technique. As a structural engineer, I was challenged by the information and discussion in the publication regarding the construction techniques applied. The book details how ashlar masonry walls, rubble masonry walls and earthen walls were built, introducing also masonry elements such as the pillar, the opening and the arch. It is impressive how masonry was also so extensively used in balconies, floors and staircases, with artisans mastering the usage of gypsum (fast setting), lime and clay mortars. The timberwork and metalwork are also well detailed, making the publication of interest to all interested in building conservation, including architects and engineers, with an extensive collection of photos, drawings and technical details. I am certain also that the experience learned will help authorities and local people to better appreciate and act in the area.

Guimarães, September 2020



INTRODUCTION¹

THE GENERAL OBJECTIVE of this publication is to design a new methodological approach to evaluate the abandonment, maintenance and use of the Historic Centres (HCs) in small rural villages and towns. Ultimately the document aims to analyse the interdependencies between physical conservation, past and present socio-cultural creation and the sustainable development of HCs by defining what is essential, distinctive and unique to their communities.

This document provides a spatial outline and classification of the results obtained from meetings and interviews in the HCs to develop the ultimate objective, a normative, theoretical and graphic framework on which to base a joint Territorial Heritage Action Plan (THAP) for several municipalities. The document addresses the need to create an inclusive procedure with which to establish the international, national and local, geographical and cultural scope for the analysis of HCs.

It develops new methodologies to catalogue cultural goods, combining traditional fieldwork, data collection, meetings, interviews, seminars and scientific gatherings

in the towns using information technologies to record and manage the work material. The document is scientific and pedagogical, reinforcing the transversal competences relating to the management, self-evaluation and dissemination of knowledge whose success has depended greatly on social and academic stakeholders.

The first section makes a review of the historic environment through the lens of Spanish heritage laws. A second section brings some singular buildings of the different villages to showcase the diverse and varied artisanal and material techniques still preserved today. The third section is specifically about building details from paradigmatic cases of crafts and practices of cultural value in the different HCs. Finally, a fourth section collects some interviews with artisans in the area of Penyalgosa. Thus, the various sections of the document are presented in an extensive photographic catalogue compiling the particularities of several HCs, individual techniques, tools and materials and their evolution over time.

Thus, this document can be used to establish the basis for drafting maintenance and conservation criteria for

¹ This publication is the result of 4 years of work of the Chair of Historic Centres and Cultural Routes in the Valencia region, Spain.

◀ Figure 0.1. Decorated eave in Mas de Vidal, Atzeneta del Maestrat

these HCs, with the local population in mind. The ultimate aim of the methodology developed in this document is to be used in the municipalities to promote the recognition, maintenance and conservation of the tangible and intangible values of the HCs. To do so, these municipalities should make the content of this document public and participatory and incorporate the necessary guidelines.

Case of study

This scientific and pedagogical document aims to be disseminated and used by local residents, as well as by heritage students and academics, in order to promote good practices recognizing the material and intangible values of the HCs.

This review of construction techniques, unlike other existing works, aims to compile information about the society and culture of some HCs in the Valencian Community, Spain. Local participants and experts have collaborated in drawing up this document. It was the craftsmen of the construction trades themselves who, through individual interviews depending on the type of craft, contributed to this document on the traditional and contemporary materials and techniques of each town. The volume includes a database of graphic information and the transcription of interviews, all obtained from fieldwork.

The catalogue has benefited from the contributions of the knowledge of the professionals of each trade, as well that of the collaborators of the regional project on Crafts and Craftsmen (GVA/2017/100). Some members of the Chair on Historic Centres and Cultural Itineraries of Castellón, Spain have also contributed to the document. Renowned scientific professionals, specialists from municipal corporations and residents who took part in local meetings all collaborated in this project.

This document seeks to be of practical use by presenting the heritage inventories of these places. The report may help not only to draw up other Inventories and Special Plans but to connect and incorporate them into heritage laws. For this, the legal figure is that of the Territorial Heritage Action Plan for the management and conservation of small HCs, as this Plan intends to promote a “(...) territorial planning instrument to develop the objectives, principles and criteria of the Territorial Strategy of the Valencian Community in specific territories or sectors. The scope of these sorts of Action Plans can include part or the whole of several villages” (Art. 16, Law 5/2014). Thus, this is about the development of the Territorial Strategy based on the compilation of the data of this book. Therefore, the eventual implementation must follow the provisions of section 5 of article 16 of the law mentioned above.

For the application of this THAP, municipalities should ideally create a Consortium, understood as an organization with legal personality, subject to law, with the capacity to interact with any other subjects, natural or legal persons, and with the capacity for self-organization, having the material and personal resources attributed to it.

The vernacular architecture of Penyagolosa

For the analysis of traditional construction, it is possible to use the term enclave in a broad sense in which we can bring together the different settlement classifications, almost always clustered. To understand their character, sometimes it is necessary to analyse some isolated buildings. Enclave, therefore, means an architectonic ensemble – urban and rural – including any dwelling or disseminated construction linked to a specific way of life or to local building traditions related to a specific cultural landscape.

Selected enclaves, buildings and techniques can be significant identifiers of a region, tradition and evolution, that helps analyse its qualities together with the features that traditional construction brings up today as a result of a permeable continuous cultural process both because of their historical value and their typological variety.

The housings and crafts under study especially corresponds to rural settlements and compact dwellings. In this case, the most common building typology is made of a stable construction which, due to the fact of being clustered, normally has a ground floor plus two heights or even three; a factor that increases where there is shortage of land for building or terrains with steep slopes.

With regard to the buildings' craftsmanship, the structure is composed by load-bearing walls on which to lay the framework structures (timber beams with various solutions for the space between joist) and the roof structure (beams and joist with its pertinent elements of coverage). There exist different kinds of vaults to solve this, cellar roofs, basement floors and grounds, most of them built with stone, brick and mortar.

In vernacular construction it is common to render the walls to preserve the structural materials (stones, bricks, adobe and mortar) from the erosive action of water and wind. The most common material for the covering is lime mortar, while gypsum plaster or clay mortars is less frequent. Only rear facades and party walls of some buildings may lack coatings as well as some auxiliary constructions located outside villages.

This book summarises a considerable amount of building techniques and construction details from the different villages and some selected buildings. The section Lost craftsmanship and crafts carefully examines the structure, openings, balconies, trellis, carpentries, coatings, frameworks, eaves, roofs and staircases found in

the area under study. Finally, in the last section, the artisans' explanation provides the expert insight to the secrets of past trades, old machinery and dusty workshops.

This collection of construction techniques serves as an analysis and compilation of the distinctive character of several villages. The analysis shows that in the area of study there are concerns about conservation and cultural involvement of local actors in issues of promotion of traditional values, perhaps due to the lack of an integrated local mechanism of governance and guardianship of these elements. The analysis presented here is intended to illustrate clearly and concisely how the defining elements of HCs can be catalogued, made visible and linked to planning systems and to other social, cultural and economic development programs in rural areas.

An analysis of techniques, buildings and places

The analysis exposes how the dynamics of HCs are directly affected by personal knowledge and the aesthetic sanctions of communities. Therefore, communities and artisans can differ significantly in capacities and motivations, as well as in skills and incentives given by the history of the place and the commitment of past and contemporary societies. These processes relate to the interpretation of these elements of the past and their contemporary integration through perception, and the attribution of meaning based on experience and behaviour.

The analysis of techniques, co-present in space and time, is possible through the analysis of parallel pasts and presents by means of an observational act of documentation and classification, but also through evaluative activities conducted with communities and artisans. This reveals the complex perception of the past, their own past, heterogeneous but somehow marked by mainstream forms of heritage provided by aesthetic canons related to

dominant forms of conservation.

Previous forms of conservation ignored the connection between the community and the present and past conceptualisation of artefacts, techniques and materials, which were disconnected by the disconnection between fields of study such as ethnography, anthropology, geography, history and architecture, or even through activities of purification where the administrations in charge of heritage management did not engaged ever those fields of enquiry. The study positions the contemporaneity of past and present techniques by connecting the tangible and intangible world and provides an accurate but heterogeneous analysis of matter.

The gathering of the small “things” that compose the space makes them visible through a sort of storytelling that incorporates them into the reading of the place. The compilation does it through a form of visualization that enables picturing materials and techniques from different epochs and social status. The analysis enables a pluralistic visualisation and pays specific attention to housings that stand out because of their humble or elementary character. It is important because they define the place and allow understand the pluralistic character of past societies.

The acknowledgement of subjects and their spaces of labour previously neglected or not properly regarded by the conservation processes is an act of justice. The artisans emerge in this study as the responsible of a lost ‘ritual’. The act of recognising that past performance is an act of visibilisation, not only for the neglected subjects, but for the communities that habited these places.